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A SERIES OF

DISCOURSES

ON THE

Dr Allison's

PRINCIPLES and EVIDENCES

OF

NATURAL RELIGION

AND THE

Christian Revelation.

And on some proper Practical SUBJECTS.

BY SAMUEL BOURN.
Dissenting Minister at Norwich.

VOLUME I.

That to the Height of this great Argument,
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the Ways of God to Men. MILTON.

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OF THE

FIRST VOLUME.

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PSALM

DIS-

INTRODUCTION.

THAT there are ſo many and great evils in this world, and that Chriſtianity has had ſo little effect in remedying thoſe evils; are the two main objections to natural religion, and the Chriſtian Revelation.——How far theſe objections are removed in the following diſcourſes, every one will judge for himſelf, who vouchſafes to read them with attention, and who thinks ſubjects of this nature worthy of his inquiry and reflection.

IN the contemplation and ſtudy of the boundleſs univerſe, the more accurate and extenſive our views become, the more marks of wiſdom and goodneſs we diſcover, and the more the evils of the world appear

to be diminiſhed; or to be admitted for wiſe reaſons, and conducive to ſalutary ends. Hence ariſes a probability, which continually increaſes in proportion to the increaſe of our knowledge, That in reſpect to the univerſal conſtitution of things and the whole purpoſe of eternal providence, there is no evil nor imperfection: and that how weak or imperfect ſoever any ſpecies of creatures are formed, and tho' made liable to do and ſuffer many evils; yet they are formed for a *good* purpoſe, fill their proper place, and are a right and requiſite part of an infinite and perfect whole.

Philoſophy refers us to the remote worlds and parts of the univerſe, the inviſible ſcale of beings aſcending upwards, and the probable relations and proportions which this world and its inhabitants may bear *at preſent* to thoſe diſtant worlds and ſuperior natures. The *Chriſtian revelation* directs our view to *Futurity*; and repreſents the

ſcene

ſcene of this world as introductory to another, and as terminating in a glorious revolution; when all the evils of human nature ſhall be aboliſhed, and the virtue and happineſs of mankind for ever eſtabliſhed: it refers us then to remote ages, and the relation which *preſent* times and events bear to *future* changes and the periods of eternity.

The effects of a *particular revelation* in the world, if it be left to the voluntary uſe or abuſe of mankind, muſt of neceſſity be *ſimilar* to thoſe of the *univerſal revelation* of nature. And it muſt either be *ſo left*; or elſe a ſupernatural or miraculous power muſt be employed univerſally and perpetually, in order to ſecure it from abuſe, and to preſerve and eſtabliſh its influence on mankind. Thus indeed, moſt or many of the evils of the world and the vices of human nature, might, in probable appearance, be prevented or remedied. But to ſuppoſe that thoſe evils, which reſult

from the very frame of the world and of human nature, ſhould be thus removed; is ſuppoſing infinite wiſdom to ſuperinduce a plan of operations coincident yet inconſiſtent with the plan of nature.

Miracles made uſe of in the introduction of a particular revelation, are in ſome meaſure ſimilar to the divine operations in the formation of the world and of mankind, and may conſpire to the ſame end. But the univerſal and perpetual uſe of them would in effect ſubvert or change the plan of nature, and conſequently could *not* conſpire to the ſame end. Hence ariſes a ſtrong preſumption, that the miracles reported in various legends, as wrought every where and for trivial purpoſes, are *Counterfeits*. But to determine from hence, as an *ingenious writer* hath done, That *no* miracles were ever wrought, for any purpoſe, or in ſubſervience to the ends for which the world and mankind were made; is determining a queſtion by prejudice, which

which can be decided only by human *experience* or *teſtimony*.

The *ſame* ingenious Author appears to be ſo ſenſible of the clearneſs and ſtrength of the *Apoſtolic teſtimony* to the reality of the miracles related in the *Goſpel*; that with all his ſubtlety, he finds no other way to evade it, than by aſſerting, That miracles are in their own nature *ſo incredible*, that they cannot be made credible in *any* circumſtances, by *any* human teſtimony whatſoever, tho' connected with the higheſt *moral reaſons and ends*; an aſſertion entirely *modern*, contrary to the judgment of the wiſeſt men in all paſt ages, and to the common ſenſe of mankind; who have always thought the general ſuppoſition, of *ſome* miracles being wrought for *ſome* ends, *ſo very credible*, that they have been ready to believe them in *every* circumſtance, on the *ſlighteſt* teſtimony, and ſeparate from all moral reaſons or *important* ends.

Our

Our own experience, and the teſtimony of others concerning *their* experience, are two different ſources of our knowledge, which this writer ſets in oppoſition to each other; and as an over-balance to all *teſtimony* in the caſe of miracles, He *ſophiſtically* puts into the oppoſite ſcale, under the name of *experience*, what is really a want of it, or, *no experience at all.*——The experience of the Apoſtles was *different* from, but *not contrary* to that of the reſt of mankind: juſt as the experience of thoſe who have felt an earthquake, differs from, but is not contrary to that of all others who have never felt one.——Or, as it appears to all our ſenſes, and to vulgar experience (or more properly *inexperience)* that the earth is at reſt; when upon the *teſtimony* of Aſtronomers, we *believe* it to move with aſtoniſhing rapidity.

Another and *late noble writer*, who was very capable of diſtinguiſhing between the *Apoſtle Paul's defence* of Chriſtianity againſt the

the objections and prejudices of the Jews, and *Chriſtianity itſelf*, which he had before delivered to them; yet confounds them together, and abuſes the Apoſtle's character in the moſt invidious expreſſions, becauſe he uſed ſuch arguments with the Jews, as were moſt proper to overcome their prejudices. He charges him alſo with teaching the doctrines of an election of particular perſons to eternal Salvation, without reſpect to their actions; and of unlimited obedience to the moſt abſolute tyranny. Thus he endeavours to throw an odium upon his writings and character. But if any writer was to comment upon any *other ancient Book*, with ſuch ignorance or miſrepreſentation of his Author's ſenſe and ſpirit, as this *late noble writer* does, together with many others, both Deiſtical and Chriſtian, upon the *New Teſtament*; what a contemptible figure would he make in the republic of letters?

It

It is with regret we have obſerved, that a *Right Reverend Advocate* for our holy religion, inſtead of telling us plainly, what that Chriſtianity is, which he means to defend, and giving us a clear definition of it; hath left reaſon to ſuſpect, if not his total want of ſincerity, yet that his main intention was to vindicate, not ſo much the doctrines contained in the New Teſtament, as ſome articles that lie elſewhere. Otherwiſe, the Chriſtian cauſe would have been more highly obliged to him, for employing his ingenuity and eloquence in its defence.

Sincerity of intention, perſpicuity of language, and ſtrength of argument, are eſſential characters of a good Author upon the ſubject of religion: eſpecially, there ought to be no room for ſuſpecting (which ever ſide the Author eſpouſes in any controverted point) that he had any other deſign than that of inveſtigating and recom-

commending truth. A diſcovery of artifice and ſophiſtry, or of deſigned miſrepreſentations, or of party-views, ought to fix a more *indelible* blot of diſgrace upon his writings, than even his ignorance of the ſubject upon which he pretends to write.——But by this rule, how many Authors, both Deiſtical and Chriſtian, would immediately ſink into perpetual diſgrace!

The Author of the following diſcourſes is willing to have his writings tried by this rule; which is the only merit he aſſumes to himſelf. And as to any errors which may poſſibly be imputed to him, his apology lies in the following words of *Cicero*; which he would heartily recommend to the conſideration of all who write or think upon religious ſubjects:—

"* Hoc autem liberiores & ſolutiores ſumus, quod integra nobis eſt judicandi

* Cic. Acad. Queſt. Lib. 2. 3

po-

poteſtas: neque ut omnia, quæ præſcripta & quaſi imperata ſint, defendamus, neceſſitate ulla cogimur. Nam cæteri, primùm, ante tenentur aſtricti, quam quid eſſet optimum judicare potuerunt: deinde, infirmiſſimo tempore ætatis, aut obſecuti amico cuidam, aut una alicujus, quam primùm audierunt, oratione capti, de rebus incognitis judicant, & ad quamcunque ſunt diſciplinam quaſi tempeſtate delati, ad eam tanquam ad ſaxum adhæreſcunt. Nam quod dicunt omnia ſe credere ei, quem judicent fuiſſe ſapientem, probarem; ſi idipſum rudes & indocti judicare potuiſſent: ſtatuere enim quis ſit ſapiens, vel maximè videtur eſſe ſapientis. Sed, ut potuerunt, omnibus rebus auditis, cognitis etiam reliquorum ſententiis, judicaverunt; aut, re ſemel audita, ad unius ſe auctoritatem contulerunt. Sed, neſcio quomodo, plerique errare malunt, eamque ſententiam quam adamaverunt pugnaciſſime defendere; quam, ſine pertinacia, quid conſtantiſſimè dicatur, exquirere."

"But we are ſo much the more free and
"unconfined, as we preſerve entire our
"privilege of judging, and are under no
"obligation of defending whatever hath
"preſcription, and as it were authority,
"on its ſide. For other men are from the
"firſt confined and fettered, before they
"are capable of forming a judgment; and
"ſo proceed to determine upon the moſt
"difficult ſubjects, at a time of life when
"their underſtandings are the weakeſt;
"either in deference to the opinion of ſome
"friend, or being captivated with the
"diſcourſe of ſome perſon whom they
"firſt heard: and whatever ſyſtem they
"happen to be thrown upon, cling to
"it, as to a rock. As to what they
"ſay of their putting an implicit con-
"fidence, in the judgment of one whom
"they believe to be a wiſe man;—I could
"agree to it, provided ignorant and il-
"literate perſons were capable of judging
"who is a wiſe man: but this very thing
"appears to me to require the greateſt wiſ-
"dom.

"dom. The fact hath been, that men
"have either judged for themſelves, as well
"as they were able, after hearing both
"ſides, and knowing the ſentiments of
"other men; or elſe, upon firſt attending
"to the ſubject, have relied wholly upon
"the authority of one man. But moſt men,
"I know not how, chuſe rather to remain
"in an error, and defend moſt obſtinately
"their favourite opinion, than to examine
"without bigotry, and find out what is
"moſt rational and conſiſtent."

DIS-

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

READER.

IT is taken for granted in the following discourses, that the writers of the New Testament always mean, by the term Ἀνάστασις, or resurrection, a restoration to life; or that operation or event, by which the person who dies passeth from death to life, or from a state of inaction and insensibility, to a state of action and enjoyment; without any reference to what becomes of the body. The reasons are as follow.

(1.) IF we understand the word *resurrection*, as denoting simply a restoration to life; the language of the New Testament on this subject is perfectly intelligible and uniform:—but is ambiguous, if not unintelligible, if we understand that word, as having a reference to the body.——This

reaſon will appear to thoſe who carefully examine and compare the ſeveral paſſages.

(2.) THERE is no ſuch expreſſion to be found, in any of the writers of the New Teſtament, as a *Reſurrection of the body*, or *of the fleſh:* and it is very unaccountable that they ſhould never uſe ſuch an expreſſion, if ſuch was their meaning.

(3.) THE Apoſtle declares, that *fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of GOD; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* But if there ſhall be a reſurrection of the body; and the ſpiritual incorruptible bodies of men in the future ſtate ſhall be compoſed of the ſame materials as theſe mortal bodies;—then *fleſh and blood* may be ſaid to *inherit the kingdom of GOD*, tho' differently modified, and *corruption* is made *heir* to *incorruption.*

(4.) THE Apoſtle's enumerating the different bodies in the viſible creation, 1 Cor. xv. is foreign to his purpoſe, if he meant to illuſtrate a reſurrection of the body: He ought rather to have pointed out to our obſervation the changes and transformations which the ſame bodies undergo. But if he meant to ſhew, that the divine power may inveſt men in a future ſtate with

with other bodies of a different kind, in exchange for theſe animal bodies; then his enumeration is directly to the purpoſe: he leads us to a view of the viſible creation, which ſerves to elucidate his ſubject; and he adds with propriety, *There is an animal body, and there is a ſpiritual body*, i. e. a body of a kind totally different from the other.

(5.) The ſame Apoſtle expreſly guards us againſt the groſs notion of a reſurrection of the body, in the very place where he uſes the compariſon of plants riſing from the ſeed:——*Thou fool, that which thou ſoweſt, is not that body which ſhall be; but GOD giveth it a body as it hath pleaſed him.*

(6.) The Apoſtle aſſigns to the preſent and the future body, not only different, but contrary qualities: one is *corruptible*, the other *incorruptible*; one, *animal*; the other, *ſpiritual*. As far, therefore, as we can determine from the properties aſſigned, they cannot be the ſame body.

(7.) Our Saviour produces an argument (Luke xx. 37.) to prove the reſurrection, in oppoſition to the Sadducees who denied it, which is utterly inconcluſive and nothing to the purpoſe, if they meant by that term

a resurrection of the body. And therefore, the term there must necessarily be understood, in the simple and general sense, of a person's being raised to life, or to a future state.

(8.) From the vulgar notion of a resurrection of the body, it has been inferred, That there are two future states, one prior, and the other subsequent to that resurrection; and that the souls of good men shall enjoy a state of glory and happiness prior to that event, and then shall receive an addition of glory and happiness by their reunion with the body. But the New Testament says not a word of any such addition at the resurrection, or of any life or happiness prior to it; and speaks but of one resurrection and one future state. From which it may be presumed, that the supposition of a resurrection of the body, as well as these inferences drawn from it, are founded merely in human imagination.

(9.) By supposing a resurrection of the body, we needlessly involve the doctrine of the New Testament, concerning a resurrection and a future state, in difficulties and objections; arising from the perpetual change of the materials of which our present

ſent bodies conſiſt, and their being incorporated with other bodies, and from other conſiderations.

(10.) By conſtantly taking the word, *Reſurrection*, in the plain and general ſenſe, of men's being raiſed from death to the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of another life; we ſhall preſerve the ſimplicity of the Goſpel, and ſhall find its doctrine, as well as language, moſt intelligible and rational.

At death men apparently ſink into a ſtate of inactivity and inſenſibility. To this ſtate every perſon is reduced at the moment of death; and many perſons for ſome time before they are certainly known to be dead. This is the plain, ſimple, primary notion of death, and the ſtate of the dead: viz. A ceſſation of life. Life conſiſts in activity, ſenſibility, and the uſe of certain powers or faculties, all which may be either increaſed or diminiſhed. By diſeaſes or old-age they are gradually diminiſhed, 'till at the moment of death they entirely ceaſe, and life is ended. The queſtion then occurs, Whether after men die, they ſhall be raiſed from the dead? i. e. whether they ſhall be raiſed from that ſtate of inaction and inſenſibility, to which they are reduced

at

at the moment of death, to a ſtate of activity, and to the uſe of the ſame, or any other ſenſes, powers, or faculties? ——If they ſhall at any time afterward be ſo raiſed; then there is a reſurrection of the dead, and a future ſtate. And it may with equal propriety be termed a reſurrection; whether they are reſtored to life immediately after the moment of death; or whether they remain for a period of time in a ſtate of *death*, i. e. a ſtate of inſenſibility, or as the New Teſtament-writers elegantly term it, *ſleep*, which is the neareſt image or reſemblance of the ſtate of the dead.

It is by departing from this ſimplicity of natural ideas, and by intermixing many additional and metaphyſical ſpeculations and diſtinctions, that men have confounded the Goſpel-doctrine of a reſurrection, and have ſtrangely appropriated that term to the *Body*, inſtead of applying it to the *Man*, or the living, thinking, acting principle in the body.

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Anonymous, 31 Setts

DISCOURSE I.

The apparent Intentions of DIVINE WISDOM in the Conſtitution of the World, and of Human Nature.

PSALM civ. 24.

O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all.

TO be convinced that all things are formed and conducted by Infinite Power and Wisdom, to the worthiest ends, is the best foundation of religion in the minds of men. This conviction must arise from an attention to the works and providence of God: and in order to it, we must enter thoroughly into the sentiments of the Psalmist in the text, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all.*

INFINITE power, knowledge, and goodness, may be considered as comprehending all the perfections of God, so far as we

are able to conceive of his nature. His *wiſdom*, then, is not to be defined as a diſtinct attribute; but as conſiſting in the application of his infallible knowledge and almighty power in obtaining the purpoſes of his goodneſs: it implies his *deſign* in all his operations, and his employing the fitteſt means in order to the beſt ends.

As to the *ſupreme* and *ultimate end*, which the All-wiſe Creator and Ruler hath in view, in the infinite and eternal ſcheme of his creation and providence; it is moſt rational in itſelf, moſt honourable to God, and moſt agreeable to the natural ſenſe of every good mind, to believe that this end can be no other than the greateſt good or happineſs of the univerſe in general. But this being ſo immeaſurable an object of our view, infinitely exceeding our utmoſt ſtretch of capacity to conceive of in an adequate manner; we are but very incompetent judges, what things, or what order and

and conſtitution of things, may be moſt conducive or requiſite to that end.

In the works of any human agent, the greater the deſign, and the deeper the ſkill of the operator, the more difficult it becomes for us to judge aright of the ſeveral parts or means, or to comprehend the whole, though the whole be laid before us; and we are often ready to imagine an error in thoſe very parts, where, if we underſtood the whole, the greateſt excellence of deſign would appear: how much more, in the operations of an infinite mind, whoſe thoughts and ways are above thoſe of men, as the heaven is above the earth? How much more incapable muſt we neceſſarily be, of eſtimating the fitneſs of things and events? How much more liable to judge erroneouſly, where all that we ſee, or can diſcern, is ſo minute a part of an infinite whole?——That there are numberleſs ſyſtems of rational beings ſuperior to, or different from, the ſyſtem of man-

kind, is what philoſophy and revelation concur in inducing us to believe; the one by the diſcoveries made of the material, the other by the intelligences given us of the intellectual creation. What connexion the order and conſtitution of things on earth have with thoſe other ſyſtems, we cannot comprehend; but neither philoſophy nor revelation leads us to imagine, that the human race is a detached and independent part of the creation, having no relation to other rational beings.

This may ſuffice to convince us, how unable we are to judge adequately of the divine works; and to ſhew us, whence it comes to paſs, that many things in the creation and order of Divine Providence, appear, as they neceſſarily muſt, to our narrow minds, imperfect, inconvenient, or evil; becauſe we cannot poſſibly know the connexions and dependencies ſubſiſting between one part and another throughout the univerſe. Many partial evils may be

be ſeen and felt, which we may, and ought to reſolve, by a rational faith, into the unſearchable wiſdom of God; either as being conducive, though we cannot diſcern how, to the univerſal good; or as neceſſarily reſulting from thoſe fixed laws and conſtitutions, which are requiſite to that end.

And indeed, if it were not ſo, if nothing appeared unaccountable in the creation; where would be the exerciſe of our *faith?* Where the virtue and excellence of that *truſt* in the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, which the *holy ſcriptures* juſtly repreſent, as the nobleſt principle of action in the human mind? —— The excellency of this faith conſiſteth, not indeed in believing contrary to, or without evidence, but in being fully perſuaded by thoſe evidences which appear in nature, that all things are directed and governed by the perfect wiſdom and goodneſs of a Sovereign Mind; and in adhering to, and act-

ing upon this perſuaſion, notwithſtanding the many difficult appearances, and ſeeming imperfections in the formation of things, and the conduct of Providence; notwithſtanding all the partial diſorders and evils, which, by divine permiſſion, take place in the world.

THAT it is reaſonable for us to act on this principle, with reſpect to the councils and ways of GOD, is evident beyond contradiction, from that general ſtate of ſociety, in which we think it right to behave in the like manner, with reſpect to the deſigns and actions of *men*. For, if the welfare of a nation be ſo great an object of view, that few perſons are competent judges of the means moſt conducive to that end; and if, on this account, it is reaſonable in ſubjects, to ſubmit to, and confide in, the direction of their governors, upon a general preſumption, and without any infallible proofs of their wiſdom and integrity, and though the fitneſs of their meaſures

ſures is not always apparent; if it is reaſonable to put ſo much confidence in human governors, of whoſe capacity and good intentions we have had little or no experience; how much more reaſonable is it to have faith and confidence in God, when we have ſo various evidence, and conſtant experience, of the wiſdom of his works, and the goodneſs of his intentions; when, at the ſame time, we are ſo unable either to comprehend that infinite object, the univerſal good, which is the ſupreme end of all his deſigns, or to determine what means are moſt conducive to it; when, notwithſtanding the unfathomable depth of his counſels, and the immenſe extent of his deſigns, notwithſtanding the littleneſs of that portion of his works and ways which is ſubject to our inſpection, and the narrowneſs of the human mind, and incapacity to judge adequately of that little part; yet there occur to our obſervation more, clearer, and ſtronger evidences of the wiſdom of God in his viſible works,

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and with reſpect to mankind, as employing fit means to anſwer good ends, than the ſubjects of any human government have, or *can* have, of the wiſdom of the ableſt and beſt of governors, or than any particular perſon hath, or *can* have, of the wiſdom of any other perſon or agent whatſoever.

In proof of this, we ſhall proceed to conſider the *inferior*, *intermediate*, and *ſubordinate ends*, which the wiſdom of God appears to have in view, in the formation of this world, and the order and proceſs of things in it. Our knowledge of the rectitude and goodneſs of *theſe ends*, which are manifeſtly *intended* and *anſwered*, at preſent, by the order of things in this world, is the *foundation* on which we muſt build our judgement and belief of the *ſupreme* intention of the Almighty in all his operations and appointments.

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Now the ends which the wiſdom of God appears to have in view in the conſtitution of this world, and the things in it, are theſe following.

First, the production and preſervation of life:

Secondly, the pleaſure of his creatures in the enjoyment of life:

Thirdly, their acquiſition of knowledge:

And, laſtly, their attainment of virtue and religion. ——

These we ſhall conſider, firſt, ſeparately; and then, in connexion with, and ſubſerviency to each other.

In the firſt place, it is evident, from the ſlighteſt view and obſervation of the ſtate of the world, that the production and preſervation of life is one end intended by the All-wiſe Creator. This

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is indeed ſo obvious as to need no illuſtration. Can any perſon doubt of this, who ſees the multitude of living creatures inhabiting the earth? who conſiders the various proviſions made for their ſubſiſtence ſuitable to their different natures? who obſerves even the deſtruction of ſome to be the preſervation of others, and the removal of one generation ſubſervient to the ſucceſſion of another? 'Tis not known how many millions there are of mankind; and of brute-animals the number is far greater: and, if we deſcend to the minuter living creatures, too ſmall for human ſight, the number is increaſed to an inconceivable degree. Wherever there is a proper receptacle or habitation, there we find ſuitable inhabitants; and in many ſtates and conditions, in which we ſhould think it impoſſible for living creatures to ſubſiſt, did we not find them actually ſubſiſting. Theſe all draw their ſupport from the world around them, fill up their place and time, till others ſucceed in their room.

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The world is full of life, in ſtates and forms wonderfully diverſified. Conſidering the *effect* then, there can be no doubt concerning the *intention* of the cauſe; and we are irreſiſtibly convinced, that communicating and preſerving life to vaſt numbers of creatures, is one end of the Creator in his formation of the world; and therefore, that he is to be acknowledged in the character of *the Giver and Lord of Life.*

SECONDLY: The pleaſure and felicity of his creatures in the enjoyment of that life, is a farther intention of the Almighty Maker, in his conſtruction of this world, and the things in it. This is alſo proved by experience and obſervation, and is the primary natural foundation of our belief of the Divine Goodneſs. For, notwithſtanding all the pains and infelicities to which mankind and other creatures are, by their nature, ſubject; yet the pleaſures and felicities of life ſo far ſurpaſs and over-balance them, that no conſiderate and impar-

impartial obſerver can heſitate in affirming, that the deſign of the Creator, in giving life to the numberleſs creatures which inhabit the earth, was not to make that life grievous, but on the whole comfortable and agreeable. Even the loweſt creatures have their enjoyments, and ſhow more ſymptoms of eaſe and delight, than of pain and trouble: for the bounty of God is extended to them; *he openeth his hand, they are filled with good*; he affords a grateful ſuſtenance to the beaſts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fiſhes of the ſea: all receive a portion of the things agreeable to their nature.

But, as the capacities of the inferior creatures, both with reſpect to enjoyment and ſuffering, are far leſs than thoſe of mankind; ſo the proofs of the Creator's benevolent intention are proportionably leſs apparent and certain: and they will be moſt convincing and ſatisfactory, if we attentively conſider the condition of the

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human life: for *here* we not only have our own *experience* for the ground of our knowledge; but alſo find a more extenſive field of evidence; where the effects of the Creator's beneficence, and the proofs of his intention are widely diffuſed, and afford the ſtrongeſt conviction, that this life was deſigned to be, upon the whole, agreeable and delightful to men.

THIS, indeed, is ſo much the natural and univerſal ſentiment of mankind, founded on experience, that nothing is more uſual than to hear of the *ſweetneſs* of life, how dearly men prize it, how unwilling to relinquiſh it, how ready to ſacrifice every thing for the preſervation of it: even when deprived of many great comforts and ſatisfactions, and confined to a very narrow condition, by want of health, loſs of ſight, extreme poverty, old age, or other afflictions; yet ſtill life has not loſt all its *ſweetneſs*, but retains a certain charm that makes men to love it, and to be de-

ſirous of preſerving it.——The kind aſſiſtance and company of friends, the curioſity of learning and knowing current events, and the gratification of the few faculties which remain to them, are circumſtances that mollify the pains and infirmities they labour under, and have a moſt pleaſing flavour, which corrects the bitterneſs of their cup. So kindly hath Providence tempered even the afflicted and diſtreſsful periods of life, that they have a mixture of ſomething agreeable, and are not entirely miſerable. And beſides theſe mitigating circumſtances, ſuch afflictions are ſhort in duration, compared to the ſeaſons in which men live free from ſuch complaints, have the enjoyment of their health and faculties, and find life to be an agreeable poſſeſſion, abounding with various entertainments.

To whatever part of the creation we turn our view, there is ſomething to entertain either the ſenſes, the imagination, or the

or the underſtanding. The whole appearance of Nature hath a majeſtic and pleaſing aſpect: It ſhews in its countenance the goodneſs no leſs than the grandeur of the Creator. Is not the light itſelf, that prime production of creative power, a glorious and heart-chearing object, which ſalutes our opening eyes every morning, throwing aſide the curtains of night, and preſenting anew the great ſcene of moving nature? Is not the very ſight of our fellow-creatures agreeable, and the idea of ſociety, acquaintance and friendſhip delectable to the heart; as the returns of food are grateful to the palate? And are not theſe our *daily delights*, and *common* to all mankind?

But had it been the Creator's intention to make human life miſerable; if we ſuppoſe (a horrible ſuppoſition it is) that the Almighty Being had formed this world, and placed mankind in it, with a malevolent deſign;—how entirely different would our

condition have been, and the whole ſtate of things reverſed?—We might then have abhorred life as much as we now prize it; have as earneſtly ſought for death, as we now avoid it; have hated ſociety as much as we now love it; and the very ſenſation of exiſtence might have been inceſſant pain and anguiſh: Ghaſtly deſpair would have been painted on every human viſage, and the converſation of ſociety uttered nothing but diſmal lamentations. Whereas in fact, the natural countenance and language of mankind beſpeak, not grief and deſpair, not wearineſs and loathing of life, but ſatisfaction and joy in it; and ſhew how grateful the intercourſe of ſociety is to them. Any inſtances to the contrary are ſo extremely rare and ſingular as to raiſe aſtoniſhment, and occaſion an enquiry, what unuſual and unheard of calamities have befallen them? — It is poſſible, that the extraordinary violence of pain, or the dire oppreſſion of melancholy, or a peculiar concurrence of calamitous events,

events, may make men weary of life, and to ſay with *Job*, *that they loath it, and prefer death.* But theſe are *exceptions*, and very *uncommon* exceptions, to the general courſe of nature and condition of human life.

MEN may indeed, (as ſome writers have done) by collecting together and crowding into the ſame ſcene, all the diſorders and evils, to which the body and mind of man and the ſtate of human ſociety are liable, give a horrible repreſentation of the miſeries incident to mankind.—But if they intend *this* for a juſt deſcription and true picture of life in general, it is a ſign, only that themſelves have a very dark and diſordered imagination: or elſe, they find it neceſſary to miſrepreſent and blacken the condition of mankind, in order to make the appearances of nature agree with ſome abſurd doctrines, which they want to juſtify. Nothing can be more partial and falſe, than to ſelect the *worſt* and moſt *un-*

uſual ſituations to which men are ever reduced, and deſcribe them as the *uſual* and general condition of mankind. For ever adored be the goodneſs of Divine Providence, that we have ſuch abundant experimental conviction, that the health of life far exceeds all diſeaſes of it; and the delights of ſociety are far more than the diſquietudes ariſing from it; and the happy enjoyment of life in every reſpect, far ſuperior to the pains and troubles of it: and that in the *uſual* ſtate of things, they who are labouring under grievous afflictions, or oppreſſed with dire calamities, are very *few* in compariſon of the *multitudes*, who are rejoicing in health and peace and the various bleſſings of life!—— Is not then the goodneſs of our Creator ſufficiently diſcovered and proved, by the ſuperior prevalence of good and happineſs in the whole? And are not all objections ariſing from the evils and miſeries which are in the world, light and inconſiderable, when

when placed in the balance againſt ſuch ſuperior weight of evidence?

To ſuppoſe, that it is inconſiſtent with the perfection of divine goodneſs, to permit *any evils* in the world; that is, to create beings liable by their nature to any degree of ſuffering, or to beſtow any meaſure of happineſs that is not pure and perfect; is a ſuppoſition, which ought to be rejected as arbitrary and groundleſs, whilſt we are ſo little capable of judging what may be requiſite to the ends of perfect goodneſs. And it may be juſtly obſerved on the other hand, that on this very ſuppoſition, the Almighty Creator preſcribes a rule to himſelf, which ſeems to limit the deſigns of his goodneſs, and diminiſh the effects of it; by excluding out of the creation thoſe numberleſs ſtates and kinds of creatures, which are poſſible, and in which the good over-balances the evil: Whereas, if the operations of omnipotence extend to the production, not only of

all ſtates and degrees of entire or unmixed happineſs, (if ſuch are poſſible) but alſo of all *other* ſtates, in which the good exceeds the evil, and which are conſequently *eligible* upon the whole;—Then his goodneſs is full, perfect, immenſe, productive of all poſſible good: and the *imperfect* or *mixed* ſtates, ſuch as that of mankind and the inferior creatures, are neceſſarily included in the *plenitude* of the divine works, and contribute to the perfection of the infinite creation.

It deſerves to be conſidered alſo, that we have no faculties or ſenſes which are not the inlets of delight: and tho' in their own nature they are liable to, and do in fact ſometimes become the avenues of pain and grief; yet thoſe pains are a neceſſary warning againſt danger, and guard for the preſervation of life, whilſt, at the ſame time, the frame of the world and the qualities of all objects around us, are adapted much more to gratify and pleaſe, than to

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offend and hurt our faculties of perception; and thoſe elements, which in themſelves might as eaſily contribute to our torment or deſtruction, are ſo tempered and balanced, as to be continually miniſtring, not only to the ſupport, but to the pleaſure of mankind.

THE ſtudy and knowledge of nature affords *delight* to the mind: and the more men contemplate the ſtructure of the world and the things in it, the more of order and beauty do they perceive, and are the more charmed with the admirable marks of divine ſkill and benevolence, and the more will they be animated, in imitation of divine goodneſs, to ſtudy and promote the happineſs of ſociety; and the higher and nobler *pleaſure* will they derive from ſuch their benevolent and godlike attempts and actions.

FINALLY, with reſpect to thoſe evils and afflictions, which ſeem ſo conſiderably

to diminiſh the happineſs we might otherwiſe enjoy in this world, it is of great importance to obſerve, that the happy enjoyment of this life is but *one part* of the divine intention, or *one end* of his view, in the formation of this world and of human nature, and it is moſt reaſonable to believe, *not the principal:* And the divine goodneſs ſhould be underſtood and acknowledged, in giving us ſuch ſufficient and undeniable marks of his indulgent Providence and regard to our preſent happineſs; at the ſame time that he hath farther and *greater* ends in view. Was this a ſtate of enjoyment unmixed with any ſufferings; we might conclude, that the happineſs of this life was our all, and that the purpoſes of God, with regard to mankind, extended no further. But as things are actually ordered, the appearances of nature and the experience of life lead us to conceive ſome other more important and extenſive purpoſes of Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, in regard to mankind; by training us up

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to ſuch degrees of *knowledge*, *virtue*, and *piety*, and the teaching us ſuch *Wiſdom* as our nature and ſtate are capable of: —— Which will be conſidered in the following diſcourſes.

DIS-

DISCOURSE II.

The apparent Intentions of DIVINE WISDOM in the Conſtitution of the World, and of Human Nature.

JOB XXXV. 10.

But none ſaith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth inſtruction in the night, who teacheth us more than the beaſts of the earth, and maketh us wiſer than the fowls of heaven.

TO enquire after GOD our Maker, with a view of underſtanding, as far as we are able, his deſigns, and conforming to his will, is our higheſt wiſdom. —But what are we able to know of him? —*Can we by ſearching find out God; can we find out the Almighty to perfection?*—No: The knowledge of him is high above all height, deep below all depth, extended beyond all extent: no finite being can comprehend him: the utmoſt inveſtigation and moſt enlarged conception of the

highest of creatures, fall infinitely short of his perfection.

But are we able then to attain no knowledge of him? Are our faculties so narrow as to exclude every glimpse of him, and to admit and retain no conception of his nature?——This would be denying our own reason, and degrading ourselves to a level with the brute-creatures.—God hath distinguished us with a rational nature above them: *He teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.*—It is therefore our privilege, and our duty, and one end of our creation, to enquire, Where, and what is God our Maker, *who hath put a spirit into man, and whose inspiration hath given him understanding*, and who is day and night instructing us in the knowledge of himself. It is our honour and happiness, that we are capable in any measure of discerning the marks and exploring the effects of his

his matchless power, his unerring wisdom, and exuberant goodness.

And his immense unsearchable perfection ought not to discourage our humble and sincere enquiries; but is a consideration proper only to damp that pride and conceit, that self-sufficiency and insensibility of our own ignorance, which would obstruct our enquiries, and prevent our attainment of real knowledge. A due sense of the narrowness of our understandings, and the boundless extent of the divine perfections and works, is one excellent qualification for acquiring the knowledge of God. And the means and advantages we are furnished with to this end, are many; and sufficient to encourage and animate us in our pious endeavours.

For, the most sublime and unknown Being, is at the same time, and without any contradiction, the most condescending, the most familiar, and the most intelligi-

ble.——Tho' no eye can behold him, yet his Deity is clearly ſeen in the viſible creation: tho' no thought can comprehend him, yet ſomething of him may be underſtood by every creature around us. If indeed we attempt to gaze on the exceſſive effulgence of his glory, we are inſtantly ſtruck blind and loſt in profound darkneſs: if we attempt to penetrate into the moſt holy receſſes of his nature, we are immediately thrown to an infinite diſtance from him. But if, with a becoming ſenſe of our own weakneſs, and the narrow limits of all human knowledge, we do not vainly attempt to pry into thoſe *ſecret things which belong unto the Lord our GOD*, but are content with the manner and meaſure of knowledge allotted to our feeble nature; if inſtead of aiming directly and intuitively to contemplate him, we diligently obſerve and catch the ſcattered rays of his glory reflected on every ſide from his works; and to diſcover him where, and as far as, he intended to make himſelf diſcoverable

coverable by us; we ſhall then act in a manner becoming our reaſonable nature, and ſhall arrive at a larger and more certain knowledge of the Attributes of God, than we can poſſibly have of the qualities of any other nature or perſon in the univerſe: we ſhall ſee more manifeſt and aſtoniſhing effects of *his* power, than of any other power; ſhall diſcern more admirable contrivances of *his* Wiſdom, than of all other Wiſdom; and receive more ample proof and ſatisfactory experience of *his* Goodneſs, than we can have of the Goodneſs of any creature whatſoever. We ſhall find that all the mighty operations of the potent elements, all the curious ſtrokes of human art and ſagacity, all the love of the kindeſt human affections, are but ſo many ſtreams iſſuing from the fountain of his fulneſs, diffuſed thro' various channels to the world of mankind. There is no power which he did not delegate, no wiſdom which he did not teach, no good-

neſs which he did not intend, no joy or happineſs which he did not beſtow.

CAN creatures endued with reaſon, then, remain unknowing of their Creator?—— As it is impoſſible to comprehend his infinitude and abſolute perfection; ſo it ſeems equally impoſſible, on the other hand, to be totally ignorant of him. For all his works diſcover ſomething of him: and we are utterly ignorant of ourſelves and of the world around us, if we know nothing of GOD. The apprehenſion of a DEITY reſults immediately from the very conſciouſneſs of our own exiſtence; as we are certain that we did not, nor could give life or being to ourſelves. Every creature around us points out a Creator; as we are certain, that they, as well as we, were unable to produce and form themſelves. We have not the leaſt doubt, from the marks which *men* diſcover, whether *they* act with intelligence and deſign: yet there is no other

other being that does or can exhibit so numerous and so evident marks of his own presence, his power, his wise intelligence, his benevolent purposes, as the Almighty Creator is continually presenting to our observation and experience. For all places are full of God: he is always present with us; always addressing himself to us, in the silent but convincing language of nature around us; speaking to our senses, our understandings, our consciences, and every faculty of our nature. That sovereign incomprehensible being, who is exalted above all thought, who rules with infinite empire over numberless worlds, whose nature no created capacity can ever measure; is the constant guardian, the indulgent parent, the familiar instructor of every human creature; incessantly administring kind supplies in various forms, to feed the body, to please the sense, to amuse the imagination, to sooth the heart, to inform the understanding, to rectify the judgment, to meliorate the temper, and

to raiſe the ſoul of man by gradual advances to thoſe excellent purpoſes for which he deſigned it. So that the moſt ſublime and unſearchable of all Beings, is at the ſame time, and with perfect conſiſtence, the moſt familiar and obvious, the moſt eaſily and certainly to be known. His wiſdom, his intentions are as manifeſt as the light of the ſun, and as much the ſubject of our experience as the enjoyment of life itſelf. We are qualified by the faculties of our minds to make inquiries after him; are always ſurrounded with conſpicuous marks of his power and wiſdom; and in every agreeable moment of life are enjoying his goodneſs. And it was one intention of his creating mankind, to lead them to ſuch knowledge of himſelf, as he hath given them means and faculties of acquiring.—*He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath predetermined the condition and boundaries of our habitation; that we might ſearch after and find him: For he is*

not far from every one of us: for in him we live, move, and have our being.

We have in a preceding discourse considered the production and preservation of life, and the comfort and felicity of his creatures in the enjoyment of life; as ends *intended* and *answered* in the formation of this world and of mankind. And it will appear with equal evidence, Thirdly, that our acquisition of knowledge was a *further* intention of the Almighty Creator.

All instruction comes from God, the original fountain of wisdom and knowledge, by whatever persons or means it is conveyed to us: It is He *who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of the heaven.* The brute-creatures have a sense and sagacity proper to their kind, and are taught by *nature*, that is, by the *Creator*, as much as is requisite to their subsistence and the purpose of their being: the knowledge of

mankind is limited by the ſame wiſe rule and proportion, and is in the whole as much, and no more, than is proper to their ſuperior rank, and ſubſervient to the higher ends of their exiſtence. And it is as manifeſtly the intention of the all-wiſe Maker, that mankind ſhould acquire a knowledge, ſurpaſſing in degree and extent, that of the lower animals, as that he ſhould excel them in any other inſtance.

This divine intention will ſtrike our minds with a more lively conviction, if we attend to the gradual proceſs, by which men arrive at that portion of knowledge, which they are ſeverally poſſeſſed of; if we obſerve the gentle ſteps, the meaſured proportions, the ſkilful methods, the inſinuating advances, by which the faculties are diſtended and knowledge introduced into the mind; by which the inſtructions of the all-wiſe Creator diſtil by little and little, and are imbibed thro' various avenues by the growing appetites and ca-

pacities of the ſoul; by which his parent-hand leads us from infant-ignorance to maturity of underſtanding.

In the beginning of life the human ſoul ſubſiſts with few ideas, according to its minute capacity. But they multiply faſt: every thing is then new, and conſequently an object of wonder; and the inquiſitive curioſity is adapted to, and gratified with, a continual acceſſion of new objects. And when the ſtock of ideas is ſufficiently encreaſed; the comparing and judging faculty begins to operate upon the materials which ſenſe hath furniſhed:—— It orders and diſpoſes, unites and ſeparates, divides and compounds, diſtinguiſhes like and unlike, equal and unequal, fit and unfit, beautiful and deformed, good and evil. —Here reaſon commenceth; and is henceforward continually employed in diſpoſing the intellectual furniture of the mind, arranging every thing in due place and order, reviewing its internal fund of knowledge,

and by new images and new reflections ſtill adding to the number, variety, form and order of the whole: riſing continually from things more ſimple, clear, and eaſy, to things more complex, obſcure, and difficult; from material, to moral and ſpiritual objects; and finally aſcending to the higheſt and nobleſt degree in the ſcale of human knowledge; and from the whole of what we previouſly ſee and know, learning to know this: that an eternal all-perfect being is the cauſe of all, to whom we belong, and from whom we derive all good. ——Is there no deſign of creative Wiſdom in this admirable and evident proceſs of nature? — Is not here the finger of God viſible, teaching men knowledge?— Did he not intend thus to diſcloſe to us his works, and conſequently lead us to the ſtudy and contemplation of himſelf?—— He ſeems to be deſtitute of the reaſon of a man, who does not perceive this divine intention and procedure, by which *men learn more than*

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the beasts of the earth, and become wiser than the fowls of heaven.

THE general branches of knowledge, which the faculties of the mind in their mature state are adapted to acquire, and which, education, the objects of the world, and the events of life are fitted to teach; are at the same time the most important and most useful to mankind: this plainly argues the wise and beneficent design of the Almighty Maker.

THE first branch of knowledge is that which respects ourselves and mankind around us, the relations, dependencies, connections, interests, inclinations, customs and laws of human society. This qualifies men to live in society, and to behave as subjects of law and government, and in a manner proper to domestic and national obligations. And parental instruction, mutual converse, daily experience of the events

events and tranſactions of the world, and the whole proceſs of life, are continually teaching this ſcience.

THE ſecond branch of knowledge is that of a Supreme Being, as the maker and diſpoſer of all things, the all-wiſe governor of the whole world, the juſt judge of mankind, and the original author of all good. —This knowledge hath a general tendency to reſtrain men from evil, and incite them to goodneſs, and to confirm the bonds of ſocial order, virtue and happineſs. And this knowledge is conſtantly taught by the ſtill eloquence of univerſal nature, *The heavens declaring the glory of GOD, the firmament ſhewing his handy-work; day unto day uttering this inſtruction, night unto night revealing this doctrine:* Every object in the viſible creation, the order, uniformity and variety conſpicuous in the whole, and the faculties of our own minds, all indicating the ſame divine cauſe; and all our knowledge

ledge of every kind leading to and terminating in this one moſt momentous and certain truth.

And theſe two kinds of knowledge, ſo important and ſo beneficial, are common to mankind in general: they are not peculiar to the great, the wealthy, or the learned: the vulgar, the poor, and the illiterate have their ſhare, and partake of the ſame divine inſtruction: all are taught and educated of GOD in theſe moſt excellent ſciences. But He doth not in like manner teach and inſtruct *the beaſts of the earth or the fowls of heaven.*—Here is man's ſuperiority and excellency. The brutes cannot ſay, *Where is GOD our Maker?*—They can form no conception of him, make no enquiries after him: nor can they attain to any idea of thoſe rules, engagements, and connections, which are the ſupport and happineſs of human ſociety. They are not capable either of *religion* or of *law*. But man, by the faculties with which the

Creator

Creator hath indowed his nature, by the means which providence hath furnifhed for his ufe, by the objects prefented to his obfervation, and by the whole experience of life, is trained up and exercifed to the knowledge of himfelf, of his fellow-creatures, of God his Maker; and confequently to the government of *law* and of *religion.*——And it manifeftly appears to have been one defign of the all-wife Maker, in the creation of this world, and in forming the human fpecies, to lead them to this knowledge, and in thefe noble refpects, *to teach them more than the beafts of the earth, and to make them wifer than the fowls of heaven.*

I fhall only add the following reflections.

First, It becomes us to acknowledge with all gratitude the liberality and kindnefs of our Creator, in forming and defigning us for the acquifition of fuch excellent and valuable knowledge; and in bringing

bringing us to the poſſeſſion of it, by the moſt wiſe conſtitution and admirable proceſs; implanting the imperceptible ſeeds of this knowledge in our infant-nature, cheriſhing the growth of them by kindly influences, and the culture of education; 'till they come to maturity, obtain their full proportion, and produce the intended fruits.——What thanks and praiſe are due to our divine inſtructor; who thus condeſcends to teach his creature man, who thus by familiar ſteps and gradual advances raiſes him to the ſublime knowledge of himſelf!——If we are thankful for bodily ſupplies; how much more ſhould the nobler gifts of reaſon and underſtanding, and that knowledge which is the dignity and preheminence of man above the beaſts, move our gratitude and excite our praiſe!

Secondly, If it was the intention of our all-wiſe Creator, in the faculties and means which he hath imparted to us, that we ſhould acquire knowledge; let us obſerve and purſue

purſue that intention, by a diligent improvement of our advantages. Does the infinite eternal being vouchſafe to be our teacher, and ſhall we refuſe to learn? —— Is every thing around us fitted to convey inſtruction to our minds; and ſhall we not admit the ſentiments of Wiſdom reſulting from an obſervation of thoſe things, and from our own conſtant experience?——Our dependance upon and obligations to one another as members of ſociety, and to God the Maker and Ruler of the world, as his creatures and ſubjects, are clearly diſcernible in the material creation, and in the ſocial nature and ſtate of man. Can we lift up our eyes to the heavens without being ſtruck with a lively apprehenſion of that infinite mind who fills heaven and earth, and who with amazing Wiſdom and power hath framed this univerſe of things? Or can we converſe in human ſociety, without being ſenſible of our mutual obligations, and diſcerning the beauty and worth of juſtice, truth, ſobriety,

briety, fidelity, and benevolence?——Such knowledge is not too high for us: we may eaſily attain to it: nothing more is requiſite than our calm and willing attention: our faculties are adapted to the attainment of it; and all objects and events conſpire to direct and aſſiſt us in ſuch enquiries. And as this knowledge is eaſily attainable, ſo it is moſt delightful to a well-diſpoſed mind. Nothing ſhould give us ſo much joy and pleaſure, as to diſcover the admirable marks of divine Wiſdom, and to perceive the intentions of infinite Goodneſs; and to conſider ourſelves as belonging to the great community of the world, and under the protection and government of an Almighty Father. It is a moſt natural and pleaſing enquiry;——*Where is GOD our Maker, who teacheth us more than the beaſts of the earth, and maketh us wiſer than the fowls of heaven?*——It is our ſhame and reproach, if we ſuffer bodily paſſions and worldly deſires, to uſurp the poſſeſſion of our minds, and exclude theſe nobler ſentiments;

timents; or to deſtroy our taſte of and delight in ſuch contemplations, which ſo directly conduce to elevate the ſoul of man, and incite him to a conduct becoming the excellence of his ſpiritual nature.

THIRDLY: The knowledge of GOD, and of the viſible intentions of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs in the frame of the world, in the faculties of our minds, and the orders of ſociety; is the beſt preparation for underſtanding and embracing the *goſpel* of our *Saviour*. Another life and a world to come is indeed the grand object and peculiar ſcope of the *goſpel-revelation*. But the diſcoveries and knowledge of natural religion relating to this life, and the preſent ſenſible effects of creative Wiſdom and Goodneſs, are introductory to the other. We muſt firſt believe in GOD, before we can have faith in *Chriſt*: we muſt previouſly hear and learn of the *Father Almighty*, before we come to *Chriſt* duly qualified for his inſtructions. If we are not firſt made

made ſenſible of the effects of divine goodneſs in *this* world; how ſhall we hope for greater effects of it in *another?* If we do not perceive the wiſe and kind intentions of the Almighty Father in creating us to *this* life; how ſhall we believe his intention to raiſe us to a *future* and *immortal* life?——But having laid the foundation in a knowledge of God as our Maker, revealed in the works of nature, having beheld his glory reflected from the viſible creation, and being convinced of his goodneſs by familiar experience; we may then proceed to the *revelation* of the *goſpel*, and ſee *his glory ſhining alſo in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*; and may receive with joyful and firm hope the ineſtimable promiſe of eternal life, which *GOD who cannot lye hath promiſed:* we may reſt ſatisfied in a moſt happy aſſurance, that the ſame divine power and goodneſs which have raiſed mankind to a pre-eminence above the lower creatures in this world, will alſo raiſe all good men to a ſuperior ſtate in another world, excelling

in capacity, honour, and happineſs, all that we can enjoy in this life.

By our natural birth and conſtitution, we are endowed with the privileges of a rational life in this periſhable and mortal ſtate. And if we wiſely improve preſent advantages, there is a glorious everlaſting conſtitution, which God hath eſtabliſhed *in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*, in order to our riſing again from the dead to the enjoyment of immortality. The reſurrection of our *Saviour* himſelf from the dead, is the evidence of this revealed hope: for as God *raiſed him from the dead and gave him glory*; we may therefore have *faith and hope in GOD*, and wait with an aſſured expectation, that the purpoſes of his goodneſs extend to, and ſhall be accompliſhed in, a future and everlaſting life. *Which God of his infinite mercy grant thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE III.

The apparent Intentions of DIVINE WISDOM in the Conſtitution of the World, and of Human Nature.

ACTS xvii. 26.

He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the whole face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation: that they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after and find him.

IN forming a judgment of the divine works and intentions, there are two extremes equally to be avoided. The one consists in a vain imagination that we are competent judges of the divine operations, and able to comprehend all the ends, for which the world in general, and the things in it, are made; as if infinite wisdom could have no other or higher purposes in the creation of the world and the several parts

of it, than ſuch as are apparent to human obſervation, and terminate in the ſupport and happineſs of mankind: an imagination founded merely on ignorance and preſumption.——The other extreme conſiſts in a negligent and ungrateful inattention to thoſe evident marks, by which we may clearly diſcern the intentions of divine wiſdom and goodneſs towards mankind, and may learn and purſue the ends for which we ourſelves were made.

THERE is ſuch an aſtoniſhing concurrence of the various parts of the world, to the ſupport and benefit of human life; that the more we ſtudy the proceſs of nature, the more clearly ſhall we be convinced, That this was *one object* of the Almighty Creator's view, in the formation of the world. The light and heat of the ſun, the temperature of the air, the falling rains, the fertility of the earth, the produce and growth of vegetables and animals, the whole conſtitution of the globe, have a manifeſt

manifeſt direction and ſubſerviency to the advantage and pleaſure of mankind. Our experience and obſervation of nature, therefore, ſhould lead us to acknowledge the Creator's Benevolence; who, amidſt all other and greater deſigns of his infinite wiſdom, hath intermixed ſo much condeſcenſion and regard, in ſo wonderful a manner, to the neceſſities and deſires of our feeble and mortal nature.

It ſhould lead us alſo to another moſt important enquiry, To what end we ourſelves are made. For the ſame unerring wiſdom, which hath formed the elements, the plants, and animals of the world, with ſuch a ſubordinacy to man and conveniency to human life; hath undoubtedly formed man himſelf alſo, and with a view to ſome ſuperior ends. And the wiſdom and happineſs of man, as a reaſonable creature, conſiſts in his underſtanding and voluntarily contributing to thoſe ends, for which his nature was formed.

Now in order to underſtand to what end any thing was made, we ſhould conſider what is the beſt uſe to which it can be applied. In order to know the end and purpoſe of our creation, we are to conſider what are the worthieſt actions we are capable of performing in life; what conduct is the moſt honourable and becoming; what purſuits are moſt agreeable to thoſe faculties of our nature, in which we excel the lower creatures; what things reaſon and conſcience point out as fit to be done, and worthy of a reaſonable being. Hence we ſhall eaſily apprehend and conclude, that the practice of virtue and true religion is a principal end of our creation, deſigned by divine wiſdom in the formation of human nature.

We have in former diſcourſes conſidered the intentions of creative wiſdom, as apparently diſcovered in the production and ſupport of life, in the comfort and felicity of his creatures in the enjoyment of life,

and

and in that ſhare of ſpeculative knowledge which men are fitted to acquire: we ſhall now endeavour to ſhew, that the divine intentions do not terminate here, but proceed to a further end; namely, their attainment of *Virtue and Piety.*

SOME men of corrupt minds have been ready to plead in favour of their criminal indulgences, that human nature is framed to no higher end than the gratification of the animal paſſions and appetites. And others have maintained a *worſe* doctrine, tho' with a *better* meaning; and have aſſerted that mankind are framed and fitted by their nature to all manner of evil, and to the love and practice of the greateſt wickedneſs. Such perſons have adopted notions contrary to experience of facts, and to the expreſs teſtimony of *Holy Scripture*; and charge *their own* moſt abſurd inconſiſtencies, upon the operations and deſigns of infinite wiſdom; by ſetting the conſtitution of nature and the diſpenſations of

divine grace in the *gospel* in opposition to each other. But the divine purposes and operations, how various soever, can never be contradictory. The wisdom of God is always consistent with itself, and all his works are in perfect connection and harmony; all co-operate, in design and effect, to the same ends. It is owing to human ignorance if men do not discern that consistency; and a proof of their prejudice and folly, when they impute their own invented contradictory schemes, to the designs of unerring and immutable wisdom.

The divine dispensation revealed in the *gospel* is pursuant to and perfective of the divine intentions which appear in the constitution of the world and in the frame of human nature. For the gospel-dispensation was preordained, as the *holy Scriptures* assure us, *before the foundation of the world*, in the eternal counsels of God: it was then a part of the original plan of creation, and

was the superstructure intended to be built upon the foundation of nature. The manifest design of the *gospel* and of the *divine grace* revealed in it, is to bring men to the practice of virtue, from the noblest principle of obedience to God and hope of his favour. And does not the same divine intention appear evident in the structure of the world and of human nature?——Our *Apostle* affirms that this was the divine intention in making mankind, considered in their state of nature, and previous to their enjoying the privileges of the *gospel*. For addressing himself to a *heathen* audience of learned men and philosophers, he says that *God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the whole face of the earth, and determined their state and condition; that they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after and find him:* including in the meaning of his expression, not only the speculative knowledge, but principally the *practice* of religion, and the consequent favour of God: *for he is not far*, adds the Apostle,

Apoſtle, *from every one of us: for in him we live and move and have our being.*

Now to illuſtrate this aſſertion of the *Apoſtle*, and ſhew this divine intention in the ſtructure of the world and the proceſs of human life; let us obſerve, in the firſt place, that as mankind are led by nature thro' a ſeries of gradual advances to the acquiſition of *Knowledge*; there is the like gradual procedure in bringing them to *Virtue and Piety.*

THERE are certain general principles and habits, which if not virtuous themſelves, are a neceſſary foundation of all virtue; and which the conſtitution of the world, the frame of our nature, and the whole œconomy of life, conſpire directly to produce in the minds of men.

THE firſt is *Obedience:* and it is eaſy to obſerve, how the ſtate of infancy and youth, and the dependance on parental power

power and authority, or on other kinds of human government, are admirably adapted to accuſtom mankind to ſubjection. The ſtricteſt diſcipline and ſevereſt government have ſo far a good effect, as they inure men to obedience. The inclemency of the elements, the calamities of life, the ſubordinations of ſociety, and even the injuries we receive from men, are continually teaching us, not to expect that all nature ſhall yield to our will and inclination, but to bend our wills to the laws of nature and the authority of ſuperiors: —— a moſt important leſſon; and preparatory to religion; which conſiſts in a voluntary obedience to the will of the Supreme Governor and Father of the univerſe.

Another general principle or habit which the conſtitution of the world is fitted to produce in mankind, is *Induſtry*, which is preparative to all virtue: for from the dead ſtock of idleneſs, what fruits of virtue and goodneſs can be produced? Thro' in-

indolence men neglect all those studies and employments, by which they might either improve themselves, or be useful to others. Instead of exerting their faculties in the attainment of knowledge, or in beneficial services to mankind; they are lost in ignorance, and become an useless burden to themselves and to society. Sloth enfeebles the soul, exposes it to temptation, and to ignorance often adds pride, conceit, luxury, effeminacy, and sensuality. It is then the parent and nurse of many vices. On the other hand, industry invigorates the mind, nourishes all virtuous and pious dispositions, bringing them into life and action, encreasing them by exercise, and making them exemplary to others. As no good can spring from idleness; so it is only by wise and honest diligence, that all worthy ends are attained, all honour and reward deserved.

And does not every thing in nature conspire to prevent or expose *idleness*, and

to

to enforce and encourage *industry?*——The bodily necessities and natural appetites of mankind; the laws and offices of society; the advantages arising from a culture of the earth, and a commercial improvement and exchange of its various products; the desire of wealth; and the love of praise; these and various other causes in nature are continually operating, to compel or invite men to an industrious exertion of their faculties: which is one great preservation and ground of human virtue.

ANOTHER general habit, pre-requisite to virtue, is *Sociability*. In a state separate from all society there could be no room, occasion, or opportunity, for the exercise of virtue and the fruits of piety. Man would live to himself alone, insignificant, useless, and miserable. The social state and temper of man is the general foundation of all the particular relative affections, and of the dispositions of justice, sincerity, fidelity, compassion, and, that extensive

Christ-

Chriſtian virtue which comprehends all, charity.

And it is ſuperfluous to obſerve how ſtrongly nature leads men to *ſociety*, or how the *ſocial temper* is naturally cheriſhed and directed by education, inſtruction, and mutual intercourſe. Nothing is more certainly deducible from ſenſible experience than that the all-wiſe Creator framed and intended human nature for *ſociety*.

Thus we may diſcern, by a common attention, and without any deep reſearches into nature, how the wiſdom of God hath adapted the conſtitution of the earth, and of mankind its inhabitants, to produce in them a diſpoſition of *Obedience*, a habit of *Induſtry*, and a temper of *Sociability* or humanity; all conducive to the practice of virtue and religion.

Let us proceed to obſerve, fourthly, that *Conſcience* is a general principle implanted in

in human nature, which *directly* serves to deter men from wickedness, and incite them to virtue.——The all-wise Creator hath infused *a sense* into the hearts of men, by which they are taught to see a beauty and worth in virtuous dispositions and actions, and a deformity and malignity in vice: so that the mind is immediately affected with an approbation, or censure, and an idea of merit, or guilt, resulting from an action, without waiting to examine the consequences, as injurious or beneficial to ourselves or to society. This is an admirable provision in our nature; as the understanding or speculative reason, would often be too slow, or too cool, or too much perplexed, ~~and~~ to admonish and deter men from bad actions, and lead them to a right and just conduct. *Conscience* has a quicker and warmer operation, striking with an inward horror at the thought of wickedness, and suggesting a secret confidence and pleasure in virtuous designs and actions.

To this we may add, Fifthly, *a ſenſe of honour* and reputation ariſing from one kind of behaviour, and *of ſhame* and reproach from the contrary. This is well known to be a general and powerful principle in human nature. And, upon the whole, it operates in favour of virtue; reſtraining men from baſe and criminal actions, and exciting them to ſuch as are in themſelves worthy and commendable. For tho' the praiſe and cenſure of the world are ſometimes grievouſly miſplaced, thro' accident, ignorance, or prejudice; yet virtue and ſincere piety, have a natural and allowed claim to the eſteem of mankind; and vice as naturally inherits their *odium* and contempt.

Men may in like manner be led to virtue and religion, by *Experience* of the tranſactions and events of life, by obſerving the actual conſequences of virtue and piety on the one hand, and of impiety and wickedneſs on the other, in regard both to private

private perſons and publick ſocieties. For tho wicked men may ſometimes appear to proſper, and to enjoy pleaſure, or increaſe in wealth, by their very wickedneſs; ſuch inſtances are *not frequent*, or according to the general Courſe of human affairs; and the examples of men reduced to diſgrace, poverty, diſeaſes, or an untimely end, by their vices, are far *more numerous*. The more accurately we obſerve the conſequences of different conduct, the more we ſhall be convinced, that honour, peace, and ſecurity are the uſual and natural effects of a religious temper and virtuous conduct; and that impiety in principle, and villainy and debauchery in practice are the *high-road*, not to honour and happineſs, but to infamy, miſery, and deſtruction in this world. By example and experience men are taught the mean and wretched conſequences of intemperance and profligacy; the tormenting ſenſations and dire effects of envy, malice, and violent wrath; the corroding cares and perplexities of avarice

and ambition; the mortifications of pride; the reproach of injuſtice and perfidy, the terror that ſprings from guilt; the anguiſh of a wounded conſcience; with all the bitter fruits which the poiſonous plant of *ſin*, when grown to maturity, ſeldom fails to produce in abundance: they learn on the other hand, the value of a good conſcience, the delight of benevolence and generous affection; the importance of ſelf-command, the worth of a good reputation, and the courage and hope which ſpring from conſcious virtue. Thus the courſe of human life is adapted by the wiſe intention of the Almighty Maker, to teach men this moral and practical wiſdom by their own obſervation and experience.—Happy they, who in purſuance of this divine intention, are reclaimed from vice by experiencing the miſery of it: and ſtill happier they, who prevent repentance; and without taſting the bitter fruits of vice, learn virtue by the inſtruction and example of others.

LASTLY,

LASTLY, the intention of the all-wiſe Creator to lead mankind to the practice of virtue and religion, is apparent in that *knowledge of himſelf*, which he hath given them faculties and means of acquiring.—— The diſplays of a deity in the creation are ſo manifeſt, that men naturally conceive ſome apprehenſion of a ſovereign power, wiſdom, and juſtice, preſiding over the world, and are affected with ſome ſenſe of religion. This apprehenſion ſerves in general, to deter from vice and influence to virtue: It is in itſelf, and when rationally eſtabliſhed in the mind, the higheſt principle of all goodneſs. For the perfection of virtue conſiſts in practiſing it from a ſteady belief of the wiſdom of GOD in his government over the world, and a firm reliance on his juſtice and goodneſs. Men may be virtuous, in ſome meaſure and degree, from other motives. But virtue has then its greateſt excellence and ſtability, when it ſprings from this pure and ſublime ſource. Now tho' the *knowledge* and

the *practice* of religion may possibly be separated; yet the former has a natural connection with and direct influence to the latter: And if it was the intention of the all-wise Maker to lead men, by the revelation of his works, to some knowledge of himself; it follows, that it was also his design, to influence them by that knowledge to a virtuous life, from a principle of obedience to his will; which is the practice of religion.——*GOD hath made all nations*, says the *Apostle* speaking in the supreme court of judicature at *Athens, to inhabit all the face of the earth*; to this end, *that they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after and find him.*——There is a beauty and propriety in the original expression, which implies *searching about*, as it were for something in the *dark*: so that the *Apostle* intimates in this expression the *darkness* of the *Heathen* world in comparison of the *light* of the *gospel*. Yet he asserts, that even in that state, God had furnished them with proper means for acquiring the knowledge

and practice of religion. And to ſhew how obvious and familiar, an apprehenſion of God, and ſome knowledge of religion, is to mankind, notwithſtanding the comparative darkneſs of *Heatheniſm*; he adds, that God *is not far from every one of us*, and conſequently not difficult to be found: nay further, that we even *live, move, and exiſt in him*, and *are all his Offspring*. And in fact, mankind in general have in all ages attained to ſome notion and belief of religion, tho' mixed with much weakneſs and error; and this hath been one natural mean, by which the wiſdom of God intended to deter men from wickedneſs, and to ſupport virtue and good order in the world.

Thus I have endeavoured to point out to your obſervation, the various meaſures, which the wiſdom of the Almighty Creator hath provided, in the conſtitution of the world and of human nature, which moſt evidently diſcover his intention, to

direct and incite men to the practice of virtue and goodness; by compelling and inuring them to obedience, to industry, and to humanity; by implanting Conscience in their nature, and a sense of honour and disgrace; by their own experience and observation of the different consequences of virtue and vice; and finally, by the knowledge of himself and an inward reverence of his governing wisdom, justice and goodness.

But if it was the intention of infinite wisdom, by the very frame of the world and the principles of our nature, to lead mankind to virtue and goodness; whence comes all the wickedness that is in the world? How can men commit so many evil and criminal actions, contrary to the leading principles of their own nature, to the instructions and admonitions continually occurring to them, and to the most important end of their creation?

In anſwer to this, let it be obſerved, that we are vindicating the wiſdom of God in the creation, in oppoſition to human folly, prejudice and corruption. And the inſtances we have alledged are great and general facts in nature, which cannot be denied; and which demonſtrate the intentions of divine wiſdom to every impartial obſerver. It is true that men often counteract thoſe intentions: becauſe, whatever principles and means infinite wiſdom employs to bring men to virtue and goodneſs; yet it ſtill leaves them at liberty to act contrary to them: otherwiſe this world could not be a ſtate of ~~a~~ tryal, of diſcipline, education, and improvement.

The wickedneſs of men does not in the leaſt diſprove what hath been advanced concerning the conſtitution of the world and of human nature, as formed and intended to lead men to virtue. For as the conſtitution of the human body is evidently deſigned for the enjoyment of health,

yet

yet is liable to various diſtempers; as the conſtitution of civil government is *the ordinance of GOD*, to preſerve peace and order, yet many public diſorders ſtill ariſe in ſociety; as the elements of fire and water are deſigned to be uſeful to mankind, yet in many inſtances become hurtful and deſtructive; as men are enabled and fitted by nature to learn knowledge, yet there is much ignorance and error in the world, and finally, as the *Goſpel* was intended to bring *Chriſtians* to virtue and holineſs, yet many remain impenitent and unreformed: ſo the intentions of divine wiſdom, in the frame of the world and of mankind, to lead them to the practice of virtue and goodneſs, are apparent and manifeſt, yet many men often reſiſt thoſe intentions, and turn [illegible] to evil: *GOD made man upright, but [illegible] have ſought out many inventions:* they [illegible] endued with reaſon, yet act unreaſona[illegible]: [illegible]ey feel conſcience directing them, [illegible] refuſe its guidance: they have a ſenſe [illegible] honour, yet commit ſhameful actions:

they

they are trained up to obedience, induſtry, and humanity; yet ſometimes addict themſelves to indolence, ſloth, and ſelfiſhneſs. And as men knowing and profeſſing *chriſtianity* yet live *unchriſtian* lives; ſo notwithſtanding all the principles and impulſes of nature, men may become *unnatural* in their tempers and actions.

The concluſion is, that in every wrong action we commit, we take ſhame and confuſion to ourſelves; and avoid adding to our folly and iniquity, by charging it upon nature, and arraigning the works and deſigns of Almighty God, *who is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works:* that we ſtudy to underſtand, and gratefully acknowledge the wiſe and beneficent intentions of our all-perfect Creator in every thing he hath made and appointed: that we endeavour to conform to thoſe intentions, and purſue the ends of our creation:——And finally, that with joyful

joyful gratitude we embrace the diſpenſation of the *Goſpel*; which gives us an aſſurance of thoſe intentions being carried on, to a more glorious diſplay of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, in a life immortal and eternal.

DIS-

DISCOURSE IV.

The Consistency and Connection of the Divine Intentions.

PSALM lxxxix. 47.

Wherefore haſt thou made all men in vain?

IN the days of health, and proſperity, when the ſpirits are vigorous, and the imagination and affections find many agreeable objects, and all nature ſeems to preſent its livelieſt colours, and to ſmile with a beautiful aſpect; then, "It is a fine world:" we deſire no other or better: life appears to be a ſcene of entertainment and delight; we are very well ſatisfied with it; and are ready to think that this pleaſure and felicity is the beſt and only purpoſe of human life.——On the other hand, in the ſeaſons of affliction, when the ſpirits are enfeebled or broken with diſtempers or diſappointments, when every object is ſeen in the darkeſt view, when all nature around us ap-

appears to lower, and the prospect before us visibly terminates in the gloomy cavern of death; then, "It is a dismal world,"—*All is vanity and vexation of spirit:* and we are ready to adopt the plaintive expostulation of the *Psalmist*, *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*

In both these instances, the sentiments flow, not from reason and judgment, but from temper, fancy, or passion, and are equally weak and groundless; proceeding in both, upon this *false* supposition, that our happiness in this life is, or ought to have been, the principal view of the Almighty Creator in our formation. From this false principle, and from self-partiality and prejudice, we first assume a right to compleat happiness; and when we find ourselves disappointed, and involved in trouble and perplexity; then assume a right to murmur and complain, and even to accuse nature itself, and say in our hearts, that God hath made the world *in vain?*

But whether human expectations are anſwered or diſappointed, the ends which the almighty intended in the creation are always the ſame. Nature proceeds uniformly and conſiſtently in its appointed courſe; and infinite wiſdom does *nothing in vain.* Immenſe deſigns are in a continual proceſs and execution from eternal to eternal ages; and there is nothing throughout the boundleſs regions of the univerſe, which does not anſwer ſome end, and coincide with thoſe infinite and everlaſting purpoſes.——Things that appear to us the moſt inſignificant and uſeleſs, may have an uſe and importance unknown to us. And thoſe things which ſerve the moſt to our benefit and pleaſure, may anſwer, at the ſame time, other and greater purpoſes, of which we are wholly ignorant.

The vaſt and glorious body of the *Sun* was made with an evident deſign to illuminate and warm the whole earth; and the importance and benefit of this purpoſe we

understand by experience. But does that grand luminary of the skies serve to no other purpose?——The discoveries of philosophy lead us to conceive far greater and more extensive ends, which it is continually answering, beyond all the benefits which the inhabitants of the earth derive from it. ——So in regard to *all other parts* of the world; we have not a capacity or view sufficient to comprehend the *whole use* for which they were made.

And if this observation be just in regard to the material and *inanimate* world; it is equally so of the *living creatures* that inhabit it; which are all subservient to the intention of the Creator, and may answer many purposes far beyond the conception of our understandings.——But men are continually referring every thing to *themselves*, and their own pleasure and advantage in life; and are with difficulty taught to conceive, that the world in general, and human nature in particular, are framed to

any different or higher purpoſes, than their own private pleaſure and felicity. Hence it is, that when they find themſelves well and happy, then, *all is well*, and the world is wiſely made and governed: but when they become unhappy, then the whole ſyſtem of things ſeems inverted, and running into confuſion and diſorder. —— So weak and vain are our ſentiments, whilſt we judge of divine conſtitutions and intentions, by the little accidents and paſſions, which affect our feeble nature.

The deſigns of creative wiſdom run forward into ſpaces and ages, infinitely beyond the limits of our ſenſe and knowledge. And the lines appear to us as abruptly *broken off*, only becauſe *we* can no longer diſcern the *continuance* or connection. We may purſue things to the limits aſſigned us; but in vain do we attempt to proceed further, and paſs on to things inviſible, and the boundleſs creation that lies beyond, of which we know nothing *par-*

ticular, but by a supernatural revelation; and nothing *general*, but this one universal conclusion, which results from the whole of our observation and experience, That all things are made and governed by an all-powerful and most wise being.

Exclusive of those important discoveries, with which we are so highly favoured in the *Gospel-revelation*; the knowledge of nature presents us with numberless marks of creative wisdom, affords ample matter of instruction, and clearly points out to us several beneficent ends, which it is our wisdom, as creatures endued with reason, to attend to and pursue, as the purpose of our creation and residence in this world. These ends are, as I have endeavoured to shew in preceding discourses, The support and agreeable enjoyment of life, and the attainment of knowledge, piety, and virtue.——In the following discourse we shall further consider these several

ral ends in *connection* with, and *ſubſerviency* to, each other.

For we are not to conceive that the all-wiſe Former of the world is like to human projectors, who often pull down with one hand, what they build with the other, and deſtroy, at one time or in one manner, what they were aiming to eſtabliſh in another. The more we underſtand of the divine operations, the more ſhall we diſcover of harmony and *Unity* of deſign, be the more convinced that all things ſpring from *One* wiſdom, whoſe intentions are, at no time, in no part, in no effect, throughout the univerſal creation, oppoſite or diſcordant, but all in perfect union and concord.

If the divine wiſdom intended, as we have endeavoured to ſhew, by the formation of this world, to produce life, pleaſure, knowledge and virtue; it neceſſarily follows, that theſe ends are purſued

in perfect *consistence:* and it is our part to examine into the real fact, and to make use of our careful observation to discern that consistence. And the more attentively and impartially we study the nature and state of mankind, we shall the more clearly perceive that these ends *differ* from each other, no otherwise, than either as *means* differ from the *end*, or as the *same* object may appear different, when viewed in *different* lights.

LIFE is previously necessary to all enjoyment of happiness, and to all attainment of knowledge and virtue.——The delights which GOD hath indulged to human life, and which render it upon the whole a happiness, are the natural evidence of his goodness; without which there could be no piety or religion: they are also intimately connected with the affections of humanity and social virtue. In like manner, knowledge, virtue, and piety are the supports and means of human happiness: and

and men become more happy in proportion as they become more wiſe, virtuous and religious.——So that in reſpect to human nature in general, and the *collective ſtate* of mankind, theſe ſeveral ends are inſeparably *united*, riſe or fall together, mutually ſerve to augment each other, the cultivation of one neceſſarily infers the advancement of the other; and all jointly contribute to and conſtitute one object, the good of the world.

If the acquiſition of knowledge, or the practice of virtue was any way detrimental to human life, or tended to encreaſe the calamities and miſeries, inſtead of the happineſs, of mankind; or on the other hand, if the cultivation of human life, or the happy enjoyment of it, was inconſiſtent with the purſuit of knowledge or the practice of religion; if any *one* of theſe ends interfered with and was *oppoſite* to any *other*; this would appear a manifeſt contradiction in nature; and the world would

seem to be the work, not of one all-wise Creator, but of some other beings, who had *each* their different ends in view, and who *opposed* each others designs.

But the wisdom of the Almighty Maker of the world is most illustriously discovered in the perfect *combination* of numberless different parts, movements, and methods; which may seem to a superficial observer, to aim at different and even contrary ends; yet are found, upon a deeper search and more extensive view, to *unite* and terminate in one and the same general end.——It is on this ground of evidence, that we acknowledge and believe that there is one God all-perfect, the cause of all things; and that there is no other but *He alone*, who hath constituted and who governs the whole world.——In the visible works of God there is discernable a perfect *Unity* amidst an immense *Variety*. There is a wonderful *apparatus* of nature for the support of human life: there is the like

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contrivance and preparation in the elements of the world and the human frame, for the pleaſure, the inſtruction, and the virtue of mankind: and theſe purpoſes coincide in one, which is the good or happineſs of mankind. For virtue itſelf is nothing elſe but ſacrificing private eaſe, intereſt, or pleaſure, to a more extenſive good; therefore the wiſdom of the Creator, by inciting men to virtue, intends the very ſame end, as by beſtowing life, or any of the pleaſures of life. The ſame is likewiſe intended by the proviſion made in nature for the inſtruction of mankind: for without knowledge there can be no happineſs.——Pleaſure is not good, but evil, when oppoſite to virtue; for it is then oppoſite to the good of ſociety. Knowledge is no better than ignorance, only as it leads to virtue, and conduces to the welfare of mankind. And virtue itſelf is eſteemable only in proportion to its utility, or the degree in which it conduces to the good of the world in general: and *that* is not a

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real, but *imaginary* virtue, which has *no* tendency to the happiness of mankind. — 'Tis evident then, that the creative wisdom of God, by the various provisions which he hath made in nature, for the several purposes above-mentioned, had, in the whole, one general and summary view to the good order and happiness of human society.

But tho' in respect to the world at large, or the whole body and state of mankind, all these intentions unite and terminate in *one*, and there is not the least opposition or disagreement; yet in respect to the state and conduct of *individuals* separately considered, there is a great difference: and it does not follow that the same divine intentions are equally united, in the nature and state of man in his *single* capacity and separate from society. Mankind in *general* increase in happiness, in proportion as they increase in knowledge and virtue: but in the instance of a single person, the contrary

trary is poſſible: and the ends of piety and virtue may be directly oppoſite to the happy enjoyment of life, and even to life itſelf. Nature may here direct and incite to contrary ends at the ſame time; The natural principle of ſelf-preſervation, the natural deſire of pleaſure, the natural impulſe of conſcience, or ſenſe of religion, may oppoſe each other; and it may be impoſſible to purſue one end without deſtroying or abandoning the other.

NEVERTHELESS, this oppoſition is ſo far from impeaching the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, that it ſerves to illuſtrate them, and to ſhew the perfect conſiſtency of nature throughout the whole, in order to one and the ſame general end.——For, the ſelfiſh affections, or the deſires of ſelf-preſervation and of private advantage and pleaſure, are principles *neceſſary* in each individual. But as the ſelfiſh views and deſires of individuals are often incompatible with a more general and extenſive good; we may here

here observe the admirable provision which the wisdom of the Creator hath made, in the constitution of the world and of human society, and in the reason, conscience, and affections of mankind, to induce *individuals* to submit *their own private* interest and pleasure to the *public* good. And the very *contrariety* which so frequently occurs, between conscience and appetite; reason and passion; private inclination and public affection; the precepts of religion and the maxims of self-interest; this very *contrariety* is the strongest demonstration of *consistency* and unity of design, in the all-wise Creator, as intending the good order of the world in general. The various means and intentions, which appear in all the parts of nature, terminate in *one end*, in respect to the *whole*, which is, the greatest good; and for *this very reason* are calculated to different and *contrary* ends in regard to *individuals*.——All other ends are subordinate to virtue and piety in single persons: But in society, virtue and religion

gion are ſubordinate to the happineſs of mankind in general. Every natural faculty, affection, appetite and paſſion belonging to human nature hath its uſe; and by contributing either to the preſervation, or the pleaſure, or the knowledge, or the virtue of human life, is made ſubſervient in *ſome* of theſe ways to the *one* great end, for which the world itſelf was made.

LET us learn juſt and honourable apprehenſions of all the works of GOD.—— There is undoubtedly infinite wiſdom, beauty, and goodneſs, even where we are able to make little or no diſcovery. But an attentive and religious diſpoſition will qualify men to make diſcoveries: for *the works of the Lord are great, ſought out of all them that have pleaſure therein.* It is the character of the *fooliſh* and *wicked, that they regard not the works of the Lord, nor conſider the operations of his hands:* and it is an impious contradiction in men to profeſs religion, and to aſcribe titles of glory and per-

perfection to the Supreme Being; and at the same time to throw reproach upon his works, and censure that nature and order of things, which his wisdom hath established. True piety is founded upon knowledge, and a deep conviction of the wise and beneficent intentions of the Almighty, in his works of creation and providence: and if, thro' ignorance or prejudice, we foolishly charge them with error and inconsistency; it is no better than a vain flattery or solemn mocking of God, afterwards to celebrate his infinite wisdom, justice and goodness. We must first learn and understand the marks of divine wisdom and goodness in the creation, before we can ascribe these perfections to him with any real *meaning* or devout intention.

It must be acknowledged, that in attending to the frame of nature and the conduct of providence, many insuperable difficulties may arise: and nothing will more frequently occur, than those inex-

plicable

plicable appearances, which only prove human ignorance; but which human folly is apt to turn into objections against the wisdom of God and the perfection of his works. Yet there are within the sphere of our clearest observation and most certain experience, such manifest proofs of design, such illustrious marks of wisdom, such a regular coherence, such a coincidence and conspiration of various innumerable parts and measures to one beneficent end, as nothing but stupid inattention can make us overlook.

This inattention arises partly from *Familiarity* itself. We are so much accustomed to see the order and beauty of the *Creation*, and to enjoy the delights of *Society*, and the improvements of *Knowledge*, *Industry*, and *Virtue*, that we forget to admire the wisdom of this divine constitution, and to be thankful for the happiness resulting from it, because they are *Continual*.

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SELFISHNESS and *Pride* also are the causes of impiety and ingratitude. GOD hath made every *Individual* for the sake of the *Whole*, and to be subservient to the good of the public community to which he belongs, and of the world in general. But thro' selfishness, men find fault with this most wise, just, and beautiful constitution; and think that the *World* ought to have been made for *them* alone, and not *they* for the *World*; that all men should be subservient to their particular emolument and benefit, and not their interest and pleasure be subjected to the general good.

ANOTHER occasion of infidelity and distrust of the divine intentions, is the great *calamities* and enormous *wickedness* which we sometimes see or hear of in the world; which astonish by their very *Singularity*, and so strongly affect the imaginations and passions of men, that they see nature thro' a false *Medium*, which multiplies and exaggerates the evils of human life; and they are

are tempted, by the diſorder of their own minds, to imagine that confuſion and diſorder prevail throughout the world.—— But the great ſubject of our attention and admiration, and the ground of all our religious ſentiments, ſhould be the *general* order and happineſs which conſtantly reſult from the univerſal conſtitution and operations of nature; not the *particular* diſorders which appear as *exceptions* to the uſual procedure of things. For, would it not be very abſurd and ungrateful, to turn all our attention to the deſtructive tempeſts, the conflagrations, earthquakes, and inundations, that occur once perhaps in an age; whilſt we forget the conſtant regularity of ſeaſons and temperature of the elements, by which they are made to conſpire ſo admirably to the ſupport and pleaſure of human life; and refuſe to acknowledge that beneficent wiſdom and power, *which rules the raging of the ſea, and bids the tempeſt to ceaſe*, which hath fixed the ſolid earth on its center, diffuſed the balmy

air, the serene lustre and genial warmth, over its surface, and appointed that *seed-time and harvest, night and day shall never cease?*——And is it not equally unnatural and ungrateful to attend only to the accidental disorders of society, and the examples of wickedness and misery in the world; whilst we are inobservant of the usual order, the settled peace, the social harmony and joy of society, and the wide-diffused harvest of *Knowledge*, *Virtue*, and *Happiness*, which is continually springing up in the world?

But if the world be the work, and all events in it the effects, of infinite wisdom and goodness; could there be all those particular disorders and evils in it which we actually perceive? Could there be any evil in the world? Can perfect wisdom produce any thing but order?——perfect goodness intend any thing but good?——*Nay, but who art thou, O man, that replieſt against GOD?—Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?*

thus?——Is there *nothing* to be placed to the ſcore of human ignorance and error?——Does it follow that there is a defect in the works of creation, becauſe *we* cannot account for every thing? Do we judge of the divine works and deſigns, as if we were *equal to him* in wiſdom and underſtanding?——The real wonder is, that we are able to perceive *ſo much* of order and wiſe deſign, and that things do not appear in *greater* confuſion to our dark and confuſed underſtandings.—And all would be in reality confuſion and diſorder, and there could be no order, concord, or happineſs in the world, if there was not a Being of wiſdom, goodneſs, and power ſuperior to our comprehenſion, who was the Maker and diſpoſer of the world and all things in it. Whatever portions of *knowledge*, *goodneſs* and *happineſs* are found in the creation, they are ſo many proofs of wiſdom and benevolence in the Creator. And if the general conſtitution and courſe of

nature is evidently directed to beneficent ends; the seeming contradiction of particular events only proves our ignorance and incompetence of judgment. To contrive and erect, out of the materials of this visible world, a system comprehensive of such magnificent appearances and various beauties, and productive of such successive *harvests* of knowledge and virtue, joy and happiness, as occur to human observation; is an operation so excellent and divine, as could not be designed and executed, but by a being whose perfections are not to be doubted of, but adored and praised, and who merits infinitely more than all the esteem, trust and confidence we can place in him. The further we extend our enquiries into the operations of nature, the more clearly we discern a wisdom and goodness forming and directing the whole; and it appears the more reasonable duty to place all difficulties to the account

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of our own ignorance, and to acknowledge the abſolute perfection of the divine nature.

We have hitherto endeavoured to demonſtrate, from human experience, the *divine intentions* in the formation of the world, to produce and maintain *life*, *pleaſure*, *knowledge*, and *virtue*; and the *conſiſtency* of thoſe intentions, as uniting in one general end, the good or happineſs of human ſociety. —— And if this was the deſign of the Almighty Creator in the conſtitution of the world; it evidently follows, that whoever acts in a manner contrary to that deſign; whoever, thro' any wrong byaſs of private intereſt or pleaſure, which he imagines will accrue to himſelf, ſhall become injurious to ſociety, or ſhall refuſe to diſcharge thoſe relative and ſocial duties, which are the foundations of public good, or ſhall intemperately debaſe and corrupt his own

nature, and disqualify himself for the duties of life; every such person is an offender in the sight of God, by following his own will, humour, fancy, or appetite, in opposition to the constitution and will of sovereign wisdom: and every such offender is liable to punishment, from that *moral* and *judicial government*, which (as I shall shew hereafter) God hath established; and which is in some measure *interwoven* with the *present* constitution of things: In the progress of his wickedness, he will meet with encreasing symptoms of divine displeasure: his own conscience, mankind around him, and at last all nature will put on a hostile and menacing aspect, and will combine in his utter destruction. But he who faithfully and piously pursues the end for which he was created, will find peace in his own mind, and friendship with other men; and finally enjoy the distinguished favour of the Almighty Maker

ker and righteous governor of the universe.

And thus, self-love and social-virtue, private happiness and publick good unite; and the ends of divine wisdom appear perfectly consistent.

DISCOURSE V.

The Order and Beauty of the Visible Creation.

PSALM CXI. 2.

The works of the Lord are great; ſought out of all them that have pleaſure therein.

THE world is not a compoſition of disjointed and incoherent materials, or of parts that bear no proportion or relation to each other; but is a regular and perfect ſyſtem: and the whole earth is to be conſidered in this view, as one work, or *one creature* of Almighty Power, probably, amidſt numberleſs *others* of the ſame *kind*, to which it may ſtand related in a manner unknown to us.——As every living creature on earth has a relation to its own kind, and to the whole earth; yet is at the ſame time compoſed of parts, which have a mutual connection with, and ſub-

ſubſervience to each other, whereby it becomes one diſtinct and compleat animal: ſo the earth itſelf may have a relation to other worlds; but is at the ſame time a ſeparate and entire ſyſtem in itſelf, with reſpect to its conſtituent parts and movements; which are all made in ſubſervience to the conſtitution and deſign of the whole.

We ſhould endeavour, therefore, to take ſuch views of nature, as to be able to contemplate, in ſome degree, the grandeur and beauty of this magnificent production of divine wiſdom; and to diſcern the exact proportions, the mutual correſpondencies, the various counterpoiſes, the regular arrangements, and harmonious movements of the ſeveral parts: that by ſuch views, our minds may be enlarged, and our hearts excited, to a more intelligent and more devout admiration of the adorable Creator.

All nature is divine art; and the structure and motion of every thing in the visible creation the effect of the great artificer's design. It is our *blindness* that hides the beauty, our *ignorance* that conceals the wisdom of the works of God. In every part and operation of the visible world, there is *something* of divine skill apparent to us; but far more that lies beyond our search, and eludes even the most subtile inquiry and eager pursuit of the greatest human genius. In endeavouring to discover the process of creative wisdom in any instance, we find it in one part offering itself to our view, in others retiring and disappearing.

As when the traveller takes a prospect of some river gliding along in its winding channel, and observes how it beautifies and enriches the fertile vale, and refreshes the thirsty animals which repair thither to draw in the fluid element; his view is limited to a certain extent, and he sees not whence

whence it comes, or whither it goes; interposing hills, or woods, or the mazy subterraneous passages, stop his progressive view, and mock his curiosity:——So the divine art continually flows thro' universal nature in numberless channels; but is *perceptible* to *us*, only in some particular part and narrow compass of its intricate and endless currents: we view it *only* in its *near* approaches, and *where* it immediately entertains the senses or passions of mankind. ——And even *here*, too many men are like the brute creatures, which graze the herbage of the field, and drink the flowing stream, without the least consideration whence they proceed, or conception of any wisdom and design in their production. So mankind, tho' enjoying in a more ample measure the provisions of nature, in proportion to their superior capacity, yet hardly reflect on the causes from which they spring, or bestow the least attention in investigating the original source. And even where the divine skill is most fully con-

conspicuous; yet *familiarity* prevents surprize, and produces inattention and dullness, instead of sensibility and admiration.

It is an easy thing to ascribe infinite wisdom to God: and if piety consists in words and phrases, 'tis easy to be religious. ——But in order to understand those evidences in nature, which are the ground and reason of our acknowledging the infinite wisdom of God;——to this, a habit of attention is requisite. And if the Almighty Creator intended to reveal himself to us in the works of creation (and if he did not, it would be impossible for us to come at the least knowledge of him) attention surely is requisite on our part, in order to our receiving and understanding that revelation: and it is our wisdom and duty to contemplate the works of God, in those views which most clearly discover his wisdom and goodness; that our religion may be built, not on a mere sound of language, but on real sentiment and belief.

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WITHOUT deſcending then to thoſe innumerable particular inſtances of divine art, which might be each ſeparately diſplayed, but are not ſo proper to a public diſcourſe; let us ſelect ſuch repreſentations or views of the world in general, as are moſt proper to ſtrike our minds with a clear idea, and deep perſuaſion, of the forming and diſpoſing wiſdom of the all-powerful Maker. Let us withdraw our minds from the paſſions and accidents of mortal life, and for a moment endeavour to place ourſelves as *ſpectators* of the vaſt ſcene of nature, and the eſtabliſhed conſtitution and operations of the world. And the following appearances will naturally attract our obſervation.

THE grandeur and ſimplicity of the works of GOD:

The uniformity and variety:

The perpetual circulations:

The

The due proportions:

The equal ballances:

The multiplicity of effects produced by one and the same cause:

And the combination of a multitude of causes to the same effect.

The first and most apparent quality which commands our attention in the visible works of God, is a sublime dignity, joined to a perfect simplicity.— The world is exquisitely adorned and enriched: yet there is no *Ostentation* in nature, no vain show, or useless magnificence: and hence arises an idea of simplicity in our view of the vast creation and the several objects in it. The works of human art are the more admired by the best judges, the nearer they approach to that mixed idea of grandeur and plainness, which is impressed on the mind by a view of the works of nature: they are admired as ap-

pearing *Natural*, but are condemned if they ſeem *Unnatural*; which ſerves to ſhew, that in the common judgment of mankind, nature is no other than the perfection of art; as all art is but an imitation of nature. And human art extends only to ſome reſemblance of the ſurface of objects: whilſt the internal texture, which comprehends much more of the plaſtic wiſdom of the Maker, is beyond all imitation. What proportion do the moſt ſumptuous and finiſhed monuments of human power and ſkill bear to the magnificence of the creation! How low and contemptible are all the proudeſt works of men compared to thoſe of God! Could we ſuppoſe a perſon in full maturity of ſenſe and underſtanding, but who had never ſeen the light of the ſun and the face of nature, preſented on a ſudden with an ample proſpect of the ſublime canopy of heaven, the blazing ſun, the illumined atmoſphere, and the florid earth diverſified with its various landſchapes; how would

the appearance astonish and transport him, and stamp at once on his mind the new ideas of grandeur and beauty, and excite his veneration of the wisdom and power of God!——If every person is not affected in the same manner with the same view; it is either owing to worldly cares and passions possessing his heart, or because familiarity has destroyed all surprize and blunted his sense of admiration. Mankind advancing from infancy arrive by slow degrees to the views of the creation; and when they have gained the most knowledge, the novelty becomes the least: and the judgment alone, separate from the passion of surprize, has less influence in exciting any devout affection.—— Hence it is, that weak minds are more disposed to religion by an appearance of any thing new, strange, and monstrous in the creation, than by the constant view of the sublime order and beauty of the whole frame of nature. Should a comet approach near to the earth with its fiery as-

pect and formidable train; how devout would mankind on a ſudden become, upon a view of this new and amazing object! —But the appearance of the ſun, that grand, reſplendent, and moſt uſeful production of creative power, and the mighty periodical revolution it appears to perform in order to enlighten and warm the whole earth; this affects our judgment only; and as it raiſes *no paſſion*, ſo it excites *no devotion* in the thoughtleſs minds of moſt men.

After this firſt and ſuperficial view of nature, we may proceed to obſerve the *Uniformity* and *Variety*, which appear in the works of creation.—The heavens above, and the earth beneath, continue the *ſame* from age to age; yet afford a *Diverſity* of ſucceſſive ſpectacles: the clouded, the clear, the parti-coloured ſky; the nocturnal darkneſs, the meridian light; the ſtrong luſtre of the ſun, and the paler ſplendor of the moon; the immeaſurable

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ſpace empty of viſible objects, or crowded with a multitude of ſtars; theſe are the changing ſcenes that appear to the human eye of the celeſtial creation above us: and beneath, the hoary winter, the verdant ſpring, and yellow autumn, vary in ſucceſſion the ſurface of the earth: How great alſo is the *local* variety of the ſame ſurface diſtinguiſhed into the level plains, the lofty mountains, the lowly vallies, the winding ſlopes, the craggy precipices, the ſtagnant lakes, the over-flowing ſtreams, and the vaſt extended boſom of the ocean. There is the like uniformity and variety in the *Vegetables* of the earth; which have all one common nature, and derive their nutriment and growth from one common parent. But what degrees of difference from the ſmall blade of graſs to the *Cedar of Lebanon!*——They are diſtributed into their ſeveral kinds: and thoſe of the ſame kind have a very near affinity and reſemblance, yet ſeem infinitely diverſified. It is the ſame in reſpect to *Animals*, which are di-

vided by the wiſdom of the Creator into ſeparate ranks or kinds; yet have each a conſtitution and form, partly common to all, and partly peculiar to themſelves. There is a reſemblance or uniformity ſubſiſting in ſome degree between the ſpecies of mankind and that of the loweſt animals: and how much ſoever men are made ſuperior in other reſpects, yet they are ſupported by the nutrimental ſupplies of the ſun, the air, the earth, and the water, in common with all other animals, and even with the vegetables of the earth: and as the plants grow, come to maturity, decay and die; the ſame law of nature extends to all animals, even to mankind themſelves.—If we conſider the ſpecies of *Mankind* alone; what an amazing conjunction of uniformity and variety! Human nature is the *ſame* in all ages and nations: yet amidſt the countleſs numbers, every individual has at the ſame time a nature and form, a capacity and countenance *different* in ſome reſpect from every other

other of his fellow-creatures.—It seems as if the wisdom of the Creator intended to produce the greatest possible change and variety in the creation, consistent with an immutable general plan of the world, and uniform constitution of every species of creatures. They are *divided* into the two classes of animals and vegetables, *subdivided* into the several distinct general kinds, those kinds into particular species, and every species *multiplied* into numberless individuals.——Hence there is no creature in the world single and solitary, or that hath not a relation to others of the same kind; nor any kind, that has not some affinity to other kinds, or a proper relation to the world in general.—This uniformity of nature amidst an endless variety, constitutes the order and beauty of the world: and this arrangement of the creatures in it, shews the disposing wisdom and œconomy of the Creator, which hath assigned to all a determinate rank and state, and rendered it impossible to confound the relations

or diſtinctions which he hath eſtabliſhed. —If we examine carefully the *minuter* productions of nature, the ſmalleſt inſects, or the leaves, flowers, and fruits of plants, we find a wonderful mixture of the *various* and the *uniform*, that ſtrikes the mind with a ſenſible and pleaſing idea of order and beauty.—If we underſtand and conſider therefore, the like admirable arrangement as taking place thro' univerſal nature; it will unavoidably teach us to aſcribe, from a rational and ſolid conviction, perfect wiſdom to the Supreme Diſpoſer.

ANOTHER view of the world may lead us to *the perpetual Circulations* diſcernible in it.—The ſun, moon, and ſtars perform their appointed courſes with a ſtated unerring motion: and without entering into the myſteries of aſtronomy; if we only aſk ourſelves, What it is that upholds and directs them? How they come to know their ſeaſons and courſes? What enables

them to travel incessantly with the same unremitting force? Why they never fall to the earth? Or wander thro' the pathless desart of the sky? In a word, why they *never err?*—These questions will necessarily turn our attention to the *unerring* wisdom of the Creator; who either supports and guides them by his own immediate power, or has lodged those mighty unknown springs in nature, which are sufficient to move the celestial wheels, and to impell and direct the heavenly orbs, with an inconceivable swiftness and perfect regularity.—There are also constant circulations in the *lower elements*, tho' not so obvious to a common eye or understanding. For not only the *Air* is in a continual agitation and flux, driven to and fro round the whole globe, the *wind veering about and returning again to the same point*; but the *Waters* also travel their destined round without ceasing. The rivers discharge themselves into the sea; and from the vast surface of the ocean are exhaled the

the vapours, that form the ſwelling clouds; which empty them in ſhowers upon the earth, and penetrating into the hills ſupply the ſprings; which are gradually augmented, and become rivers; which feed in return the waſting ocean.—*Solomon* had obſerved, in that early age of the world, all *theſe* circulations of nature: Eccleſ. i. 5. *The ſun ariſeth and goeth down, and haſteth to his place where he aroſe: the wind goeth toward the South, and turneth about unto the North; it veereth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits: all the rivers run into the ſea, yet the ſea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.*—The like circulation of fluids is obſerved by anatomiſts in the body of every living creature. The whole maſs of blood is inceſſantly flowing thro' various channels, diſtributing the proper alimental juices to every part, and returning back to the heart from whence it came.——The ſoil of the earth is conſtantly expending its richneſs in

in the growth of every plant, and the harvests which it annually affords; yet is not exhausted: because the tribute which it pays it receives back, by an endless circulation of the nutritious particles.—— All these apparent revolutions in nature lead us to apprehend a first mover and a directing cause, whose wisdom hath established *them*, and probably *many others* not discoverable by us; in which things move in an imperceptible maze of changes, 'till they return to their former situation, and begin again their appointed courses.

The *regular proportions* observable in the several parts of the world, are a further evidence of creative wisdom in the structure of the whole.——For as in the fabric of every plant and animal, the several parts bear a due proportion to each other and to the whole: so it is of the world in general: the parts were all formed by rule and measure, proportionate to each other and to the whole system. The respective

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magnitudes of the ſun, the moon, and the earth, the quantities of land and water, the height of the mountains, the depth of the ſeas, the weight of all ſolids and fluids, the ſize of every ſpecies of animals and vegetables, are determined in the fitteſt proportion. Every part of nature is weighed and meaſured, by the unerring ſkill of that Being, whom the prophet elegantly and ſublimely repreſents, as *holding the ocean in the hollow of his hand, meting out heaven with his ſpan, comprehending the maſs of the earth in a meaſure, and weighing the mountains in ſcales and the hills in a ballance.*

And further: as the world is compoſed of elements and powers, many of which are not only different from, but contrary to each other in their operations; the wiſdom of the Almighty Diſpoſer admirably appears, in having ſo *adjuſted* their reſpective forces, that there is an everlaſting oppoſition and ſtrife, without any prevailing

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so far as to subdue and destroy the other; which would produce universal ruin and destruction. The gravitating and projectile forces, the causes of heat and cold, of moisture and drought, of storms and calms, are ballanced against each other; and by this perpetual equal strife the world subsists; and from this incessant *war*, are derived the *peace* and order of the creation, and the security of life. In like manner there are in human nature various *counterpoises*, between the bodily appetites and the mental principles, between self-love and social kindness, between fear and hope, affection and resentment, the desires of ease and of advancement, of saving and of expending: and from this perpetual *discord*, springs the *harmony* and the variety of human life.

In all these views we may be able to catch a glimpse, and to form some imperfect notion of that vast unsearchable wisdom of God, by which he framed and disposed

poſed this viſible univerſe, and eſtabliſhed the conſtitution of the world in general and of human nature in particular.——We ſhall proceed, in the following diſcourſe, to ſome other views, proper to diſplay the ſame creative wiſdom.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VI.

The Order and Beauty of the Visible Creation.

PSALM CXI. 3.

The works of the Lord are great; ſought out of all them that have pleaſure therein.

THE little portions of knowledge which men are able to acquire, are like ſcattered rays derived from the Father of lights, the eternal fountain of wiſdom. If there was no wiſdom in the Creator, there could be none in the creature: the work cannot be wiſer than its Maker. And it is ſufficient to expoſe the abſurdity of Atheiſm, and the unnatural folly of every Atheiſt in the world, only to obſerve, that he pretends to have more knowledge than that power which made him, and which *gave* him the little ſhare of wiſdom which he hath. Whatever degrees of wiſdom and goodneſs are to be found in mankind;

they prove with the utmoſt certainty, that there are much greater in the Maker of mankind. And the queſtions of the *Pſalmiſt* contain the ſtrongeſt reaſoning:——*He that formed the eye, ſhall not he ſee?—He that planted the ear, ſhall not he hear?—He that teacheth men knowledge, ſhall not he know?*—Can that power which furniſhed mankind with all the means and objects, and the very capacity, of ſeeing, knowing, deſigning and acting, be itſelf blind, ignorant, unſkilful, undeſigning in its operations?——If we were able to make fewer diſcoveries, than we really are, of the wiſdom of God in the Creation and general conſtitution of the world, of the beneficent ends which he intended, and of the methods of his operation in order to thoſe ends; yet the tranſition from the faculties of our own minds to the perfections of that being who made us, from our leſſer to his greater knowledge and wiſdom, is *natural*, and the proof is *demonſtrative*.

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But what acceſſions of luſtre and force does the argument receive; or rather the demonſtration is endleſly repeated, when we proceed from ourſelves to our fellow-creatures, and to the general œconomy and order of the creation around us. When we ſee multitudes of creatures in the world of the ſame nature and rank with ourſelves, and perceive the connections of human ſociety; when we ſee multitudes more of different ranks and kinds, and obſerve their relative order and ſubſervience; when we obſerve alſo the various proviſions made by the operations of the elements for the whole world of living creatures ſuitable to the nature of every kind; and finally, when we extend our view to a ſtill larger compaſs, and are able to form ſome conception, of the relation which the earth bears to the celeſtial orbs, and of the proportion and connection which may ſubſiſt between one world and another; our ideas of magnificence order and beauty in nature are raiſed and improved; and we aſ-

cribe, from a more intelligent and comprehenſive conviction, infinite wiſdom to the Creator.

MANY indeed are unaccuſtomed and indiſpoſed to enquiries of this kind; ſome perhaps thro' incapacity; and others thro' want of leiſure; but moſt, thro' idleneſs and inattention. They are willing to be religious the eaſieſt way: and therefore admit and believe whatever has a pious ſound; without applying their minds to underſtand the reaſon and evidence on which it is founded; as if *this* was a ſuperfluous labour.——It is indeed acknowledged, that the right culture of the heart is preferable to that of the underſtanding alone: yet ſurely it is a deſirable and valuable acquiſition, to apprehend clearly the evidence on which religion ſtands. For the more we know of the wiſdom of GOD, the wiſer we ourſelves become. And *that* is the trueſt piety and the moſt ſolid virtue, which is built, not upon ignorance,

but upon a knowledge of the works, designs, and dispensations of infinite wisdom.

The difficulty is, that when men first turn their attention, to contemplate the wisdom of God in the structure of the world and the œconomy of the creatures in it, they find themselves involved in confusion and perplexity. The world appears to be *a mighty maze:* they know not how to take the proper views; what to consider first or last; how to stretch their minds to grasp the general order of the whole, or to contemplate the proportions and measures of the several parts: and their attention is more apt to be engaged by some appearances or events which seem particular and extraordinary, than by the established order and continual operations discernible in nature.——As if a person of sufficient natural capacity, but brought up in the solitude of a desart, unacquainted with human society, and the works of men, was

tranſported into a populous and policied country, where he beheld the various operations of men, in the culture of the earth, in building, commerce, and navigation, in the diſcipline of troops, the holding of councils and courts of juſtice; he would not be able to conceive the meaning and deſign of theſe appearances, but all would be a myſterious ſcene; 'till by a gradual obſervation or inſtruction, he began to underſtand the connections of human ſociety, and to frame ſome idea of that plan of government, by which a nation is united in one body, and to perceive how the protection of law, the exertion of induſtry, and the ſeveral employments of men, contribute to the ſupport and welfare of the whole.——So are we at a loſs to conceive of the vaſt plan of the world, and the mutual relations of all the parts of nature, and how they co-operate to the ends the Creator intended.

YET

YET as every thing is a part, how ſmall ſoever, of the boundleſs Creation; and as there is infinitely more wiſdom in the works of GOD, than in any which men perform; ſo we may, with due attention, diſcover ſome evident ſtrokes of divine art, and admirable marks of order and wiſe deſign, in thoſe parts of nature, which lie within the narrow compaſs of our obſervation: tho' after all our ſtudy and ſearch, there will remain infinitely more *beyond*, than *within* our comprehenſion; and the *whole* will ever be too vaſt to enter into human imagination: for *known to God*, and to him alone, *are all his works, from the begining to the end.*

THE wiſeſt courſe therefore that we can purſue, is neither on the one hand to neglect or deſpiſe the knowledge of nature, which argues ignorance and ſtupidity; nor on the other, attempt to explore beyond the limits of our capacity, which leads to preſumption and error; but to ſelect for

our attention ſuch views of the creation, as are moſt conſpicuous and intelligible, and at the ſame time moſt proper to impreſs on our minds, a belief and admiration of the framing and diſpoſing wiſdom of the divine Maker.

In offering you my aſſiſtance therefore to this end in a preceding diſcourſe, we did not aim to fathom the profound depths of nature, or to diſcloſe the hidden ſprings of motion, and examine the internal fabrick of the world; but obſerved ſuch appearances *only*, as offer themſelves to our view in the general order and frame of the world:—Such as, the *Grandeur and Simplicity* apparent in the creation; theſe ideas being impreſſed on the mind by the firſt ſuperficial view of the heavens and the earth:—The *Uniformity and Variety* which take place throughout the world and the creatures in it: The *Perpetual Circulations* or revolutions of the moving parts of the creation:—The *Due Proportions* of nature;

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every part of the world being made in weight and measure proportionate to every other part and to the whole:——The *Equal Ballances* established between the opposite elements and powers of nature; by which their respective forces and operations are so adjusted that the contest subsists for ever, and a due equilibrium is always preserved; without which the world would be destroyed or become uninhabitable. We observed also, that the *like ballances* are established in the frame of human nature, between the several appetites, passions, affections, and principles belonging to it; and from this equal opposition of the several ingredients which compose our nature, the harmony of society, and the happiness, and even the safety of human life are derived.

Let us proceed finally to observe, the *Multiplicity* of *Effects* in nature flowing from the *same Cause*;—and the *Combination* of a *Multitude of Causes* to the *same Effect*.—

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The whole proceſs of nature is an endleſs ſeries of cauſes and effects. As all the parts of the world have a *local* relation to and dependance on each other; ſo all movements and events in *time* have a dependence on the preceding cauſes, and a relation to the *following* effects. Tho' all things proceed from omnipotence originally; yet every thing that comes to paſs in the creation is more immediately derived from ſubordinate cauſes: and in our utmoſt enquiries there is nothing found, which we can affirm with certainty to be done by the immediate operation of the power of God. The world is of an exquiſite mechaniſm: the ſprings and powers contained in it are moſtly concealed from all human ſearch, and are too complicated to admit of our explication. It is ſufficient if we underſtand ſo much of it, as to be fully convinced, that not chance, but divine art, and a wiſdom ſurpaſſing our comprehenſion, at firſt erected this ſtupendous frame, gave motion to its various parts, and appointed

pointed the unſearchable ſeries of events dependent on and ſucceeding one another. And ſo much knowledge is not difficult to be acquired: for tho' we cannot trace the proceſs of nature beyond certain narrow limits; yet we plainly ſee many and great effects following from cauſes equally apparent to human ſenſe and knowledge.

For inſtance:—To how great a *variety of effects* does the *heat of the ſun* ſenſibly contribute? Not only to the life of numberleſs animals; but to the growth of every plant; the ripening of all kinds of grain and fruit; the diſſolving the waters; raiſing the vapours; and forming the clouds; without which there could be no rain or dew upon the earth.——The texture of the *Air* is contrived with equal ſkill to anſwer *various* and different purpoſes: to ſuſtain and refreſh the bodies of animals by the lungs, and give force to the vital circulations; to feed the glowing fire and blazing lamp; to convey all the different ſounds, with

with a quick vibration, thro' the ſurrounding ſpace, to every ear; to give paſſage to all the winged tribes, flying from place to place; to fill the ſpreading ſails, and give paſſage to mankind over the vaſt and otherwiſe *impaſſable* waters; to ſupport the clouds of heaven, 'till, overcharged with moiſture, they diſtill in rain upon the thirſty earth; to increaſe the light of the ſun by reflection, and to prolong the day by morning and evening-twilight; to give ſpeech to the tongue as well as hearing to the ear: theſe and many other beneficial effects depend upon the texture of that fluid in which we live and breathe. Is there no evidence of creative wiſdom in the circumfuſion of this curious and uſeful element around the globe, wrought of a texture too delicate for the eye to ſee, yet endued with a force which no other element can reſiſt?——The *ſingle* principle of *Gravitation*, pervading the univerſe, at the ſame time, gives ſolidity to the land, ſtability to the mountains, and fluency to the rivers;

binds

binds the ocean to its bed, and the whole earth to its orbit; maintains the due distances of the heavenly bodies; and retains every thing thro' universal nature in its proper situation.——Similar to this, is the *single* principle of *benevolence*, in the moral world: which in like manner is diffused thro' human nature, and produces, according to its different modifications, various beneficial effects: hence parental care; relative union; combination of friends; public spirit; good government of superiors; fidelity of inferiors; and it is *this* which retains every individual in his proper sphere, cements human society, and contributes to all virtuous actions, honourable pursuits, and innocent delights.——In these instances, and many others, we may observe, how one and the same general cause or spring in nature operates to numberless different effects.

On the other hand, it is equally to be observed, how various causes *conspire* in pro-

producing the ſame effects.——As the ſeed ſown, the diſpoſition of the ſoil, the temperature of the air, the deſcent of rains, the warmth of the ſun, and other cauſes, are all requiſite to produce the annual harveſt;——ſo the concurrence of a far greater number and variety of things is neceſſary to the ſupport of human life; any one of which failing throughout the world, *all fleſh would periſh together, all mankind return again to duſt.* Whether we conſider the ſtructure of the world in general, or of the human body in particular; the ſprings and movements in both, which are *all* neceſſary in conjunction to preſerve life, ſeem to exceed enumeration or conception: and that they ſhould continue *all co-operating* to that end for any period of years, is an aſtoniſhing effect of divine contrivance. There appears to be no element, no power, no part, or movement in the creation, which does not contribute one way or other to the production or preſervation of life.——There is alſo an inconceivable variety of

causes operating continually in the production of knowledge, of virtue, and of happiness in mankind. *These harvests*, these richest and noblest *fruits*, are not raised and brought to maturity without a vast preparation in nature. What is there in the immense compass and variety of the visible world, that does not serve to instruct, or please or amend mankind? The good of human society is evidently one end, to which all things in nature, as far as human knowledge extends, have either an immediate or distant relation and subservience. Here is the point, in which an innumerable multitude of lines, drawn from all parts of the world, appear to meet as in a center.

How should it excite the inquisitive understanding, and affect the religious temper, of every considerate person, to be convinced by ocular demonstration and sensible experience, how much the good of mankind is the object of the Creator's view!

view! To find the whole world framed and difpofed, and all the elemental parts of it contending and co-operating in a perpetual motion, to pleafe and benefit the human race!——Such inquiries and obfervations are not to be thought merely fpeculative amufements: they not only afford the greateft admiration and pleafure to an ingenuous mind; but are the very foundation of all religion. For 'till men are convinced of the intentions of divine wifdom and goodnefs in making the world and mankind, they cannot poffibly have thofe fentiments of gratitude, efteem, and confidence, in return, which are the effence of religion; nor are they capable of receiving the *Faith*, and entring into the *fpirit* of the *Gofpel*. A *general belief* of the exiftence of God, of the exercife of his wifdom, and the intentions of his goodnefs, arifing from a view and knowledge of the conftitution of nature, is a neceffary preparation, and the beft qualification, for a *particular belief* of that conftitution of

of divine wisdom and goodness revealed in the *Gospel*; by which the *present* state and life of mankind are *connected* with a *future* state and life, and by which the divine purposes in the frame of the earth and of mankind its chief inhabitants, are *carried forward* into a *new creation* and an eternal world.

It merits our particular observation, that our blessed *Saviour*, that great *Teacher sent from GOD*, and who taught religion in a manner no other person ever did or could do, in his discourses and parables, not only imitates (as far as human language can imitate) the dignity and simplicity, the uniformity and variety of nature, but instructs his disciples by frequent and various *allusions* to the process of nature in the vegetable world and in the course of human life; appealing to their common knowledge and experience of the world around them: he collects images, from the sower going forth to sow; the growth of

the corn; the whitening harveſt; the intermingled weeds; the ſeparation of grain and chaff; and the repoſitory of the garner: he bids his diſciples to behold the fowls of the air; the lillies of the field; the tree putting forth its branches and leaves; the vine bringing forth fruit: he introduces the ſhepherd dividing his flocks, the King going forth to war, the bridegroom entertaining his friends, the maſter examining his ſervants; the thief breaking into a houſe; the traveller robbed and wounded on the highway, and paſſengers diſcovering him; with many other ſcenes and characters of vegetable and animal life: in a word, whenever he intended to convey ſome memorable inſtruction to thoſe about him, he immediately *draws a picture* of ſome part of *nature*, and requires them to look upon it, and find out the meaning. —— The more therefore we attend to and underſtand the operations of nature, we ſhall be the better qualified to underſtand and receive the inſtructions of the

Goſpel.

Gospel. Such is the wisdom and *philosophy* of our *holy religion.* But our minds are so corrupted, and our taste so vitiated, by the artificial inventions and *sophistry* of men, that we neglect to study, and do not enter into the natural sentiments and spirit of our divine teacher's discourses. They deserve *more* attention than any other portion even of *holy Scripture* itself; but often meet with *less* than the vainest dictates and emptiest declamations of ignorant or presumptuous men.

THUS far have I endeavoured, in several discourses, to represent such views of the creation, as are proper and sufficient to give us a full persuasion of the Creator's wisdom and goodness.——But our enquiries and observations hitherto, concerning the divine intentions in the frame of nature and government of the world, have been confined to the marks of order, beauty, and wise contrivance, and to the benevolent purposes of GOD, respecting

the *present* life and human ſociety in *this* world. We have not as yet obſerved the evidences of a *future* ſtate, and the proviſion which God hath made in order to the *eternal* life and happineſs of mankind. ——And indeed, for our full aſſurance and ſatisfaction in this moſt important and intereſting point, we muſt have recourſe to a *new theory:* we muſt underſtand the ground, the ſtructure, the deſign, and the end of the *chriſtian* revelation. *Here* is diſcovered the connection between *this* world and *another*, the conſtitution, by which men are ſaved at death, and raiſed to another life. The *Goſpel* every where leads our views to, and moſt clearly and ſolidly eſtabliſheth our hopes of, *a world to come.*

It ſhall be my endeavour therefore, in ſome future diſcourſes, to repreſent thoſe evidences of the *Goſpel*, which prove the intention of divine wiſdom and goodneſs to *raiſe* mankind to *another* life, in order to their enjoying higher degrees of know-

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ledge, virtue, and happinesſ in a world to come, than can be attained by the conſtitution of this viſible world. In reſpect to our animal nature, we are under the ſame law of the creation as the brute-creatures, and even the plants of the earth. *All fleſh is graſs, and all the glory of man as the flower of graſs.*——It is not ſo much from *our nature* then, nor from any arguments which reaſon alone can furniſh, as from that *word of GOD which abideth for ever*, that we derive our hope of another life: *and this word is the goſpel.* The ineſtimable gift of *eternal Life* is in *Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* This is that *Myſtery* of divine wiſdom and goodneſs, *which lay hid from the foundation of the world; but is now*, ſince the appearance of our *Saviour, made manifeſt to us, who by him do believe in GOD, who raiſed him from the dead, and gave him glory*; from which we derive the higheſt *faith* and *hope* in God, the faith and hope of a glorious immortality.

In the mean time, we ſhall previouſly conſider the evidences which prove the moral government, and rewarding *juſtice* of God, in the *preſent* ſtate of mankind: as it is requiſite to take a view of *this* ſubject, before we proceed to *that* of a future ſtate.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VII.

The Marks of a Moral and Judicial Government.

PSALM lviii. 11.

Verily there is a GOD, that judgeth in the earth.

THE books of *holy ſcripture* conſpire to repreſent the Supreme Being in the character of a *moral Governor*, and to inculcate upon the minds of men, ſentiments of reverence and ſubmiſſion ſuitable to his governing juſtice and goodneſs. —— GOD is ſufficiently revealed to us in his works, as the natural Creator and preſerver of all things; his wiſdom, power, and beneficence appearing in every part of the viſible creation: *for the inviſible things of GOD*, ſays the *Apoſtle*, *are clearly ſeen in the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.*——And here is the beginning

and

and foundation of all religion; in that knowledge, which men may and ought to attain from the things that are made, of the all-wiſe Maker; that they may *worſhip him*, and him alone, *that made the heavens, the earth, the ſea, and the fountains of water*. And the evidence here is ſo clear and certain, that it becomes irreſiſtible: the moſt obvious appearances of nature are ſufficient; and in proportion as our knowledge encreaſes, the conviction becomes the ſtronger, by diſcovering ſtill more, and more admirable, effects of wiſe contrivance and benevolent deſign.

But that God acts, not only as Creator, Former, and Preſerver of all things, but as a moral Governor and judge of mankind, as the holy ſcriptures conſtantly repreſent him, eſtimating the different actions and characters of men, rewarding the righteous and puniſhing the wicked, in proportion to their reſpective deſerts; this is a doctrine which hath been thought liable,

liable, if we ſet aſide a divine revelation, to great difficulties and objections. Many wiſe and good men, not only amongſt the Heathens, but amongſt the Jews alſo, ſeem to have laboured under great perplexity concerning it. This we may eaſily perceive, if we read and conſider the 73d *Pſalm*, the whole book of *Job*, and other parts of the *old Teſtament*. When they ſaw the innocent oppreſſed, the virtuous afflicted, and the ungodly proſpering in the world and increaſing in riches, they were confounded, and were at a loſs how to reconcile theſe dark appearances with their notions of divine juſtice. —— The Pſalm, which concludes with the text, is a petition to the Almighty, that he would exert his power and juſtice, to curb the inſolence, and break the teeth, of powerful oppreſſors, who wrought violence and ſpoke lies, and to make their puniſhment an example, that the righteous might rejoice, and all men ſay, *verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

EVERY

Every age and nation hath afforded ſome examples of good men, who have ſuffered oppreſſion and other terrible afflictions; of wicked men who have flouriſhed in eaſe, wealth, and proſperity; of horrible crimes which paſſed off with impunity; and of worthy actions which met with no reward; nay, of villany being protected and rewarded, and of virtue being perſecuted.——Theſe are appearances which ſeem inconſiſtent with the perfection of a divine government. It may ſeem impoſſible to find out ſuch a theory as will ſolve theſe difficulties, and to prove, notwithſtanding ſuch objections, that *there is verily a GOD who judgeth in the earth*; that the world is under the government of a Being *who loveth righteouſneſs and hateth iniquity*, who wants neither power nor inclination to do perfect juſtice to all his creatures.

In attempting to lay before you ſuch a theory, to reconcile all the events of life with

with a righteous providence, and to vindicate the ways of God to men; we ſhall obſerve,

First, that the general laws and conſtitution of nature imply the *juſtice*, no leſs than the *wiſdom* of God:

Secondly, that in conſequence hereof, *certain meaſures* of divine juſtice are in *continual execution.*

Thirdly, that *thoſe meaſures* are more extenſive than men generally apprehend or believe:

Fourthly, that the particular inſtances, which appear to the contrary, are only *exceptions* to the general order of things:

Fifthly, that the *goſpel-revelation* is abundantly ſufficient to give entire ſatiſfaction to good men, to ſupport them under every ſuffering, and to raiſe virtue to the higheſt excellence and ſtability.

First:

FIRST: the general laws and conſtitution of nature exhibit the *juſtice*, as well as the *wiſdom* of GOD.——As there is an evident ſubſervience of the general frame of the world to the benefit of human life, and ſuch various proviſions in nature to anſwer the divine intentions of producing knowledge, virtue, and happineſs in mankind; as numberleſs proofs of wiſdom and benevolence appear throughout the whole; here is the ſtrongeſt preſumption in favour of the divine juſtice: and it is moſt irrational to imagine, that *injuſtice* can find place in a plan or conſtitution of *ſo much* wiſdom and goodneſs. For every inſtance of injuſtice implies either ignorance or malevolence, or at leaſt a *defect* of wiſdom and goodneſs. And therefore, all the arguments drawn from the whole frame of nature which lead us to aſcribe infinite wiſdom and benevolence to the Supreme Being, conclude equally for his perfect juſtice.

SE-

SECONDLY: in consequence of that constitution of things which his creative wisdom hath established, and which shews undeniably the goodness of his intentions; there are *certain measures* of divine justice in *continual execution*, for the punishment of vice and the encouragement of virtue. ——Here begins the moral government of GOD; and the marks or proofs, by attending to which, we may be convinced, that *there is verily a GOD that judgeth in the earth.*—— In a former discourse, we observed the methods of divine wisdom, for the purpose of producing and cultivating *virtue* in the world; which shew at the same time that mankind are under a divine discipline and *moral government.*——But avoiding an unseasonable repetition of the same sentiments, we shall collect some of those symptoms in nature, which most clearly shew the divine *intention* to prevent, restrain, correct, and punish *vice*, as well as to promote *virtue*; and which may establish our belief in him as a moral governor, and

confequently incite us to obey his righteous will.

THE *fubordinations* of human fociety are appointed by the author of nature for the purpofes of his governing juftice.——*Civil government* is exprefly denominated in *Scripture, the ordinance of GOD, for the punifhment of evil doers,* as well as *the protection of them that do well:* it is therefore to be confidered as *one mean* or inftrument, among many others, which the wifdom of GOD hath provided for the execution of his *juftice.* And tho' there is neceffarily much imperfection, and fometimes much abufe, in the adminiftration of this divine inftitution, *becaufe* it is adminiftred by frail men; yet it is certain, that the general operation and natural tendency of it, is to reftrain and punifh the wickednefs of men, to fupport order and encourage virtue. For as the *Pfalmift* fays, *if the foundations be deftroyed,* if government which is the foundation of fociety be overturned, *what fhall the*

the righteous do?——There would then be no protection for innocence, no peace or ſafety for virtuous men. The puniſhment of malefactors in ſociety, and the awe of human authority, is a *general effect* in nature, which diſcovers a moral and *judicial intention* in the Almighty Maker, who hath fitted and deſigned mankind for ſuch a ſtate.——*Domeſtic Government* is alſo an inſtitution of nature for the reſtraint and correction of evil actions, as well as inſtruction and encouragement in virtue. And how weakly ſoever that moſt important office is ſometimes diſcharged; the deſign of creative wiſdom in appointing it, to anſwer the ends of a juſt government in the whole, is too evident to admit of any doubt. *Parents* bear as it were a vicegerent-authority over their offspring, *delegated* to them by nature from the Supreme *Governor* of the world; of whoſe univerſal government over all his rational creatures, the beſt notion we are able to conceive, is under the *paternal* image and character.

We find our *Saviour* explaining to his disciples the nature of *the kingdom of GOD*, or of his moral government over mankind, by *allusions* to the authority of a *Prince* over his subjects, of a *Master* over his servants, and chiefly of a *Father* over his children: *The Father*, is the title constantly ascribed to God in the *New Testament*, and with a particular emphasis as *characterizing* the measures of his governing *justice* and clemency towards mankind.

We may further trace the footsteps of divine justice, in the natural *resentments* of mankind against the perpetrators of wicked actions; who thereby expose themselves to a general indignation or contempt: for the passions and affections of men, even of vitious men, naturally rise in favour of virtue and detestation of vice in others. And this is a considerable *provision* in nature, for the restraint and punishment of the one, and the encouragement of the other. For however wicked men

men may avoid the penalties of human laws, or be unaccountable to human authority; yet they find themſelves *loaded* with public diſgrace and reproach, or at leaſt, *feel* the loſs of that reputation, eſteem, and good-will, which they naturally deſire from their fellow-creatures.

THERE is an order alſo, in the conſtitution of the human body, for the puniſhment of ſome vices. As thoſe crimes which are moſt injurious to ſociety are generally puniſhed, by the public reſentments of that ſociety which they injure; ſo thoſe vices that are of a perſonal nature find their own puniſhment nearer home. It is almoſt impoſſible to perſiſt in any bodily exceſſes, without ſuffering the penalties naturally annexed to them in the frame of the human body; diſeaſes, and often death itſelf.

AND finally, there is the moſt certain and effectual proviſion of nature, for the

punifhment of wickednefs and the reward of virtue, in the frame of the human *mind.*——There is as it were a *Tribunal of juftice* erected in every man's own heart, where confcience fits as judge, to whofe approving or condemning fentence men are continually expofed, and moft of all in the feafons of retirement and reflection. And however men may attempt to filence this internal monitor, to deceive or corrupt this impartial judge, or to harden themfelves againft the dread of this vicegerent of divine juftice, it feems hardly poffible either to fuppref it entirely, or to become indifferent to its opinion and cenfure.

To this we may add, that the paffions of envy, malice, revenge, ambition, and covetoufnefs are naturally tormenting to the mind; they bring in fome meafure their own punifhment along with them.

Such are the *various orders* and regulations, which the wifdom of God hath eftablifhed

tablifhed in nature, for the *ends* of his *juftice:* which I barely mention, as they are fufficient to prove beyond contradiction, that mankind are under a moral and judicial government; and are not only the *creatures* of divine power, and *objects* of his providence and goodnefs, but alfo *fubjects* of his governing juftice.

THIRDLY: thefe meafures of divine juftice are more extenfive than men generally apprehend or believe:——They operate in more inftances, and to a greater degree of punifhment, than we are apt to imagine.——The ftings of confcience are often keen and piercing to the inmoft foul: the paffions of vice are corroding, and deftroy mental quiet and repofe: the refentments of fociety, the difaffection of friends and relatives, are galling to the heart: the terror of human laws is grievous and burdenfome: and infamy, difeafe, and death, the frequent effects of debauchery and villany, cannot be thought

ſlight puniſhments. Now tho' wicked perſons may avoid ſome of theſe puniſhments; yet it is hardly poſſible that any criminal in the world can eſcape them all. The all-wiſe governor of the world has various methods of chaſtizing and puniſhing his offending creatures: he can convert any thing into an inſtrument of his juſtice, and make the ſinner to taſte the bitterneſs of ſin, and to feel the ſtripes of his diſpleaſure, in methods *imperceptible* to others. It is indeed the *mind alone* that is capable of puniſhment: and in what degree the ſinner's mind ſuffers, is only known to God and himſelf. However, the meaſures we have already obſerved, by which divine juſtice operates, are ſo viſible and ſo frequent, that no one is the leaſt ſurprized at the effect. When intemperance and lewdneſs bring diſeaſes; when baſe actions are covered with ſhame and infamy; when villany ſuffers by law; when conſcious guilt produces inward confuſion, remorſe and anguiſh; and on the other hand, when

men

men of ſobriety, probity, and beneficence, enjoy health, ſafety, and reputation, the approbation of their own minds, and the friendſhip of other men; —— there is no occaſion of wonder and aſtoniſhment in all this, becauſe it is no more than the uſual and natural courſe of things.

How comes it to paſs then, that the conduct of providence is thought ſo dark and intricate; and that men have ſo little confidence in the divine juſtice, that they are ready to imagine the world to be in a ſtate of confuſion, or under a ſtrange diſpenſation of government, in which vice is unpuniſhed and virtue unrewarded; and are tempted to doubt, whether *there is a GOD that judgeth in the earth?*—This principally ariſes, not from the *actual ways* of providence, but from *men's* fooliſh *miſapprehenſions*, and their wrong ways of thinking and judging of this ſubject. They *look* for the juſtice of God's providence, *where it is not to be found*, and where they *ought not to*

expect to find it; and *overlook* it, *where* it moſt plainly and certainly *appears*. They look for it in the ſingular, extraordinary, and marvellous events of life, in the ſtrange and ſudden calamities or deaths of particular perſons, or in tempeſts and whirlwinds, in thunder and lightning, in famines, peſtilences, and earthquakes.—— But in ſuch events the juſtice of God *veils itſelf* from all human knowledge: theſe are the myſterious ways of providence, and *the judgments paſt finding out*: and it is folly and preſumption in men, to pretend to explain the particular purpoſes, which they are intended to ſerve. Yet *weak* men have always been ready to imagine that they *ſaw* moſt clearly, in ſuch events, the *hand* of God's juſtice lifted up againſt the wickedneſs of men, which they never *did*, nor *could ſee*. Our *Bleſſed Saviour* hath expreſsly taught us, not to look upon ſuch events as inſtances of God's vengeance inflicted on the unhappy ſufferers. *Suppoſe ye*, ſays he to his diſciples, *that the eighteen men upon whom*

whom the tower of Siloam fell, or the Galileans whom Pilate ſurprized and maſſacred as they were offering ſacrifice, were ſinners above others?—I tell you, Nay.——And when they aſked him concerning the blind man, did this man ſin, or his parents, that he was born blind? He replied, *Neither.*——

On the other hand, where the juſtice of God's Providence is moſt *evidently to be ſeen*, there men are moſt apt to *overlook* it; in the regular and uſual courſe of things, by which wickedneſs draws its own puniſhment after it, infamy, diſeaſes, cares, fears, perplexities, the weight of human reſentments, or the burden of a troubled conſcience, nay often terminates in death, or the utter loſs of all that is dear in life.—But here it is that the *hand* of God and the *rod* of his juſtice *appear*, *pointing* at the wickedneſs of men, and chaſtizing or *puniſhing* them for it. Here we are leaſt liable to miſtake, and may diſcern the divine intention with the greateſt clearneſs of evi-

evidence. And why?—*Becauſe* theſe events follow in the *natural courſe* of things. Here are the orders which the wiſdom of God hath provided and eſtabliſhed in the conſtitution of the world, for the execution of his juſtice, *for the puniſhment of evil-doers, for the encouragement of them that do well*, and for inſtruction and admonition to all.——Every wiſe and conſiderate perſon will obſerve the *natural* conſequences of vice and ſin, and of virtue and piety, in the world, and *in them* expect to find marks of divine juſtice, and of that moral diſcipline and government, under which mankind are placed by the wiſe providence of God. But weak and inconſiderate minds are never affected but with *ſtrange* and *uncommon* appearances, which *ſtartle* and *terrify* them into religion: and all their belief of God's juſtice is founded upon events which ſeem *marvellous*, and *contrary* to the common courſe of things. They can hardly form a notion of that moſt wiſe, gentle, and humane procedure

of

of divine juſtice, perfectly adapted to a ſtate of trial, and to the circumſtances of mankind; by which vice in its progreſs is gradually reſtrained and corrected, and the ſinners final ruin is mercifully delayed; that he may take warning by his own experience or the ſufferings of others, and by amendment eſcape deſtruction.

If the thunderbolt ſhould immediately ſtrike the criminal dead, if the earth ſhould open and ſwallow up the blaſphemer; this might appear to ſome a moſt proper diſplay and *ſignal proof* of God's juſtice; as it could not fail to aſtoniſh men, and ſtrike them with horror: and they would then conclude that *verily there is a GOD that judgeth in the earth.*——Or if good men were miraculouſly reſtored to health, or raiſed in a ſudden and unaccountable manner to grandeur and affluence; this might appear an illuſtrious and engaging evidence of the divine regard to virtue and piety.——But all this is nothing elſe, than contriving in our

our own imaginations a ſcheme of government agreeable to human prejudice, paſſion, and folly; inſtead of ſtudying to learn the rectitude and excellence of that government, which the infinite wiſdom of God hath actually eſtabliſhed in nature.

Vice is not unpuniſhed, neither is virtue left deſtitute of ſupport and encouragement, in this life: and the more accurately we inquire into the real ſtate of things, the more certain evidence we ſhall find of a divine juſtice diſtinguiſhing the different actions and diſpoſitions of men. It is our want of attention that hinders us from diſcerning that evidence; and ſtill more, our vanity and ſelfiſhneſs and miſtaken judgment of the virtues and vices both of ourſelves and others; and moſt of all, our worldly prejudices in being ſo much blinded and prepoſſeſſed with the external circumſtances of men; as if riches were a mark of divine favour, and the beſt reward of virtue; and poverty ſuch an evil as provi-

dence cannot compenſate. And this is a prejudice that lies uppermoſt in the minds of many; who can hardly conceive how it is conſiſtent with a juſt providence to beſtow the riches and poſſeſſions of this world in ſo indiſcriminate a manner, that bad men may as eaſily obtain a ſhare as good men.——But this is no difficulty with a truly wiſe and virtuous man, who makes a right eſtimate of things, and very plainly perceives, that external wealth is a circumſtance of little moment, in determining men's happineſs; and therefore is not ſtruck with *envy* when he ſees the proſperity of fooliſh and wicked men.——Indeed as riches are *no ſign* of God's favour; ſo ſuch envy and high admiration of them are a very *bad ſign* of a man's merit: and to make ſuch an objection againſt God's providence, concludes nothing but our own want of virtue and eager deſire of wealth.

FROM

FROM theſe ſeveral cauſes it proceeds, that men *judge partially* of the ways of providence: whilſt the real marks of a diſtinguiſhing juſtice are ſlighted and overlooked; and the difficulties and objections on the other hand are exceedingly *magnified.* The internal peace and pleaſure which ariſe from innocence and conſcious virtue are little eſteemed or conſidered; nor are the troubles and pains, which enſue from guilt in the natural courſe of things, much regarded, *as proofs of divine juſtice.*——As the *Phariſees* demanded of our *Saviour* a *ſign from heaven*; ſo we want to ſee ſomething *amazing* and ſtupendous, or at leaſt ſome external *ſhow* and glare; and are not content with that ſilent internal proceſs of juſtice, by which the mind of man is inſtructed, perſuaded and admoniſhed, the vitious made to undergo various ſufferings, and the virtuous ſupported with courage and hope.

BUT

But it is in the *internal frame* of human nature, not in the *external fabric* and events of the world, that we are to discover a providence distinguishing the different actions and characters of men. The world and the elements of it were fitted for the habitation and support of mankind in general, of the good and bad equally: and, as our *Saviour* observes, *GOD causeth his sun to shine and his rain to descend on the just and the unjust*, without distinction: and in like manner those calamities and desolations which proceed from any violence or disorder of the elements, fall on mankind indiscriminately, without any regard to their guilt or their innocence.——It is not therefore in such events that the divine justice makes itself apparent to us. But if we look within, and attend to a train of operations and events of another kind, we may observe a *distinction* evidently *designed* by the providence of God, and a regard shewn to the different actions of men. For it never can be said or thought, that

that good and bad men, the beſt and the worſt, are *equally* liable to the remorſe of a troubled conſcience, to the penalties of human laws, to infamy and contempt, and the abject ſlavery to which the habits of vice reduce men; or that they *equally* enjoy peace and pleaſure of mind, and ſatisfaction in ſociety, which is the conſequence of a wiſe and worthy behaviour. No one can heſitate in determining, whether a virtuous or vitious conduct, whether piety, probity, and temperance, or profligacy and villany, be upon the whole a better foundation for the happy enjoyment of life. For however men may in particular inſtances, and when a temptation urges, determine wrong *for themſelves*; yet in regard to *others*, and where they judge moſt *impartially*, no man living has the *leaſt doubt*.

HERE then the providence of GOD plainly turns the ſcale of human life in favour of virtue and piety; and his diſtinguiſhing

guiſhing juſtice apears as evident, as the ſun in the firmament: and whatever interpoſing objects may eclipſe its luſtre, or clouds ariſe to intercept our view and occaſion a tranſient darkneſs; it remains an eſtabliſhed truth, that *verily there is a GOD that judgeth in the earth.* And the proof lies not in particular and extraordinary ſigns and appearances; but in the general order and conſtitution of the moral world, and the effects continually reſulting from it; in like manner as the creative wiſdom of God appears in the general frame and conſtitution of the material world.

Having thus far endeavoured to fix our belief of the governing juſtice and providence of God, upon its own proper and natural foundation of evidence, in the general order and diſpoſition of the rational world; we may obſerve, *fourthly*, that the particular inſtances which appear to the contrary are but *exceptions* to that general order eſtabliſhed in nature.—— For tho'

ſuch inſtances are not near ſo frequent and conſiderable, as the prejudices of men are apt to imagine and repreſent them; yet it cannot be denied, that there are affecting examples of good men enduring ſuch trials and miſeries, as we cannot imagine are any way compenſated in this life: and of wicked men who eſcape with impunity, and ſeem too powerful, or too hardened, to be affected by the ordinary courſe of divine providence, and even to triumph over all juſtice human and divine.——Such appearances in the *moral* world are, like *unuſual* diſorders in the *material* elements, *exceptions* to the general order and proceſs of nature: and the wiſdom of divine providence does not ſee fit to interpoſe in a ſpecial and miraculous manner to prevent the one or the other.——In regard to ſuch particular events, we may and ought to remain ſatisfied with the general evidence of wiſdom and juſtice in the whole. The conſtitution and laws of the material and ſpiritual world were framed, not for individuals,

viduals, but for mankind collectively: and if we are able to difcern a divine wifdom and rectitude in the general orders of nature; fome apparent deviations or exceptions fhould have little weight in the oppofite fcale, to affect and alter our judgment. Human ignorance is a reafonable and fufficient anfwer to fuch objections: fince we are as little capable of fully comprehending the reafons or ends of every difpenfation in the moral government of God, as of the conftruction and defign of every part of the vifible creation: and in refpect to *both*, we cannot have too low and mean an opinion of our own knowledge and underftanding, in comparifon of the unfearchable wifdom of the Supreme Maker and Governor of the world.

But there are notwithftanding fome confiderations, which if we can enter into them, will caft a *light* upon the providence of God, and *diffipate* in fome meafure thofe *thick clouds*, which feem to furround

the throne of his juſtice.——It will eaſily be allowed by all who have any ſenſe of the excellence of virtue, that to produce virtue in the hearts and lives of men, is an end moſt worthy of the wiſdom and providence of God; and that *thoſe* are the beſt meaſures of government, which are beſt adapted to this end. And we have great reaſon to believe, that it is in order to this end, that the providence of God ſo frequently appoints afflictions and perſecutions to good men.—Adverſity is often the ſchool of wiſdom; poverty the ſoil producing the richeſt virtue; and the loweſt ſtate of ſuffering the ſcale of aſcending to the nobleſt height of piety and goodneſs.——Are opulence and eaſe the proper rewards of virtue, which are ſo often found to enfeeble and corrupt it?—Are the hopes of external poſſeſſions and preferments, or the fears of poverty and loſs, the proper motives of piety and goodneſs?—— Are men to be honeſt and charitable, through mere *ſelfiſhneſs*, and give, only to receive back

back what they gave with intereſt?—— What is that virtue worth, which ſprings merely from a regard to our temporal intereſt; and is founded on the narrow views of immediate reward or puniſhment?— What kind of piety is *that*, which demands preſent pay, and dares not truſt the Supreme juſtice of God to a future account? —The moſt ſolid virtue and genuine piety is ſurely *that*, which, moved by no worldly conſideration, acts from the principles of honour and conſcience, and a ſteady confidence in the governing juſtice and goodneſs of Almighty God; *that*, which deſpiſes the allurements of wealth and eaſe, and riſes ſuperior to difficulties and dangers; *that*, which is *tried in the furnace* of affliction, and when tried *comes forth as gold.*—But if the government of the world was moulded according to the vain fancies and deſires of men, and their narrow notions of juſtice and equity; if temporal rewards and puniſhments were immediately diſpenſed according to the different ac-

tions of men; this conſtitution, inſtead of promoting, would deſtroy religion and virtue: there would be no room for the exerciſe of faith and truſt in God, of ſtedfaſt integrity and diſintereſted goodneſs, of fortitude, patience, charity, or any kind of honourable and exemplary virtue: mankind would then be governed like the brute-creatures, by their immediate appetites and paſſions, not by reaſon, conſcience, or the *faith of religion:* this world would be no longer a ſtate of trial, diſcipline and education; and the higheſt ends we can aſcribe to the wiſdom of God in creating mankind would be defeated.

The tyranny and perſecution which have raged in the world for a ſucceſſion of ages, by which the beſt of men have been the moſt inhumanly treated, and they, who [illegible]e paid the ſincereſt regard to religion [illegible] conſcience, have met with all ſorts of [illegible], reproach, oppreſſion, and the [illegible] death, preſent the darkeſt ſcene that

that ever was beheld in the world, in respect to the providence and justice of the Supreme Governor. But these persecutions were the means of trying and exercising the probity and piety of numbers of men, and of producing the noblest harvest of genuine virtue. It may be reasonably thought, that it was in order to this end, Divine Providence permitted such an amazing tyranny to rise, prevail, and continue so long, *waging war against the Saints of the Most High*, and spreading terror and devastation in the earth. In this view the *holy Scriptures* teach us to look upon such scenes, and thus to reconcile them with the justice of an over-ruling Providence.

But *such* virtue and religion, in *so great* numbers, who resigned all the possessions of this world, exposed themselves to miseries most terrible to human nature, and accounted their own lives of no price, to retain their integrity, in firm reliance on the final justice and goodness of the Al-

mighty Governor of the world;——*such* virtue and religion was never found but among *christians*; nor can ever spring from any principle in the human mind, but the *Faith* of the *Gospel*, the earnest belief of a future life and the rewards of immortality.—For it is evident that such piety and virtue hath not its reward in this life. And tho' the Providence of God makes such a general distinction between good and evil men, as is sufficient to establish our belief of his justice, and to support the practice of virtue in all *ordinary* cases, yet a provision is requisite for cases of *extraordinary* difficulty and distress. The highest and most excellent degrees of virtue and piety (as appears in the instance we have now in our view) are *not* recompenced in this life.——To vindicate therefore the *perfect* justice of the Divine government, to give proper consolation to the minds of good men, and to raise virtue to the highest excellence and stability; recourse must be had to the doctrine of a *future Life*: and

and in this point (which was my laſt obſervation) the *Goſpel-revelation* is abundantly ſufficient to give entire ſatisfaction, and to ſupport all good men under the ſevereſt trials.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VIII.

The Moral Evidence of a Future State.

ROM. ii. 16.

In the day when GOD will judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt, according to my Goſpel.

THE evidence of a moral government, and the meaſures of divine juſtice which are in continual execution, for the reſtraint and correction of vice, and for the encouragement of virtue and piety in this life, have been obſerved in the preceding diſcourſe: and the ſummary account is, That the juſtice of GOD diſtinguiſhing the different actions of men appears, not in a diſtribution of worldly poſſeſſions, or of any external advantages or calamities; but chiefly in thoſe internal

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ſufferings or ſatisfactions which reſult by natural conſequence from the temper and conduct.

Domestic and civil government are indeed *ordinances* of God for the reſtraint of vice and protection of virtue, which beſpeak upon the whole the *governing deſign* of the author of nature, who fitted mankind for ſuch a ſtate of ſociety. But the authority and judgment of *conſcience* within the mind itſelf, approving right, and condemning wrong conduct, both of ourſelves and others, is a direct and certain proof of a judicial intention in that Being, whoſe wiſdom eſtabliſhed the conſtitution of the rational mind, as well as the frame of the animal body and the fabric of the material world. For the make of the mind is ſuch, that guilt produces remorſe, anxiety, fear, ſhame, and many painful emotions; but innocence and virtue are attended with tranquillity, comfort, hope, and many pleaſing affections. So that without having

ing recourſe to the frequent inſtances of wicked men, ruining their health, waſting their ſubſtance, pining with envy or avarice, or expoſing themſelves to the ſword of human juſtice, and thus eating the bitter *fruits of their own doings, and being filled with their own devices*; the natural influence of conſcience is ſufficient of *itſelf*, to turn the ballance on the ſide of innocence and probity, and to ſhew, that wicked practices ſerve in general, not to *increaſe*, but to *diminiſh* the happy enjoyment of life.

HERE then lies the main evidence of the governing intentions of the Supreme Maker of the world; and not in external accidents and events: for in this reſpect, as *Solomon* obſerves, *there are the ſame events to the righteous and to the wicked, as is the good ſo is the ſinner, and he that ſweareth as he that feareth an oath:* poverty, bodily pains and calamities ſeem equally incident to men of both characters: nor do famines, peſtilences, earthquakes, or other public de-

vaſta-

vaſtations, diſtinguiſh the different qualities of men, or pay the leaſt regard to their guilt or innocence: *becauſe* the all-wiſe Creator, in framing the elements, had a view to the ſtate of his creatures *collectively:* and as far as they are framed for the ſafety and benefit of mankind, *this* goodneſs he deſigned to extend *equally* to the juſt and the unjuſt. And therefore the providence of God doth not appear to diſtinguiſh the qualities of men in ſuch events of the world. This muſt be allowed, if we would not be guilty of ſpeaking *deceitfully* for God, and attempting to vindicate his juſtice by ſuppoſitions contrary to common experience.——This was the error of *Job*'s friends, who in their debating with him, and reaſoning upon this great ſubject, the juſtice of God's Providence, maintain confidently, that Divine Providence doth reward and puniſh men according to their deſerts, in this life, and even in their external and bodily circumſtances: and therefore ſeeing him reduced

to ſuch a miſerable ſituation, they peremptorily pronounce him guilty, and accuſe him in the bitterest terms of hypocriſy and ſecret wickedneſs. To which he replies, by proteſting his own innocence and integrity, aſſerting that the providence of God doth not diſtinguiſh good and bad men by their outward condition, and charging them with miſrepreſenting the actual ſtate of things, and *pleading for GOD deceitfully*; or defending his juſtice by falſe ſuppoſitions. And we find, in the concluſion of the book, that when the poet introduces the Almighty to end the debate, he firſt ſilences *Job*'s complaints, by ſhewing him his great ignorance of that unſearchable wiſdom, which eſtabliſhed the various parts of the creation, and formed the different ſpecies of living creatures; and finally reproves with indignation thoſe friends of *Job*, *who had not ſpoke of his providence the thing that was right as his ſervant Job had done.*

BUT beſide thoſe external calamities to which men of all characters are equally liable; there have been numerous examples of good men, who have ſuffered the moſt grievous oppreſſions, from the power and tyranny of wicked men, on the very account of their piety and integrity. This conduct of Providence, in permitting the beſt of men to fall under the dominion, and to bear the injuſtice and cruelty, of the worſt, even to the extremities of diſgrace, pain and death; may be thought an appearance the moſt inexplicable, and irreconcileable to our ideas of governing juſtice. For however ſuch hard trials may ſerve to exerciſe and improve the virtue, and exalt the piety, of the ſufferers, and render them exemplary to others; yet *excluſive* of another life, ſuch virtue neither appears to meet with any adequate recompence, nor ſcarcely to anſwer any purpoſe of wiſdom and goodneſs: and nothing can ſeem more *inconſiſtent* with a wiſe and juſt government, than to favour *lower* degrees

grees of virtue with the peaceable and comfortable enjoyment of life, and at the ſame time permit the *higheſt* degrees of it, not only to paſs unrewarded, but to be puniſhed with miſery and deſtruction. To reſign the eaſe and advantages of life, to withſtand the terrors of pain and death, rather than depart from the rules of integrity, is apparently the nobleſt degree of virtue human nature is capable of practiſing: and to do this, upon a principle of confidence in the divine juſtice and goodneſs, is ſurely a conduct moſt acceptable to the Supreme Being, if any actions of men can be ſo.

Can it then be believed, that the ſame all-wiſe, all-powerful and beſt of Beings, who throughout univerſal nature does *nothing in vain*, who provides for the wants and deſires of the brute-creatures, who gratifies in a various and wonderful manner the bodily appetites of all mankind; that He hath made *ſuch virtue in vain*, and mocks the beſt deſires of the beſt of men;

and hath ſo ordered, that the more abſolutely men *confide* in his wiſdom and goodneſs, the more miſerably they ſhall be *diſappointed?* Can it be imagined, that the ſame providence, which doth not produce a harveſt of grain, but to anſwer a beneficent end, and which hath a *meaning* in the minuteſt productions of nature; yet produceth this moſt valuable *moral harveſt* for nothing but *deſtruction*, and hath *no meaning* in thus cultivating and raiſing the virtue of men? Eſpecially when we conſider, that the root and principle of ſuch virtue is a *Faith in GOD*; a truſt in his rewarding juſtice, and hope of another life? Is it not a contradiction to admit, that the trueſt piety is that which ſprings from error and deluſion; that the nobleſt virtue is that which terminates in the worſt effects? —— If this appears inconſiſtent with that adminiſtration of a juſt government, and with thoſe deſigns of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, which are diſcovered in the general frame and conſtitution of

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the world and of human nature; we are hence led to believe a future ſtate upon a natural foundation of probability: *not* becauſe there are *no effects* of God's juſtice experienced at preſent; but becauſe, on the *contrary*, there are meaſures of divine *juſtice* as well as wiſdom, which are *commenced*, and are in *continual execution* in this life and world, which at the ſame time do not appear to be *finiſhed* here, but to extend further; and which ſeem moſt defective in the moſt important events and ſignal actions of life.

Public calamities involve good and bad men *equally* in a common ruin. And tho' in the uſual courſe of human life, the inferior and more ordinary degrees of vice and virtue meet with ſome proportionable degrees of puniſhment and reward, in the ordinary meaſures of a juſt providence, and by the very conſtitution of human nature; yet the moſt compleat and *hardened wickedneſs*, and the moſt eminent and *ſteddy virtue*, ſeem *not* to

be comprehended in *those measures*, but to remain *unprovided* for, in the *present* plan and administration of Divine Providence. Men by the very *excess* of wickedness get above the power of conscience, the sense of shame, and the fear of human resentments; and so escape those punishments which are intended to correct and restrain the lesser degrees of vice and folly: They are reserved therefore to another world, and *the Spirit of GOD ceaseth to strive with them*; but *after the hardness of their hearts they treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD.* And on the other hand, men often *lose*, even the usual advantages of virtue in this life, and sometimes life itself, by their *uncommon* fidelity and virtue: and therefore their reward is *not in this* world, but in *another*.

THUS we have endeavoured to shew the natural evidence of the moral government of GOD, or of his rewarding justice and good-

goodneſs, as it appears in the preſent actual ſtate of things, and as it leads to the *Faith* of the *Goſpel.*

By the *Goſpel* I mean, what the *Apoſtle* defineth as *his Goſpel* in the text, and what all the writers of the *New Teſtament* mean by it, viz. The doctrine of another life, and of the rewards of divine juſtice and goodneſs in it, diſpenſed by our *Saviour*; and by the *Faith* of the *Goſpel*, the belief of this doctrine.——

In reviewing the context we ſhall eaſily perceive what the *Apoſtle* declares to be *his Goſpel.*—*GOD will render to every man according to his works:*——This expreſſion aſſerts the moral government and juſtice of God:——*to them, who by patient continuance in well doing ſeek for glory, honour, and immortality; eternal Life:*—This aſſerts, that the meaſures of divine juſtice and goodneſs extend beyond this life, and that *immortality* will be the reward of that virtue which

is founded on faith in God and the hope of another life.——In what follows he aſſerts an appointment of puniſhments alſo to the vicious and impenitent; and that this diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments will be made to all mankind in the moſt impartial manner, without the leaſt reſpect to names and profeſſions: and finally, that the adminiſtration or execution of the divine juſtice and goodneſs in a life to come, is committed to our Bleſſed Saviour;——*In the day*, or at the time, *when GOD will judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt, according to my Goſpel.*

Now this *Goſpel* hath been variouſly known and believed, or unknown, diſregarded or rejected, and conſequently has had more or leſs influence, in all ages from the beginning of the world. For the *Faith* of the *Goſpel* was in the world, in *ſome degree*, before the coming of our *Saviour*.——Let it not ſeem ſtrange that I aſſert this; becauſe our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles*

poſtles aſſert the ſame. The patriarch *Abraham* was inſtructed in the *Goſpel*, as our *Apoſtle* aſſerts, Gal. 3. And he believed it: *he believed GOD, and it was accounted unto him for righteouſneſs.* That is, He acted upon a confidence in the rewarding juſtice and goodneſs of God in another life, and was therefore acceptable to him. He had alſo ſome information of that great deſcendant from himſelf, by whom this eternal Salvation was to be accompliſhed: *he longed*, ſaith our *Saviour*, (for ſo it ſhould be tranſlated) *to ſee my day; he ſaw it, and was glad.*——The writer to the *Hebrews* ſhews throughout the eleventh Chapter, how the moſt celebrated perſons of the *Jewiſh* antiquity, acted upon the *like faith*, and were animated in virtue by the expectation of a *life to come.* And he defines the *Faith* of the *Goſpel* to be *the ſubſtance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not ſeen:* That is, the firm belief, founded on ſufficient evidence, of a life inviſible and eternal.—The *Apoſtle Peter*, placing *this* life

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and the *future* life in contraſt, ſays, *All fleſh is graſs, and all the glory of man the flower of graſs; the graſs withereth, and the flower thereof falleth:* that is, the *animal nature* of man, as inhabitant of the earth, is ſo far akin, not only to the brute-creatures, but even to the *plants* and *graſs* of the earth, that, by the law and conſtitution of his *nature*, he muſt decay and periſh like them:—*but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is that word which by the Goſpel is preached unto you:* that is, the diſcovery and aſſurance of an immortal life is the *Goſpel.*——The *Apoſtle John* ſums up the whole *Goſpel* in two points: *that GOD gives eternal life to men, and that this life is in his Son.* And in the beginning of his firſt epiſtle he ſays, *We declare what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have ſeen with our eyes, what we have viewed, what we have handled of the word of life:* referring to that experimental proof the *Apoſtles* had of another life, by ſeeing with their own eyes, viewing at their leiſure,

ſure, and even handling our *Bleſſed Saviour* after his reſurrection. For he adds, *The life*, that is, the life to come, *was diſcovered, and we ſaw it, and bear witneſs of it, and declare to you, that eternal life, which was with the Father, and which is now revealed to us.*—And to return to our *Apoſtle*, in the xvth chapter of his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, he reminds them of, and declares what *that Goſpel* is, which he had before preached to them: —— *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you, the Goſpel which I preached unto you, which alſo ye have received, and wherein ye ſtand: by which ye are alſo ſaved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unleſs ye have believed in vain.* And we find throughout the whole chapter, that it was the doctrine of a future life, founded on the Reſurrection of our *Saviour* from the dead.

From all theſe paſſages we may clearly underſtand what the *Goſpel* is. It lies in a ſhort compaſs, and nothing is more intelligible.

ligible.—The whole hiſtory of the diſcourſes and actions of our *Saviour* and of his *Apoſtles*, and their reaſonings, replies, confutations of objections, and precepts of duty, are all calculated to ſupport the belief, and to direct the influence of *this Goſpel* againſt the prejudices of *Jews* and *Heathens*.—And it is of importance to diſtinguiſh the *Goſpel itſelf*, from the train of circumſtances, events, diſcourſes, arguments, aſſertions, and inſtructions, which are recorded in the *New Teſtament*, in *proof* and *defence* of *this Goſpel*, and to promote its ſpread and influence. From a want of making this juſt and *important diſtinction*, much controverſy, miſtake, and confuſion have ariſen amongſt Chriſtians concerning the *Goſpel*; or concerning the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of *Chriſtianity*; which have been ſtrangely multiplied and confounded in the imaginations of men.—But the whole may be ſummed up in a few words: that God will aſſuredly raiſe mankind to another life, and judge them according

cording to their actions, by *Christ our Saviour*, whom he hath appointed to that end, *whereof he hath given us an assurance by raising him from the dead.*—This summary of *Christian Faith* is given by our *Apostle* in his speech to the *Athenian* court. The Almighty Maker and Father of mankind, pursuant to the designs of his creative wisdom and the measures of his governing justice and goodness, not intending that mankind should perish at death, hath employed and appointed our *Blessed Saviour*, as the great administrator of his moral government, to raise from the dead and to judge mankind, and to confer immortality on all who shall be found qualified for such divine favour.——Here is in one clear and single view, the glorious *Gospel of our Salvation*, the sublime and joyful *tidings*, most worthy of our grateful acceptance. To confirm *this Gospel*, and give it its proper influence on the hearts and lives of men, is the whole scope of all the arguments

ments and inſtructions delivered in the writings of the *New Teſtament*.

THE *Jews* in general before the coming of our Saviour, and the *Heathens* alſo, had ſome apprehenſions and belief of a future ſtate. But it is remarkable, that in all the books of the *Old Teſtament* there is little or nothing ſaid clearly and expreſly concerning it. The grand diſcovery ſeems to have been reſerved for that eminent perſon, who is *the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, who hath aboliſhed death, and brought life and immortality to light*, and who is himſelf *the reſurrection and the life*. And from that time, the belief of another life has prevailed, and had an influence in a manner and degree, which it never had before. The ſeed of the *Goſpel* hath ſprung up and produced a harveſt of genuine virtue and piety: multitudes having actually maintained integrity and a good conſcience, againſt all the allurements of this life and

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the terrors of death, in confidence of a life to come.

It is no part of our design in these discourses to derogate from natural religion, or to advance the *Christian revelation* to the disparagement of the light of nature, but to shew the extent and excellence of both in conjunction, considering one as the foundation, and the other as the superstructure; and to observe where the superstructure begins, that we may know the value of the *Gospel* and the dignity of our *Christian Faith*, as built upon, and rising superior to, the *Faith of natural religion.*

We shall therefore in the following discourses more particularly consider the natural evidences of a future state; and how they are confirmed by the *Christian-revelation.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE IX.

The Natural Credibility of a Future State.

ACTS xxvi. 8.

Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you, that GOD ſhould raiſe the dead?

IN order to eſtabliſh our minds in the ſublime faith and hope of a life to come and a ſtate of immortality, on the ſureſt and largeſt foundations; it is requiſite to raiſe and enlarge, as much as poſſible, our apprehenſions of the grandeur and excellence of the works and deſigns of Almighty GOD.

BEFORE *the breath of life* inſpired our firſt progenitor, *before the mountains were brought forth, or the ſoil of the earth was formed*, before the rivers flowed, and the

ocean filled the ſpacious cavities of the earth, *from everlaſting there was GOD*; the firſt and only potentate, who holds immortality, life, and exiſtence, in himſelf; who is all, yet ſeparate from all; who pervades and ſupports every thing; who connects the remoteſt parts of eternity and immenſity; who is the life of all that live, the exiſtence of whatſoever exiſts; whoſe wiſdom, goodneſs, and power were without a beginning, the ſame in the paſt eternity, and will be the ſame without end.

In revolving backwards the interminable ſeries of ages paſt, before this world was made, can we ever come to a period when there were no creatures exiſting, nothing but the ſole ſelf-ſufficient deity? Were there not always worlds and ſyſtems without number, peopled with myriads of intelligent beings, beholding the glory and rejoicing in the goodneſs of their Creator? Could infinite wiſdom ever exiſt with no deſigns in execution? Could Almighty

power

power ever lye dormant and inactive? Could exuberant goodneſs ever be barren and unprofitable? and the fountain of all life and good ſend forth no ſtream of beneficence?——Were we capable of inſpecting the *archives* of heaven and reading the *Volumes of eternal hiſtory*; how would the vaſt operations and revolutions in numberleſs ſyſtems of being, which never reached the eyes or ears of mortals, and which the tongue of *Angels* is not able to relate, teach us to conceive of the fulneſs of deity, and amplify our ideas of the power, wiſdom, and goodneſs of God! When we lift up our eyes to the heavens, and view the ſublime regions of the worlds above, we behold ſomething of the glory of God: the ſcene is indeed vaſt and magnificent beyond the ſtretch of human imagination: in contemplating, which we wonder with a childiſh ignorance and incapacity; we gueſs a *little*, underſtand *leſs*, and fully comprehend *nothing*. Yet this proſpect, tho' inconceivably great, is but a *little ſcene*,

in comparison of what hath been, is now, and ever shall be, in boundless ages and spaces. The works of Almighty God are now, ever were, and ever will be, *adequate* to the inexhaustible plenitude and absolute perfection of his own nature.

But if the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of deity, never were, in any age of past eternity, inactive or unbeneficent; it follows, that there may be exalted spirits now existing in a glorious state, who are *not of yesterday* like *ourselves*; but who have been from millions of ages, and who may not be able themselves to trace back their own existence, thro' so vast antiquity, to the remote beginning; who nevertheless may at first have inhabited a world, and animated bodies similar to our own; and having acquired virtue and passed the trials of life and death, became the proper objects of divine favour, and arose to glory and immortality.——What shall be, may have been: what hath been, may be hereafter

after. And no angel, no created ſpirit, but God alone *knows all his own works* and deſigns *from everlaſting to everlaſting.*

Inconceivable revolutions have taken effect in remote ages. One world or ſyſtem hath ſtill ſucceeded to the ruin of a former, before this world had a beginning. And how great and wondrous was the change, when from the decay and diſſolution of an *old world* this *new world* was raiſed!——when *the ſpirit of GOD* firſt moved the enormous confuſed maſs, ſeparated the elements, and diſpoſed every part to its proper place:——when *GOD ſaid, let there be light*; and light ſhone upon the dark ſurface of the earth:——*Let there be living creatures to repleniſh the earth*; and they were:——*Let man be made*; and man was made *in the image of GOD*, bearing, in his *ſpiritual* nature, ſome ſimilitude of the infinite eternal *ſpirit*, who made him.

If ſuch and ſo great and aſtoniſhing the effects of divine power and goodneſs in ages paſt; why ſhall not *equal* events come to paſs hereafter?—*Why ſhould it be thought incredible that GOD ſhould raiſe the dead?*—When we conſider, *that power*, which commanded the light to exiſt, gave form and motion to the vaſt orbs of heaven, and life to every living creature;——*that wiſdom*, which by unknown ſprings directs all the revolutions of the material ſyſtem, and by inviſible chains connects the remoteſt parts of the viſible creation, and forms the bodies and ſouls of men with unſearchable ſkill;——*that goodneſs*, which is the ſource of all joy and happineſs, which hath given the earth to the ſons of men for their preſent uſe and pleaſure, and makes earth and heaven conſpire to their ſupport and delight;——what effects may not be expected in ages to come and worlds inviſible, from ſuch unlimited power, wiſdom, and goodneſs?——

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AFTER appealing to the primæval revolutions of remote antiquity, and arguing from the original formation of *this visible* world for the credibility of another *invisible*; let us consult the *present* appearances and operations in nature: and if we can find any, which are equal or *similar* to a *resurrection of the dead*; this may remove difficulties, and facilitate our belief of that important doctrine.

THE rise of every successive generation of men upon the earth, may be termed, not improperly, a continual *resurrection of human nature.*——We believe without any doubt, that multitudes of men shall be produced into life, and inhabit the earth in ages to come; tho' they are, at present, not only *invisible*, but *not in existence.* It is but a short period since the present generation came into being; since the creative omnipotent power of GOD raised us from nothing, to enjoy the present life, and see the light of his glorious works.

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And is He not every moment producing human ſouls into being and life, to repleniſh the loſs of thoſe who are removed from the earth?——And certainly the continual production of ſouls *from non-exiſtence* into *this life and world*, is a divine operation *ſimilar* and *equipollent* to the raiſing them *from death* to *another life and world.*

Let us obſerve the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, when they ſeem to deſcend into the *infernal* regions, yet *riſe again* at their appointed period.—Let us attend to the declining ſeaſon of the year, and the following *reſurrection* of the ſpring. The trees of the foreſt drop their leaves: every plant languiſhes and ſickens: and the cold hand of winter benumbs and *deadens* the vegetable world: 'till the appointed period of the revolving year arrives: and then, how is the face of the earth renewed; and all the vegetable tribes receive *freſh life*, at the return of the great fountain of vital heat.——If God hath given to the ſun

ſuch *reviving power* over the plants of the earth; how much more may his own moſt glorious power *reſtore life* to the decaying and dying generations of men?

Let us mark the diminutive creatures which at firſt ſubſiſt in a torpid ſtate ſcarce half-alive, then with active limbs traverſe the clods of earth, then ſeem to die, yet *revive*, and with new acquired wings mount up into the airy regions.

Let us examine the diſſolving bodies upon the earth, and trace the ſeparated parts thro' the ſeveral changes and migrations; and we ſhall find that not an atom periſhes, that every particle ſtill ſubſiſts, and has only *changed* its place and form. If then the minuteſt parts of dead matter are ſtill preſerved and never annihilated; is not the ſenſitive intelligent ſoul of man more worthy of preſervation?—And may it not ſubſiſt after death, tho' in a different manner and ſtate, and with an acceſſion

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of new faculties?—Or ſhall the *ſoul alone*, that particle of divine breath, that living image of the ever-living ſpirit of God, *periſh*, whilſt every part of the body remains in being, tho' ſo much changed in ſituation and form?

Finally, let us conſider, how *ſleep*, that *image of death*, pervades the human frame, and in ſoft yet ſtrong chains binds up the ſoul of man, and ſuſpends its faculties; yet in a moment, *in the twinkling of an eye*, the bands are burſt, and the *ſoul riſes* to wakeful and active life.——May not the bands of death be looſed in like manner?—To *die* is but to *ſleep*, the ſofteſt ſoundeſt repoſe; free from every mortal care, fear, trouble and pain: *then the weary are at* their full *reſt*.—And when they have *reſted* their *appointed period*, ſhall riſe with new vigour and activity.

From ſuch views of the actual proceſs of divine wiſdom in nature, may not a rational

rational hope arise, that *death* is no other than the *birth* of a life to come; and that the *grave* shall yield an immortal *offspring*, born to possess a world of eternal light?—Is there any thing impossible or *unnatural* in this doctrine?——On the contrary, are we not led to the conception and belief of it, from what we already know and experience of the divine operations?——If the power of God framed the whole world, raised the body of the first man from the dust, made him a *living soul*, and gave him to possess the earth; if the same power is continually *raising souls* from nothing to *this life*; can it appear *incredible*, that he should *raise the dead* to *another life?*—What can be more consistent with and pursuant to the main purposes of his wisdom and goodness apparent in the formation of this world and of mankind?——*O slow of heart to understand the power of GOD*, and to trust the designs of his all-preserving and eternal providence!—On the part of the divine Attributes, and what an all-powerful,

wise,

wiſe, and beneficent providence may intend and execute; there does not appear, in the eye of reaſon, the leaſt incredibility in the doctrine of a life to come.

But tho' no objection or difficulty may appear to remain, *on the part* of the divine perfections, and while we conſider the boundleſs extent of the power, wiſdom, and goodneſs of that eternal potentate, who is the giver and preſerver of all life; yet a formidable objection may ſeem to ariſe *on the part* of human nature, and our own meanneſs and unworthineſs. For are mankind worthy of eternal life? Is it credible that *mortal* man ſhall be made *heir of immortality?* that *ſinful* man ſhall be an object of divine everlaſting favour?——*What is man, that GOD ſhould be ſo mindful of him?* What is the whole world of mankind, that God ſhould *viſit them*, with ſo much clemency and goodneſs?—How little is the greateſt of men, how worthleſs the beſt, in the eye of the Sovereign Lord of all

all Beings? Compared to ſuperior intelligences, man is but as a worm, and all the ſons of men as ſhort-lived reptiles in the duſt of earth. *All nations of the earth before GOD are as nothing; they are counted to him as leſs than nothing and vanity.*

In *this* view, the doctrine of a reſurrection to another life might be thought *incredible*; if the Creator had not *already* diſcovered ſuch marks of paternal goodneſs to his creatures of mankind: if he had not *made man but a degree lower than the angels, crowned him with honour, given him dominion over the earth,* and ſubjected the lower animals to his uſe and pleaſure; if he did not *cauſe his ſun to ſhine and his rain to deſcend upon us*; if he did not make the elements of the world to co-operate in a wonderful manner to the preſervation of human life; if he was not continually raiſing mankind, by the methods of his all-wiſe providence in the conſtitution of nature, to their ſeveral degrees of knowledge,

ledge, virtue, and happineſs: without this foundation in nature we could have no ground to hope for a life to come. And notwithſtanding this natural foundation of evidence, it might ſtill have been thought a *dark* and diſputable doctrine, *wanting* a moſt *deſirable* confirmation; if *the Father* Almighty had not alſo ſent *his Son* into the world, *who hath brought immortality to light*, and ſelected *him*, the moſt eminent and worthy of the human race, to be the great leader and example of the reſurrection of mankind, *the firſt-born from the dead*, the Sovereign and judge of men in that unſeen eternal world, *which is his everlaſting kingdom.* His virtue was perfected, when he voluntarily gave himſelf to die a moſt ignominious and painful death in obedience to God; and was proportionably rewarded, when he was *raiſed from the dead*, and *exalted* to a throne of eternal dominion and glory. And the virtuous endeavours of all men, how weak and imperfect ſoever, are in due proportion approved and accepted

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by the all-righteous and merciful Governor of the world, who deſpiſeth not the poorest offerings of a ſincere and obedient heart. Tho' human nature is infirm, and the beginnings of virtue but as the ſmallest ſparks; *the bruiſed reed ſhall not be broken, nor the ſmoaking flax extinguiſhed:* where there are any ſincere efforts of obedience and generous love of goodneſs, they are encouraged in the *Goſpel*, with the moſt animating aſſurances of acceptance and favour, and *ſhall in no wiſe loſe their reward.* How little and unworthy ſoever the human ſpecies may appear, compared to Beings of celeſtial dignity, wiſdom and virtue, yet *it is not the will of your Father in heaven*, ſaith *our Saviour, that one of theſe little ones ſhould periſh.*

If any ſhould further object, and ſay, *How are the dead raiſed? And with what bodies do they come?*——The *Apoſtle*'s anſwer is, How doth the *grain* that is buried and

diſſolved in the earth *riſe again?* And who *giveth* it its *proper body?*—Can that divine wiſdom which hath formed matter with an infinite *variety*, and which gives to every *body*, rare or denſe, ſolid or fluid, celeſtial or terreſtrial, its *proper* nature and form; can ſuch wiſdom be at a loſs to provide ſuitable receptacles, and to every ſpirit its proper dwelling?——Such objections proceed from the narrowneſs of our conceptions; and will vaniſh upon a more attentive and enlarged obſervation of the actual operations of infinite power and wiſdom.

The ſame beneficent and *miraculous power*, which made the *lame to walk*, the *deaf to hear*, the *blind to ſee*, which reſtored *the dead to life*, which *raiſed up Chriſt* from the grave, and ſeated him on a throne of celeſtial power and dignity, will alſo heal the infirmities and involuntary diſtempers of the human mind, endow the virtuous

ſoul

ſoul with new life and enlarged faculties, and *raiſe* it to that unſeen ſtate and region, where our *riſen* and *exalted Saviour* holds his eternal empire.

THUS the *revealed evidence* of a reſurrection from the dead to life everlaſting, is founded upon and connected with the *natural credibility* of this ſublime doctrine: and thus *the Goſpel* enhances the natural credibility into a confirmed aſſurance.—— *How then can it be thought incredible that GOD ſhould raiſe the dead?*——The wondrous operations of divine power, in all ages and thro' univerſal nature, ſerve to perſuade us of its *credibility*; the miraculous events of *Goſpel-revelation* ought to convince us of its *certainty*.

LET this ſublime *Faith* be eſtabliſhed in our minds: let it encourage us to *overcome the world:* let us rejoice and triumph in the exalted hope, and unbounded pro-

ſpect, of an immortal life. —— *O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy victory?*—The all-ſubduing enemy of mankind is itſelf ſubdued.——Let us add,—— *Thanks be to GOD, who giveth us the victory, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE X.

The Goſpel-Diſcovery of a Future State.

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2 TIM. i. 10.

Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.

MANKIND born into this life and world, are no sooner capable of looking around them, and considering the frame of their nature and the condition of their being, than they become sensible of their mortality, and see death before them. The human frame, like that of every animal and plant upon the earth, soon decays and falls to ruin. *All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.* While one generation is springing up, the former is fading and passing away. The brave, the wealthy, the wise, the innocent, the

good, all come to the same end, and are involved in the universal destruction.

But is it an *absolute* destruction? an *eternal* period of life and Being? Are all men doomed to perish *for ever* at death? Is there *no redemption? no salvation?* In this most momentous inquiry, *revelation* comes in to our aid, and extricates us from doubt and perplexity. The *Gospel* is an authentic discovery of a life to come: it extends our view beyond this narrow scene of things, to the boundless region of an immortal existence. It overlooks the interests of this life and the wisdom of this world: it doth not instruct us in the policy of government, the prudence of laws, the discipline of war, or the arts of peace: nor does it unfold the mysteries of philosophy, or disclose the wonders of the material and visible creation. These inferior subjects are left to the natural abilities and inquiries of men. But it treats of something more important and interesting to mankind;

kind; and at the ſame time more unſearchable by human wiſdom and penetration. It diſcloſeth to us an inviſible world, brings immortality to view, and aſſures us of a reſurrection from death to a life everlaſting.——And what other ſubject can be conceived ſo proper for a ſupernatural diſcovery, ſo worthy of the interpoſition of a ſuperior Being, ſo equal to the dignity of a *divine revelation.*

In regard to the viſible works of creation, and the material worlds preſent to us in time but diſtant in ſpace, the attempts of inquiſitive men have been in ſome meaſure ſucceſsful, have made ſome admirable diſcoveries, and *brought to view* many objects beyond the natural ſight of the eye. But in regard to an *hereafter*, and all that may lie beyond the viſible boundary of death, no human ability, art, or invention could ever make the *leaſt diſcovery.* It was, as Job expreſſes it, a *region of darkneſs without*

out any order, and where the light is as darkness.

But our *Blessed Saviour hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light:* he hath revealed *this mystery of God, which laid hid in the divine counsels from the beginning of the world:* he hath drawn aside the dark veil which precluded all human foresight, and opened to the eyes of our understanding a prospect into futurity; hath established our belief of a world to come, on the surest evidence; and given us all the information concerning it, that is proper to our condition, and promotive of our virtue and happiness.

Mankind were wandering *in the dark*, uncertain, perplexed, conscious of guilt, rather *doubting* than *believing* a life to come, rather *fearing* than *hoping* for the consequence of death; when *in the fullness of time*, a messenger from heaven arrived, issuing

iſſuing the proclamations of divine grace, aſſuring men of the pardon of their ſins, of a deliverance from the power of death, and of a reſurrection to a life incorruptible and eternal. He *ſpoke not of himſelf*, but as he was authorized and directed to ſpeak: and did not deſire to be credited upon his own *word* alone, but upon the evidence of his miraculous *works*. He aſſerted his own authority to *forgive the ſins* of men: and to prove it, he healed inſtantaneouſly the moſt inveterate *diſtempers* of men: arguing thus with the Phariſees, *Which is eaſier to ſay, Thy ſins are forgiven thee, or to ſay, Riſe, take up thy bed and walk?—But that you may know that the ſon of man hath power to forgive ſins, he ſaith to the paralytic cripple, Riſe, take up thy bed and walk.*——He pretended to the mighty power of *raiſing all mankind from the dead*; and ſaid, *The time ſhall come, when all they that are in their graves ſhall hear the voice of the ſon of GOD; and they that hear ſhall live.* And for proof, he *raiſed the dead* by the power of his word:

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he said to the deceased daughter of Jairus, *arise*, and she arose from the dead: he commanded the corpse of the widow's son upon the bier to *arise*; and he immediately *arose to life* and health: he stood and called with a loud voice, *Lazarus come forth*; and he who had been interred four days *heard* the potent voice, *and came forth* from his *Sepulchre*. He assumed a power of conferring immortality or an eternal life; and for our conviction he himself *appeared alive* from the dead, *neuer to die more*, and visibly ascended to heaven: and finally, he claimed *all power in heaven*, as well as *on earth*, requisite to the eternal salvation of men, a power in the invisible regions, and over a superior order of intelligent beings: and what evidence did he give to prove this high assertion? he sent down, according to his promise, *the Holy Spirit*, to illuminate his Apostles, and enable them to work miracles in his name.

All the miracles wrought by our Lord and his Apoſtles; the peculiar and perfect character he invariably ſuſtained in every diſcourſe and action; his voluntary ſubmiſſion to a cruel and ignominious death; the integrity and diſintereſtedneſs of his Apoſtles; the conſiſtency of the Goſpel-doctrines; the purity of all its precepts; the accompliſhment of predictions; furniſh various evidences to the ſame effect, To prove the truth of our Lord's *high pretenſions*, in aſſuming to himſelf an eternal dominion over mankind, as the immediate Author of a life to come, and the diſpenſer of the rewards of immortality to the human race.

But the *particular fact*, on which our Lord and his Apoſtles ſeem to lay the greateſt ſtreſs, as the ſpecial evidence of a future ſtate, and of his own dominion and authority in that ſtate; was *his own reſurrection:* it was by *his own riſing and appearing alive from the dead to many witneſſes, and*

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by many infallible proofs, that *he abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light.*——Thus St. Peter says, *Blessed be the GOD and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath regenerated us to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, reserved for us.*—— So the Apostle John introduces his Epistle with expressing the absolute certainty of our Lord's resurrection, and alledging it as the discovery and proof of a life to come;——*What we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, what we have viewed, what our hands have handled of the word of life, we declare unto you: for the life* to come *was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness of it, even that eternal life which was with the Father, and which is now discovered to us:*—Plainly referring to our Lord's resurrection, and the infallible evidence the Apostles had of it from their own senses.—In like manner St. Paul connects a future state with Christ's resurrection:

rection:——*Now if Christ be risen, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? For if the dead rise not, then Christ is not risen, and we are found false witnesses of GOD:——But now Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.*—Here he considers the particular resurrection of our Saviour, as the proof, specimen, and commencement of a future life to mankind in general.——And the Author of the Book of *Revelations* introduces our Lord in his risen and exalted state, as speaking of himself with great dignity, saying, *I am the first and the last*; that is, the chief of Mankind, *who was dead, but am alive, and behold I live for evermore, and I possess the keys of death and the invisible world.*

The general theory of the Gospel concerning the nature, design and end of a life to come, is most just and rational; and includes in it the true *natural evidence* of its reality. For it represents the raising man-

mankind from death to another life, as a mighty operation of the glorious power of God, a constitution of his infinite wisdom, and an effect of his paternal goodness and benevolence: and deduces the primary evidences of our belief, not from the attributes or qualities of the *human* soul, but from the *divine* perfections; not from the *merits* of good men, but from the *grace* or favour of the Father Almighty; who in pursuance of the same purposes of wisdom and goodness for which he created mankind to this life, saves them from perishing at death, and raises them to another life and world. And as the good of mankind was evidently an object of the divine intention, in the formation of this world; so the scheme of another life and world, which is as it were a new creation and constitution of things, hath for its end the greater good and eternal happiness of mankind: and was formed in the divine counsel, not from a motive of *resentment* against the *sins* of men, but of *love* and mercy to mankind,

mankind, *tho' ſinners*; not to ſhew the rigour of his *juſtice* in *puniſhing* the wicked, but the boundleſs extent of his *goodneſs* in *ſaving* to eternal ages the virtuous and pious: from which ſalvation none ſhall be excluded, but they who diſqualify themſelves for it, by their impenitence and preſumptuous wickedneſs; and whoſe puniſhment and deſtruction are requiſite to the purpoſes of goodneſs itſelf, to the ends of divine government, and to the higheſt virtue and happineſs of the rational creation.

SUCH is the general view, which our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* give us of this ſublime ſubject. In ſupport of which we may ſingle out, among many other paſſages, the following words of our Saviour: *GOD ſo loved the world, that he hath given his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth on him might not periſh, but have everlaſting life:—and ſent him, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be ſaved thro' him.*—

And those of the Apostle;—*GOD, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved mankind, hath quickened us even when dead in sins, and raised us up together with Christ, and seated us with him in the heavenly places; that he might shew in the ages to come the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards them in Christ Jesus.*

OUR *Saviour* himself describes the general nature and design of the future state, and particularly the grand distinction and final separation, which will be made by *his own* judgment and authority, according to the difference of men's characters, in various *familiar comparisons*, suited to the capacity, conduct, and experience of men. ——As the *husbandman* carefully separates the *good grain* from the *useless chaff*, and *reposites* the former in his garner, but *destroys* the latter: as the *fisherman* gathers of every kind into his net, but *separates the good into vessels*, and *casts the bad away*: as the *master of a feast* admits those whom he judgeth

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to be *worthy*, but rejects and excludes the *unworthy*: as the *Prince* rewards those who serve him with fidelity, according to the capacity in which he hath placed them, but condemns the unprofitable and treacherous servant:——As *all men*, in all things subject to their cognizance and judgment, usually *distinguish* the good from the bad, the fit from the unfit, the useful from the noxious:——*So shall it be at the end of this world*: a distinction and separation will be made, by a most wise judgment and just appointment, between good and evil men. *The Son of Man*, the appointed judge, *will send forth his angels, and sever the wicked from among the just*, and destroy the former, but preserve the latter in eternal life.

The condemnation of the wicked to eternal destruction in another state, does not detract from the goodness of the divine intention and operation, in raising mankind to another life. For as the creating

all mankind to this life is undoubtedly *an effect of divine beneficence*, tho' some men make themselves wicked and miserable in it, and come to an untimely and tragical end; so *much more* is the restoration of all mankind to a life after death, *an effect of infinite goodness*, tho' some shall afterwards perish for ever; and instead of enjoying that eternal life, which is *the gift of GOD in Christ Jesus our Lord*, shall undergo the misery and penalty of an absolute and eternal destruction.——This procedure is analogous to the experienced constitution and process of nature. As the providence of God produceth all mankind into this world, according to one and the same law and order of nature; so the beneficent operation of Almighty Power, in raising men to another life, extends to the *whole collective body* of mankind: tho' far *greater distinctions* will arise in *that* life, than *any* we observe in *this*: distinctions proportioned to the moral character and desert of every man: and the wicked shall be finally

excluded from that life, and condemned to perish in death eternal. The *redemption* which is in *Christ Jesus our Lord*, considered as a deliverance from the power of death, or a resurrection to another life, is a *benefit* or priviledge bestowed on *mankind in general*; in like manner as their production into this life: but the everlasting possession of that life is *peculiar to the righteous:* not to any nation, party, or profession of men; but to the virtuous and good of all mankind. *For they who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life; and they who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

How clear and rational this account is, how consistent with the constitution of nature, how agreeable to our best apprehensions of the divine perfections and government, and conducive to the satisfaction of every good mind, will easily appear to the thoughtful and ingenuous part of mankind.

We shall proceed to some particular views, which the Gospel *reveals* and represents to us, of the future state and life; such as we may clearly collect from some memorable passages of our *Saviour* and his *Apostles*.——And here it becomes us to adhere *closely* to the express words of *Holy Scripture*; lest we should indulge a vain and groundless imagination, instead of attending to those solid truths of revelation which are proper to influence our practice.

First: Our Blessed Saviour informs us, that the future state of good men, or their manner of existence and life, shall bear a resemblance to that of a superior order of Beings, who are denominated the *Angels* of God:——*They shall be like* (for so it should be translated) *unto the angels*. Luke xx. 36.——That there is a rank or order of Beings, the creatures and servants of God, of a nature and dignity far superior to the mortal inhabitants of the earth, invisible to us, yet spectators of human actions,

tions, is a ſentiment that ſeems natural to mankind, as it has prevailed more or leſs in all ages and nations; and will appear upon examination agreeable to the beſt philoſophy, and the moſt rational ideas we are able to form of the immenſe ſyſtem of the univerſe.——This ſentiment, abſtracted from the fictitious and corrupt additions made to it by the *Jews* and *Heathens*, is confirmed by our holy religion: and thoſe benevolent ſpirits are deſcribed as *rejoicing at the repentance of every ſinner*; as *miniſtring to the heirs of Salvation*; as attending upon our Lord in the moſt important emergencies; and as employed by him in the future ſtate of mankind, and in the execution of the final judgment. The reſurrection of good men therefore will be to a ſtate, rank, degree, and manner of exiſtence, different from and ſuperior to the preſent ſtate of mankind, and *ſimilar* to that of the angelic order, who are now converſant, tho' inviſible, with the actions and characters of mankind.

SECONDLY: It will be a state of *society*, in which all good men, *the sons of the resurrection*, shall enjoy in common the same rank and condition of Being, and have a mutual connection and intercourse, as belonging to the same general community. And this is so often intimated in the writings of the *New Testament*, that it is unnecessary to produce particular passages: and it is an idea, which an attentive observation of the œconomy of divine wisdom, in the arrangement of the several species of creatures in this visible world, may lead us to conceive and approve.

THIRDLY: It will be the *same* state in which our Saviour himself is resident. For he says to his disciples before his departure from this world, *I am going to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also*. And as the punishment of the wicked is described by an expulsion or banishment from his presence; so the happiness of good men is expressed by their *being admitted into*

his

his presence and joy, and by *dwelling for ever together with him.*

FOURTHLY: It is represented as a state of *government*, and in which mankind shall be united under *one* head and ruler, even our *Saviour himself*, the Redeemer of mankind, who underwent sufferings and death in this world of mortality, that, by his inestimable virtue, he might be found *worthy to receive honour, glory, and everlasting dominion*, and become the author of immortality to mortal men, and their eternal King. And *this future state* is constantly described as being the true, proper, peculiar and *everlasting kingdom* of our Lord. And there is *no other* state, life, or world to come for *mankind*, but that over which our Lord rules, and where he hath obtained an eternal empire, and into which all good men shall have *an abundant entrance administered* to them; but into which the workers of iniquity shall have no admission. And the qualifications requisite for an admission

mission into *this kingdom of heaven* are described at large, with the most express and solemn assurances, that no admission can be obtained without them.

FIFTHLY: It is described by our Saviour himself, as *one particular* state, region, or world of habitation, distinct from numberless others which are in the infinite universe. *In my Father's house*, says he, *are many mansions*:—In the immensity of space possessed by the infinite Being, there are various states and worlds of residence, fit for the various orders and ranks of his intelligent creatures. *I am going to prepare a place for you*, an habitation fit for the reception of my followers, *that where I am there ye may be also.*

SIXTHLY: It is represented by the *Apostle Paul*, as a *bodily* state; in which the human spirit shall be invested, not with a body like these dissolvable and mortal bodies, nor composed of the same materials:

rials: *for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of GOD:* but with *a fabric of GOD, incorruptible, fashioned after Christ's glorious body, by that mighty power by which He is able to subdue every thing to himself.* For as there are various kinds of bodies subject to our senses, so there are numberless other kinds of which we have no sense or knowledge: *And GOD giveth to every creature its own proper body,* of what nature and duration he pleases, according to the state of life for which it is designed: *and so shall it be,* says the Apostle, *in the resurrection.* And comparing the transformation which human nature shall receive at the resurrection, to that which the seeds of plants undergo when they are sown in the earth, he says, *It is sown in corruption, but raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, but raised in glory: it is sown an animal body, but raised a spiritual body:* (so greatly does the comparison fall short here between the resurrection of plants from seed and that of mankind from the dead:)

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He adds, *for there is an animal* or mortal *body*; *and there is a spiritual* or a refined and immortal *body*.

SEVENTHLY and lastly: as to the particular *time* as well as manner, in which the divine wisdom directs the mighty operation of raising mankind to another life; revelation seems not to determine expresly, whether the spirits of good men are raised *immediately* after death to another life, or whether they continue for a *period* of time in *a state of death*, or, as the holy writers term it, *sleep*, their faculties being *suspended* in total inactivity and insensibility. *For it is not for us to know the times and seasons which the Father Almighty hath reserved to his own power*. And where revelation stops, it is a vain attempt to proceed further: and all speculations and conjectures only serve to indulge an useless and unreasonable curiosity, which ought to be repressed. ——The account which the Apostle gives us is sufficient to our satisfaction; *that as*

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in Adam, or after the example of Adam, *all die*; ſo after the example of *Chriſt's* reſurrection *all ſhall be made alive: but every man in his due order: Chriſt the firſt fruits; afterwards they who are Chriſt's at his coming: and after that cometh the end.*—From which we may collect, what is in itſelf the moſt rational ſuppoſition, That, as in all other divine operations, ſo in the vaſt tranſaction of raiſing the dead to another life, there will be a determinate *order* and *regular proceſs*. And there is one obſervation may here occur, which as it plainly tends to the encouragement of virtue and piety, ſhould not be ſuppreſſed in ſilence; which is, that as every one ſhall be raiſed in *his due order*, there appears to be a priority or *precedency* allotted to good men, and that they ſhall be raiſed before the reſt of mankind. Our Bleſſed Saviour, who was beyond compariſon the *beſt of men*, was alſo, according to ſcripture-account, the *firſt of mankind* who aroſe from the dead *to die no more*: hence he is ſtiled *the firſt fruits of*

them

them that slept; the first-born from the dead; the first-born amongst many brethren; the first-born of every creature: and faithful christians are represented as raised the next in order of time, and prior to the general and final resurrection of mankind at the end of the world. The Apostle Paul strongly expresses his own hope and expectation of being immediately raised from death to the same state and life with Christ our Saviour, in the 5th chapter of his 2d Epistle to the Corinthians. *For we know that when our earthly dwelling* (meaning his own mortal body) *is dissolved, we have a fabric of GOD, an habitation not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*; that is, an immortal body. He then expresses his desire of passing into that state, and being invested with that celestial body, and if it could be, without undergoing the pain and terror of a bodily dissolution, that so *mortality might be swallowed up of life:* for he confesses that the apprehensions of death were burdensome to him. But notwithstanding this, he always

ways ſupported himſelf with courage againſt the terror of death, from this conſideration, *That whilſt he remained in this preſent bodily ſtate, he was abſent from Chriſt; and that when he quitted it he ſhould be preſent with him.*——But whatever precedency or peculiar privileges may be conferred by divine favour on good men; *the end of this world* is continually referred to, as the great *period of a general reſurrection* of mankind; and this with the greateſt propriety: for as the future ſtate and life is repreſented in contraſt to the *whole preſent ſtate* and life of mankind in general, and the world to come, is repreſented as *ſucceeding in time* to this preſent world; ſo therefore, whatever the order and proceſs of the reſurrection may be, yet the end of this world is juſtly and with an exact propriety referred to continually, as the great period of revolution, when *all ſhall be raiſed*, when the *everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour* ſhall be fully and finally eſtabliſhed, and

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all enemies, even *the last enemy*, *death*, shall be totally destroyed.

THUS I have endeavoured to point out the particular views which the *Gospel-revelation* hath exhibited to us, illustrating the general belief and prospect of a life to come.——I shall beg leave to subjoin by way of caution, that these things are revealed, not to administer food for a vain trifling wandering imagination, but to inform the understanding and govern the heart, by giving light and force to that grand principle of true religion, of solid virtue, and extensive goodness; *the faith of a life to come*, and of the eternal justice and goodness of the Almighty Creator and governor of this and all other worlds visible and invisible.——This is the most solemn and important subject to which we can possibly turn our attention, and in which every man is interested to a degree beyond the power of his own conception; and of which

which we could no way gain the leaſt knowledge, but by a divine revelation.

It becomes us then to receive, with lively gratitude and deep attention, the intelligences given us by our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles*, concerning this myſterious ſubject unſearchable to human reaſon. The more ſeriouſly and impartially we attend to the Goſpel-account of a future ſtate, it will appear the more convincive and ſatisfactory, and be the more attractive of our devout affection gratitude and hope. The Goſpel points out the ſtrongeſt natural evidence of a world to come, by leading us to conſider all the effects of divine goodneſs to mankind in this life, as arguments for his more extenſive goodneſs hereafter. It gives us alſo the ſupernatural evidence of miracles, and eſpecially of Chriſt's actual reſurrection from the dead. What do we conceive could move the Almighty to create mankind to this life, but his own goodneſs? And to what cauſe can we aſ-

cribe our future existence, or (if I may so express it) his *re-creating* mankind to another life, but to the same goodness?—— Exclusive of the benevolent purpose of infinite and eternal goodness, all mankind would perish for ever at death: *but it is the mystery of GOD revealed in the Gospel, that thro' his inestimable love and mercy to mankind dispensed by Christ Jesus our Lord, eternal life shall be the inheritance and reward of all who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and immortality.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XI.

The Chriſtian Evidence of a Future State.

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1 COR. XV. 12.

But if Chriſt be preached that he roſe from the dead; how ſay ſome amongſt you, that there is no reſurrection of the dead?

THE moſt valuable advantage we derive from the knowledge of the *Goſpel*, is the belief of a life to come, founded on the evidence of *Chriſt's* reſurrection.

THE being and perfections of GOD, the Maker and governor of the univerſe are diſcoverable, by the light of nature. We confeſs the *power* of GOD, becauſe we *ſee it*, in the aſtoniſhing motions of the heavenly orbs, and other mighty operations in nature: we acknowledge his *wiſdom*, becauſe it *appears* in the ſtructure of the whole

world, and of every creature in it: we own his *goodness*, because we *experience* it in every enjoyment of life. In these first points of religion, the evidence of nature is clear and demonstrative.——And the ample displays of divine power and goodness to mankind in *this* life and world, may lead us to form some probable conjectures and pleasing hopes, that the same all-wise and beneficent power, which produces mankind into existence and life in *this* world, and which bestows upon them so many *present* felicities, *may* have *further* designs of goodness to men; and *may* raise mankind from the dead to *another* life, even a life superior in kind and duration; and to which this life is but an introduction or preparation, like the state of infancy, compared to mature age; and that the seeds of knowledge and virtue sown in the human mind, and springing up in this world, *may* not be utterly laid waste and *destroyed* at death; but on the contrary, *survive* the dreary tem-

tempeſt, and *riſe again* to an immortal harveſt.

HUMAN reaſon cultivated by a ſtudy of nature, and raiſed to high conceptions of the purpoſes of infinite wiſdom, may ſuggeſt ſuch ſentiments as theſe: and men of liberal and elevated minds will gladly lay hold of every juſt argument, to ſupport and fortify themſelves, in the ſublime and pleaſing hope of riſing from death to life and immortality.——Now, to men of ſuch worthy ſentiments and diſpoſitions, nothing can be more *welcome* than the *chriſtian revelation*, rightly underſtood: in which they find ſuch a theory of the government of GOD, of the purpoſes of his wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs to mankind, and of *this* life as connected with and *introductory* to a *future* and eternal life; as the pureſt reaſon of mankind will moſt approve, correſponding to all the evidences and intimations of nature, and free from thoſe *ſo-*

phiſtical and partial arguments, by which ſome have perplexed the doctrine of a future ſtate. For the *Goſpel* derives our hope of a life to come, from the true original fountain of divine power and wiſdom, and the purpoſe of his paternal goodneſs and mercy to mankind; and repreſents this world, as intended for a ſtate of minority, diſcipline, and education, in order to the enjoyment of a nobler kind of life in a future ſtate.

But, tho' this theory or repreſentation of things is both conſiſtent with itſelf, and agreeable to the moſt refined and elevated conceptions of the attributes of God and the purpoſes of his wiſdom and benevolence in the formation of this world and of human nature; yet a *further evidence* of another life not only is *deſirable*, but ſeems *neceſſary* to confirm the truth of it, and to convert it from a *plauſible ſpeculation* into an *eſtabliſhed belief*, ſufficient to the ſup-

ſupport of virtue, in every trial of life and death.

For how ingeniouſly and plauſibly ſoever men may argue, from the deſigns of creative wiſdom, and the meaſures of governing juſtice, executed in the viſible order of the creation and the preſent ſtate of mankind; and hence infer that God intends to raiſe men from the dead, and that this life is introductory to another; yet it may be objected, "That ſuch kind of reaſoning is not ſufficient to give intire ſatisfaction, and to deliver the mind from all uncertainty and ſuſpence:——There is a weakneſs inherent in the very nature of all ſuch arguments, which degrades them into mere probable conjectures.—It may ſeem to us, by the beſt light of nature, agreeable to the wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs of the Almighty Creator, to appoint a future ſtate for mankind: but does it follow of a certainty, that God will act, as *we think* he ought? Is

"it

" it a proof that God hath determined
" thus, because it appears to *us* a conduct
" becoming his infinite perfections? Are
" men so capable of judging what is fittest
" and best for a Being of infinite wisdom
" to design, as to conclude with any de-
" gree of assurance that it *is* his design?
" *Hath he eyes of flesh? and doth he see as*
" *man seeth?* Doth he determine according
" to human judgment and the dictates of
" our shallow understandings? Is not his
" wisdom infinite? and is there ought in-
" finite in man, but his weakness and ig-
" norance?——There is a wide difference
" between what the power of God *may* ef-
" fect, and his actual *will* and *purpose* to
" effect it. We believe the power and
" wisdom of God in the constitution of
" this world and his goodness in this life,
" because we see the evident marks and ex-
" perience the effects: but another life and
" world are *wholly miraculous*, and beyond
" all our sight, sense, and *experience:* the
" visible structure of this world, and pro-
" cess

" ceſs of nature in it, can afford but a very
" imperfect evidence of an inviſible world,
" and a ſtate of things *out of apparent na-*
" *ture.* And tho' the divine goodneſs be
" perfect and infinite; yet his creatures
" partake of his infinite goodneſs, only
" according to the *limited* nature and mea-
" ſure of duration, which he hath *aſſigned* to
" them, whether ſenſitive or rational, hu-
" man or angelic, mortal or immortal.
" Let it be granted, that there are innu-
" merable ſpirits in the boundleſs univerſe,
" who are created of an *immortal nature*,
" and who enjoy their Creator's goodneſs
" in an *eternal life*: but what pretence hath
" *man* to an eternal exiſtence, who is made
" of the *duſt* of the earth, to which he
" muſt ſoon *return?* We doubt not the
" power of God to reſcue mankind from
" the apparent deſtruction of death and
" the grave; nor do we deny his infinite
" goodneſs: but we doubt the purpoſe of
" his *will* to beſtow an immortal life on
" men; becauſe mankind do not appear to
" be

" be the proper objects of *ſuch* goodneſs: " even the beſt of men have reaſon to be " contented with what they receive from " the divine liberality in *this* life, without " vainly pretending to a happineſs beyond " death and the enjoyment of immorta- " lity.——All the arguments therefore of " reaſon or natural religion for a future " ſtate, are little better than preſumptions, " not *proofs*, conjectures, not *diſcoveries*. " We are therefore deſirous of ſome fur- " ther, ſpecial, and direct proof, in order " to remove our doubts, and eſtabliſh our " belief of the divine intention to beſtow " ſo inconceivable and ineſtimable a pri- " viledge on men, as that of a reſurrec- " tion from death and corruption to a life " incorruptible and eternal."

Now it is our great happineſs as chriſtians to find all theſe doubts removed in the *Goſpel revelation*, and to be furniſhed, in a moſt ſignal manner, with *that kind of proof*, ſo much to be *deſired*, and ſo proper to give

give us all reaſonable *ſatisfaction.* The more we attend in this view to the doctrines of the Goſpel, to the character and actions of our Lord, and particularly to the great event of his reſurrection and appearance after death; the more ample conviction we ſhall receive, and be affected with joy and gratitude on occaſion of ſo *clear* a diſcovery, and *ſatisfactory* evidence, of a life to come.

THE *Goſpel* is the aſſurance of a life and world to come. This *Goſpel of the kingdom of heaven* our *Bleſſed Saviour* himſelf preached; and he was the *firſt* and *only* prophet of GOD who did preach it, and to whom the other Prophets bear witneſs: he *taught* it in the courſe of his life; He *proved* it by miracles; He *confirmed* it by his own reſurrection from the dead, when he *appeared openly, not* indeed to *all the people*, but to faithful and ſufficient *witneſſes choſen before of GOD:* The *Evangeliſts* and *Apoſtles* are the reporters of this *Goſpel*, and the evidence

dence of it, to the world: and they establish our belief of a world to come——How?—Not by offering to us the dreams of *Homer*, the reveries of *Plato*, or the doubts of *Socrates* or *Cicero*; but by declaring to us a *matter of fact* and of *their own experience*; when the *life to come* was indeed *discovered* and *proved* to them; when, contrary to their expectations and their prejudices, to their vast amazement and terror, succeeded by a joy beyond description, *They saw with their own eyes, viewed at their leisure, and handled with their own hands*, the person of our Lord after his resurrection.——This is a *fact*, in which they could not possibly be *deceived themselves*, but must know of a certainty, whether they had, or had not, seen and conversed with him after his crucifixion: and a fact, in which they could not *intend to deceive others*, by perishing to death in support of a falsehood; unless they were the most foolish and absurd, as well as the most insincere and impudent of all men. And their

their *teſtimony* is alſo accompanied by ſuch a train of circumſtances and events; that *no ſingle fact* recorded in all Hiſtory, is either ſupported by ſuch *unexceptionable witneſſes*, or confirmed with ſuch collateral and ſubſequent proofs.

HERE is then an *experimental evidence* of a future ſtate, more proper in itſelf to determine our belief, and in all its circumſtances to govern our practice, than the moſt probable conjectures of the ableſt reaſoners. For whatever ſpeculations and probable conjectures men may frame upon other grounds; yet if ever there was *an inſtance* of a perſon *actually returning from the dead*, to aſſure men of a future ſtate; *this fact is deciſive*; and is a kind of proof which gives the mind more content and ſatisfaction, than the deepeſt refinements of the wiſeſt Philoſophers; as it removes all objections ariſing from the *unexperienced* and *unknown* nature of a life to come. 'Till our Saviour's reſurrection, all beyond death

death was indeed, as the Poet expreſſes it, *the undiſcovered country from whence no traveller had ever returned.* But here was an *actual return* of a moſt illuſtrious and diſtinguiſhed perſon, and for *this* purpoſe, among *others*, of aſcertaining to us a general reſurrection of mankind.

In forming and eſtabliſhing our religious belief, we are not firſt to frame notions and opinions after our own conceit, and then deduce *facts* from *doctrines*; but to examine firſt into matters of fact, and then deduce our doctrines from them.—— In *natural religion*, we are not to determine previouſly from our own reaſon, what is fit for a being of infinite perfection to do, and thence *infer* the thing done; but to obſerve firſt the actual works of God, and the appointments of his providence; and then learn, as far as we are able, the wiſdom, goodneſs, and perfection of thoſe works, and build the doctrines of religion upon the *facts of nature.* So in regard to

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our *christian faith*, it is not the business of christians to heap up notions by their own fancy or the tradition of others, concerning the Gospel in general, or the person and office of our Saviour in particular; but to attend to the *facts* recorded and established by the united and indubitable testimony of the evangelists and apostles, and upon *them* to build our doctrines of christian faith.

THIS is the *method* the *Apostles* themselves use. And the *great fact* to which they appeal, to which all other facts recorded have a reference and subservience, and which is the foundation of the whole fabrick of christianity, is the *resurrection of our Lord from the dead.* And what a firm superstructure of doctrine they build upon this foundation of fact, we may easily learn.——Hear the apostle Paul deliver the Gospel, in the 15th Chapter of his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians: *I now declare to you the Gospel which I have before*

preached unto you: for I delivered unto you firſt of all, that Chriſt died and was buried, and that he roſe again the third day: that after his reſurrection he was ſeen of Cephas, then of the twelve, after that of five hundred brethren at once, the greater part of whom are alive to this day: after that he was ſeen of James, then again of all the Apoſtles: and laſt of all he was ſeen of me alſo, as of one born out of due time. Then the Apoſtle proceeds from the *fact* to the *doctrine. Now if Chriſt be preached that he roſe from the dead; how ſay ſome among you, that there is no reſurrection of the dead?* that is no future ſtate. For the term reſurrection in ſcripture always means a future ſtate: and the modern notion of two diſtinct reſurrections, one of the ſoul and another of the body, is a meer vulgar error; there is no ſuch diſtinction in the new teſtament. But, continues the Apoſtle, *if there be no reſurrection of the dead, then Chriſt is not riſen: and if Chriſt be not riſen,*

then

then our preaching is vain, and your faith alſo is vain; yea and we are found falſe witneſſes of GOD; becauſe we have teſtified of GOD that he raiſed up Chriſt, whom he did not raiſe up, if it be true that the dead riſe not: for if the dead riſe not, then Chriſt is not raiſed: and if Chriſt be not raiſed, your faith is vain, you are yet in your ſins, ana even they who are fallen a ſleep in Chriſt are periſhed: but now Chriſt is riſen from the dead, and become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept.——It is evident here, that the *Apoſtle* founds the doctrine of a future ſtate or a life to come upon the actual reſurrection of our *Saviour* from the dead; expreſſing in the ſtrongeſt terms the dependance of the one event upon the other; inſomuch that he ſeems to give up all hope of another life, ſeparate from the the truth of that fact.——In like manner, he founds the doctrine of a future judgment to be adminiſtred by our Lord, upon the ſame fact, in the ſummary account which he gives of the Goſpel, in his ſpeech

to the great court of judicature at Athens: *the times of ignorance GOD winketh at; but now commands all men every-where to repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a time when he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given an assurance, by raising him from the dead.* Here the *Apostle* establishes our belief of a future judgment and the judicial authority of our *blessed Saviour* upon the fact of his resurrection.——The same order and connexion may be observed in the apostle *Peter's* account of the Gospel to *Cornelius* the *Roman* officer: *we are witnesses of all things which Jesus did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree; him GOD raised the third day, and shewed him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of GOD, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead: and he commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify, that it is he who was*

ordained of GOD to be the judge of quick and dead.

THESE inſtances are ſufficient to ſhow how the *Apoſtles* appeal to the fact of *Chriſt's* reſurrection for the truth of the doctrines which they taught of a future ſtate, a judgment to come, and the dominion and authority of our Lord and Saviour. And here is evidently a ſolid and ſufficient foundation to ſupport theſe doctrines: If we believe that our Lord actually roſe from the dead, we cannot doubt of the reality of a future ſtate, or of that power which he aſſumed to himſelf, and which his apoſtles attributed to him, of raiſing mankind from the dead and judging and diſpoſing of them in another life. This ſingle fact being admitted, our whole chriſtian faith is ſufficiently eſtabliſhed. All the real and eſſential doctrines of *chriſtianity* are built upon it. And all objections againſt *chriſtianity*, which do not tend to diſprove that fact, are either level-

ed againſt ſomething elſe in the ſtead of chriſtianity, or are of little weight and moment. And all arguments in defence of the *chriſtian* religion, which do not ſerve to evince that fact, are unneceſſary.

From the reality of our Lord's reſurrection, it undeniably follows, that he was all that he pretended to be, *the SON of GOD:* meaning by that title, not any thing concerning his eſſence or ſubſtance (tho' it has been abſurdly miſapplied to that ſenſe) but his moral character and dignity and the high honour and favour which he had with God: *for by his reſurrection,* ſays the apoſtle, *he was declared to be the ſon of GOD with power.* It follows, *that GOD hath exalted him to be an eternal Prince and Saviour, the judge of the world,* and the giver of immortality to mankind: or as our Lord himſelf expreſſes it, *that GOD hath committed all judgment to him, and hath given him power over all fleſh,* that is, all mankind, *to give eternal life to as many*

many as GOD hath given him.—Upon this ground of evidence, we receive like Cornelius, with a reverential belief, the declaration which the apoſtle *Peter* made to him, *that the man Chriſt Jeſus, who was crucified, dead and buried, and who roſe again, and ſhewed himſelf alive from the dead by many infallible proofs to witneſſes choſen by divine providence, is ordained of GOD* (as he commanded his apoſtles to declare and atteſt) *to be the judge of quick and dead,* that is, of all mankind of all paſt ages as well as preſent and to come.

It is of no force to urge here by way of objection, that in this divine conſtitution, this *kingdom of heaven,* there is ſomething myſterious and unaccountable, that we cannot fully underſtand it, or comprehend the whole manner of it, and all the reaſons of infinite wiſdom in eſtabliſhing it.—All ſuch objections are founded meerly on human ignorance, and are exceedingly weak and frivolous. For

what work of infinite wisdom, what dispensation of eternal providence, what divine constitution thro' universal nature, can our understandings thoroughly comprehend?—It implies the utmost degree of folly and arrogance to imagine, that we can understand the whole reason and method of any divine procedure; much more when the subject is nothing less than a future state, and the eternal government and disposal of the whole collective body of mankind from the beginning to the end of the world.——It is our wisdom first to inquire into facts, and learn as far as we are able what the power and wisdom of God hath actually appointed; and then to adore with reverence, obey with willingness, give thanks with chearfulness, and *rejoice in hope.*

Let it not be imagined, that under colour of human ignorance, we are attempting to screen any thing weak and absurd in the doctrines of christianity, any

any thing that will not bear examination, any thing contradictory to the reaſon of mankind, or inconſiſtent with the appearances of nature and the uſual order of God's providence. *Chriſtianity* ſtands in no need of artifice, and rejects with contempt the ſubtle evaſions of human wit in its defence. All the genuine doctrines of it are perfectly rational, and as intelligible as any thing concerning another life and world can poſſibly be made to human ſenſe and knowledge. There is a wide difference between our not being able, thro' want of capacity, to underſtand fully the whole of any thing, and it being contrary to what we do clearly underſtand.——Every work of God, and every doctrine of religion exceeds in ſome reſpect our capacity of comprehenſion: but no work of God, no truth of religion is or can be *contrary* to our clear reaſon and knowledge. And the genuine and *peculiar* doctrines of chriſtianity are *peculiarly plain* and intelligible: and nothing but an obſcure

ſcure multiplicity of words and figures, diſguiſing inſtead of explaining them, can render them difficult to be underſtood, or bring them into controverſy and confuſion. That Chriſt roſe from the dead, that he is exalted to glory and dominion, that he is appointed judge of mankind, and impowered to beſtow the rewards of immortality upon all virtuous and good men; are propoſitions as plain to be underſtood, and lie as much within the compaſs of our ideas, as the doctrines of God's immenſity and eternity, his creating all things out of nothing, his univerſal providence, or any other truth of natural religion.

Men have indeed framed adopted and propagated many ſtrange and abſurd doctrines, and confounded them with the Goſpel. But let thoſe who have eſpouſed them be *alone* anſwerable for them: let ſuch *blind believers* carry on the controverſy with as *blind unbelievers*, one imagining themſelves to be *defending*, and the other

the other *attacking* the *chriſtian revelation*; when in reality, it is not in the leaſt concerned, and the *Goſpel itſelf* ſtands clear and firm, ſeparate from all ſuch falſe, or at beſt, dark and dubious notions.—What clouds of vapour and ſmoke have ariſen from the groſs fictions and fiery diſputations of contentious men, obſcuring the native clearneſs and luſtre of the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt!*—But as when miſts and clouds vaniſh, we may lift up our eyes and ſee the one grand object, the glorious Sun ſhining with its own inherent ſplendor;——ſo when the thick fumes of prejudice error and contention which ariſe to intercept our views, are diſſipated or ſubſided, we may then contemplate with the clear eye of a rational faith *the Son of GOD* the *Saviour* of the world ſhining in wiſdom power and goodneſs above all the ſons of men, riſen from the dead, aſcended to a throne of dominion and judgment in the upper regions, and diſpenſing the light of true religion in this

world;

world; and what is more and greater, and the *sublime end of his office*, the rewards of eternal life in a world to come.

THIS Gospel is perfectly rational in itself, and worthy of all acceptance: It corresponds to our purest sentiments, and our worthiest desires and hopes. And the testimony of the *Evangelists* and *Apostles* to the reality of our Lord's resurrection, is a sufficient ground of our firm belief, and an evidence superior to all imaginable objections.

BUT as it may serve to obviate some difficulties, may afford some satisfaction to inquisitive minds, and may conduce to strengthen the influence of the *Gospel*; we shall proceed to consider it in the following discourse, in analogy to the constitution of the world, and the apparent order of divine providence in it.

DISCOURSE XII.

The Consistency of the Christian Scheme, &c.

ACTS X. 42.

And he commanded us to preach unto the people and to teſtify, that it is He who is ordained of GOD to be the judge of quick and dead.

THE exaltation of our *Saviour* from his human ſtate to the throne of univerſal judgement over mankind, and the mighty power of raiſing them from the dead, and determining their future eternal condition; is a diſpenſation of the ſame infinite wiſdom which made this world and mankind: and it is revealed, made credible, and ſufficiently aſcertained to us, by the whole hiſtory of the diſcourſes and actions of our *Saviour*; but particularly and principally by his reſurrection, *when he ſhewed himſelf alive from the dead openly and by many infallible proofs to thoſe faith-*

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ful witnesses who have reported the *Gospel* unto us.

In this, as in all other constitutions of eternal providence, there is much more than our understandings can give any distinct account of, or indeed are capable of conceiving: but there is nothing contrary to the reason of mankind, or inconsistent with those apprehensions of divine wisdom power and goodness, which we collect from nature around us.——Another world and a higher state of being, the œconomy of things in it, and the relation of mankind to it, are subjects which we may well suppose cannot be fully revealed to us, or comprehended by us; as they are not only beyond our experience, but above our faculties.

The discoveries of the intellectual universe, made by *revelation*, seem to bear a similitude and proportion, to those of the material creation, made by human study and

and enquiry. For as the vaſt theatre of the ſkies, and the material worlds pendent in the immenſe ſpaces, are not only defined by elaborate arguments, but even made to approach *nearer* in appearance; and to become in a ſurprizing degree *objects of ſight* and *experience*; ſo the intellectual worlds of *angels and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, and the vaſt ſcene of an immortal life, are not only aſſerted in doctrines of truth, but reduced by a miraculous operation within the compaſs of ſenſible and *experimental evidence*, and brought *near* to our proſpective *view*. But notwithſtanding, as the all-wiſe Creator hath limited all human ſenſe and ſcience, concerning the viſible creation, to certain proper bounds, and they are ſtill but obſcure and imperfect glimpſes men are able to obtain of the celeſtial orbs; ſo divine revelation is limited by the like rule and proportion: and the Apoſtle juſtly expreſſes himſelf, when he ſays, *We know but in part, and propheſy but in part,*

and see future things *but as it were in a glass darkly*, or by an obscure and distant reflection: and again, *We walk by Faith, and not by sight:* the life of angels, and of human spirits raised from the dead and exalted to a superior manner and degree of existence, is still a *mystery*, the object of *Faith*, not of *sight*, of reason, not of bodily sense.——As it is impossible to make those who are blind from their birth, to understand the nature of light and colours, or how other men are able to perceive distant objects by the power of sight; so it may be justly supposed equally impossible, that the powers of a superior order of beings, and their manner of perception and action, should be made intelligible by any human language.

But at the same time, in all that our *Saviour* and his *Apostles* have delivered to us concerning these most sublime subjects, there is no doctrine opposite to our experience, or in itself irrational and incredible.—In the visi-

viſible works of God, and that conſtitution of his providence which regards the *preſent* ſtate of mankind, there are many *inexplicable* appearances, and the whole order and reaſon of things far *ſurpaſs* our comprehenſion: ſo, in that conſtitution of infinite wiſdom, which regards the *future* and eternal ſtate of mankind, there muſt neceſſarily be much *more* of what is *inexplicable*, and *beyond* the limits of our judgment and apprehenſion. But as in the diſplays of nature, men may diſcover by ſearch and examination reaſons of things, which were not apparent *at firſt view*; ſo in the doctrines of revelation, we may come to diſcern, by a careful and judicious attention, more reaſons within the verge of our capacity, than we *at firſt* apprehended. Such reaſons are *not* indeed direct *proofs* of the truth of the Goſpel, which reſts upon the facts recorded and ſupported by the ſtrongeſt teſtimony: but if the ſcheme of *human redemption* can be ſhewn to be not only not contrary to the

order of creation and providence, but in the most important views *similar* to, and consistent with it; it may remove speculative objections, and give us a just satisfaction: and it is *so far* an argument for the truth of the Gospel, *as* it shews that such a scheme could not be the invention of such illiterate men, as the *Apostles* were, without an unaccountable and indeed *miraculous* enlargement of their understandings.

THAT the judgment and disposal of the whole collective race of mankind in regard to their state after death is delegated or committed to a person, who hath himself existed in human nature, and who rose from the lowest condition of human life to this amazing height of power and dominion, of office and authority in the universe of GOD; is the doctrine we are to reconcile with the dictates of reason, the appearances of nature, and the experienced order and conduct of Divine Providence.

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To this end it will be proper to beſtow ſome attention upon the following ſeries of arguments; which I ſhall not expatiate on at large, but rather ſuggeſt to the reflections of any, who may have capacity and a habit of thinking requiſite to ſuch ſubjects.

FIRST: It plainly appears throughout the whole viſible order of the creation, that the purpoſes of infinite wiſdom are accompliſhed by the intervention, either of material cauſes, or of intelligent beings ſubject to the will and deſign of the Supreme Being. All the events befalling mankind in this life are effected in this manner. It is therefore conformable to the whole plan of nature, that the events of another life, and the divine purpoſes in regard to the future condition of mankind, ſhall be effected by the like intervention, not indeed of *material* cauſes, but of ſome *one* or more *intelligent* and powerful beings. Therefore the Scripture-Doctrine of a *Mediator between GOD and Man*, in order to our *eter-*

nal Salvation, is perfectly rational and agreeable to the constitution of nature.

SECONDLY: That there are orders of wise, powerful, and active beings, the subjects and servants of the One Supreme Being, but far superior to mankind, is a dictate of *reason* as well as *revelation*: and that the welfare, happiness, and salvation of mankind should be an object of *their* regard and benevolence, and, *as our Saviour asserts*, the repentance of sinners an occasion of joy amongst them; is a natural and credible sentiment.——But what exertions of power or of virtue any of them may employ for the benefit and salvation of men, cannot appear to us, except by *visible miracles*.

THIRDLY: That the mighty province of raising mankind to another life, and disposing of them according to their respective qualifications, should be committed to a *Mediator*, who hath himself exhibited the

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moſt perfect humanity and ſingular goodneſs to mankind; is a conſtitution which it is ſo *unnatural* in *men* to object to, that it ſeems on the other hand to be the wiſeſt and beſt ſentiment the reaſon of men could poſſibly offer up in requeſt to the ſupreme Being, That he would vouchſafe to grant them the privilege of ſuch a conſtitution, and of having their actions tried, and their future condition determined, by ſuch a judge.

FOURTHLY: We ſee, that the Providence of GOD hath *actually committed* the lives and condition of mankind in this world, to the will and determination of *men*, even corrupt and vitious men: and if we can reconcile *this* conſtitution to our reaſon and our beſt ideas of divine wiſdom and goodneſs, and think *no objection* of force ariſes from hence againſt *natural* religion; our reaſon cannot be offended at that doctrine of revelation which declares, That *the Man Chriſt Jeſus*, the moſt emi-

nent and perfect character in wisdom and virtue that ever appeared in the world, was raised from the dead, exalted to dominion, and appointed of God to be *the judge of quick and dead.*

Fifthly: If it appears to any an irrational and incredible supposition, that a being of a superior order and celestial dignity, and in comparison of man *in the form of a GOD*, should become incarnate and *be found in the fashion of a man*;—— we may observe in answer, first, That there is no instance of our Saviour or any of his Apostles requiring any of their disciples or converts to receive and believe that doctrine. They require us to believe that *Jesus* was *the Christ*, *the Son of God*, that *he rose from the dead*, and *is ordained of GOD to be the judge of mankind:* but they do not require our belief of any thing concerning his dignity or existence, *previous* to his human appearance. That doctrine therefore is not to be ranked amongst the *Articles* of

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our *Chriſtian Faith*. But if any unbeliever will ſtill object that this doctrine is plainly intimated in ſome expreſſions of the *New Teſtament*, and that it is ſuch a *myſtery* as his reaſon cannot aſſent to, and hence is diſpoſed to reject the *Chriſtian Faith*; it may be a ſufficient reply, if in the next place we demand of him, to explain the *myſtery* of *his own incarnation*, and the union of his own ſoul and body, and to teach human reaſon to comprehend the manner of *that*: 'till then, we can neither on the one hand allow any force or weight to ſuch an objection; nor on the other, preſume to aſſert or explain any thing concerning our *Saviour*'s incarnation.

The folly and arrogance of ſome men have tempted them to advance and maintain, with an amazing degree of aſſurance, certain propoſitions concerning the *perſon* or *eſſence* of our Saviour, and his ſtate of glory and dignity before his coming into this world.——But let us be contented to

receive

receive the Gospel, in that plainness and simplicity in which it was first delivered, free from every mixture of *metaphysical* notions: and then we shall find no great difficulty in defending the truth of it, and may be able *to give a reason of the Faith and hope that is in us.*——The *Apostle Peter*, immediately after the effusion of the *Holy Spirit*, delivers the Faith of the *Gospel* to the unbelieving *Jews* in these words: Acts ii. 22. *Ye men of Israel, hear these words.——Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of GOD amongst you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which GOD did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of GOD, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: this Jesus GOD hath raised up; whereof we all are witnesses: therefore being by the right hand of GOD exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit; he hath communicated these miraculous gifts to us, which you now see and hear. Therefore let all the house*

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of Israel know assuredly, that GOD hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, Lord and Christ.——He delivers the *christian* Faith in the same manner to the heathen officer *Cornelius* in the context: *That GOD anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for GOD was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the country of Judea and the city of Jerusalem: whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him GOD raised up the third day, and shewed him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of GOD, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead: and he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, that it is He who was ordained of GOD to be the judge of quick and dead: to him give all the prophets witness; that thro' his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

SIXTHLY:

SIXTHLY: That the miraculous operation of some Being superior in power and goodness to mankind, should accompany the discourses, actions, life, and death of our Lord, in pursuance of so great and benevolent a purpose, as the resurrection of men to another life, and their eternal happiness; is not only credible, but will appear the *more credible*, the *more* we attend to the constitution of nature, and consider the mysterious and properly speaking miraculous operation of divine power, in producing numberless animals into existence for the lower purposes of this life. If we know by *sense* the one to be *fact*; we may with *reason* believe the other to be *probable*.

SEVENTHLY: All men who believe a future state, believe already the greatest of *mysteries* and of *miracles*, which, exclusive of the *testimony* of the Gospel, is beyond all *human experience*: and the credibility of which depends on some moral probabilities,

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concerning the unrevealed intention of the Almighty Maker of mankind. And we may ſafely appeal to every impartial mind, that has given any ſerious attention to the writings of the New Teſtament; whether the doctrine of a future immortal life, as repreſented there, and founded on the *experimental* evidence of our Lord's reſurrection, is not rendered more reaſonable and credible, than by any other account that ever was or can be given.

And laſtly: We know nothing more worthy of the Supreme Governor of the world, according to our natural apprehenſions, than to diſtinguiſh, honour, and reward the greateſt virtue in a ſignal and exemplary manner. And according to the Goſpel-account, the exaltation of our Saviour to the throne of glory and of final judgment over mankind, was in conſequence and *reward* of his ineſtimable *virtue*. He was therefore a moſt illuſtrious example of obedience to God, and of his

conſequent

consequent favour; not only to *men* on earth who receive the *Gospel*, but to all those *Superior Beings* who were witnesses of the great transaction.

To sum up the whole in a short compass: ——Nature and reason lead us to apprehend, that there is a benevolence in the Almighty Maker to his creatures of the human species, and that mankind as a collective body are an object of his care and goodness. And undoubtedly, raising them to another life is to be esteemed a greater effect of his beneficence, than any effect in this world, or than his creating them for this life only. And as the Providence of God *by man* brings men into this world, and *by man* sustains, instructs, governs, and judges them in this life; *as by man, sin, and death entered into this world; so by man comes also the resurrection of the dead:* by man mankind are raised to another life and judged according to their works, and sin, misery, and death destroyed in another world:

world: and as in this natural life mankind descend from and are born in the nature and likeness of the *first man Adam*, who was made of the dust of the earth; so when they are born again or raised from the dead to another life, it will be in the nature and likeness of *that second man who is the Lord from Heaven*, the Father of the life to come: for tho' *it doth not yet appear*, says the *Apostle John*, *what we shall be: we know that when he shall appear we shall be made like him:* and the Apostle *Paul*, *that as we now bear the image of the earthly, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly*, of Him who was himself *the first fruits of them that slept*, *the first-born from the dead*, *the first-born of the whole new creation* of God, who is gone before into the invisible regions, to prepare *Mansions* for them that follow him, and who will return to judge the whole world and put all virtuous souls into possession of an everlasting life.

The first cause of all things, the one Almighty Sovereign, the blessed and only

potentate, who alone hath immortality in himself, is infinitely above all other powers and potentates in all *other* worlds as well as in *this*: and the councils of his eternal government are accomplished by those persons and powers which his providence raises up and appoints: and the wisdom of his appointments is often above all human penetration. But if we were not able to discover so much of divine wisdom in this constitution revealed in the *Gospel*; yet nothing seems more evidently adapted to human nature, or a more proper ground of consolation and hope, than the belief, that our final judgement and eternal condition is committed to one who has had experience of human life, its infirmities, difficulties and temptations.

The discourses, actions, and events recorded of our Saviour in his human state, are as it were so many *pledges* or securities given to us of his wisdom, justice, and clemency, and (if it be a proper expression) of his *humanity*,

manity in the adminiſtration of the final judgment. What a ſource of comfort and hope is here, to creatures endued with the infirmities of fleſh and blood, and oppreſſed with a conſcious ſenſe of their own demerits! What a ſubject of courage and joy in exerting our beſt endeavours of piety and virtue! By whoſe judgment would men wiſh to have their eternal ſtate decided, were it left to their *own election*; or what other perſon in the univerſe can human reaſon or imagination conceive as *more eligible* to this high and glorious office than *the man Chriſt Jeſus*; who qualified himſelf for it, by performing the hardeſt duties, and ſuſtaining the ſevereſt trials, of our mortal nature, even to the bittereſt pains of death, from a principle of obedience to God and love to mankind?—— *Therefore GOD hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name*, in this world or that which is to come: *And he hath committed all judgment unto him*, and given him

the power of eternal life and death over the whole human race.

WILL *He* who pleaded the ignorance of his own murderers in apology for their crime, be severe upon the failings and errors that proceed from mere human weakness and involuntary ignorance? Will *He* who implored mercy and forgiveness from his Almighty Father for his own most cruel persecutors, punish with rigour and beyond the measure of justice? Will he who came *to seek* and to save *that which was lost*, condemn any, by arbitrary purpose, or without a necessity of justice, to the loss of eternal life? Will not *He* who *himself* endured the most unjust oppression, vindicate the cause of the injured and oppressed? And will not *He*, who by humility, virtue, and obedience to GOD, rose to glory and dominion, distinguish and prefer men according to their piety and virtue?

AND

And it should strongly affect the mind of every christian in reading or hearing the instructions and precepts of our Saviour, to consider that they are delivered by the *same* person, who is constituted the future *judge* of our behaviour.——There cannot be a more natural and powerful motive to a virtuous and christian life than this consideration. His precepts and example come recommended to our consciences with a redoubled influence of reason and authority, from his exaltation to the throne of judgment, and the power committed to him of punishing our negligence and rewarding our observance. This doctrine alone contains the strongest motives and the highest encouragement, to excite our attention and animate our endeavours in *christian* goodness, to make us *stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, having such an *assurance that our christian labour shall not be in vain.*——If we live as becomes his disciples and followers; we may with joy expect *the blessed hope, even*

the appearance of the glory of the great GOD and of our Saviour Jesus Christ: when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels, and sit upon the throne of judgment, and make the universal and final distinction and separation: when the wicked *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from his presence and by his glorious power*; and the righteous *enter into his joy, possess his kingdom*, and *live for ever with him* in the *Mansions* he is preparing, and which were designed for them *from the foundation of the world.*

DIS-

DISCOURSE XIII.

Philoſophical and Chriſtian Views, of the Future State.

JOHN XIV. I.

Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in GOD, believe alſo in me.——In my Father's houſe are many manſions: if it were not ſo, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myſelf; that where I am there ye may be alſo.

THESE words are the beginning of that private and affectionate diſcourſe, which our Lord held with his diſciples, the evening in which he was going to be betrayed and put to death. The dignity of the ſpeaker, the character and ſituation of his diſciples, and the ſolemn and intereſting occaſion of the words ſpoken, are all proper to engage our earneſt attention to them. Our Lord had often foretold the approaching event: but his diſciples ſeem not to have underſtood him;

or at least, not to be fully convinced 'till the present time; when at the celebration of the *passover*, he assured them of the immediate accomplishment of it, in such a manner, that they could not possibly doubt or mistake his meaning any longer. Then all their expectations were contradicted, all their hopes blasted, their prejudices excited, and their Faith overcome: they were filled with consternation, grief and despair. The ample experience which they had of the wisdom of his instructions, the power of his miracles, and the charms of his goodness, only served to produce a *violent struggle* in their breasts, between the esteem and affection they conceived for him, and the terrible disappointment and mortification of seeing him apprehended and put to death like a miserable malefactor, instead of raising himself and them to honour and grandeur. One of them indeed had the courage to declare that he would die with his master rather than desert him. But tho' he might be sincere in making the declara-

claration, he did not know his own weakneſs: his maſter knew him better than he knew himſelf. Now in this dejected and ſpiritleſs ſtate of his diſciples was this diſcourſe of our Lord addreſſed to them; and every expreſſion in it was directed to their inmoſt thoughts and affections; and it is throughout full of an inimitable dignity of ſentiment, ſimplicity of manner, kindneſs of diſpoſition, and propriety of addreſs. His view was to ſtrengthen their Faith, to mitigate their grief, and to revive their hopes. To which end, tho' he could not avoid ſome myſterious appearances, becauſe they were not qualified to receive a fuller information; yet we may obſerve, that he gives them many plain and ſtrong aſſurances; "That he would "return to them again; that his death "would not be their loſs, but their great "advantage; that they were to be ſeparated "for a while only in order to be united for "ever; that he would in the mean time "ſend them another *comforter* to ſupply "the want of his preſence; that his power

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"and inclination to befriend them would "always continue; that he was leaving "them and going into another state in or- "der to provide for them; that in a short "time they would see him again, and their "grief be changed into joy; and he would "then remove all their doubts, explain "things more clearly, and give them an "entire and lasting satisfaction." He intermingles also many expressions of kindness to them and persuasions to fidelity, steddiness, and courage, and to an observance of all that he had taught them, and a confidence in the promises he was then making, and of which they would most assuredly experience the truth. Such appears to be the purport of his discourse in this and the following chapter.

But to consider the text more particularly.——*Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in* GOD, *believe also in me.—In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place*

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for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also. ——Words than which nothing can be imagined more affecting or consolatory. Our Lord reasons with his disciples, in order to support their faith: "That, as "they believed in God who is invisible, "from the evidence of his works which "they saw; so the works of power and "goodness which himself had performed "amongst them were sufficient for their "faith and confidence in him, tho' he was "then about to depart from them and to "be invisible for a time: nor ought his "suffering death greatly to alarm and dis-"quiet them, as if he was going to perish "or to be separated from them for ever, "or as if his pretensions of being "the Messiah, and their hopes of his "rising to power and glory and be-"coming their prince and deliverer, would "be defeated. For this world is not "the only scene of existence and life, or of "honour and power. In the universe of

"God's

"God's creation there are numberless different worlds and places of residence: "and death would be to him only a passage into another state, where he would "have an opportunity of employing his "care and power for the greater advantage of his disciples: and the very intent of his leaving them at present, and "going into that other state, was to dispose things for their reception; after "which he would come again and translate "them into it, and they should dwell together with him for ever."—In this manner doth our Saviour chear his desponding disciples, opening their understandings, confirming their belief, and reviving their hopes.

The principal points which the words of the text propose to our attention are the following.—First, The representation which our Saviour makes of the universe and the invisible world: *In my Father's house are many mansions*, that is, various states or worlds.

worlds. Secondly, The aſſertion of his own power and agency in providing a future ſtate for his followers: *I am going to prepare a place for you*, that is, another ſtate or world. Thirdly, That this ſtate will be where he himſelf reſides.—And fourthly, That the end and deſign of his whole procedure was to prepare this future ſtate:—*I am going to prepare a place for you: and if I go*, or, when I am gone and have *prepared a place for you, I will return and receive you to myſelf, that where I am there ye may be alſo.*

First: We are to conſider the repreſentation which our Saviour here makes to his diſciples of the univerſe and the inviſible world: *In my Father's houſe are many manſions.*——It is a character peculiar to our Lord's diſcourſes that he expreſſeth the fulleſt ſenſe and the moſt ſublime ſentiments with the greateſt ſimplicity and familiarity of language. As with great juſtice and propriety he frequently ſtiles the

the Supreme Being *Father*; so here, in pursuance of the same image, he stiles the creation, the *house* of his Father, in which he saith there are many *mansions*, various different scenes or places of residence for his different creatures. Now from these words, as well as from philosophical reasoning and speculation, we may learn to enlarge our ideas of the works of God, and to extend our views further into his immense creation.

Mankind born into the present world, confined to the surface of the earth, limited by the imperfect organs of sense and by a narrow sphere of experience, see but very little, and know still less, of the boundless works of the Almighty Creator. What knowledge the minutest insect confined to its little cell hath of the whole earth and of all the tribes of men and other animals, such in proportion is *our* knowledge of the surrounding system of the universe.

But

But as we ſee the earth repleniſhed with numberleſs animals, of various forms and in different ſtates and conditions; as we ſee a regular gradation in the various ſpecies of creatures, from the loweſt inſect to the higheſt of mankind; ſo it is reaſonable to believe that all the living creatures which inhabit the earth bear no proportion in number to the living inhabitants of the univerſe in general; and that as mankind are raiſed in capacity, dignity, and enjoyment above the lower animals; ſo there are creatures of ranks and orders aſcending above us, in an undeterminable gradation: and as this earth is the appointed reſidence and bounded habitation of mankind, the limits of which they cannot paſs; ſo there are innumerable other worlds and regions infinitely various, each poſſeſſed and repleniſhed with its own proper inhabitants.

The late diſcoveries of natural philoſophers extend ſo far, that they acknowledge

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with one conſent and belief, that there are many material globes or worlds ſituated in the vaſt ſpaces, but within the reach of the human eye, which have ſo great an affinity and reſemblance to the world we inhabit, as to afford the ſtrongeſt preſumption, that they are in like manner replete with their own proper and living inhabitants, who derive ſupport and benefit like ourſelves from the light and heat of the ſame ſun. And if the material ſyſtem be of this nature and extent; if the immeaſurable ſpaces of the ſkies afford room for various worlds of unknown dimenſion and quality; 'tis not incredible, that there are alſo numberleſs ſyſtems or ſtates of being in the univerſe, which are not nor can be ſubject to any of our ſenſes, and of which it is impoſſible for us at preſent to form any the leaſt imagination or conception.

It is impoſſible for a perſon born blind to form the leaſt idea or conception of light and colours: and when the ſenſe of ſeeing

ſeeing is added to him, he is then brought into a new and higher ſtate and capacity of action and enjoyment. So the almighty power of God may give to other creatures, for ought we know, faculties, of which we have not the leaſt conception; or may tranſlate any of his creatures into a new and higher ſtate of exiſtence, and impart to them powers and means of enjoyment and happineſs, of which they could not before frame any notion to themſelves, but we may conclude with the higheſt probability, that every ſpecies and rank of beings throughout the univerſe poſſeſſes manſions, regions, ſpheres of activity, objects and means of happineſs, ſuitable to their reſpective natures and qualities.——Such order and diſpoſition of things we naturally apprehend to proceed from the perfect wiſdom of the ſupreme author and diſpoſer of all.

Further, we ſee the changeable and revolving nature of all things on earth: one

neration paſſing away in order to give room and place to another: And amongſt mankind, ſome aſcending and others deſcending in the ſcale of human life: ſome ariſing from ignorance, meanneſs, and obſcurity, to knowledge, honour, power, and other poſſeſſions: ſome degrading themſelves to contempt and miſery by their vices; others improving themſelves and attaining the true dignity and happineſs of their nature by virtue. So in regard to a more extenſive ſyſtem, conſiſting of many different ranks of rational beings, or in regard to the whole univerſe, it is not unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that there may be an endleſs variety of changes and revolutions: that one world or ſyſtem of worlds is in the courſe of ages ſucceeded by another: that ſome creatures are continually aſcending, and others perhaps deſcending in the infinite ſcale of rational being: that there are various migrations or tranſlations of creatures, into different ſtates or ſcenes of habitation, and different

degrees

degrees of capacity and enjoyment: and, conſidering the infinite multiplicity of the works of God and variety of his living creatures, that there are alſo different periods of duration, as well as different ſtates of being, aſſigned to them; that ſome are created for a ſhort and *momentary* exiſtence, others for a *longer* period, and others for an *eternal* duration.

It is likewiſe agreeable to our beſt apprehenſions of the orders and deſigns of Almighty God exerciſing a moral government over all and every ſpecies or ſyſtem of rational beings, to conclude, that it is the fundamental and immutable rule or law of this his moral empire, That, by virtue and obedience to his will, his rational creatures ſhall riſe to higher ſtates and nobler ſcenes of action, and to ſuperior degrees of capacity honour and happineſs; whilſt on the other hand, the conſequence of vice and diſobedience ſhall be their degradation, or *forfeiture* of their former ſtate privileges and enjoyments,

and a suffering of loss disgrace and misery; and if they remain *incorrigible*, that the end shall be their *utter destruction*; whilst other creatures more fit and worthy shall succeed to their state place and rank in the creation, and numbers newly created replenish the waste and loss of numbers in the universe, who are destroyed in just consequence and punishment of their wickedness and impenitence.

THE creative power of GOD is unlimited: and we may reasonably conclude, that it is perpetually operating in the production of new creatures into existence and life: and when millions perish, how easily can his almighty power produce equal or greater numbers in their stead?-- *For to him it belongs to kill or to make alive, to save or to destroy. He is the everlasting GOD, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary: There is no searching out of his power or his understanding.*

WITH

WITH regard to ourſelves and the whole human ſpecies, it is not to be preſumed that we can comprehend all the various ends and wiſe purpoſes which the almighty Creator had in view in the formation of mankind: and therefore it may be difficult if not impoſſible to judge with certainty from reaſon and ſpeculation alone, what is his deſign in regard to our *duration*; or to determine that moſt important queſtion, whether mankind are totally deſtroyed by death; or whether they ſhall ſurvive that mortal change, and paſs into another ſtate. But ſuppoſing we could determine to our own ſatisfaction, that, in general, death does not put an end to our being, but that we ſhall paſs into ſome other ſtate; yet how many doubts, how many difficult queſtions ſtill remain unreſolved, and indeed unreſolvable by any arguments in the power of human reaſon to produce. If the light of nature does afford ſome glimmering hopes, ſome dubious intimations and preſages, of a future ſtate; yet how

blank is the prospect! what *shadows clouds and darkness rest upon it!* impenetrable to human eyes, and uninvestigable by our most curious researches!

But is it not natural to extend our enquiries further? can we help being sollicitous to know, whether there is any *place prepared* to receive us after death? any particular regions, any habitations or *mansions*, appointed to us in the universe of God? when our souls launch into the boundless ocean of unknown being, shall they wander solitary and forlorn thro' the abyss of immensity and eternity? or who will be our pilot and conductor? whose friendly guidance and immediate protection may we hope for? to whose territories shall we arrive? to whose government and jurisdiction shall we be subject? with what society shall we claim acquaintance? or shall we be lost in the deserts of the creation, having no place of refuge, no home

or

or habitation, no friends, no Saviour, protector, and governor?——

It is indeed readily acknowledged, that in all ſtates and at all events we are and ſhall be under the care and government of the one infinite and ſupreme being: without which belief there can be no hope; and which is the neceſſary foundation of every thing we can hope for.—But when we conſider on the other hand, that it may be as truly affirmed of the moſt deſtitute miſerable and abandoned creatures in the univerſe, as of ourſelves, that they are within the power and providence of almighty God; and likewiſe, that to ſuppoſe that mankind will be provided for in a future ſtate by the immediate hand and power of almighty God, is an hypotheſis we have no ground to make from the viſible ſcene and courſe of things in this world, but is *contrary* to all appearances at preſent; ſeeing we derive in this world, life, preſervation, deliverances, protection, and

all provisions and blessings of life, not immediately from God, but by the mediation of others:—when we consider all this, the doctrine of God's universal power and providence over all creatures in all states, will not, *alone* and abstractly considered, afford us all that satisfaction concerning a future state which we naturally desire, and which may be a proper and sufficient ground for our conduct in life, and our hope and courage at death. For if there be a world to come, it is *not* to be presumed that the œconomy of things in *that world,* is not only different from, but *contrary* to, all the methods of divine œconomy which we see in *this* world: at least no appearances of providence *here* will lead us to conceive of *such* a divine procedure *hereafter*, or to believe *such a kind* of future state.

On the contrary; as we are born and live in this world by the mediation and assistance of others, and owe all our safety support and enjoyments to the care and in-

inſtruction, to the power and goodneſs of others; ſo from all that we ſee and know of the divine conduct and deſigns, it is natural to conclude, that a ſimilar œconomy and diſpenſation muſt take place in a future world; and that our reſurrection after death, our ſafety or ſalvation in a future ſtate, our manſion or place of reſidence, our manner of life, our enjoyments and felicities, and every thing relative to that ſtate, will be under the care direction and government, not immediately of the ſupreme being, but of ſome *ſubordinate* agent and miniſter.—And the whole conſtitution and proceſs of things in this world, upon the moſt impartial and extenſive view, lead us to apprehend, that if mankind are to live after death, and God hath appointed a world to come for them, there is ſome *mediator between GOD and man*, ſome deliverer, protector and governor, to whoſe immediate care and tuition mankind are committed, as the ſpecial and diſtinguiſhed friend and patron

tron of the human race; and by whoſe powerful agency and wiſe direction, all things relative to our future and eternal ſtate ſhall be tranſacted and accompliſhed.

HERE then ſhall we not gratefully accept of the aid, and acknowledge the favour of the *chriſtian* revelation? which gives us a better aſſurance and more information concerning a future ſtate, than we could attain to by the light of nature; and conſequently eſtabliſhes our belief of it in a ſuperior manner and degree. It informs us, by whoſe immediate care inſpection and agency all things relating to our future exiſtence are tranſacted and governed;—That it is *Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*, who hath power and commiſſion from GOD, to deliver us from the power and dominion of death, to afford us protection and ſafety, and to provide for us convenient *habitations* after we have quitted theſe earthly dwellings. *He is our reſurrection and our life*, and our future ſtate is under

his

his government and appointment. To this end, and that we might believe in him, and rely on his care and protection, even in the article of death, *GOD raised him from the dead*; and in reward of his most perfect and exemplary virtue and obedience, hath given him power over *all flesh*, committed to him the *keys* of the future world, and constituted him *judge* over mankind, *that he might give eternal life* to all good men.

This leads us to consider, secondly, the assertion of our Saviour in the text, concerning his own power and office of preparing a future state for his followers:—*I am going to prepare a place for you.*

The idea of an *intermediate power* between the one supreme and infinite being and his minute creatures on earth; *a power*, friendly and benevolent to the human species; *a person*, who hath experienced the infirmities of our nature, and exhibited

every

every human virtue, who hath himself passed before us from *this* life thro' the *gulph* of death to *another*, whose peculiar charge and province, whose most affectionate concern and important enterprize, is the salvation of mankind;—nothing surely can be more grateful to the heart of man, than *this* idea of a *mediator* and *Saviour*; nothing more consonant to our amplest views of the vast universe, and the ways of infinite wisdom, than *this faith* of the *Gospel.*

As the power of omnipotence does not produce the glorious light of the day, but by the operation of the sun; as his unerring wisdom does not bring mankind into this world, but by the intervention of man; as his infinite goodness does not bestow any blessings of this life, but by *intermediate* benefactors; so neither will divine power wisdom and goodness raise mankind from the dead, to the life the light and happiness of a world to come,

but

but by the beneficent operation of an *intermediate* power; of *him*, who is revealed to us as the great benefactor and *Saviour* of men, the author of a future ſtate, *the reſurrection and the life*, to the world of mankind.

And when we conſider the myſterious and momentous nature of that change, which will befal us at death, the impenetrable veil which hides futurity from our view, and the untried unknown expanſion that lies beyond, when at the moment of our departure we are ſeparated from every preſent object, and deſerted of every human acquaintance, and no earthly power can befriend or relieve us; in this real proſpect of death (for real it is) what can give us ſo much conſolation, ſo cheering hopes, as to believe that our ſouls ſhall not wander deſolate, friendleſs, forſaken, abſorbed in a void or chaos of ſolitary exiſtence, but that there is a *place prepared* for us, a ſociety ready to receive us, a

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propitious power appointed to protect us, to order our state and assign our habitation; that there is a *kingdom* and territory subject to the government of a *potentate* most friendly to mankind, who will not fail to give all virtuous souls an hospitable and kind reception, and a sincere welcome to his celestial dominions; a *potentate*, whose government was erected and established to the very end and purpose of saving mankind, and providing for the spirits of the just happy seats of residence: that amidst the infinite universe and the innumerable *variety* of states and worlds in it, there is *one* designed for the perpetual inheritance of good men, and prepared for their reception, by the care and agency of *our blessed Saviour*, whose high *imperial office* it is, to raise mankind from the dead, to judge them, and to put the righteous into possession of *that everlasting kingdom*.

And it may add greatly to our satisfaction to be assured, thirdly, that it will be the same state in which our Saviour himself resides. *I am going*, saith he, *to prepare a place for you: and when I have prepared a place for you, I will return and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.*——As good men shall be raised from death in the likeness of their risen Saviour, and *their bodies shall be fashioned according to his glorious body, by that mighty power by which he is able to subdue every thing to himself*; so they will be united into one celestial assembly and community with him their exalted head, under his government, in that region or world of residence, where his everlasting throne is fixed, where he shines with ineffable glory, and will for ever employ his wisdom and power for the happiness of his subjects, now *redeemed* by him from *sin* and *death*, and *cloathed* with immortality.

LASTLY: this was the great end of all his actions and sufferings, of his whole procedure and enterprize, that he might become the author of this immortal happiness to good men, that he might obtain this celestial province jurisdiction and government, that he might establish this mysterious intimate indissoluble connexion and relation between himself and the world of mankind; when all virtuous souls, the *sons of the resurrection* shall be formed into one vast community, city, or *church*, the object of his eternal care and love; as he will be the object of their admiration esteem gratitude and obedience, to everlasting ages. Then will they also stand in a resemblance to, and perpetual alliance with, that order of superior beings, who are now spectators of human affairs, and who will be combined under the direction of the Saviour of mankind, in accomplishing with him *the great salvation; when he shall send forth his angels, and*

they

they shall gather his elect from all parts of the world.

It is not possible that a future state, and the happiness of it, can be represented to human thought and conception, in a more intelligible and rational manner, in nobler images, or in sentiments more grateful to the heart of a good man than those which the writings of the *Gospel* convey to us.

We find in the *Gospel-revelation*, an experimental evidence in the actual resurrection of our Lord from the dead; an *apparatus* presented to our view; celestial agents introduced; miraculous powers exhibited; a state of residence prepared; a heavenly community formed; an eternal government established; and the great sovereign and Saviour of mankind revealed, with a sublime dignity, yet a familiar and perfect humanity; his actions seen, his discourses heard, his divine virtue proved, his person distinguished, not indeed with earthly

pomp, but a heavenly power, not with the grandeur of this life, but a far more important and glorious resurrection to a superior life; whence he became the example, the pledge, the leader, the author of a general and final resurrection of mankind, the appointed judge of human actions, the rewarder of the righteous, the everlasting admiration and joy of his *redeemed* in the *mansion* of his glory.

HAVING these sublime and joyful truths revealed to us; it becomes us *to set our affections on things above*, where *Christ sitteth*, invested with glory and dominion; knowing *that our future life is hid with Christ in GOD, and that when he who is our life shall appear, then shall his followers appear also with him in glory*. By this hope we are animated to follow his example of humility, charity, resignation, patience, contempt of riches, obedience to GOD, and benevolence to men. For by thus *dying to sin*, and *living to righteousness* in this world, we shall assuredly

ſuredly obtain a reſurrection to another life, be found *worthy*, as our Lord expreſſes it, of *that world* which he hath prepared, and *have an entrance adminiſtred unto us into his everlaſting kingdom*.——And in conſequence of this *Chriſtian Faith* and obedience, we need *not let our hearts be troubled* at the proſpect of our own death, nor *ſorrow* for the loſs of our friends and relations, as if we had no *hope*; but may enjoy at preſent a ſolid conſolation and reviving hope, amidſt all the afflictions of mortality; and may at laſt with a calm and ſecure confidence reſign our departing ſpirits to the merciful diſpoſal of our Saviour; in certain *hope* of an admiſſion into that happy ſtate where he reſides, and of *being for ever with the Lord*.

DISCOURSE XIII.

The Principal Objection to the Gospel answered.

JOHN xviii. 36.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

IT hath been thought by some the strongest objection against the *Christian revelation*, That it hath not produced those great and good effects in the world which seem adequate to the dignity and design of a supernatural interposition; that instead of accomplishing a general reformation of mankind, the world is upon the whole but little if at all amended; and that even the nations called *Christian*, are for the most part as ignorant and superstitious, as corrupt and wicked, as the *Jews* or *Heathens* had been before.

AND it may be allowed, that it would have been beyond our power to remove this objection, by any clear and satisfac-

tory account, had not our *Bleſſed Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* themſelves prevented all the force of it, and furniſhed us with a juſt ſolution; which they have done in ſo ample a manner, that not only the difficulty is removed, but the truth and authority of the *Goſpel* is confirmed by the very inquiry. ——For

FIRST: Our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* not only declared, that the *Goſpel* would *not* be effectual to reform mankind, and foretold in general the corruption and wickedneſs which would enſue, notwithſtanding the *Goſpel-revelation*; but particularly *predicted* and deſcribed, in all the peculiar and principal characters, that very apoſtacy and corruption of the *Chriſtian* nations, which hath given riſe to the foregoing objection: *predictions*, which cannot with any colour of reaſon be attributed to any human penetration and foreſight, much leſs to any natural ſagacity of ſuch men as the *Apoſtles* were. For tho' it is abſurd to expect

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predictions so plain beforehand, as to operate to the prevention of the very consequences predicted, and so to destroy themselves; yet they describe with a surprizing plainness and perspicuity (1.) The extent of this grand apostacy; as comprehending *ten kingdoms:* (2.) The duration of it; as lasting 1260 *years:* (3.) The capital seat of it; *viz. that city which stood upon seven hills and* then *reigned over the Kings of the earth*; which could be no other city in the world than *Rome:* (4.) The tyranny of it; *as drunk with blood, making war upon the Saints, even them that kept the testimony of Jesus*; that is, carrying on religious wars, persecuting and massacring the true christians who maintained their fidelity and refused to comply with the prevailing corruptions: (5.) The policy of it; as *confounding the understandings of princes and of whole nations*, as it were by arts of *Sorcery*, and by administring to them *intoxicating potions:* (6.) The fraud and falsehood of it; as forging and publishing false miracles

racles and *lying wonders* without end: (7.) The diſtinguiſhed doctrines and inſtitutions of it; as *prohibiting marriage*, commanding to *abſtain from meats*; maintaining *idolatry* and practiſing *Dæmon-Worſhip*; that is, the invocation of departed ſpirits: (8.) The grandeur and pomp, the pride and arrogance of the great *head* of this apoſtacy; as diſplaying a vaſt magnificence, as *contending with, and exalting himſelf above, all that is called GOD or is worſhipped, ſitting in the temple of GOD, and ſhewing himſelf that he is a God*; that is, claiming a power to pardon ſins, and to diſpenſe with all laws divine as well as human (which is indeed aſſuming a power over God) preſiding viſibly in the church, and openly demanding the Faith and obedience which are due to God alone: (9.) And laſtly, the very title which is the pretended ground of right to all his authority, namely, as *Chriſt's Vicar* or *ſubſtitute* on earth, which exactly anſwers to the *Greek* word *Antichriſt*.—— Other circumſtances might be mentioned; but

but these are all so bold strokes, so peculiar and distinguished features, that the picture cannot possibly be mistaken or misapplied. And unless we imagine that the *Apostles* of our *Saviour* drew these extraordinary characters at a venture, and that by chance things fell out afterwards as extraordinarily to answer them; here is evidently such an argument for the truth of the *Christian revelation*, as more than ballances any objections arising from any strange event of things since the publication of the *Gospel*. Here is a state of things, it must be confessed, directly contrary to what the Apostles tell us *ought to be* amongst professed *Christians*; but exactly agreeable to what they foretel us *would be*: here is a *kingdom* erected under the name of *Christ*, but as different from the real *kingdom of Christ*, as darkness is from light: The former is a worldly dominion, founded on fraud and falsehood, exercised with tyranny, productive of all corruption and wickedness: the latter is *not of this world*; and there are no

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other ſigns or effects of it on earth, but truth, virtue and charity; and wherever theſe are found, there is in ſome degree a ſpecimen and commencement of our Saviour's kingdom.

SECONDLY: The truth and excellence of any doctrine or inſtitution of religion is to be judged of independently of the moral conduct of thoſe who profeſs it. The moſt perfect inſtitution cannot inſure the morals of mankind. On the contrary, it is itſelf always liable to be neglected, or miſtaken, or, like gold, to be debaſed, or counterfeited by the artifices of corrupt men. As the wiſeſt ſyſtem of human laws cannot ſecure the political virtue of a nation, but being left to the execution of weak or wicked men, may be neglected or perverted; ſo may any ſcheme of religion, tho' founded on divine truth and authority, be equally abuſed, when left to the voluntary uſe and application of men.

If the *Heathen*-corruption of natural religion is no real objection to the revelation of nature; neither is the *papal* or any other corruption of Christian religion, any objection to the revelation of the Gospel. — The law of nature is indeed the law of God; and it is right and perfect in itself; but it never was perfectly understood, much less practised, in any part of the world; and in most parts, was violated and perverted to an enormous degree, and even the most unnatural ideas and customs planted in its stead. *Christianity* is the *same* law of God inforced by additional principles and motives: but the same causes in human nature, which corrupted natural religion, have operated in like manner to violate and pervert *Christianity*, and to substitute the wicked inventions of men in its room. All this follows from the passions and lusts of mankind, from the artifice and fraud of deceivers, and from the weakness and folly of the deceived. And neither any system of laws, or doctrines of truth, or institutions

tions of worſhip, tho' ever ſo plainly derived from divine authority, whether diſcovered by reaſon, or delivered in the fulleſt terms of revelation, can ſecure mankind from the influence of thoſe cauſes of corruption: nothing but a perpetual ſeries of miraculous interpoſitions and judgments (ſuch as that which ſtruck *Ananias* and *Sapphira* dead, for attempting to paſs a fraud upon the *Apoſtles*, or in reality upon the *Holy Spirit)* could be ſufficient to this end. And even ſuch a train of miracles would by their continuance loſe their beſt effects, and come in time to be conſidered as no miracles at all.

The actual reformation or virtue of mankind is by no means therefore a neceſſary condition, in order to prove the truth, either of natural religion, or of the *Chriſtian* revelation. The truth of things ſhould always be conſidered as independent on the opinions and practices of mankind: and we ought not to ſuffer any prejudices

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to arise in our minds, against any doctrine or institution, on account of the mistakes and abuses which it hath been subject to, by human fraud or folly, caprice or wickedness.

In reality, a general reformation of mankind in any high degree, seems to be impracticable by any means whatsoever: the constitution of this world does not seem to admit of it. Human nature will still remain the same, and mankind are and always will be creatures beset with temptations, appetites, passions, errors, follies, and faults. *This world* is not a state, in which the virtue, peace, and happiness of mankind can ever be thoroughly established. So great a change, so happy a reformation, so divine an establishment, cannot take place but in *that state* or *world*, where our Blessed Saviour's *Kingdom* is established, that *everlasting kingdom* of his, into which all sincere and good men shall be finally admitted, and form one glorious

ſociety under his protection and government.

THIRDLY: 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. The publication of the *Goſpel* and the endeavours of the *Apoſtles* to promote its credit and influence in the world, were indeed directed to the inſtruction, converſion, and moral improvement of all who would give attention. But the reception and effect of the Goſpel amongſt mankind is only a *circumſtance*, compared to the *great end* of our Saviour's whole undertaking: *which end* might have been accompliſhed in regard to mankind in general, tho' the *Goſpel* had never been publiſhed at all: as it is now, in *fact*, accompliſhed, in regard to the far greater part of mankind, who have never yet received or heard of the *Goſpel*; and who nevertheleſs ſhall obtain, if they live virtuouſly according to

the law of GOD written in their hearts, the great salvation of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When he himself was questioned in the most solemn manner upon his trial by the *Roman* governor, concerning his kingly character and pretensions; he avowed himself to be in reality a *King*; but added, *that his kingdom was not of this world: that he was born into and appeared in the world, that he might bear testimony to the truth; and that every one who is of the truth would hear his voice.* That is, he aimed at no government or influence, and came to effect no change in the state of the world, but such as that *truth*, to which he bore testimony, would produce: and every person who received that truth would indeed *obey* his commands. But this was a kind of influence and authority no way interfering with the government of *Pilate* or the empire of *Cæsar*, or prejudicial to the rights of any prince on earth.

Our bleſſed *Saviour* exerciſes no regal or judicial power in this world. All that can be properly ſtyled *his kingdom* on earth, is nothing more than the influence which the truth of the *Goſpel* hath upon the minds and actions of men. And this truth he left to the voluntary acceptance or refuſal, uſe or abuſe, of mankind: and men themſelves, not his goſpel, are anſwerable for the conſequences. He hath expreſsly diſclaimed all *coercive* power over mankind in this life: and his *perſuaſive* power is left in the hiſtory and other parts of the *new teſtament:* which men may attend to, or, on the contrary, may neglect, deſpiſe, miſtake, pervert, and abuſe, juſt as they are diſpoſed, without the leaſt apprehenſion either of reward or puniſhment from *him* in *this* world. As far as the goſpel ſerves to influence men to virtue; ſo far he intended to reform the world and to *bleſs men in turning them from their iniquities*, but *no further*. Excepting

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this, the world goes on in its natural course; and fraud and folly, superstition and wickedness rule in it as much as ever.

HAD our *blessed Saviour* come with a sole or principal view to reform mankind in this life; he would have done what he expresly disclaimed; that is, he would have erected a government on earth: and we need not doubt but it would have been a perfect government, and have advanced the virtue and happiness of mankind, as high as human nature, and the constitution of *this* world could admit. But they will not admit of any high degrees. A government of perfect virtue, a community of compleat happiness, are impracticable *here*. *This* world *cannot* be converted and framed into an entire unmixed scene of knowledge, virtue, and happiness. But *another* world *may* be so framed: and mankind translated to another state and invested with a new na-

ture, may become wiſe, virtuous, and happy, in a manner and degree, of which their preſent nature and ſtate are incapable: *for fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of GOD, nor can corruption inherit incorruption.*—If any then ſuppoſe, that the main purpoſe of our *Saviour*'s coming was to eſtabliſh the virtue, peace, and happineſs of men in this world; they are inattentive to what is repreſented as his great deſign and office, and do not underſtand the meaning of that *redemption which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* He had a far greater end in view, than any thing which could be effected on earth; a more ſublime and extenſive enterprize, than any reformation or government of mankind in this life.

This leads to a fourth obſervation, which takes in the ſenſe of the text: that our *Saviour*'s great deſign and end was to provide a future ſtate for mankind, to prepare another world for their reſidence, and to raiſe them

them from the dead to the possession of it, and there to establish his everlasting throne, kingdom and government.—Here is an effect worthy of a divine revelation, and every way answerable to the dignity of it, and to the miraculous intervention and operation of superior beings, in order to accomplish the glorious purpose.

A LIFE and world to come are derived to men from the power and goodness, the mediation and the agency, of the great *Redeemer* of the world, who saves men from *death eternal*, that is, from an utter extinction of being, and raises them to that life and state, that *inheritance* and *kingdom*, which are *his*, and which he prepares for and bestows on good men.—To this grand event the scriptures of the new testament constantly direct our attention, and represent it, in the fullest manner, as the purpose, end, and consummation of the scheme of *redemption*.

If we are prepoſſeſſed with opinions, that a future ſtate is the natural birth-right of mankind, and that the ſouls of men are phyſically immortal or eternal; or that the almighty Creator either could not, or had ſome way bound himſelf that he never would, deſtroy or annihilate the human ſouls he hath made; if we entertain a previous notion, that a ſuperior eternal life comes to mankind in the neceſſary courſe of things, independent of the operation and ſpecial agency of any ſuperior power to that end; if we think that our ſalvation and happineſs after death is effected by mechanical cauſes, and not by the mediation of intelligent agents; we ſhall find more difficulty in attaining to a clear underſtanding of the *Goſpel*. But if we lay aſide theſe vague, obſcure, and prejudicate notions, and take our ideas and ſentiments directly from the language of our Saviour and his apoſtles, we ſhall find it clearly intelligible: and ſhall then eaſily apprehend, that *the kingdom of our Saviour*,

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the kingdom of GOD, the kingdom of heaven, so often mentioned in the new testament, are one and the same thing with the *future state* of mankind.

JOHN the *Baptist*, the forerunner of our *Saviour*, preached saying, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* And whilst *our Saviour* was living on earth, he taught, and ordered his *disciples* to teach, the same, viz. *the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* But after his resurrection, they never say it was *at hand*; because it was then actually *come* or commenced: the future state was then begun, *Christ* being *the first fruits of them that slept:* and as *Adam* was the first of mankind in this world, so *our Lord* was the first of mankind in the *resurrection-state* or the world to come, *the first-born from the dead*, the beginning of the *new creation.* At the last *passover* he declares to his disciples, *that he would no more taste of the fruit of the vine, till he should drink it with them anew in the kingdom of his Father*; that is, 'till after his resurrection,

when *the kingdom of GOD* was begun, and he then *eat and drank* with his disciples in his risen state.—The spread and influence of the *Gospel* in this world is indeed frequently signified by *the kingdom of GOD:* but it is always in connection with and reference to *that state* and world, which is properly and ultimately *the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour*; *that everlasting kingdom* into which all virtuous *christians* shall have *an abundant entrance administred to them: that kingdom*, into which *many shall come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: that kingdom*, in which *the righteous shall shine forth as the sun*, and which they shall obtain the perfect and eternal possession of, when *the king shall say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: that kingdom*, which our Lord received from the Father Almighty after his resurrection, when he was exalted, and had *all power given to him in heaven and*

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on earth for the salvation of men: and finally, *that kingdom*, in which *He will rule 'till he hath put all enemies under his feet*, subdued all opposition, *destroyed the last enemy death*, and thoroughly established the virtue, peace, and happiness of it.—These are all descriptions of that future state and life, which is the effect of our Lord's mediatorial undertaking, the state of his residence, the scene of his glory, and the region of his empire, where his throne and government are for ever established.

This being the revelation of the *Gospel*, it is evident, that the general reformation of mankind, or their perfect peace and happiness in this world, are by no means essential parts of the plan of redemption, or consequences necessarily following from the truth of the christian revelation. Our Saviour's grand purpose, and his kingly office and empire, stand independent of the state of things in this world, and of all effects and consequences of his gospel pub-

publiſhed amongſt men. We have indeed ground to hope, that the goſpel will have, in ſome future ages, more extenſive and beneficial effects, than it hath hitherto obtained: 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 order to the accompliſhment of the whole, in an 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. But even *this ſtate* of things will be no more than a faint reſemblance, or ſhadow, of his real, proper and everlaſting *kingdom*, and of no greater importance, than as it

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shall conduce to qualify men for *that future* state, which is in the proper and full sense *the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.* And the qualifications for *that* state may be found amongst mankind in every age and nation, tho' the *Gospel* be not received, known, or heard of amongst them.——So our Lord declares, *that many shall come from the east and the west, the north and the south,* from all parts of the world, and possess *his kingdom,* that is, the future state and world, whilst many *children* of the *kingdom,* many who now enjoy the *Gospel,* shall be excluded.——It is undoubtedly our high privilege to know this *Gospel* of the *kingdom* of heaven, and to have the *glad-tidings* of this *great salvation* published for our acceptance, and confirmed to our belief by the *resurrection* of our *Saviour* from the dead, that grand event, which was the actual commencement of a future state, as well as the signal proof of it: but this privilege may be neglected and fatally abused; and will have no effect in itself,

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ſeparate from an improvement or abuſe of it, in determining our future condition.

The wiſe or fooliſh conduct of *chriſtians* in this view, is repreſented in a moſt natural and lively figure, according to his peculiar and inimitable manner, by *our Lord* himſelf. *Then ſhall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom: and five of them were wiſe, and five were fooliſh. They that were fooliſh took their lamps and took no oil with them: but the wiſe took oil in their veſſels with their lamps*, &c. By *the kingdom of heaven*, he means, the future ſtate: by the *bridegroom* he characterizes *himſelf*, as he will then *appear*, not in the form and manner in which he lived on earth, but in ſplendor and magnificence, like a *prince* entertaining his friends and attendants at a *nuptial* ſolemnity: by the *virgins* going forth to meet the *bridegroom*, he denotes all *chriſtians* who

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profess a veneration for him, and seem to prepare for and attend his *grand appearance:* and they are of two sorts, the *wise* and the *foolish:* the *foolish* are contented with the name and profession of christianity, without moral virtue: but the *wise* are sollicitous to maintain that internal religion and virtue, without which, an outward profession is of no more significance, than a *lamp* without *oil:* and the consequence is, the exclusion of the one sort from, and admission of the other into, *the presence and joy of their Lord.*

It is needless to explain, or to add, any other passages or expressions of the *new testament.* The whole language of our *Saviour* and his *Apostles* will convince every attentive reader, that tho' the state of true religion and the influence of the *Gospel* in this world, is sometimes stiled *the kingdom of heaven,* as being preparatory to the future state; yet it is the *future state alone,*

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that life and world, to which all good men ſhall be tranſlated, that is always meant by *the kingdom of Chriſt*, whenever our Lord's perſonal reſidence, or power, or government, or judgment, or glory, or joy, or the rewards he will beſtow on good men, are comprehended.

To conclude: if the grand deſign and effect of our *Saviour*'s enterprize was not to rectify all diſorders, and eſtabliſh the perfect virtue and happineſs of mankind, in this world, not to mold human nature anew in this life; but to raiſe mankind from the dead, to provide another ſtate and world for the reſidence and happineſs of the good, and there eſtabliſh his glorious and *everlaſting kingdom*; it highly becomes all who believe this *Goſpel*, it is our greateſt advantage, and if we have a right conſideration of things, will be our greateſt delight, to extend our views and affections to that future ſtate.

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The present nature and present state of mankind, or this world and its inhabitants, are undoubtedly fitted to each other by unerring wisdom. And whilst this world is upon the whole as good as the best men, and far better than the worst, deserve; it is no other than a senseless impiety, the offspring of pride and ingratitude, to be always complaining of our lot, neither enjoying the good things of life with thankfulness, nor bearing the calamities of it with patience.—In this view, every one ought to be satisfied with *present things*, and acknowledge the goodness of the almighty Creator, in bringing him into this life and world, so *good* and happy in the whole.

But if the power and virtue of the great *Redeemer* is exerted, by commission from the *Father* Almighty, to provide another and a better world, for the peculiar and eternal inheritance of good men; is it not an inestimable accumulation of di-

vine goodneſs? Should it not be thought *tidings of great joy?* Should it not raiſe our ardent hopes and deſires, and excite our endeavours of preparation for the poſſeſſion of it? After ſuch an authentic diſcovery and *annunciation* of a world ſuperior and eternal, the reward of virtue; what is there in this world to engroſs our attention, and make us unmindful of *the great ſalvation*, and *the promiſed inheritance?* —This world cannot be made a ſtate of happineſs, either great in degree, or laſting in duration. Mankind are neceſſarily incident to vices, diſorders, corruptions, calamities, diſeaſes, and death: and there is no remedy: it is the proper ſtate of our preſent corruptible nature. To eſtabliſh the wiſeſt government and greateſt happineſs that mankind are capable of in this world, would have been a deſign below the dignity of our Saviour, and unequal to the extent of his power and goodneſs. And we ought to rejoice much more in the goſpel-account of a fu-

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ture state, than if our Saviour had erected the most perfect empire possible here on earth. For undoubtedly men may become capable of a happiness in another and immortal life, such as they can neither enjoy, nor so much as comprehend, at present. We have therefore the strongest reason to be satisfied, that the reward of good men is not in *this* world, but in *that*, where our *exalted Saviour* resides, and over which he rules with *an eternal scepter* of perfect justice and goodness.

THE *practice* of men often shews the great strength of their *faith* and *hope* in a prospect of temporal interest; when they risk their worldly *all*, upon an uncertain expectation of gaining, not a *kingdom*, but a small return of profit.——Had men the *like faith* in regard to *another* world; how great an operation would it have in the practice of all virtue!——yet in our *christian vocation* there is no risque or danger: we may *gain every thing* by attention and

induſtry, but can *loſe nothing*. For if we ſuppoſe that the goſpel is falſe, and that there is *no* future ſtate; yet the honour and pleaſure of conſcious virtue is a full equivalent for any ſelf-denial we ſhall exert in the practice of it: and therefore we can ſuffer nothing. But if the *Goſpel* be true, the difference is immenſe: whether we ſhall be refuſed admittance into the future ſtate, and together with the dreadful reproach of our own folly, be doomed to periſh in *eternal death*; or on the contrary, *have an abundant entrance adminiſtred to us into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour*. May God of his infinite mercy deliver us from the former, and beſtow upon us the latter, *thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*.

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DISCOURSE XV.

The Gospel-Doctrine of Future Punishment.

2 Thessalonians i. 9.

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

THE *redemption* of mankind, or their resurrection to another life, is represented in the *Gospel* as the noblest effect of divine goodness; and the paternal love of the *Father almighty*, in this greatest instance, is recommended with all the force and beauty proper to engage our filial affection and warmest gratitude. At the same time, the *judicial* character of the supreme being, as governor of the world, and *punisher* of wickedness and disobedience, is duely maintained, and the belief of his punishing justice properly enforced, to produce reverence and fear.

We may perhaps find some difficulty in forming *consistent* ideas, of the inflexible *justice* of God as united with his paternal goodness and *tender mercies over all his works.*——But this difficulty arises from the weakness of our minds. We are apt to imagine that the different acts of punishing and rewarding, or of saving and destroying, proceed from different principles or affections in the divine nature. Whereas every divine act equally springs from the purpose of infinite wisdom, in order to the best ends. And tho' in common and popular language frequent mention is made of the divine *wrath* or *indignation*, which is imputing human passions and resentments to the supreme being: yet in reality, as in general, no human language can express his attributes; so in particular, all *passion* is, strictly speaking, *inconsistent* with the immutable happiness of the divine nature and perfection of his government. If it be thought unworthy of an earthly magistrate to judge with passion

and

and punish from resentment; how much more should it be thought incompatible with the all-perfect governor of the universe? —Yet human prejudices are so apt to arise, and intermingle themselves, in our conceptions of the supreme being and his government of the world, that we are continually tempted to ascribe some of our own affections, or indeed infirmities, to him, and to imagine him influenced by such emotions as we experience in our own hearts; as if the infinite and self-existent spirit was little better than such a frail composition of materials as our animal nature; when, in truth, the highest faculties of our rational nature in the best exercise of them, exhibit an image or resemblance of his perfection infinitely obscure and imperfect.

And some men have been so weak, so misled, or so much influenced in their religious opinions by their own evil hearts, that they have not forbore to ascribe to

God the very worst corruptions of human nature: and as the *Heathens* debased their Gods by ascribing to them bodily appetites, and even the lusts of intemperance; some *Christians* have imputed to the all-perfect Deity the passions of partiality, tyranny and cruelty; and have erected a scheme of notions, in regard to the eternal state of men and the *decrees* of God, contrary to the natural sentiments of humanity, and to the most frequent and express declarations of the *Gospel*. They have represented the Deity as arbitrarily *electing* particular favourites, and placing a partial affection upon them, and *reprobating* or neglecting the rest of mankind; and have described the execution of divine justice in another world as consisting, not in *destroying*, but *preserving* for ever the souls which are condemned, in order to inflict upon them endless and extreme miseries. Both which doctrines are not only void of all foundation in the *holy scriptures*, but are directly contrary to

many

many explicit assertions of our *Saviour* and his *Apostles.*

For they represent the whole scheme of a future state, and the divine purpose of raising mankind to another life, as proceeding from the goodness of God and his fatherly benevolence and clemency; and *that*, not to a few select favourites, but to the world in general. *For God so loved* the world *that he gave his only begotten Son, and sent him, not to condemn the world*, not to execute a purpose of displeasure, but to accomplish a scheme of infinite mercy and eternal salvation. And, *He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance:* and, *is no respecter of persons, but accepts all in every nation who fear him and work righteousness. He is the GOD of the Heathens, as well as of the Jews and Christians; and mankind are all his offspring. And he will judge the world in righteousness*; not according to any particular secret decrees, but according to his universal, revealed,

vealed, known, immutable, everlasting, most wise, just, and merciful decree, of *rewarding all men according to their works*; and of his infinite goodness will bestow eternal life on all good men; and will in perfect justice punish the wicked, *not* by an *eternal preservation* in misery and torment, but by *an eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.*

Now as this last is a point of great moment; as it is a justice due to every doctrine of *christianity* to rescue it from abuse and ambiguity, and to represent it faithfully and clearly; and as, in this instance, it is taking away a formidable, and indeed unanswerable, objection in the mouth of an infidel against *christianity* itself; I shall proceed to shew, what is the final punishment threatened in the *Gospel* to the wicked and impenitent, adhering closely to the terms of *holy scripture*, which are our only authentic ground of

belief,

belief, and which are, if duly attended to, sufficiently plain and explicit: as indeed it would seem unworthy of a divine revelation to leave so momentous an article dubious and perplexed.

WITH this view, let us first consider the plain and *literal*; and secondly, the *figurative* expressions of our *Saviour* and his *Apostles*, concerning the final punishment of wicked men in another world.

FIRST, we are to consider the most plain and literal expressions on this subject: for in collecting the sense of holy scripture, these are to be attended to in the first place and principally, and the more dubious and figurative language is to be compared with and explained by them.

Now there are many passages, in which the end of wicked men, or the ultimate punishment to which they shall be adjudged, is defined in the most precise

and intelligible terms, to be, *not* an *everlasting preservation* in pain and torment, but (as it is expressed in the text) *an everlasting destruction* from that *power* of God, which is equally *able* to destroy, as to preserve, to annihilate, as to create the souls of men. So when our Saviour is fortifying the minds of his disciples against the power of men, by an awe of the far greater power of God, and the punishment of his justice; he expresses himself thus: *Fear not them 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 is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* Here he plainly proposes the *destruction* of the soul (not its endless pain and misery) as the ultimate effect of the divine displeasure, and greatest object of our fear. And when he describes the great judge of the world, as commanding the criminals to be *brought forth* and *slain* in his presence; the expression evidently imports an absolute *destruction*, and not an end-

endless *imprisonment* in a place of torments. And when he says, *These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*; it appears evident, that, by that *eternal punishment*, which is set in opposition to *eternal life*, is not meant any kind of *life* however miserable, but the same which our Apostle expresses by *everlasting destruction from the presence and power* of the almighty judge of life and death. And the very term, *Death*, is the most *frequently* made use of, to signify the end of wicked men in another world, or the final effect of divine justice in their punishment.——*The wages of sin*, says the Apostle, *is death*; *but eternal life is the gift of GOD, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.* And, *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if thro' the spirit, ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*——*To be carnally minded is death*; *but to be spiritually minded is life.* ——*Sin when it is finished*, says St. James, *bringeth forth death.*——And our Saviour says, *whoever believeth in me shall never die*,

or

or shall not die for ever, *but hath eternal life.*—And *good christians* are said to be *already passed from death unto life*; and on the contrary, *uncharitable* and *wicked* christians to be *in a state of death.*

We should now proceed to consider the more *figurative* language of scripture on this subject. But it is proper to observe in passing, that to imagine, that by the term, *death*, is meant an *eternal life* tho' in a condition of extreme *misery*, seems to be confounding all propriety and meaning of words. *Death*, when applied to the end of wicked men in a future state, properly denotes their *ceasing to exist*, or a total *extinction of life and being*. And it may contribute to fix this meaning, if we observe also, that the bodily dissolution which all men undergo in this world is usually termed by our Saviour and his Apostles, not *death*, but *sleep:* because from *this* death the soul shall be raised to life again: but from the *other*, that which is fully and proper-

properly *death*, and of which the former is but an image or shadow, there is no recovery; it is an *eternal death, an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.*

We might let the whole argument rest on the passages already quoted, and others of the like kind; which are as precise and determinate in expressing an utter extinction of being, as any words in familiar use of the language in which the Apostles wrote could express it.

But if we proceed to the *figures* by which the eternal punishment of wicked men is described, we shall find them perfectly *agreeing* to establish the same doctrine.—One *figure* or comparison often used, is that of combustible materials thrown into a *fire*, and which will consequently be entirely consumed, if the fire be not *quenched. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and*

his

his angels. The meaning is, a total irrevocable destruction. For as *the tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire*, and is thereby destroyed; as the useless *chaff*, when separated from the good grain, is set on fire, and if the fire be not quenched is consumed; so it appears plainly, that the image of *fire unquenchable or everlasting*, is not intended to signify the degree or duration of *torment*, but the absolute certainty of *destruction* beyond all possibility of a recovery. So the cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* are said to have *suffered the vengeance of an eternal fire:* that is, they were so effectually consumed and destroyed, that they could never be rebuilt: the expression of *eternal fire* signifying the *irrecoverable destruction* of those cities, not the degree or duration of misery of the inhabitants who perished. Again, our Saviour says, *it is better for thee to enter into life blind or maimed, rather than to be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.*

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The meaning is, it is better to undergo any difficulty, or submit to any loss in this world, in order to obtain the *Life to come*, than with all the advantages of *this life* to suffer at last the total irrecoverable loss of Life and Being. For those images, of *the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched*, are set in opposition to *entering into life*, and are both intended to denote, not any degree or duration of *misery*, but an absolute *period* of life and existence: for the *worm*, if it continues to live, destroys the patient diseased by it, and the *fire*, if it is not quenched, consumes the fuel that is cast into it. The Prophet *Isaiah* uses the *same* figures to signify the *entire* defeat and slaughter of those who should oppose the designs of providence in the restoration of the *Jewish* state. *They shall go forth, and look on the carcases of them that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence of all flesh:* that is, they shall be

so utterly destroyed, that none shall be left to bury the slain, but the carcases shall be a spectacle of abhorrence on the field of battle. So when the same Prophet says, *Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell in everlasting burnings?*——He expresses the great irretrievable calamities and destruction, which he foresaw would come upon the people of *Judea*; without any reference to another world, as we may plainly see by the context of the whole chapter.——In like manner the Author of the book of revelations describes, in the *poetic* figures of prophesy; the misery and destruction which shall be inflicted *in this world* upon the Abetters of the Antichristian Apostacy. *A third Angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark on his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of GOD, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brim-*

brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. That this passage hath no reference to a future state, and the final punishment of wicked men, will appear evident, if we consider; that *the cup of indignation* here mentioned is the same with *the cup of the wine of the fierceness of divine wrath given to great Babylon, when she came in remembrance before GOD*, mentioned, Ch. xvi. 19. and if we compare this passage with the following passages, Ch. xviii. 4. *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her sins have reached unto heaven, and GOD hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double, according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double. How*

much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her. For she saith in her heart, I sit a Queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire: for strong is the Lord GOD who judgeth her. And the Kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning. And Ch. xix. 3. *And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.* And again at the 20th verse: *And the beast was taken, and with them the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image: these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone: and the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sate upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth; and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.* From comparing these passages it will evidently ap-

appear that these poetical descriptions wholly relate to public calamities and temporal punishments in this world: in like manner as all the preceding poetical figures at the opening of the *seals*, the sounding of the *trumpets*, and the pouring out of the *vials*. In the following chapter the author extends his view to a *future* state, and represents the final *punishment and destruction* of wicked men by the *like* expressions and figures, by which he hath before described the most terrible judgments of divine providence in *this* world. *And I saw the dead small and great stand before GOD, and the books are opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and Death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And Death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire: this is the second death. And whosoever*

was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire. It is evident here, beyond contradiction, that, *being cast into the lake of fire*, means the same with, *the second death*; and that it cannot possibly mean, a living in torment; for *Death*, and *Hades* (which should have been translated, *the grave)* cannot be tormented; but they may *cease to be*, which is unquestionably the true meaning: and the expression here, of *death and the grave being cast into the lake of fire*, is precisely equivalent to that of the Apostle, *the last enemy which shall be destroyed is death*; or to that of the Prophet, *O death I will be thy plague, O grave I will be thy destruction.* The Scripture-figure therefore, of being *cast into an everlasting* or *unquenchable fire*, means a total destruction, or annihilation, a period of existence, or *for ever ceasing to be.*

Our Saviour's parable of the *rich-man* and *Lazarus* (besides its ultimate view) contains a most lively and affecting description-

ſcription of the momentous change and *reverſe* of the condition of men in another world: where the diſeaſed and famiſhed beggar is tranſlated to a ſtate of eaſe and happineſs; and the voluptuous, avaritious, and inhuman rich-man is repreſented as paſſing at death into a ſtate of miſery and torments. But in regard to the ſubject we are upon, the concluſion we ought to draw from this repreſentation is, not that thoſe torments ſhall never end, but that the ſentence of eternal death ſhall be executed with more or leſs miſery and torment preceding or attending the final period, in proportion to the greater or leſs guilt of the criminal: in like manner as in this world, condemned criminals are put to death, with different degrees of preceding pain and horror, proportionate to the ſeveral crimes for which they were condemned. This doctrine our Saviour teaches in the plaineſt and fulleſt manner. The rich man was void of religion and humanity,

and suffered *Lazarus* to perish at his gate by disease and famine: he is therefore represented by an elegant and striking contrast, as imploring relief in his extreme misery from the hand of *Lazarus*. But in regard to the duration of his misery, the text is wholly silent. In other passages our Saviour expresly assigns different degrees of future misery, in proportion to mens respective degrees of guilt. *The servant*, says he, *who knew his master's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew it not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.* But if all wicked men shall suffer torments without end, how can any of them be said to suffer but a *few* stripes? Could our *Saviour* stile infinite sufferings by the soft name of *a few stripes?* It is probable he here alludes to the usual methods amongst the *Jews* of executing malefactors, who were first *scourged with rods* and then put to death; and the scourging was more or less

severe

ſevere and terrible, according to the degree of the crime: and therefore our Lord here points out the different degrees of puniſhment which ſhall precede or attend the execution of *eternal death.* In like manner, Matt. v. 22. He deſcribes, under the names and images of preſent temporal puniſhment, the degrees of future puniſhment proportionate to the degrees of guilt there ſpecified. The *Judgment* denotes the loweſt degree, the *council* a higher, *Gehenna* the higheſt. The paſſage is rendred obſcure to the *Engliſh* reader, by his not being acquainted with the judicial proceedings cuſtomary amongſt the *Jews*, and with the proper ſenſe and force of the terms here made uſe of in reference to thoſe proceedings, and by the miſtake of our tranſlators in rendering the word *Gehenna*, *Hell-fire:* whereas it is, *the valley of Hinnom*, that is, a place without the walls of *Jeruſalem*, where the carcaſes of the criminals deprived of burial were thrown and their bones

bones burnt, or where some particular criminals were burnt alive; both which kinds of punishment were considered by the *Jews* as most severe and dreadful, and as such, were inflicted for the worst of crimes: hence the word *Gehenna* is used by a Metaphor to signify the greatest and last punishment in another world. These and other passages clearly express, what we may most rationally believe, that the sufferings and pains preceding death eternal shall be different, in like manner as those preceding temporal death, and shall be adequate to the respective degrees of guilt, in those who are condemned at the final judgment: and *how great* those sufferings may be, either in *degree* or *duration*, we cannot possibly determine. But we may justly conclude, if the providence of God permits *good* men to endure sometimes much misery, or to be put to a cruel death, in *this* world; how *much more* dreadful will the *end* of *wicked* men be in *another* world, especially of those cruel

cruel persecutors who have so inhumanly treated good men in *this*. *They shall be thrown into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* —— Nothing can be more just, than that the measure of punishment, assigned to every criminal, should be in proportion to the measure of guilt which he hath contracted; which the doctrine of the Gospel, as before represented, admits and affirms: whereas all degrees and distinctions of punishment seem swallowed up in the notion of never-ending or infinite misery.

And let it be observed, that death spiritual and eternal, or annihilation, is *properly* stiled in the New Testament an *everlasting* punishment, as it is irrevocable and unalterable for ever, and it is most strictly and literally expressed in the text, *An everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the Glory of his Power.*

If any Christians imagine, that the foregoing explication of this doctrine may take off some kind of restraint from the minds of wicked men, or give them any encouragement to harden themselves in their wickedness; let such Christians seriously examine and consider, whether it is not the doctrine of our Saviour; and if it be, whether He may not be safely trusted as to the consequences of his own doctrines; whether it is not blaspheming *him*, to assert that any of *his* doctrines serves to encourage wickedness; and whether it be not *absurd in itself* and a manifest contradiction, to suppose, that declaring *the righteous judgment of GOD* against *wicked* men, as determined to punish them with proportionate misery and an *everlasting destruction*, is giving countenance to their wicked practices.

It is not credible, that any man ever did, or ever can harden himself in wicked-

ness

nefs from the mere expectation that his punifhment in another world will terminate in his utter deftruction. It is not poffible that any man can act in defiance to the juftice of God and the terrors of hell and eternal damnation from fuch a belief. Or if there be fuch a perfon exifting, he muft be *already* the moft abandoned and incorrigible of mankind. But certainly, human nature is not capable of fo defperate and diabolical a refolution: and we only betray the meannefs and folly of our own hearts in fufpecting this confequence, and in having a worfe opinion of mankind than the worft of men deferve.

The *Gofpel-Doctrine* of a total everlafting deftruction is much more adapted to bring finners to repentance than the doctrine of endlefs mifery and torment: becaufe they may be *convinced* of the reafon and *juftice* of the *former*; but never can be fo, of the

latter.

latter. And it is of the greatest importance that men be convinced, not only that they shall suffer for their sins, but also that they shall suffer *justly*, and no more than their guilt deserves. It is indeed highly requisite, that men should have a profound reverence of the Supreme Being, and a fearful apprehension of the punishment due to wickedness: but it is equally requisite, that this fear be built upon a reasonable foundation, and a persuasion of the *justice* of that punishment: it ought to be the fear of a most righteous and merciful Governor, who punishes in due measure, and to answer a wise and beneficent purpose; not of an unjust and mercileſs tyrant, "who punishes without measure or end to satisfy an implacable and eternal resentment." The former is a motive proper to bring sinners to repentance, by convincing them, that if they persist in their wickedness, it will become right and fit in the great Governor of the world, and

requiſite to the ends of his *goodneſs*; to puniſh and deſtroy them for ever, in order to put an *end* to their *wickedneſs*; and for an example to others. But the doctrine of an eternal preſervation in the moſt dreadful torments is not proper to bring men to repentance, or to promote virtue in the world. On the contrary, this *antichriſtian* doctrine hath actually produced much wickedneſs, and of the worſt kind, and hath ſerved alſo to harden men in it.

The more we ſtudy human nature, and underſtand what influence different principles have upon the temper and conduct of mankind, and are acquainted with the religious hiſtory of the chriſtian world; the more we ſhall be convinced of this. When men have been guilty of enormous crimes, or abandoned themſelves to ſome vitious courſes, but at length begin to think of another world, and what their own condition will be after death; then, to be perſuaded

suaded of *the righteous judgment of GOD*, and that he will punish impenitent sinners in a terrible and exemplary manner, but no more than their iniquities deserve, or than the ends of government and the purposes of wisdom and goodness require; this persuasion will lead them to a true repentance, as it implies a conviction of the mischievous heinous and criminal nature of their own actions, and tends to inspire them with an abhorrence and dread, not of *GOD*, but of *their own wickedness* and ill deserts, and with a veneration and esteem of the Almighty Governor of the world for his very *justice*, tho' it condemns them; because they believe that his intention in punishing is to prevent the progress of wickedness, and put an end to misery; not to make wickedness and misery immortal. *This fear* of God is consistent with the *love* of him, and with the highest confidence in his paternal goodness and saving mercy: hence they naturally reflect upon their own disin-

disingenuity and ingratitude; in transgressing the will of the wisest and best of Governors. And this temper is the true spirit of *repentance towards GOD*, and the spring of humility, justice and charity towards men.

But on the other hand, if they believe that God will punish beyond all bounds of justice, and will *preserve* condemned sinners *alive* for ever, in order to wreak upon them an insatiable eternal vengeance; and that it is his design not to extirpate and *destroy*, but to *preserve* and increase *wickedness* and *misery* in the creation; this opinion, the more seriously they attend to it and believe it, the more it will *prevent* true repentance: it can only serve to confound the mind, and to absorb and destroy the best principles of true religion, and particularly to exclude from the heart all *love* of God and all *confidence* in his justice and goodness. For let men *pretend* what they

 will,

will, they *cannot* esteem, love, and confide in a *tyrant*, or a being whose will and pleasure is to make *wickedness and misery endless*. They may be Hypocrites thro' fear, and profess love with their mouths; but secretly and in their hearts they will have an aversion to him: they will hate *GOD* more than *themselves*, and abhor *his gogernment* more than their *own sins* and ill deserts. At best, this opinion will *only* produce a slavish dread and terror which may compel men to worship God *against* their inclination, *and praise him with their lips*, while *their hearts* are not only *estranged* from him, but utterly *averse* to him

It is indeed readily allowed, that this opinion may have driven some men to use certain means, by which to avoid that relentless and insatiable vengeance, which they impiously ascribed to God. But by what means? Not by repentance and the practice of sobriety, humanity, and charity; but

but by penances, pilgrimages, unctions, auricular confessions, priestly absolutions, and all the low tricks of *superstition*; which correspond to the base and unworthy notions they had formed to themselves of the Supreme Being. Or else, where it made a more deep and violent impression, it hath driven men to a gloomy bitterness of temper, and inspired them with a dark and fierce *enthusiasm*; and they have sought to compensate for their vices, to appease the deity, and recommend themselves to his favour, by a furious bigotted zeal for a particular church or party, and by hating and persecuting others, whom they vainly and presumptuously stiled enemies of God and religion.

Such have been the real and natural consequences of this *Antichristian* doctrine. For according to men's sentiments of God and of the designs and measures of his government, such hath been the influence of

religion on their temper and conduct. And if they have not framed to themselves a God after their own evil hearts, they have framed their own hearts agreeable to that false and *evil character*, which they were taught to ascribe to God. And when they have believed the deity to *love* and *hate*, to *elect* and *reprobate* nations, parties, or individuals, without reason or regard to the ends of good government, and to pursue those, whom he hath thus reprobated, with an endless and insatiable resentment; they themselves have become more arbitrary, bigotted, fierce, unmerciful, and more addicted to hate and persecute their fellow-creatures, all who were not of their own church, and whom they supposed to be reprobated of God.——It is hardly credible, that inhumanity and *cruelty* would ever have been carried to such *excess* in the christian world, as they actually have been, had they not derived countenance and support from these *Antichristian* and barbarous no-

notions. Tyrants and persecutors, if they have not invented these doctrines, yet have applied them to excuse to their own consciences, and vindicate to others, the most iniquitous and cruel proceedings; and when they have made the very worst use of their power in persecuting good men, at least men who deserve no such punishment, they have persuaded themselves and others, that they were acting like the *Deity*, espousing *his* cause, and maintaining *his* character and *his* glory.

The court of *inquisition*, as established in many countries, and as far as it differs from civil-courts of judicature, is declared by the authors and maintainers of it to be the nearest *imitation* of the divine tribunal, and it is avowedly founded upon and justified by the doctrines of *reprobation* and of *eternal torments*. Jews, Infidels, and Heretics are judged in that court to be criminals, and are condemned. And how do

they vindicate this procedure; but by supposing them to be all reprobated and abhorred of God? And they execute them, not by a quick dispatch, but by the most lingering torments. And what do they plead for this cruelty; but that it is an *act of Faith*, that they are doing the *work of GOD*, and that he will expose those wretches to the like torments *for ever?* — Thus they conquer *nature* by *Faith*, as they express it: that is, they extinguish all sense of justice and relentings of mercy in their own nature, and harden themselves in iniquity and barbarity, by the belief of *those very doctrines* we are exposing: and by them they defend themselves in the face of the world, and give a colour and sanction of *religion* to the most enormous wickedness.

The only way to promote sobriety, justice, humanity, and every virtue in the world, is by representing truly and recommending

mending strongly the characters of the Deity and his government, as contained in the *real* doctrines of our *Saviour* and his *Apostles*: that he is the most just and merciful Father and governor of all mankind; who will by no means clear the guilty, or suffer the impenitent workers of iniquity to escape, and will assuredly *punish* them with an *everlasting destruction* from his own presence and by his own glorious power; but who in all the measures of his government intends the best ends, and to promote the good of the whole; to *destroy for ever*, not to *preserve for ever*, the souls of the wicked; to make *virtue* and *happiness*, not *wickedness* and *misery*, everlasting.——This belief of religion will have a most happy effect, in reclaiming men from vice and exciting them to virtue, and is every way proper to engage our reverence of God and our charity to all men, and to make us *love the Lord our GOD, and serve him with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and*

strength; which is our highest excellence and happiness.

To sum up the whole in a few words. ——To increase wickedness and misery in the creation, and to make them *endless*, is the work and design of the *Devil*. To impute the *same* design to the all-perfect and ever-blessed *GOD*, is no better than the greatest *impiety*. And to imagine that such a doctrine can do any good in the world, is great *weakness* and folly. Some men are amazingly forward, even while they *praise* God with their *mouths*, to harbour an *ill-opinion* of him in their *hearts*, and suspect him of having unjust or cruel designs. The timidity and melancholy of some, and the artifice and tyranny of others, lay the ground-work of such *diabolical* delusions. But *Christians* should know better: and if they have been *taught* otherwise, if they are yet ignorant of *the truth as it is in Jesus*, and have not the

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knowledge of GOD their most righteous Governor and merciful *Father in heaven*, it is high time they should learn to understand *their own* religion.

The true doctrine of the Gospel is most honourable to the Supreme Governor of the world, maintains the perfect consistency of his justice and mercy, and shews that the measures of his government are calculated, to prevent, destroy, and extirpate wickedness and misery, to purge at last the whole creation from every evil, *to collect together*, as our Saviour expresses it, *all things that offend and them which do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire*, where they shall be utterly consumed and never more exist. *John* the forerunner of *Christ*, describes him by the sublime character and office of being the minister of divine justice and mercy to mankind, *whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner*,

garner, but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire, that is, utterly destroy it: then wickedness and misery shall cease for ever, *death shall be destroyed*, and *destruction itself* come to an utter end.

The practical language of the New Testament corresponds to the doctrine as before explained: and it remains that we attend to the Gospel-admonitions, *to chuse the way of life, that our souls may live*, and to avoid the fatal *paths* that lead to eternal *destruction*. The *gate* of the former is *strait* and the *way narrow*, and it is requisite to *strive* to gain that important pass. But if it was the dearest possession in the world, if it was a *right hand* or *eye*, that is an obstacle preventing our entrance into *life eternal*; it is better to part with it and *cast it from us*, than with it to *perish for ever*. *For what is a man profited, if he could gain the whole world, and lose his own soul*, his own life and being for ever? Or what can possibly

ſibly be given to a man of equal value *in exchange* for his own life and being? It is not a few years in this world, but *life* and *death* abſolute and *eternal* which are ſet before us. This is the very condition of our exiſtence: there is no poſſibility of avoiding the momentous choice: and there is ſome difficulty in determining aright; and more, in adhering to that determination. But the firſt thing requiſite is to convince ourſelves thoroughly of the vaſt importance of our preſent conduct, and to have our minds awake and eyes open to look before us, and attend to the final conſequences of things. As it is not eaſy for children to be perſuaded, or bring themſelves to apprehend, what is requiſite or pernicious to their future health and life in this world; ſo men are not eaſily aware of the eternal conſequences of their preſent actions. There are ſo many things to bribe their judgment, or divert their attention, or benumb their hearts, or alter their

their resolutions, that *the gate* is found to be *wide* and *the way broad that leadeth to destruction, and many go in thereat*; and it is not without some difficulty that any are reclaimed and brought back into *the way of life.*——*Are there few that be saved!*—— is a question to which no answer ought to be expected, but those persuasions to use our best endeavours, and those descriptions of the qualifications requisite to salvation, which are to be found so frequent, so clear, and so cogent, in the writings of the Gospel, *That we would flee from the wrath to come*, and *let the goodness and patience of GOD lead us to repentance*; and not, *after the hardness and impenitence of our hearts, treasure up for ourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD*; but on the contrary, *by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honour and immortality*, that we may gain *eternal life*; and that we do not thro' corrupt prejudices mistake the way of salva-

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tion, and *what we must do to inherit eternal life*; but *if we would enter into life, keep the commandments* of God; that we do not deceive ourselves with a vain show and empty professions, for *GOD is not mocked*, and *whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap: he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap an incorruptible and immortal life. Do ye not know*, says the Apostle, *that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of GOD? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of GOD.*——Our blessed Saviour hath most plainly and authentically specified the terms of our acceptance with God, and the duties requisite to salvation: and *whosoever heareth his sayings and doth them* builds his hope of *eternal life* on an immoveable foundation: but hear-

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ing and not doing, professing and not practising, believing and not obeying, or to speak more properly, *pretending* to believe and to have *Faith* separate from works of obedience, is only heaping up to ourselves the greater confusion and ruin. And the grand event, the sublime mystery of a world to come, and of eternal life and death, is revealed in the Gospel, with such perspicuity of doctrine and force of application, as cannot fail to impress an attentive mind, and have a powerful effect. The favour or displeasure of the Almighty Governor of the universe; glory and immortality, or misery and destruction; *everlasting life*, or *death eternal*; are solemnly propounded to the belief, choice, and pursuit of mankind: and the way to avoid the one and obtain the other clearly described.

Let us wisely attend to these things, which are alone of infinite moment to us, and not let them slip out of our minds, or

or be choaked with the *cares of this world* and the *deceitfulness of riches*; that we may escape the condemnation of the wicked, even *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord*, and may inherit that *eternal life, which is the gift of GOD* (and which may GOD of his infinite mercy grant to us) *thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.*