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DISCOURSES

ON SEVERAL

Important Subjects.

To which are added,

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED AT THE

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE,

IN THE

Cathedral Church of *St. Paul, London.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By *JEREMIAH SEED*, M.A.
Rector of *Enham* in *Hampshire*, and late Fellow
of *Queen's-College, Oxford.*

The THIRD EDITION, with Corrections and
Amendments.

VOLUME I.

LONDON:

Printed for R. MANBY and H. S. COX, on
Ludgate-Hill, over-against the *Old Bailey.*

MDCCLXVII.

THE
CONTENTS
OF THE
First VOLUME.

SERMON I.

THE Duty of loving our Enemies,
stated and explained.

MATTHEW V. 44.

*But I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless
them that curse you, do good to them that
hate you, and pray for them which despite-
fully use you and persecute you. Page 1*

SERMON II.

Domestic Love and Union recommended
and enforced. In two Sermons.

PROVERBS XV. 17.

*Better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love is,
A 2 than*

The C O N T E N T S.

than a stalled Ox, and Hatred therewith.

Page 33

S E R M O N III.

Domestic Love and Union recommended
and enforced.

PROVERBS XV. 17.

*Better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love
is, than a stalled Ox, and Hatred therewith.*

51

S E R M O N IV.

The Duty of an uniform and unreserved
Obedience. In two Sermons.

St. JAMES II. 10, 11.

*Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and
yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of
all.*

*For he, that said; do not commit Adultery;
said also, do not kill.*

73

S E R M O N V.

The Duty of an uniform and unreserved
Obedience.

St. JAMES II. 10, 11.

*Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and
yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of
all.*

For

The CONTENTS.

*For he, that said, do not commit Adultery;
said also, do not kill.* Page 97

SERMON VI.

How far an Affluence contributes to Happiness, considered.

LUKE XII. 15.

A Man's Life consisteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth.

123

SERMON VII.

The Reasons, why Men act contrary to Conviction, and their settled Principles assigned.

ROMANS I. 18.

—Who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness.

159

SERMON VIII.

The Case of Diversions stated, and the Necessity of an early Application to Wisdom shewn.

PROVERBS XVIII. 1.

Through Desire, a Man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with Wisdom.

197

SER-

The CONTENTS.

S E R M O N IX.

On the Government of the Thoughts.

PROVERBS IV. 23.

*Keep thy Heart with all Diligence : For
out of it are the Issues of Life.*

Page 231

S E R M O N X.

On the Reasonableness of Prayer in general,
and of public Worship.

ROMANS XII. 12.

Continuing instant in Prayer. 261

S E R M O N XI.

The Duties of Family and Private Prayer,
considered.

ROMANS XII. 12.

Continuing instant in Prayer. 287

S E R M O N XII.

On the Duty of Resignation. In two
Sermons.

JOB II. 10.

*Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God,
and shall we not receive Evil?*

305

S E R-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XIII.

On the Duty of Resignation.

JOB II. 10.

*Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God,
and shall we not receive Evil? Page 327*

SERMON XIV.

On Evil-Speaking.

JAMES IV. 11:

Speak not Evil one of another, Brethren.

349

SERMON XV.

On the Love of God.

MARK XII. 30.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all
thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and
with all thy Mind, and with all thy
Strength. This is the First Command-
ment.*

379

SERMON XVI.

On the Foundation of Morality. In two
Sermons.

COLOSSIANS III. 23.

*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the
Lord, and not unto Men.*

405

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XVII.

On the Characters of Those, who pretend
to Morality, without Religion.

COLLOSSIANS III. 23.

*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the
Lord, and not unto Men* Page 427



SERMON

SERMON I.

The Duty of loving our Enemies
stated and explained.

Preached before the Univerſity of O X-
F O R D, 1733.

M A T T H E W V. verſe 44.

But I ſay unto you, love your Enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you.

TH E R E is an inſeparable Connexion SERM. I. between Malice and Unhappineſs: And it is an obvious Remark, that the moſt malevolent Being in the Univerſe is the moſt unhappy and accuſed Spirit in it, whoſe Temper reſembles that *Blackneſs of Darkneſs*, to which he is reſerved; as on the other hand the great Being, who is infinitely good and an inexhauſtible Fountain of Bleſſings to all his Creatures, is infinitely happy and *bleſſed* in himſelf for evermore.

VOL. I.

B

That

That we might, in some degree, resemble God in Goodness, our Saviour *virtually* enjoins an universal Benevolence, by enjoining *even* the Love of our Enemies; a Love not dead and unperforming, but such as exerts itself in the most proper and significant Expressions, as speaking well of them, praying for them, and doing Good to them. In Opposition to the narrow Notions of the Scribes, who taught the People, without any Authority from the Old Testament for teaching them so, that they were permitted to hate their Enemies; he recommends a prevailing, habitual and unmixed Sweetness of Temper, without the least Gall of Bitterness in our Composition against any Man; that Sweetness of Temper, which, if it does not give a Man such a *shining* and *glaring* Figure, as some other Accomplishments do; yet constitutes the most *lovely*, *beautiful*, and *agreeable* Character, and gains *unenvied* Praise.

The best Comment on his Words will be,

I. To state the Nature and Extent of the Duty enjoined, *viz.* the Love of our Enemies.

II. To shew the Reasonableness of it.

III. The

stated and explained.

3

SERM. I.

III. The Practicableness of it.

IV. To subjoin some Considerations, which may enable us to reduce it to Practice.

I. Then, I am to state the Nature and Extent of this Precept.

There are two kinds of Love which we must distinguish here, the Love of *Approbation* or Esteem; and the Love of *Benevolence* or Good-will. Now it may be impossible sometimes to pay the former kind of Love, in any great degree, to our Enemy, as when his Vices far over-balance his Virtues: We cannot love, with any considerable degree of Approbation and Complacency, him, who does not appear, upon the whole, lovely to our Understanding. However as human Nature, though degenerated, is still in some measure amiable, as no body is completely wicked, as Men are generally of a *mixed* Character; less degrees of Goodness may entitle Him at least to a less degree of our Esteem and Good-liking.

But should it be granted, that we could not regard an immortal Enemy with any Love of *Approbation*; yet still this would not excuse us from shewing a Love of *Benevolence* and Good-will to him. A Parent, for

instance, is far from approving a Child who is stubborn, disobedient and immoral; yet still his Love of *Benevolence* and Good-will shall continue in all it's Force and Efficacy: and it is this kind of Love which the Scripture seems to require from us; *if our Enemy hunger, we are to feed him; if he thirst, we are to give him Drink.* The Love of *Approbation* and the Love of *Benevolence* are then very distinct in their own Nature. Our Saviour, at the same time that he expressed his *Disapprobation* and Dislike of Jerusalem for *stoning the Prophets*; yet exemplified a very *benevolent* and compassionate Regard for it: *For he wept over it.*

Even Resentment does not exclude Benevolence, and we are very often angry at a Person for committing a Fault, even *because* we love him. We may then resent any injurious Behaviour; provided our Resentment does not destroy our Good-will and Affection, and end in Malice.

And as our Saviour loved and compassionate the Jews, though he abhorred their ungenerous Treatment of Himself and the Prophets; so we ought, with the same God-like Generosity of Soul, to love the Man at the same time, that we detest his Vices: just

as we may have an affectionate Regard for a Person that lyes ill, but have an Aversion to the Disease he labours under. SERM. I.

As to the Extent and Degree of this Duty, the Scripture no where enjoins an undistinguishing Beneficence to Men whether friendly or injurious. We are to *do good to all*, but more especially to some, according to their different Merits, Circumstances, and Relation to us. Yet it is, I think, our Duty to prefer *Compassion* to an Enemy, before a Matter of mere *Generosity* to a Friend, when we cannot exercise both together. My Meaning is this: When we can, consistently with the public Good and our own, rescue an Enemy from the very Brink of Ruin and extreme Misery by the same Sum of Money, which would but make a slender Addition to the Happiness of a Friend, as having already an easy or perhaps an ample Fortune; in such a case, we ought to sacrifice the mere *Conveniency* of the latter to the pressing *Necessities* of the former: and that for this plain Reason, because we ought to do the most Good we can. Now by singling out Men of Fortune, whatever Relations may endear them to us, as the Objects of our Favour, we contribute little or nothing to their real

SERM. I.

Enjoyments ; but by being, what God is in a higher degree, *the Helper of the Friendless* and Forlorn, we make the Heart of one, that was *ready to perish, sing for Joy*. In the former Case our Bounty is like a Shower to the Ocean ; in the latter it is like a Shower to dry and thirsty Ground. This is a very important Rule, *viz.* that the extreme Necessity of even our Enemies, much more of other Persons, is to take place of the mere Conveniency of Friends and Relations, and that we ought rather to relieve the Distressed than to promote the Happiness of the Easy ; however the Practice of it be disregarded by the World.

But to proceed, the Scripture does not require any Acts of Kindness to our Enemy, which are confessedly prejudicial to our own Interests: For we are not to *love our Neighbour better than ourselves*. It no where lays us open and defenceless to the injurious Assaults of our Enemy: For that would be to give the worst a continual Advantage over the best. It forbids indeed all Desire of private Revenge ; but does not prohibit Acts of public Justice, and an Assertion of our important Rights against the Invaders of them. We may prosecute an Adversary,
not

not indeed to gratify the envenomed Rancour of our Heart; but with a View to the Reparation of our own Wrongs and the public Good. The Law and the Gospel are very consistent, and we cannot with any Propriety be said to endeavour to return an *Injury*, when we strive to recover a *Loss* or *Damage*. *Turn the other Cheek to him that smites thee, give thy Cloak to him that took thy Coat*, are to be understood with the Allowances, which are made for proverbial Expressions, and concerning *tolerable Injuries*; and the Sense is: Rather run the Risque of suffering a *second Loss* or *Affront* of a *lighter* Nature; than, by attempting to revenge the *first* and rigorously insisting upon every *petty Right*, ruffle your Spirits, sacrifice the Evenness and Composure of your Mind, and lose the most amiable Spirit of Charity, the *worst Loss* and most fatal to your Happiness of any, that you can sustain; it being better to receive than to give any ill Treatment, as it is *better to give than to receive Favours*. A Man of a true Christian Spirit of the two would chuse rather to *suffer*, than to *do a hard* thing; and rather to do, than accept a Kindness.

Our Mercy to our Enemies must not be so far extended, as to expose us to the Mercy of our Enemies: only we are rather to put up a *slighter* Offence and recede a *little* from our Right; than by the Prosecution of it very probably draw upon ourselves a very *considerable* Injury, and besides endanger the Peace of our Minds. And in Matters of *greater* Offence, we must strive to redress our Wrongs by those calm and sedate Methods, which cool Reason suggests; and not by any Acts of Violence, Outrage and Insult.

II. Having thus stated the Nature and Extent of this Duty, I proceed secondly to shew the Reasonableness of it.

First, the great Law of Nature is an universal, active Benevolence to the whole Body of rational Beings, as far as the Sphere of our Power extends. We were all sent into the World to promote one another's Happiness, as being all Children of the same Father, *our Father which is in Heaven*. What *Moses* said to the contending Israelites, is applicable to all Mankind; *Why do ye wrong one another since ye are Brethren?* And as no Injuries can take away or can-

cel

cel that unchangeable Relation, which we ^{SERM. I.} bear to every one of our fellow Creatures; so neither can any Injuries take away or cancel our Obligation to the Duty of Love, which results from that Relation, to every one of them: It is founded upon Reasons, which continue the *same Yesterday to Day and for ever.*

For, do we do good to our nearest and dearest Relations *only*, because they are *deserving*? Do we not think ourselves obliged to serve them merely, because they are *Relations*? Yes undoubtedly. It appears then that the Relation, which we have to a Person, not his Worth only, is the Foundation of Benevolence. Now we bear a Relation (though not so strict and endearing a one) to a Neighbour, a fellow Creature, or fellow Christian, as well as to a Parent or Son: and if we are obliged to promote the Happiness of our Kindred, notwithstanding their Unworthiness, merely upon the Account of the Relation, which they bear to us; the Relation, in which we stand to all Mankind, will infer an Obligation to consult their Good likewise in a less degree, in proportion as the Relation is more distant. In a Word, this Relation is always a strong Reason for doing good,

good, when there is no stronger Reason to supersede or set it aside.

If all Benevolence be so great a Virtue, our Virtue must arise higher in proportion to our Benevolence; and consequently we exemplify the strongest and most powerful Virtue, when we shew the strongest Benevolence: but that Benevolence must be the strongest, which can bear up and exert itself under the Weight and Pressure of those Injuries, with which our Enemies may load us. This way of arguing seems to be confirmed by the Words of our Saviour, *If ye love them which love you, what Reward have you? Do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your Brethren only, what do ye more than others?* This is no more than what is ordinarily done: To be kind to such Persons, is, strictly speaking, to be just to them: it is rather discharging a Debt of Gratitude, than doing a Favour. But when we do good to them that have aggrieved and used us ill, this is chiefly praise-worthy and acceptable to God. The Love of our Enemies therefore, when under due Regulations, when it does not impower or animate them to do more Disservices, must evidence an uncommon Energy of Soul and an unusual Superiority of Virtue. The

The Man, who is pushed on by too deep a Sensibility of Injuries to make Reprizals, shews by his Uneasiness, that his Happiness lies at his Adversary's Mercy; and that it is in every body's Power, who has the Inclination, to disturb his precarious Repose: But he, who, through a firm, resolved, unconquerable Principle of Goodness, returns good for evil, is always superior to his Enemy; his superior in Benevolence and Good-will, that very Excellency, which is as much the very Loveliness and Beauty of the *Soul*; as Justness of Proportion and an agreeable Mixture of Colours constitute the Beauty of the *Body*.

And this may serve to shew, that however forward Persons of the first Distinction in civil and military Offices may be to engross to themselves the Character of Heroism or any uncommon degree of Virtue; a Man in a private Capacity may be as truly a Hero in Virtue, as they can be in a larger and more publick Sphere of Action. The meanest Mechanick, who employs his Love and Gratitude, the best of his Affections, upon God, the best of Beings; who has a *particular* Regard and *Esteem* for the *virtuous* Few, *Compassion* for the *Distressed*, and

2

a fixed

SERM. I. a fixed and extensive *Good-will* for all; who instead of triumphing over his Enemies, strives to subdue his *greatest Enemy* of all, his unruly Passion; who promotes a good Understanding between Neighbours, composes and adjusts Differences, does Justice to an injured Character, and Acts of Charity to distressed Worth; who cherishes his Friends, forgives his Enemies, and even serves them in any pressing Exigency; who *abhors Vice*, and *pities* the *vicious* Person; such a Man, however low in Station, has juster Pretensions to the Title of Heroism, as Heroism implies a certain Nobleness and Elevation of Soul, breaking forth into correspondent Actions; than he who conquers Armies, or makes the most glaring Figure in the Eye of an injudicious World. He is like one of the fixed Stars, which though, through the Disadvantage of its Situation, it may be thought to be very little, inconsiderable, and obscure by *unskilful* Beholders; yet is as truly great and glorious in *itself* as those heavenly Lights, which, by being placed more *commodiously* for our View, shine with more distinguished Lustre.

Narrow is that Man's Soul, which the Good of himself or of his own Relations
and

and Friends can fill : But he, who, with a Benevolence warm as the Heat of the Sun, and diffusive as it's Light, takes in all Mankind, and is sincerely glad to see Poverty, whether in Friend or Foe, relieved, and Worth cherished; makes the *Merit of all the Good*, that is done in the World, *his own*, by the *Complacency*, which he takes in seeing or hearing it done. For he shews, by his Complacency, that he would have done the same, if his Abilities had been equal to his Inclinations.

Secondly, an Argument may be drawn from the Consideration of our own Happiness.

Now to cultivate the sweet and kindly Passions, to cherish an affectionate and social Temper, to beget in ourselves, by repeated Acts of Goodness, a settled Complacency, Good-will and Benevolence to all Mankind in general; is a constant Spring of Satisfaction. By this Means we relish our very Nature; it is this Temper, that generally procures us the Peace of the World without; and always gives us that unruffled Peace within, which the World cannot give. It produces a mutual Intercourse of friendly Offices and Endearments; as Revenge occasions

SERM. I.

fions a perpetual Round of receiving and returning Injuries. To contract an unrelenting Malice, Sullenness and Discontent, to let a sudden Discomposure of Mind ripen into a fixed Averfion and Ill-will, to have a Savageness of Nature and an Insensibility to Pity; what is this but to make our Breast, which should be the *Temple of God*, as it were a *Den of savage Passions*? The Scriptures by a very beautiful Metaphor call this Temper the *Leaven of Malice*: For as a little Leaven spreads and ferments, till it has diffused itself over the whole Mass; so Anger and Malice are of that spreading Nature, that by Degrees they entirely sour and embitter the Temper, and engross the whole Man to themselves.

In Acts of Severity, even when necessary, there is always something that is irksome to a gentle and compassionate Spirit, something of a harsh and ungrateful Feeling within accompanies them; like Armour, which, though we may be obliged to put it on for our necessary Self-defence, yet always sits uneasy, cumbrous and unweildy.

Some *cool* thinking Villains there may be, who can lay Plots to injure others with a stedfast and *sedate Malice*, and with an *un-*
toward

toward Complacency; their Minds being like SERM. I. those Nights, which are very *calm, silent and close*, and yet very *black and dark*; Nights in which there reigns a *sullen Stillness*. But Men of this Stamp are very rare: The generality of Mankind, when they strive to make *others uneasy*, certainly *disquiet themselves*, and *work out the Ruin of other Men*, as they should do their *own Salvation*, with Fear and Trembling. Their whole Time is engrossed and their Endeavours laid out, either in forming Measures to blacken the Character and ruin the Fortune of their Adversaries; or in defeating their Attempts, disproving their Slanders, and countermining their Plots.

Surely those, who indulge this savage Bent of Inclination, have never tasted the Joys of an hearty Reconciliation: when that corroding Uneasiness, which before oppressed the Soul like a dead Weight, is removed; and our Souls appear once more like their great Original, pure unmingled Love, without any remaining Dregs of Bitterness and Distaste. At that Instant all our Suspicions, Distrusts, and Jealousies are unravelled, our Enemy's ill Actions and offensive Behaviour, are softened and qualified by several alleviating

SERM. I.

ing Considerations ; and his good Qualities shine out with a full and triumphant Lustre.


Let this therefore be the second Argument for our Benevolence to our Enemies, *viz.* that we ought to cultivate that Love, in which there is no Torment ; whereas a Soul embittered with Revenge is a perpetual Seat of War. Could we but trace the inward Workings of a vindictive Mind, could we but know with what tormenting Thoughts the Soul of our Adversary had laboured between the first Birth of his revengeful Designs, and the last Execution of them ; we should rather pity him, as an unhappy Man ; than detest him, as a malignant Enemy.

It is allowed, that a genuine unmixed Malice, without the least Tincture of Benevolence and Love, without one social and enlarged Affection, is productive of Misery. But for the same Reason, that it is confessed, that such a thorough and mere Malice, at it's full Growth, is the Source of Unhappiness and Self-torment ; it ought to be confessed, that Malice in a much less degree must cause Misery in a less degree, or in other Words, that the degree of Misery must bear Proportion to the degree of Malice and Ill-nature : Not to mention that Rancour in
a lower

a lower degree paves the Way and disposes SERM. I. the Mind for this Vice in a much higher, till at last it arrives at it's Fulness of Stature. In a word, whatever disturbs the calm, easy Course of our Passions, must make us miserable. If a Temper thoroughly rancorous render a Person thoroughly wretched; then he, who is in part malicious; must be in part or in such a degree uneasy.

A third Argument for the Love of our Enemies may be drawn from the Forgiveness of them. Now, the Forgiveness of our Enemies is a Duty incumbent on us: because, in the first place, Malice is, as I shewed before, destructive of our Happiness: because 2dly, we cannot with any reason ask that of God which we are not willing to bestow: because 3dly, all private Revenge, and consequently the Desire of it too, is in the Nature of the Thing unlawful; since if it were allowed, it would draw a fatal train of Consequences after it, and make the World an *Aceldama* or *Field of Blood*. Every one would be apt to fancy himself aggrieved, when he was not; and his Anger, a precipitate and undistinguishing Passion, would carry him too far, when he really was so. We know that the Malignity of the Offence

arises in Proportion to the Dignity of the Person, whom we offend: Now, most People are inclined to think themselves much greater than they are; and consequently to think the Offence committed against them to be so too; the Consequence of which is obvious, if we were commissioned to revenge ourselves. The *Mists* of Passion would represent Injuries *bigger* than they are, and it would be impossible to proportion the Punishment to the Indignity. In short it can never be reasonable, that one Man's Reputation, Fortune or Life should be sacrificed to another Man's Passion and Malice. Now if upon these Grounds an Absence of Malice is highly requisite, if we are not to harbour any revengeful Thoughts; how are we to behave ourselves to those whom we forgive? Are we to behave ourselves to them as to Enemies? Or as we should to other Men? Not as to Enemies: For then we do not sincerely forgive them. We must then behave ourselves to them, as we should to other Men; that is, with a Love of Benevolence and Humanity: For Benevolence and Humanity is a Debt we owe to all Mankind.

Besides, it is unnatural to have a cold SERM. I.
Indifference to the Happiness or Misery of 
our Fellow-Creatures; when our Minds
are *divested* of all *Rancour* towards them.
Benevolence will naturally shed abroad in
our Heart it's kindly and gentle Beams, when
the Clouds, which the unfriendly Passions
cast over the Soul, are removed and dis-
persed.

And farther, whatever Distinction some
People may make between *giving* and *for-
giving*; yet to *give* to an Adversary, when
his pressing Exigencies require it, and our
Circumstances enable us, is the most sub-
stantial Proof, that we sincerely *forgive* him.

A fourth Argument may be drawn from
the Nature of God.

No Creature ought to counteract his Cre-
ator. Now when we harbour Malice and
wish the Unhappiness of any Man, we in-
solently counteract our Creator, who hates
nothing that he has made, and wills the
Happiness of all his Creatures. We are
guilty of a flagrant Disloyalty to the inex-
haustible Fountain of Good, who is infi-
nitely lovely in himself, and infinitely lov-
ing towards us. Whereas when we strive
to be as beneficial to them as we can, we

SERM. I.

act in concert with him, who *makes his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good.* A malicious Man acts in direct Opposition to that *Love*, that *infinite Love* by which he *himself* was created, and is upheld, and which alone upholds all that Variety of Beings, that people the Creation.

Lastly, those who maintain the Unreasonableness of this Duty, if they would speak ingenuously, must express themselves after the following Manner. “ Man is a very
 “ frail and faulty Creature, his Actions oft-
 “ en bad, and his Thoughts worse than
 “ his Actions. What then? Must I love
 “ no body, because every body has his
 “ Faults? No: But this is my settled Per-
 “ suasion. Man however faulty, as long
 “ as he sins against others or himself, is
 “ entitled to my Love and good Nature;
 “ but from that moment he sins against
 “ me, he forfeits all Title to Humanity and
 “ Mercy. The Blood of *Christ* may atone
 “ for Offences against the rest of Man-
 “ kind; but his *own* shall exiate those
 “ committed against myself.”

III. I proceed 3dly to shew the Practicableness of this Duty.

It

It must be granted that it is easy to have a Love of Benevolence and Good-will to a Man, whom we have no Malice against. The only Question therefore is, whether it be practicable to abstain from revengeful and malicious Designs against our Enemies. SERM. I.

And here two sorts of Men fall under our Consideration: 1. Men of cool and deliberate Malice, who, like Lions lurking in secret Places, can wait a considerable Time, till, a convenient Season offering itself, they spring to Vengeance, and crush their unwary Foe: their Resentment is like a massy Stone, slowly raised; but, when once it is raised, on *whomsoever it falls, it will grind them to Powder*. And 2dly, the Men of Fire and Fury, who immediately discharge the Malignity of their Passion in Words or Actions.

As to the first Set of Men; it is certain that the same Power of Mind, which enables them to *suspend* the Prosecution of their revengeful Designs till a commodious Opportunity, enables them likewise to get the *better* of their revengeful Desires: For a Passion so *importunate* and *clamorous* in it's Demands, as Revenge, if it cannot be curbed and *controled*, cannot be *suspended*, and

SERM. I.

put off; and if it can be *controled*, it can likewise be quelled and *overcome*.

As to the second Set of Men, *viz.* the Men of Passion and Fury, they indeed will tell you, "God forgive them, it is their Infirmary which they cannot help: they are apt to be transported into unseemly Words and Actions; but the Storm is soon over." These are the Excuses of those, who, when their Anger has spent itself, are very good natur'd; and continue so, till fresh Recruits of Spirits enable their Passions to take the Field again; and they might serve well enough for those *fierce Animals*, who must be held with Chains and Bridles, lest they fall upon you; but they come with a very ill Grace from the Mouths of those, who call themselves *reasonable* Creatures. But the Misfortune is, these notable Excuses are quite spoiled, if we consider that these Men can be, and are very often, upon their Guard. They will not fall into an unseemly Rage before a *great* Person, whom they dread and revere: Nay they will *recover* themselves from a Passion, and be *recollected* at the Entrance of a *Stranger*. Now what we can govern and restrain in the Presence of a King or a Superior; that we can certainly

tainly do, if we will, by an *habitual* Con- SERM. I.
 sideration of the Presence of the King of
 Kings; whose *single* Inspection and Obser-
 vance ought to have a much greater Influ-
 ence upon us, than the most august *Assem-*
bly of Men.

After all it must be owned, that a Pro-
 vocation may be so shocking and flagrant,
 that Nature may rebel against Principle,
 and a Desire of Revenge may as naturally
 hurry away the Soul, as a Whirlwind does
 the Body. This is an extraordinary Case,
 and no doubt a gracious God will make Al-
 lowances for it. But in all common Cases,
 where we have Power and Leisure to rally
 our scattered Thoughts, and to call in the
 Succours of *powerful* Reason and *all-power-*
ful Grace; the Duty of Forgiveness, how-
 ever distasteful to our corrupt Nature, is far
 from being impracticable, if we take an
 Hereafter into the Account.

To exemplify this by a plain Instance;
 suppose after some great Injury received, a
 Monarch, in Countries where Monarchs are
 invested with absolute Power, should tell
 us, that if we breathed nothing but Re-
 venge, he would condemn us either to drag
 out a wretched Life in Slavery and Woe,

or to die a lingering Death: But if we heartily forgave, and evidenced that Forgiveness by some undissembled Instances of Good-will, he would heap upon us the most distinguishing Marks of his Favour: I desire to know who would not sacrifice his Resentments, to embrace such advantageous Proposals, and decline such exquisite Torments? Now, the *only Potentate, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, has expressly told us, that *if we forgive not other People their Trespases, neither will he forgive us ours: But if we forgive we shall be forgiven*. Are Then worldly Advantages the only valuable Considerations? May not the nobler Views of recommending ourselves to our sovereign Benefactor, an awful Sense of his Presence, and a Fear of incurring his Displeasure, who is able eternally to *destroy both Soul and Body*, as effectually overcome our Revenge; as the narrow Prospect of Lucre, or the impotent Power of one, who is only able to kill the Body? What we can restrain upon the Account of temporal Advantages; that we can certainly do upon more generous and forcible Motives, if we allow them their due Weight. It may be said, that these Rewards and Punishments are distant: But

then the Consideration of a short Distance SERM. I.
is infinitely overbalanced by the Greatness of
their Degree, and the Eternity of their Du-
ration : and a Man must be perfectly good,
or desperately abandoned, or impenetrably
stupid, that is not alarmed at a full, serious
and weighty Consideration of Eternity, an
Eternity of Happiness or Misery, when for
ought he knows he may stand just on the
Brink of it ; when at least within a short
Term of Years he must be, according to his
Behaviour here, either eternally blessed with
God, or for ever separated from all Joy
and Peace.

That we are so often foiled in combating
with certain Passions, seems to be owing to
this : Some Vices being very palatable and
delightful, we care not to exert the whole
Force of the Soul in Opposition to what
pleases, though it be of a *pernicious* Conse-
quence. We resist them, it is true, but it
is *animâ malè pertinaci*, with a *feeble trea-
cherous half Opposition* ; whereas did we set
ourselves *against* Vice, as we ought to cleave
unto God, with *all our HEART, with all
our SOUL and with all our STRENGTH* ;
we should soon find, that we thought that
impossible, which to a *determined* Mind is
scarce

26 *The Duty of loving our Enemies*

SERM. I.



scarce *difficult*; and that we want not so much a sufficient *Ability* to surmount the Difficulties of a virtuous Course of Life, as a vigorous and animated *Resolution* to exert it. It is a common saying, that few People know their own *Weakness*; but it is as true a one, that few People know their own *Strength*, till they are put to it, and *resolved* in the Prosecution of any Design. And the Observation, that none ever pushed their Capacity in Matters of *Knowledge* as far as it was able to extend; holds as true in Matters of *Morality*; that few or none ever exerted their Abilities, as far as they were able to carry them, to the utmost Stretch of their Power, in the Pursuit of Virtue.

It has been often observed, that our Hatred is most implacable, when it is most unjust; that the *injurious* Person is more unwilling to hearken to any Terms of Accommodation, than even the *injured*. And we have a very apposite Instance of this in Scripture. When Moses would have adjusted the Difference between the two contending Israelites; he, that *did* the Wrong, thrust him away, saying, *Who made thee a Ruler or a Judge over us?* Whether, or no, the injurious Person suspects there can never
be

be any *heartly Reconciliation*, where *Wounds* SERM. I.
of deadly Hatred have deeply pierced, and
therefore thinks it a Matter of Policy, ever
to persecute the Man, whom he has once
aggrieved; this is certain, that it is a Torment
to any Man, that has not quite divested
himself of all Sentiments of Humanity, to
have even a casual Interview with one,
whom he has greatly wronged; it brings to
his Mind those Reflections upon his ill U-
sage, which he would shun as well as the
injured Party, and he may say to his Con-
science, as well as to the Man, *Hast thou
found me, O mine Enemy?* On the other
hand the very Sight of a Person, whom we
have lately obliged, gives a delicate Pleasure.

IV. and lastly, To conclude with some
practical Advice.

Let us reflect, that we cannot expect to
be benefited by our Saviour, as a full *Sa-
crifice for Sin*; unless we imitate him, as
a complete *Model of Virtue*: And this we
cannot do without forgiving and loving our
Enemies.

Consider likewise how ridiculous it is for
Beings to indulge their *Malice* and *Enmity*
about little Competitions of *temporal Interest*,

SERM. I.

or Trifles less than that; Beings, that were designed to live above in an *eternal Friendship*, in an *everlasting Harmony and Union* of Minds, and in an *uninterrupted Circulation* of mutual *Endearments*.

We are all Brethren, and why should there be occasion to advise us, as *Joseph* did his Brethren, not to *fall out by the Way*, when we are all travelling, or should be travelling to the same Place, the spiritual Canaan?

Can a Mind think any thing here worth an implacable Animosity, whose comprehensive Views are raised as *high* as Heaven, and extended as *far* as Eternity?

Let us think, what would become of us at the last decisive Day, a Day decisive of our eternal Happiness or Misery, if God should deal with us with the same *unforgiving* Disposition, as we would deal with others.

If God should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who may abide it? Yet Man, weak Man! who wants those Allowances of Mercy which he refuses to grant, will not charitably overlook one single Fault, among a Croud of considerable Virtues.


Instead

Instead then of either breaking out into sudden Bursts of Passion, or contracting a fullen settled Gloom of Malice ; let us turn the Edge of our Reflection upon ourselves, and consider, that, whatever Offences others may have committed against God and ourselves, yet however like a Paradox it may found, the greatest Offender within the Compass of every Man's *Knowledge* is *himself*. For how many vain, foolish, wicked Thoughts he has indulged, how many Blessings he has been ungrateful to God for, how many Opportunities to do Good he has neglected, how many Motions of God's Grace, how many Checks of his own Conscience he has stifled and disregarded ; how often fantastick Cares have distracted, or vain Pleasures have dissipated the Attention of that busy, idle Thing the Soul, ever active and at work, but seldom active to any good Purpose ; this every Man can only know as to *himself*. But whether *others* have had all the same Advantages, whether they have harboured so many wicked Thoughts and Designs, whether their Guilt be attended with every particular inflaming Circumstance, that his is loaded with ; this he can never be certain of, except he could
dive

dive into the secret Springs of their Actions, unravel the Doublings and Foldings of their Nature, and be intimately present to whatever was transacted behind the Curtain, within other People's Breasts. Unless therefore Man was, what God is alone, *the Searcher of Hearts*; he must conclude the greatest Sinner he knows, is himself*.

You will say such a Man has committed a very flagrant Sin, the Imputation of which cannot be fastened on me. But how do you certainly know, but if he had enjoyed the same Advantages of Understanding, Condition of Life and Education, the same Assistance of God's Grace, the same Checks of his own Conscience, and the same Advice from others; he might have been so far from falling into that enormous Sin, that he might have been much better than you? You then alone know the Number, Malignity and particular Aggravations of your own Sins; which should teach you to be candid and forgiving to others, whether they sin against God, themselves or you; but to be severe and inexorable to yourself: to let your *Censure* and Severity as well as your *Charity* begin at home; and if your

* See Law's Serious Call. Pag. 339.

Censure *begins* at home, it will find so much SERM. I.
Employment, that it will *end* at home too, 
which your Charity ought not.

As the *best Writers* are the most *candid Judges* of the Writings of others; so the *best Livers* are the most *charitable* in the *Judgments* they form of their Neighbours *Actions*.

Let us therefore put on as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Meekness, Long-suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any Man has a Quarrel against any. Even as Christ forgave you: so also do ye.



SERMON II.

Domestic Love and Union recom-
mended and enforced.

In two Sermons preached in *Twickenham*
Chapel, 1741.



PROVERBS XV. verse 17.

*Better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love is,
than a stalled Ox, and Hatred therewith.*

IT is hard to form a true Estimate of SERM. II.
any Man's Happiness; because Happi- The first
ness depends *most* upon those Things, Sermon on
which lye *most out of Sight*. Those Joys, this Sub-
like those Sorrows, are most real, deep and ject.
strong, which run on in a silent Stream
without making any Noise: Such are the
Joys, which arise from easy Reflections,
moderate Desires, and calm Content.

We see the false Glare of Greatness,
which surrounds some Men, and are apt to
gaze at it with a foolish Face of Wonder;

SERM. II. But we see not those Miseries, which sometimes lurk beneath these pompous Appearances.

What avails all the Pomp and Parade of Life, which appears abroad; if, when we shift the gaudy flattering Scene, the Man is unhappy, where Happiness must begin, at home? Whatever Ingredients of Bliss Providence may have poured into his Cup, domestic Misfortunes will render the whole Composition distasteful. Fortune and Happiness are two very distinct Ideas; however some, who have a false Idea of Life and a Wrongness of Thinking, may confound them. For

Better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love is, than a stalled Ox, and Hatred therewith. That is, it is better to have Peace without Plenty, than Plenty without Peace: That, where there is but a slender Subsistence, yet an uninterrupted Interchange of mutual Endearments, among those of the same Family, imparts a more solid Satisfaction; than to fare sumptuously every Day, or to live in great and pompous Buildings, great and noble Apartments, every thing great, but perhaps the Owners themselves.

Those,

Those, that are curious Observers of Mankind, love to consider them in the most *familiar* Lights. When Men are *abroad*, they chuse to *appear* (whatever they really are) to the *best* Advantage: But at home, their *Minds* as well as their *Persons* are in a perfect *Undress* and *Deshabille*. The World is the great *Theatre*, on which they act a *Part*; but *behind* the Scenes, they may be seen in their proper *Persons* without any studied Appearances. Our domestic Behaviour is therefore the main Test of our Virtue and good Nature.

In Public we may carry a fair *Outside*; our *Love* may be not *without Dissimulation*, nor our *Hatred* without *Disguise*: But at home Nature left to itself shews it's true and genuine Face, with an unreserved *Openness*; and all the Soul stands forth to *View*, without any *Veil* thrown over it. There we see Men in all the *little* and *minute* Circumstances of Life, which, however they may be overlooked by *common* Observers, yet give a Man of *Discernment* a truer Opening into a Man's real Character; than the more *glaring* and *important* Transactions of it: Because, as to these, they are more upon their *Guard*: They act with more of


SERM. II. *Caution and of an Art, than of plain simple Nature. In short our good or ill Breeding is chiefly seen abroad, our good or ill Nature at home.*

It were to be wished, that we had more Family-pieces preserved and transmitted down to us. * The good public *Magistrate* is an Example of use to few only; but the prudent and affectionate *Father* of a *Family* is of a more general and extensive Influence. For my Part I more admire *Cornelius* the Centurion for that short Sketch of his Character in the Acts of the Apostles, viz. that he was a *devout Man and one that*

* The Reader will be pleased with the beautiful Excuse, which, among others, Sir *Thomas More* makes, why he did not publish his *Utopia* sooner. The Substance of which is: That he was obliged to devote the little Time, which he could spare from his Avocations abroad, to his Family, and spend it in little innocent and endearing Conversations with his Wife and Children: Which, though some might think them to be trifling Amusements, he placed among the necessary *Duties* and *Business* of Life; it being incumbent on every one, to make himself as agreeable as possible to those, whom Nature has made, or he himself has singled out for his Companions in Life. “ Dum foris totum ferme diem
“ aliis impertior, reliquum meis; relinquo mihi, hoc est, li-
“ teris, nihil. Nempe reverso domum, cum uxore fabulan-
“ dum est, garriendum cum liberis, colloquendum cum mini-
“ stris. Quæ ego omnia inter negotia numero, quando fieri
“ necesse est (necesse est autem, nisi velis esse domi tuæ pe-
“ regrinus) et danda omnino opera est, ut quos vitæ tuæ co-
“ mites, aut natura providit, aut fecit casus, aut ipse dele-
“ gisti, his ut te quam jucundissimum compares, *Mori Uto-
pia Præfat.* Pag. 4, 5.

feared God with all his House; than if he SERM. II. had been represented as the most victorious General, that had enlarged the Bounds of the Roman Empire: For we learn from it this useful Lesson; that the Influence of a pious Example, like the precious Ointment from Aaron's Head, descends downwards from the Head of the Family, diffuses itself over the main Body; till it reaches the very Skirts, the lowest members of it.

Our blessed Saviour had indeed *no Family* to take care of: The whole World was *his Family*, and all Mankind, that heard and kept his Sayings were his *Mother, and Brethren and Sisters*. Yet some of *his last Thoughts* were employed upon a Subject, that will be sometimes rising uppermost in the Minds of tender-hearted Persons in their last Moments, *viz.* "What will become of my poor defenceless Relations? Who will keep them unspotted from the Contagion, and preserve them unhurt from the Injuries of this World, after I am departed out of it?" At the very instant, that he expressed an unexampled Love to Mankind in *general* by dying for them; yet he exemplified a *particular*

SERM. II.  Tenderness to his nearest Relation. *When Jesus saw his Mother and the Disciple, whom he loved, standing by, he saith unto his Mother, Woman, behold thy Son. Then saith he to his Disciple, Behold thy Mother, (whom you are henceforth to treat and honour as your Mother,) and from that Hour that Disciple took her unto his own Home.*

The Pains, that he sustained, the generous Concern, that he felt for the World, could not swallow up all his Regards of a more *private* Nature. As a *Man*, he felt the Sensibility of a Son, and the soft and tender Workings of Nature within him; as a *great* and a *good* Man, he restrained them within proper Bounds, nor suffered them, at that great Crisis, to break out into any inordinate Agitations of Grief. He shewed us, that those Affections, which Nature has implanted, may be innocently cherished; till we are about to pay the last Debt to Nature; and even *then* exert themselves, provided they do not wound the Peace of the Mind, and shock the Soul in her last Moments, when she should be as much as possible rid of all the Incumbrances of this World, to take her Journey, with more Ease and Freedom, to another.

These

These Examples, as well as my Text, SERM. II.
 point out the Reasonableness and Advantages
 of domestic Love and Union, which shall
 be the *1st* Head of my Discourse.

1^{dly}, I shall lay down some Rules to
 prevent Disunion.

1st Then I am to shew the Reasonable-
 ness and Advantages of domestic Union.

Quietness under one's own Roof, and
 Quietness in our own Conscience, are two
 substantial Blessings, which, whoever bar-
 ters for Shew and Pomp, will find himself
 a Loser by the Exchange. *Abroad*, we
 must more or less find Tribulation; yet, as
 long as our *Home* is a secure and peaceful
 Retreat from all the Disappointments and
 Cares, which we meet with in that great
 Scene of Vexation the World, we may still
 be tolerably happy: But if that, which
 should be our main Sanctuary from Uneasi-
 ness, becomes our principal Disquietude,
 how great must our Uneasiness be! There
 cannot be a greater Curse, than to have
 Those of one's own Household one's greatest
 Foes; when we neither can live happily
with Them, nor must think of living *apart*
from them. It was wisely ordained by

SERM. II.

Nature, that whereas, if our Benevolence should be equally strong to *all* Mankind alike, it would be lost in a *Multiplicity* of Objects, and distracted in it's *Choice*; therefore our Benevolence should be the *strongest*, where there were the *closest* Ties of Relation. Our Benevolence is like Attraction, “ which increases as the Distances “ diminish; and then operates most powerfully, when Bodies make the nearest “ Approaches to one another *.” It is the Voice of Nature, which calls within us, and Reason seconds that Call, when all other Circumstances are equal, to love our near Relations better than our Neighbours, and our Neighbours than mere Strangers.

We then counteract the Design of Nature, and consequently of the Author of Nature, when we do not endeavour to contribute as much as in us lyes to *their* Ease and Happiness, with which our *own* is often essentially interwoven. “ Is it not strange, “ (says an ingenious Writer) that some “ should be so delicate as not to bear a disagreeable Picture in the House, and yet “ force every Face they see about them, “ to wear a Gloom of Uneasiness and Dis-

* See *Hutcheson's Inquiry*, &c. Pages 197, 198, &c.

content?”

“content *?” Yet this is no uncommon Character. Nay, there shall often be a certain Shyness, Coldness and Sullenness in Families, where there is no material Ground of domestic Animosities : And these Differences shall be often the most lasting. For when Anger or Uneasiness immediately vents itself in Words, the Malignity of the Passion is soon discharged ; then it is most fatal and pernicious, when the Wound rankles and festers within, when the Mind preys upon itself, without disclosing the Subject of its Grievances.

The Affronts, that are put upon us by Strangers, make but feeble and languid Impressions in Comparison : But those, that proceed from Persons endeared to us by the closest Relation of Blood and Kindred, wound us in the most tender and sensible Part. There are two Things, that affect the Heart of every ingenuous Man most deeply, viz. *good-natured* and *generous* Offices from Those, to whom we have been *injurious* ; and an *ill-natured* and *unchristian* Treatment from Those to whom we have been very *kind* and *affectionate*. As for the former, we can make a Shift to bear their

* *Persian Letters*, Page 128.

SERM. II. *Hatred*, because we have deserved it: But we cannot bear their *Love*; it quite confounds and overpowers us. And, as to the latter, it is certain, we can endure the utmost *Rancour* and *Malice* of others, much better, than the least *Coldness* and *Indifference* from Those to whom we have made it our *constant Endeavour* to please. Very beautiful in this Light are the Words of the Psalmist. *For it is not an open Enemy that hath done me this Dishonour: For then I could have born it; neither was it mine Adversary that did magnify himself against me: For then peradventure I would have hid myself from him. But it was even Thou, my Companion, my Guide and mine own familiar Friend.*

Love is a tender Plant, it must be kept alive by great Delicacy, it must be fenced from all inclement Blasts; or it will soon droop it's Head and die. Indeed in general we ought to be very tender (we can scarce be too much so) as to what may affect another: Otherwise we do, we know not what. For no Man can tell, unless he could feel for him, how much another may suffer by any unkind thing we say or do. An angry Word shall give a deeper
Wound

Wound to some Minds, than an injurious Action shall to others, who are of Matter, too hard to make any Impression at all upon them: And perhaps most Men feel more in the whole of their Life, from the *scornful Reproofs of the Wealthy, the Despitefulness of the Proud*, taunting Sarcasms and little Instances of Ill-will, Neglect and Contempt; than they do from the more *solid* Evils of Life. These are the little Thorns and Briars, which, (tho' Men of a rougher Make may make their Way through them without feeling much) extremely incommode Persons of a more refined Turn in their Journey through Life, and make their Travelling irksom and unpleasant; though they do not distress them so much, as the deep Waters, that threaten to swallow them up.

But the unkindly Behaviour of *Bosom Friends* and dearest Relations gives the most exquisite Sensations of Distress; as on the other Hand, a grateful, humane Deportment from Them gives the finest and most delicate Touches of Pleasure. Every trifling Service, that is an Evidence and Expression of their Love, is received by us, as if it were a substantial Obligation; and nothing

SERM. II. thing can come *from their Hearts*, but what proportionably affects *ours*.

To see a well regulated Family acting, as if they were *one Body* informed by *one Soul*, where *if one Member suffers, all the Members suffer with it*; to see Those, who are embarked together in one Bottom, whose Interests are inseparably united, and therefore whose Hearts ought to be so too, *dearer* to us than any other *particular* Objects in this World, and *only not quite so* dear as the Good of the World in *general* and our *own* Happiness in the next; acting in Concert, adopting each other's Cares and making them their own, uniting their friendly Beams, and jointly promoting the common Happiness: is a beautiful Scene and amiable even in the Sight of that Being, *who maketh Men to be of one Mind in a House*. How joyful a Thing it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity? To have Those, who will receive us with an open-hearted Cheerfulness, to whom we can discharge the Fulness of the Soul, to whom we can unburthen our Cares; and by unburthening we lessen them: (For Sorrow, like a Stream, grows weaker, by being divided into several Channels:) To have Those,

Those, with whom we can share our Joys ;
(and Joy like Light by communicating grows
greater, and burns brighter) this, this is a
Happinefs, which a *forlorn Individual* must
be in a great measure a Stranger to, who
stands single in Life, without any Support
to lean upon.

But the greatest Advantage of a friendly
Behaviour to Domestics is, that thereby we
contract and cultivate that Habit of Benevo-
lence, which is a necessary Qualification for
everlasting Happinefs. We are apt to over-
look and disregard our daily Behaviour to
one another in Company and the common
Occurrences of Life, as little and trivial :
Whereas, though they are little in *them-
selves*, they are not so in their *Consequences* :
They are the very Foundation, upon which
we must build an Habit of Benevolence.
For an Habit of Benevolence must be con-
tracted and kept alive, as all other Habits
are, by constant Exercise. Now our daily
Behaviour to our Domestics gives us an Oc-
casion for an uninterrupted Exercise of Be-
nevolence ; and scarce any thing else does
so. It is not then enough to say or think ;
we will serve our Friends and Relations upon
any *material* Occasions ; but, as for a con-
stant

SERM. II.

stant Complacency and Obligingness in our *common* Behaviour, to imagine, we may be dispensed with from observing *it*. For these Acts of solid, and substantial Kindness we are seldom impowered to do; They are extraordinary Emergencies, which do not constantly occur: And a settled Bent of Good-will must be acquired, not by what is occasional, not by what seldom occurs; but by repeated and numerous Acts, by a daily and uninterrupted Discharge of the common Offices of Humanity; by *saying* a thousand obliging Things, and by *doing*, if possible, *more* obliging Things, than we *say*. It is not in every Body's Power, because he has not a Fortune answerable to it, to form a standing Habit of Charity by redressing the Injured, relieving the Distressed, and cherishing Men of Merit; but it is in every Body's Power to beget in himself this lovely Disposition of Mind, by studying to adjust his Temper to Theirs, with whom he lives, by complying with their Humours as far as he innocently can, by soothing their Distresses, bearing with their Infirmities, and by incommoding himself in some Points to gratify others. On the contrary the Indulgence of an occasional Fit of ill *Humour* paves

the Way to an habitually bad Temper. And to those, who think it a *small Matter*, *Solon's* Answer is a very just one: "Yes, but *Custom is a great one.*" Did we seriously consider, that as often as we are exerting a Spirit of needless Contradiction or venting an ill-natured Wit to mortify those about us, we are cherishing a Principle of Ill-will, the very Temper of the Damned; it would, it is to be hoped, put some Stop to this Practice. But here the Misfortune lyes: Men are more ambitious to display the *Abilities* of the *Head*, than to cultivate the *good Qualities* of the *Heart*: Though the latter are in every Body's Power; the former few have any Title to.

The habitual Sweetness of our Temper, or the habitual Badness of it, does not then depend so much upon the *great and surprising* Reverses of Fortune, when the Scene is suddenly shifted from Prosperity to Adversity, or from Adversity to Prosperity; as upon our Behaviour under little and minute Accidents, which befall us every Day.

It may be observed, that, (generally speaking,) Men of a generous Education have a more refined Humanity, Passions more softened and civilized; than those in very low Life,

SERM. II.

Life, where Rudeness, Ill-manners, and Brutality too often prevail. Mankind in this Respect (some think) resembles *Nebuchadnezzar's* Image; the *Head* whereof was of fine ductile Gold; but the lower Parts of stubborn Clay and inflexible Iron. This Observation does not always hold true: There being often great Humanity and Good-nature among the common People, and great Cruelty among those of higher Rank. But, as far as there is any Foundation for this Remark, it consists in This, that the Gentry are obliged by their Character, as such, to shew Affability and Complaisance in their outward Deportment; and these *outward* Acts by degrees enter into, and refine their very *Temper* and Frame of Mind; and an Obligingness in their whole Behaviour, which is or ought to be their distinguishing Characteristic, begets a corresponding Sweetness of Disposition within.

Be that as it will: Did we often reflect, that to withhold from our Domestics in the ordinary Passages of Life, and our daily Intercourse with them, to withhold from them common Civility, that Debt, which we must be always owing, and always paying one another; is to withhold from them,
 what

what They have as much a Right to, as SERM. II. they have to any Property whatever; that every Person, whether above us, or below us, has as well-grounded a Claim to good Manners from the Laws of Reason and Religion, as he has to his Estate from the Laws of the Land: And did we act agreeably to such Reflections, our Minds would be inured to Humanity; the Virtues of Patience, Long-suffering, mutual Forbearance would be every Day called into Action, and ripen into Habits; till at last we arrived at a thorough-good Temper. From hence we may learn, how little Reason any have to complain, that they have it not in their Power to do good. Whereas, if we would act agreeably to those Relations, some of which we must bear to those about us, *viz.* those of Parents, Children, married Persons, Superiors, Equals, Inferiors, Friends; there is not a Day passes over our Heads, but we might contribute something to lessen the Uneasiness, or promote the Happiness of those, with whom we have to do; and by studying to promote their Happiness, we mould ourselves into those Habits, which are productive of our own, both here and hereafter.

SERMON III.

Domestic Love and Union recommended and enforced.



PROVERBS XV. verse 17.

Better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love is, than a stalled Ox, and Hatred therewith.

THAT is, a moderate Subsistence SERM. III. where Love is among Domestics, The second Sermon on this Subject. imparts a more unallayed Satisfaction, than all the high and genteel Enjoyments of Life without that material Ingredient of Happiness. *Sensual* Pleasures would be very flat and insipid; unless they were quickened by a mixture of *social, friendly* and *liberal* Pleasures, by the Thoughts of imparting them to, and sharing them with, those, whom we love and esteem. It is this, that takes off or qualifies their Grossness,

ness, and gives them their most endearing Charm. One can scarce believe, that a rational Man can love *himself*, without loving somebody, *besides* himself. For he could find nothing in himself *worth* loving, if he were of that unloving and unlovely Temper. He would despise that little Thing, the Heart, if it were intirely engrossed by *Self*, without a Capacity to harbour any other Guest, however deserving; just as he would a poor narrow Cottage which could barely accommodate it's sorry Owner, but wanted Room to lodge and entertain a Friend. He who feels within himself a dull *Indifference* for all *Mankind*; must, one would imagine, have a thorough *Disrelish* of *Himself*.

In a former Discourse I therefore shewed the Reasonableness and great Advantages of Union, Love, and a friendly Behaviour among Domesticies. And in pursuance of this Design

I shall now proceed to suggest such Considerations, as may beget, preserve and cultivate such an Union.

In the first Place, do not delude yourself with any visionary Notions of Perfection. Consider Men, as they really are,
with

with all their numerous Imperfections ; and not as you could fondly wish them to be. The Philosophers have remarked what a joyless unfightly figure the *material* World would make, if it were divested of all it's *adventitious* Ornaments, of all it's Lights and Colours, which are Appearances only, and not the *real Properties* of matter. I am apt to think the *moral* World would make as unlovely an Appearance, if we could view it in a true Light, stript of all Disguises ; and Men should appear naked and unveiled, just what they are, with all their Imperfections, all their little sinister Views, and their Follies, which they industriously cast in Shades, exposed to publick View. But God, who *knows whereof we are made*, and has ordered all Things for the best, has wisely ordained, that our Minds should not be transparent, nor our Thoughts visible to one another ; till we arrive at that Place, where we shall have no paltry Thoughts, no vain and senseless Follies, nothing, that need poorly skulk, and shun the Light. The generality of Men are like the generality of Books, which we may often be obliged to have Recourse to, and consult, upon particular Occasions ;

but will not bear several Views and Reviews, and to be scanned over minutely by a critical Eye: There are few Men, as there are few Books, whom the more we look into, the more we shall admire; the more we study Them, the more Graces and Beauties, which escaped us before, we shall discover in Them. Even Those, whom Nature has shewn to the World as Patterns of what it could produce, have yet some certain Failures that reduce them in some things, to the common Level. If they have several Excellencies to shew, they are *great* Men; they have several Defects to shew, they are *but* Men. 'Tis vain to imagine, we may meet with a *Person*, that shall please us in *every Thing*: But this we may do, we may find out *Something*, that will please us in *every Person*. A Man is not fit to live in the World, who does not see several Things, without seeming to see them; who does not see through the little By-ends and selfish Views, which Men may have; against which he must use all the Reality of Caution and Distrust, with as little Appearances of it as possible.

There are not many, who can stand the Test of a close Inspection. Their Virtues

shine upon us at a distance: It is upon a nearer Approach that we descry their Failings. The *distant* Ground, which is adorned with Variety of Flowers, seems to be all in Flower, and to glow with one *continued* and unmixed Lustre; but, if we were upon the *Spot*, we should discover several Weeds interspersed, amidst such a beautiful Asssemblage of Colours. We may admire upon a slender Acquaintance the *Saint*, *Philosopher* and *Hero*: It is upon a closer Survey we always discover some Tincture of the *mere Man* to sully the Brightness of these exalted Characters. And Familiarity, though it does not beget Contempt, where there is true Worth; yet always takes off Admiration: Admiration and Wonder, always the Property of raw unfurnished Minds, unacquainted with, and unpractised in, the World. Those, who look into, and see through, Things, find nothing wonderful, but *One*; and that is *He*, who is *great*, *wonderful* and *holy*: Nothing is truly marvellous, but what he *is*, and what he *doth*. Nay the Follies of Men are often so strongly interwoven with their Virtues, that we cannot gather up the Tares, without rooting up at the same Time the Wheat.

SERM. III.

Let us therefore in the second Place learn to make proper Allowances, and to represent their Failings with all the Softnings of Humanity. Those, that are continually complaining that Things run cross, that the World is much worse than it should be, have very great Reason to complain, that there is *one individual* Person in it much worse than he should be; who cannot bear the Accidents of Life with tolerable Patience, nor look upon Mankind with Common Charity. Men are uneasy in themselves, and then shift the Blame off from themselves upon the Persons they converse with, and the Times and Places they live in.

Other Men's Follies and Vices are always insupportable to those, that are entirely devoted to their *own*. The fuller of Imperfections any Man is, the less able he is to bear with the Imperfections of his fellow Creatures. True, regular, solid Virtue is *not easily provoked*; but when provoked, *easy to be intreated*, knows, how to connive at little Follies, and to pardon even considerable Errors: Whereas false Virtue is peevish, exceptious, magisterial, hating to be put out of it's own Way; disconcerted with Trifles, and unhinged by solid Misfortunes.

Bear then with the Faults of those about you, as you expect they should bear with yours; Faults, which frail Nature cannot well guard against, and which therefore *good Nature* should overlook; be just to their Merits, charitable to their Failings, and tender to their Misfortunes. *All other Ornaments fade and decay, and Sorrow or Age makes Beauty consume away like as it were a Moth fretting a Garment: There is one only unfading Beauty, one undecaying Ornament, which is infinitely more worth than all the rest, and that is the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit.*

Which brings me to observe thirdly,

There is a particular Tenderness due to Persons under any recent Affliction, not only that we may not seem to *vex them, whom God hath wounded, and persecute them, whom he hath afflicted*; but because Men are more susceptible of Resentment, in proportion to the Greatness of their Distress. Men of a Mind involved in Melancholy, like Objects of a dark and black Colour, are more apt to take Fire, than any other. Their distempered Souls take Umbrage sometimes, where none is given. All this we must bear with and place to the Account,

SERM. III.

not of their natural Temper, but of their Adversity, which embitters their Spirit, and discolours every Object. Handle then gently a *wounded Mind*, as you would do a *wounded Body*, with all the Tenderness you can : It will not bear too *rough* a Hand. Remember, that a good-natured Man cannot *give* Pain, without *feeling*, in some Measure, the Pain which he *gives*. Nay, he cannot even *see* a Person in Pain, though he does not give it, without *feeling*, in some degree, what he *sees*. As the Ancients held those Places sacred, that were blasted with Lightning ; we ought to pay a tender Regard to those Persons, who are visited with Affliction : Their Persons are in some Measure sacred, they claim a kind of Reverence from us, and are to be privileged from any ludicrous, or inhuman Deportment. The very Sight of them should strike us with a Thoughtfulness on the Changes of Fortune in general, and beget in us that delicate Feeling of their own Case in particular, which we would wish for, if in the same disadvantageous Circumstances. A *general Civility* is a Debt to all Mankind : But an *extraordinary Humanity* and a peculiar *Delicacy of Good-breeding*




breeding is owing to the Distressed, that we may not add to their Affliction by any seeming Neglect. The Scripture, which is very particular in recommending every Instance of fine Humanity, gives us to understand how we are to behave to the Unfortunate in the Words of *Job* xvi. 4, 5. *I also could speak as you do; if your Soul were in my Soul's stead, I could heap up Words against you, and shake mine Head at you: but I, instead of doing this, if you were afflicted as I am, would strengthen you with my Mouth, and the moving of my Lips should assuage your Grief.*

In the fourth Place, be sure to observe and practise the Rules of good Manners. By good Manners I do not mean an insignificant Punctuality, and a frivolous Exactness in the Observation of *little Ceremonies*; I mean something of an *higher Nature*, I mean an Assemblage of moral Virtues expressed in our *outward Demeanour*; a Combination of Discretion, Circumspection, and Civility, Submission to our Superiors, Condescension to our Inferiors, and Affability to all; more especially a strict Regard to Decency in all our Actions. For the Rules of Decency are the very Outworks of Respect, and when they are once broke through,
the

SERM. III. the rest will soon be delivered up as an easy Prey: And Affection is oftener lost by *little* Violations of the Rules of *Decorum*, than by any *scandalous* and *enormous* Faults. The Queen of *Sheba*, it is observed, was so amazed at the great *Decorum* of *Solomon's* Table, at the Order and Oeconomy of his Servants, the Attendance of his Ministers and their Apparel, and his Cup-bearers; that *there was no more Spirit left in her.*

If you have any Talent for saying *keen* and *satyrical* Things, be *superior* to the Talent you possess, by shewing how *little* Strefs you lay upon it, when it comes in *Competition* with your *good Nature*. Have no Recourse to low Stratagems, at once to cover, and yet discharge, your little Spite; which some do after the following Manner. To attack Men in publick, without any Provocation, for *gross and palpable* Vices, is, what they care not to do; because their good Nature would be called in question, and their Company shun'd: There is a more artful Way at once to gratify their ill Nature, and to avoid the odious Imputation of it; which is to dwell upon the *Indiscretions* and *unguarded Follies* of those they are conversant with, or to play upon *Sub-*
jects,

jects, that require a very *delicate* Hand to ^{SERM. III.} *touch* them *so*, as to give the Party concerned  no *Pain*.

And yet these are the Subjects which leave the most lasting Sting behind. For such is the Nature of Men: They had rather be thought vicious, than ridiculous. They can bear you should *bate* them for their *Vices*: They cannot endure you should *ridicule* them for their *Follies*. For you do not place in the most insignificant Light him, whom you do not look upon as *beneath* your Hatred: Then you must exasperate a Man, when you scorn and make a Jest of him, as thinking him *not* of *Consequence enough* to be *hated*.

The Province of Ridicule is very narrow. *Vice* is the Object of our *Hatred*; *natural* Folly of our *Pity*: *Acquired* or *affected* Folly is the only Object of *Ridicule*; when not content with what we really *are*, we are ambitious of being *thought* what we are *not*, or *aspire* at what we *cannot* be. We should be out of Humour with *ourselves*, if we thought ourselves *insignificant* and of *no Consequence*: And can it be wondered at, that we are out of Humour with *others*, when they give us to understand by their Behaviour, that we appear *such* to *them*?

SERM. III.

5thly, Never make any Reply to a Person, *till* his Passion *abates*, and the Ferment *subsides*. For to what end should you expostulate with a Man in a Passion? That he may hear Reason? But how can you expect he can hear Reason, as long as his Passion has got the better of his Reason? How can you expect he should hear the Voice of that Charmer, whom Anger has made deaf to all it's Remonstrances? Wait but till Reason resumes it's Empire; and then speak to him, in the softer Seasons of Address: If there be any Necessity for it, if the Affair be of such an Importance as to require a fair Hearing. Otherwise, it is a Matter of Discretion to drop it entirely, lest his Passion should rekindle; for Reason is often retained on the Side of Passion, and is set at Work, in our *cooler* Hours, to find out specious Excuses, for what we said or did, in the *Heat* and *Warmth* of Temper. And as you are not to reprimand any Person, during the Emotion of *his* Passion; so neither are you to do it, during the Emotion of your *own*. What the Philosopher said about punishing, you may apply here and say, "I would chide you, if I were not "angry." For you will be apt to carry

Things

Things too far: Or if you did not, yet ^{SERM. III.} what you say will have less Weight, as it will be looked upon, as the Result of Rage and Fury, not the Product of cool sedate Reason.


Forearm yourself with this Persuasion, and keep it present upon your Mind; that, whatever any occasional Fit of the Spleen suggests, is either wholly or in some Measure wrong; that what is really bad, it exhibits doubly bad, and what is not bad, it represents so: that you no more see Things, as they are, in a settled melancholy Gloom, than you do in a dazzling Glare; that it is very blind and undistinguishing, apt to discharge itself upon Friend or Foe indiscriminately. We then the *least* suspect ourselves or our Cause to be wrong, when our Passions are the warmest: and yet then we ought to suspect both the *most*. A *Probability*, that we are in an *Error*, arises in *Proportion* to the *Violence* of those Passions which hinder us from discerning the *Truth*. But an *Apprehension* or *Distrust*, that we are so, *lessens* in the same *Proportion*. Nothing is more common, than to hear Persons, who have very *material* Things to say in their own Behalf, injuring themselves and their Cause by mixing

SERM. III. ing *Trifles* with them: The Reason of which is, that, though they are Trifles in themselves, and appear so to every indifferent Person; yet the Warmth of Passion in the Party concerned magnifies them into substantial Injuries.

6thly, Guard against Pride, *from which cometh Contention.* Persons of Sense and Virtue will seldom differ about Things, that are plainly *essential* to the Happiness of the Family: The greatest Danger is, that they should Disagree about *Trifles*, where each will think they cannot give up the Point without yielding the other the Superiority: And the Disagreement is often the sharpest where the Difference is the smallest. Do not imagine that every Person must exactly adjust their Temper to yours in every Point, so as to be your exact Counterpart. If Men recede in some Particulars from their own Inclinations to comply with those of others, there is some Prospect, that Differences may be adjusted, and a good Understanding kept up: like irregular Stones, that must have their Unevennesses filed off, and their rough Corners smoothed; before they can come together, and join to make a compact Building, where there shall be
Harmony

Harmony and Symmetry of Parts. There SERM. III. is but *one* Being, whose Will we ought to submit to *intirely* and *unreservedly*; and *His Will* is *perfect unallayed Reason* without the least *Mixture* of *Caprice* or *Humour*. Vain is all Strife for Superiority, where the *only* Strife should be, which should oblige each other the most; and the *only* Power, that should be lodged in any Person, should be, a greater Power of doing good. Never strive to gain an absolute Sway over any Thing, *but* your own Passions.

Be not ashamed to confess, you have been in the wrong. It is but owning, what you need not be ashamed of; that you now have more *Sense*, than you had before, to *see* your Error, more *Humility*, to *acknowledge* it, and more *Grace* to *correct* it. We double the greatest Part of our Faults, by the Excuses, which we make use of to justify them: Excuses, which are a kind of *Patches*, when a *Rent* is made; far more unseemly and misbecoming, than the *Rent* itself. It is a Sign, a Man is generally in the Right, who has the Ingenuity to own himself sometimes in the Wrong; that he is one of those, whose Fund of Reputati-

SERM. III.  on is so great, he is not afraid of impoverishing it, by taking or losing a little from it*: Whereas those, whose Stock of Credit and Esteem is very inconsiderable, care not to own any Thing at the Expence of it. Observe, what Sin most easily besets you, whether it be Moroseness, Pride, Passion, Covetousness, &c. and place there the strongest Guard, where your Nature is weakest. Few Persons have more than one predominant great Vice: Nature has guarded them very well in other Respects; here they must take Care to guard themselves. Particularly guard against any Inequality of Temper: For no Man can have a true Sweetness of Temper, without Steadiness and a sedate Way of Thinking: They that seem to have it, have only, as one observes, a certain Easiness, that quickly turns peevish and sour. Yet, when *our* Affections begin to fall off, and cool *gradually* and *insensibly* towards any Person; we are apt to imagine *His* are abating toward us. Just as the Land seems to Voyagers in a Ship to be

* De futuris se deceptum esse Hippocrates memoriae prodidit, more magnorum virorum, et fiduciam magnarum rerum habentium. Nam levia ingenia, quia nihil habent, nihil sibi detrahunt. Magno ingenio, multaque nihilominus habituro, convenit etiam veri erroris confessio. Celsus, l. 8. Cap. 4.

retiring from them, when they are retir-
ing from the Land. SERM. III.

7^{thly}, Take care to distinguish between a Person's *general standing* Sentiments of you, when he is perfectly calm and undisturbed; and his *occasional* Sentiments, when some cross Accident may have soured his Temper. Consider, what he is *for a Constancy* towards you; and not what he may be *now and then*, when his Spirits are ruffled and over heated. Unkindly Thoughts of us, which vent themselves in unfriendly Expressions, may be only *occasional Visitors*, which tarry but an Hour; whereas tender and endearing Ideas may be the constant Inhabitants of his Mind. You must reflect that there is no such thing as maintaining a friendly Intercourse, without overlooking Things of this Nature. He who thinks he has discharged *every* Duty without any Failure in Point of Kindness and Friendliness to his Domesticks, has forgotten *one* Duty respecting *himself*, that of self Examination. For the least Reflection upon himself will serve to shew, that he has sometimes said Things, that had better been left unsaid; that he has been out of Humour, when there was not a sufficient

SERM. III.

Reason for his being so; and has gone too far, when there was. A wife and a good Man will therefore make proper Allowances, and think, that as a generous Enemy may sometimes through a Flush of good Humour say an handsom Thing in our Behalf, and *deviate* into Praise; so a firm Friend, through a Surprize of ill Humour; may let fall a disobliging Expression. And whereas an hasty Temper is immediately for proceeding to Extremities; a prudent Man goes more leisurely to Work, and advises a Friend, perhaps *he has not said* what has been reported; and *if he have, that he speak it no more*. And indeed, without such a Procedure, all Friendships would be precarious; they would lye at the Mercy of those, who were malicious enough to do us an ill Office.

But above all, lastly, Religion is absolutely necessary to preserve domestic Union. For Families are but little Societies, as Societies are larger Families; and therefore Religion, which is confessedly the best Bond and Cement of Union in States and larger Communities, is likewise so in little domestic Governments: And Family Prayer is as much a Duty in this smaller Sphere
of

of Action, as public Worship is a national Concern. It is therefore incumbent upon those, who preside over a Family, to impress a Sense of Religion upon those, who are beneath them: But to do that effectually, they themselves must be first affected with a serious and hearty Sense of it. Their Domesticks will every Day be Witnesses of their *ill* Qualities, such as Anger, Impatience, &c: It were to be wished therefore, that they would let their *good* Qualities, if they have any, shine forth before them. It must be with very ill Grace, *they* can complain of the Disobedience of Servants to them, who let them see by their whole Behaviour, that they are regardless of their great and common Master, their *Master which is in Heaven*. Why should they, whom much *nobler* Motives have no Influence upon, expect that the Fear of offending *them* should restrain their Dependants? People may complain of the Badness of Servants, the Undutifulness of Children, and the universal Depravation of Morals; but such Complaints come better from any, than from those, to whom that Depravation is in a great Measure owing by their Carelessness and unguarded Levity of Temper,

SERM III

per, to say no worse; not having the Prudence to keep their Follies to themselves, but scattering the Infection among their Inferiors and Attendants.

Be then seriously and solidly good yourself; and others, if they are susceptible of it, will learn Goodness from you; and obey you more out of a Principle of Love, than Fear. Revere *yourself*, if you would have your *Inferiors* revere you:—Revere yourself—by exemplifying such a steady and regular Practice of every Branch of Virtue, as will command their *inward* Homage, the Homage of the *Mind*; and then *outward* Marks of Respect will follow of Course without Reluctance or Constraint. Every one will reverence and acknowledge that Worth, of which you seem insensible; and acknowledge and reverence it the *more*, because you seem insensible of it. We insensibly slide into the Manners of those, with whom we daily converse, and constantly live: We catch the Flame of Virtue from them, by being always near to them. For Goodness does not only communicate Favours and Kindnesses; it even in some measure communicates itself. Just as those, who have been long among the most fragrant Objects,

not only are delighted with the Odour, that SERM. III. breathes from them; some of the very Fragrancy cleaves to, and remains with them: They become fragrant themselves, by staying long among Objects, that are so.

Carry then their Minds upwards from yourself, who are the Head of a small Family, to him, of *whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is called.* Consider that the joint Prayers of a Family are as necessary to derive a Blessing upon, or avert a Calamity from, a Family; as public Prayers are to deprecate the Judgments, or conciliate the Favour of the Deity to a Nation. So may He, who *maketh Men to be of one Mind in an House*, preserve you from all the Miseries, that must fall upon a Family embroiled, and *a House divided against itself!*

Thus, when you have tinctured their Minds and your own with Religion, you will find that the Union of Souls was but *begun here*; it will be perfected *above*, where Love and *Charity never fail.* And Death, which dissolves the *Union of Soul and Body*, cannot dissolve the *inviolable Union of virtuous Hearts* joined together in pure, un-fully'd Friendship. Those, who were *lovely and loving in their Lives*; shall not be,

SERM. III.

even by *their Deaths*, divided for ever. Separated for a while, they shall meet again, where there shall be no second Separation, where they shall continue to be of *one Heart and of one Mind*.



SERMON IV.

The Duty of an uniform and unre-
ferred Obedience.

In two SERMONS.

St. JAMES II. 10, 11.

*Whofoever shall keep the whole Law, and
yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of
all.*

*For he, that said, do not commit Adultery;
said also, do not kill.*

THERE is this Difference between *mere* Taste and Judgment: SERM. IV.

That the former is our liking one Thing more than another, without being able to assign any sufficient *Reason* why we do so; mere Taste being an *arbitrary* Agreement between the Faculty and the Object. Whereas Judgment is a *real* Agreement between the Faculty and the Object, founded upon *Reason, Truth,* and the *Nature* of Things.

SERM. IV.

Things. Thus there is often an *unaccountable Agreeableness* of one Sort of Food, more *than* another, to the *Palate*, where *both* Sorts are perhaps *equally* good in their Kind, and conducive to Health. Thus too, an *arbitrary* Relish of one Virtue more than another, and an *undue* Preference often takes Place, without bringing Things to the Bar of impartial *Reason*.

The Design of the Text is therefore to guard against that Bias of Temper, which, if we are not upon our Guard, may mislead us to over-rate some Duties, merely because they *fall in* with our Taste and Inclination; and to undervalue and disregard others, merely because they *do not*.

The Apostle does not enjoin an unfinning Obedience; but only enters a Caveat against a wilful Disobedience to any of the divine Laws, under a Pretence of keeping the rest. Farther, the Text does not take in Sins of Surprize and Infirmitv: It is plainly confined to deliberate Crimes, by the next Verse, where none but such are specified. Great Allowances will be made for the Weaknesses of Nature: Life is a great Journey, and there is no such Thing as *travelling* through the several Stages of it, without

without making *one false Step*. It is the SERM. IV. Property of God that *his Wisdom never slumbers nor sleeps*: Ours alas! often lyes in a great Measure dormant. In this Sense therefore a *Respect* to *all God's Commandments* is enjoined, that we do not indulge ourselves in an habitual Breach of any *one* of them, *knowing* it to be such: For that is not the Weakness of Nature, it is an obstinate Rebellion.

The Meaning then of the inspired Writer is this: “Whosoever knowingly, deliberately, and habitually offends in one Point, upon an impious Presumption of *compounding with God* for that Sin, which is most palatable to him, by a strict *Obedervance* of other Duties, that do not cross his reigning Passion; such a Man’s *Religion is vain.*” Then follows the Reason. *For he, that said, do not commit Adultery; said also, do not kill, i. e.* “If thou hast any *Regard* for the divine Lawgiver, *his Sanction* is alike impressed upon *all his Laws*; and he giveth thee no more a Dispensation to commit this *one Sin*, than he does to commit *every other*. But, if thou hast *no Regard* for him; then thy Actions, however *seemingly* virtuous,

SERM. IV. “ virtuous, are but as it were an *uninformed*
 “ Carcase: They want that *Principle* of
 “ Duty, which is the very *Soul* of Virtue,
 “ and should *actuate* the whole *Body* of our
 “ Performances. It is as if he had *said*, to
 “ go on in one *uninterrupted Track* of dis-
 “ obeying the Deity in any *one* known Point,
 “ is in effect to disclaim *all* Obedience to
 “ him.” For can that Man be influenced
 by a reverential Awe of the Deity who not
occasionally, now and then, in an *unguarded*
 Hour, is overtaken in a Fault; but *con-*
stantly and *knowingly*, through the main
Tenour of his Life, continues to counteract
 the Will of his Creator in any Point? It is
 the Observation of a *Roman* Historian, that,
 though his Countrymen were sometimes
 defeated in a single *Battle* with their Ene-
 mies; yet they were always victorious in
 the whole *Course* of the *War* over every one
 of them. Thus it ought to be with us,
 who may, now and then, through Surprize
 and Inadvertency, be foiled by our Passions
 in some few *Conflicts*; but yet, in the *main*
 of our spiritual *Warfare*, must gain *Ground*
 over every one of them, and, upon the
whole, be *Conquerors*. No one Sin must
reign in us: The only true Religion is to do,

whatever God commands; and that, *because* he, from whom we have received all that we have, and to whom we owe all that we can do, commands it. All other Schemes open a Door to Confusion and Licentiousness. We must either follow God's Will, and be determined by it; or we must set up our own Head-strong Self-Will in Opposition to his unerring Wisdom.

SERM. IV.


In discoursing upon these Words, I shall Ist, Shew the Reasonableness of an unreserved and uniform Obedience to God.

IIdly, I shall give some Instances, and point out the Folly, of a partial Obedience.

IIIdly, I shall answer some Objections against the Duty, which the Text enjoins.

IVthly and lastly, I shall draw some practical Inferences from what has been laid down.

I. Then I am to shew the Reasonableness of an unreserved and uniform Obedience to God.

To think of coming to a scandalous *Composition* with God, by offering him *Part* of our Duty, instead of the *whole* Debt we owe him; to imagine he will
tamely

SERM. IV.

tamely accept just such a small *Pittance* of Service, as our *Lusts* can afford him; is as highly affrontive, as to offer him *no* Service at all. To single out *some* Parts of our Duty as obligatory, and to reject *others*, which have the *same* binding Sanction, because they *interfere* with some beloved *Inclination*; in short, to *choose* for *ourselves*, is subversive of *God's* whole *Authority* over us: It is to dethrone *him*, and set up an *Usurper* in his stead, *viz.* our own *Fancy*, or *Interest*, or *Passion*. To make the Case plainer; suppose a *Servant* should only execute his *Master's* Orders, when they fell in with his own *Humour*; but should continually disobey him when they did *not* suit his *Fancy* or *Convenience*: Could such a Man be said to obey his *Master*, or only to gratify *himself*? He who does not obey *God* at all, is guilty of all; and he does not obey *God* at all, who makes *himself* his *own* *Legislator*. To obey *God* *rightly*, is to obey him as *supreme* *Lawgiver*: Which can never be done, while he only maintains a *divided* *Empire* in our *Breasts*: An *Empire* divided between him, who is the *universal* *Emperor* of the whole *World*; and some little insignificant worthless *Passion*

sion of our own; a fit Rival indeed to contest it with our Maker!

The main Proof of our Virtue is the Superiority and Ascendant of Reason over our Passions. And the main Proof, that Reason has the Ascendant over our Passions, is the Victory of Reason in *those* Cases, where the Passions make *head* against it. For, if Reason only maintains it's Sway, where the Passions fall *in* with it, or do *not* oppose it; this is no more a Proof that we are virtuous; than it is, that a Man is not a Lunatic, because he may argue tolerably well, and coherently on *indifferent* Points, that do not deeply touch and interest him. The only decisive Test, whether he is a Lunatic or not, is to bring him to *that* Point, which is supposed to have deeply affected him, and at last *unbinged* his Brain: However plausibly he may reason on other Subjects, we scruple not to pronounce him a Madman, if *here* he flies off into *Jargon*, *Wildness*, and *Extravagance*. To obey God in Points indifferent, where we have no Temptation to offend, is doing nothing at all. One excessive Passion is enough to engross the *whole* Man: And therefore, if we do not give into other Vices, it is not

SERM. IV. *so much owing to the Strength of our Reason, as to the Weakness of our Inclinations for other Things.*

People are not aware, what they are doing when they indulge any one Vice. For any one *habitual* bad Quality will, in Process of Time, as effectually destroy every Thing morally good in us; as even *many bad Qualities*. When it has thoroughly got Possession of your Heart, it will soon draw the Head after it. It will turn the whole Bent of your Pursuits, Inclinations, and Studies one way; make you indifferent to whatever is not subservient to it's Interest, and hate whatever is opposite to it. Single out what bad Quality you please: Let it be, what some will think a very small one, the Love of *Ease*. It will not indeed put you upon *desperate Crimes*; for that is contrary to it's *Nature*: But it will end in a total *Absence* of every *active Duty* in Life: It will be a kind of a Frost, that, as long as it lasts, locks up all the Virtues of the Soil. But if Idleness, the most *unperforming* of all the Vices, bears so great a Sway; it will be needless to observe, that when any one of the more *enterprising* Vices, such as the Love of Honour, Money,

ney, or Pleasure, has got Footing, and established it's Interests; it will supplant and turn out every Virtue: Just as one wicked Favourite, who has crept into his Master's Affections, will by degrees prevail with him to displace and remove every faithful Servant, that may stand in his Way*.

On the other hand, the Man, that constantly practises any one Virtue, *merely because* it is the *Will of God*; will be *disposed* to practise every *other* Virtue for the same Reason. It is true, his Situation in Life may not empower him to exemplify every other Virtue; Yet he, who is grateful to the Rich, in low Circumstances, upon a fixed Principle of Virtue; would undoubtedly be charitable to the Poor, in a higher Sphere. Any *one habitual* Duty, which we embrace to *recommend* ourselves to our *Maker*, calls forth into Action those *other* Duties, which *are* in our Power; and gives us a

* It is *Sallust's* Remark on a *Roman* Consul, that he had many excellent Endowments both of Body and Mind, all which his Covetousness rendered uselefs. *In Consule nostro [Bestia] multæ bonæque artes animi et corporis erant, quas omnes avaritia præpediebat.* Sal. de Bello Jugurthino.

SERM. IV. *Relish and Love* for those, that are *not so*†. Just so he, who conscientiously abstains from any Sin, *solely because* it is *displeasing* to his *Creator*; will find the same Motive operating much farther, and inclining him to forbear every *other* Action, that he *knows* is *offensive* to him. No one great Virtue (Virtue upon Principle) will come single: The Virtues, *that be her Fellows*, will *bear her Company*, and with *Joy and Gladness* enter into the same Heart.

But this brings me to my

II. Second General Head, which is to shew the Folly of a partial Obedience, in several instances.

Few, very few, seem to consider, that one habitual Vice cuts them off from the Benefits of Christianity. We relapse into the worst Part of Popery. We will not allow the Pope (and we have good Reason for not allowing him) to deal out his Dispensations and Indulgences to us: But we set up as many private Popes, as there are Men: We allow *ourselves*, unauthorized by God, to deal our Dispensations and Indul-

† *Inter omnes Philosophos constat, qui unam haberet, omnes habere Virtutes.* Cicero.

gences from our favourite Sins, with a very liberal Hand. Nothing is more common, than to substitute some Part of our Duty, for the whole.

Of this we have a pregnant Instance in those, whom the World miscals *mere moral Men*. True Morality, in the largest Sense of the Word, consists in acting agreeably to those Relations, which we bear to our Creator, and Fellow-Creatures. It takes in even our Duty to our blessed Saviour and Redeemer; unless either Gratitude be no Part of Morality; or he, who was the Author of our eternal Salvation, be entitled to no Gratitude from us. But a *mere moral Man*, in the Language of the World, is one, who lives in a State of open Disregard, or at least of fashionable Indifference, to Religion in general; yet shall do some generous and good-natured Actions, and never be guilty of any flagrant Breach of Honesty. He shall condemn the Man, who is wanting in proper Returns of Gratitude and Affection to his Fellow-Creatures: But never condemns himself, who continually receives, and never acknowledges the Favours he receives from the *Author of every good Gift*, and therefore

SERM. IV. the Object of every *grateful Sentiment*. He shall think it *Superstition* (so far he thinks right) to lay a great *Stress* upon mere Ceremonies: But he never thinks, that *not* to comply with innocent Ceremonies is a criminal Singularity of Temper. He shall express as great Displeasure against some little Wrongnesses of acting in Men of religious Characters, as if they were solid Grievances and substantial Crimes: But shall not reflect that to be disturbed at the Foolery of others is a greater Foolery in himself, than any they are guilty of. He is one, who does not consider, what would be the Consequence, if the *fashionable Religion*, or rather the *no-Religion* of our modish Gentlemen should become the Religion of *labouring* People in low Life? What, if *they* should entertain such *indigested* Notions of God's *Mercy*, as to shut out all Apprehensions of his *Justice* and *Vengeance*? That therefore, whatever *other* Instances of Benevolence they may pretend to; yet the *greatest* and most *significant* Instance of Benevolence, that Men, whose Example will have any Weight and Influence, can at present give, is, by a publick conspicuous and exemplary Adherence to

Religion,

Religion, to put a Stop to that Ungodliness and general Depravation of Morals, which, if not put a Stop to, must plunge Men into Distresses in this World (not to mention eternal Damnation in the next) which no Charities, how great soever, can redress. Thus have I described a moral Man, in the Language of the World; but in the Language of Reason, as immoral a Man as can be conceived. For he lives daily in the uninterrupted Practice of Immorality of the deepest Dye, *viz.* Ingratitude to his Sovereign Benefactor; from whom he has received every thing, and to whom he can return nothing, but Obedience and Thanksgiving, the Tribute of a grateful Heart.


What shall we think of this Set of Men? It would be uncharitable to suppose them determined Atheists: What is most likely, is, that they imagine God will accept the social Duties, in lieu of Piety. And yet true substantial Morality is inseparably connected with the highest Regard to the Deity; and it is an unnatural Divorce to part them asunder. What is said of the Sciences, holds as true of our Duties to God and Man. There is that Harmony, Alliance

SERM. IV.

ance and Correspondence between them, that, if one Link fails, the whole Chain must fall afunder : and the last Link of the Chain must be fastened to the Throne of God. If one Branch of Morality be neglected, if *one Member* of our Duty suffers, *ALL the Members must suffer with it.* And, if *one Member* be honoured, *all the Members will rejoice with it.* Thy Prayers and thy Alms, saith the Scripture, *i. e.* thy Piety and Charity, both acting in Concert, and uniting their friendly Beams, *are come up, as a Memorial before God.* Charity and Humanity must beautify and adorn our Religion ; and our Religion must ennoble, and give a Consistency and Steadiness to, our Humanity.


Dismissing the mere moral Man, let us proceed to those, who pretend to be of a religious Turn. And here do we not find some, who, though scandalized at the little Levities and innocent Freedoms of Men of a gayer Make, are addicted to Vices of the graver Sort, such as Censoriousness and Pride, *trusting in themselves, that they are righteous, and despising others?* Are there not some, who do not reflect, if we may judge by their Conduct, that there is a strong attractive Charm in the Strictness

and Regularity of Piety, when attended by all the easy Graces of Humanity and Cheerfulness; like Beauty and Regularity of Features far more powerful when softened by an Air of Sweetness and Humility; than, when it puts on a distant and forbidding Mien? Strict in little Ceremonies and outward Observances, which they *ought not to leave undone*; some only omit the *weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Faith and Mercy*: like those Workmen, who can hit off some *Under-Parts* with a frivolous Exactness; yet in the *main Substance* of the Work, in the essential and constituent Parts of it, are awkward and ungainly Performers: because they know not how to give Order, Justness and Proportion to the whole, throughout the same. Not that Religion is at all in Fault: It is their original or acquired Littleness of Temper, which makes them incapable of reaching those Heights and Elevations, which Religion teaches and inspires. The same little Temper, which, when it takes a *religious* Turn, confines itself to mere Modes and Ceremonies, without any enlarged and generous Affections towards God and towards Man; would, if it had applied itself to *Learning*, have employed

SERM. IV.  ployed itself in collecting various Readings of no Use, in settling Points and Commas with an insipid Accuracy, or in getting together impertinent Curiosities, and difficult Trifles. Do they use Religion, as an intimate *Friend*, whom they admit, with an *unreserved* Affection, into the *inmost* Recesses of the *Soul*, and to whom they have recourse, with *Pleasure*, on every Occasion? Or rather do they not treat it as a mere fashionable *Acquaintance*, to whom they *now* and *then*, with a *flat* Civility, pay a *ceremonious* and *formal* Respect, studious to keep up each *cold Decorum*, a certain Sign, there is no kindly Warmth of Affection at the *Heart*? Religion has all the *Outside* of Regard from them, and wants *nothing* but (what is indeed *All in All*) an *inward Love* and *Relish* for it. They consider Religion, as only requiring some few broken occasional Acts; not as enjoining such a settled Habit and Frame of Mind, as shall influence them in the common Occurrences of Life. *I was glad*, says the Psalmist, *when they said unto me, we will go into the House of the Lord*. His Religion, you see, had descended deeply into his Heart, which made him gladly embrace every Opportunity of expressing

pressing it publickly in his Actions. Where-^{SERM. IV.}
as the Religion of many is something to
save Appearances, a kind of *Beauty-wash* to
colour over and give a *finer Tincture* to the
Surface of their Actions, without going
deeper, or mingling with the *Vitals*, with-
out promoting the *Health* of the Soul.
Hence it is, that Self-Examination, Medi-
tation and Watchfulness are Duties so little
practised. Custom and common Decency
require, that Men should sometimes go to
Church, and say their Prayers; otherwise
they might incur the Imputation of Atheism:
But common Decency, Custom, and Fear
of what the World will say, do not oblige
us to Self-Examination, Meditation and Re-
collection; Duties to be transacted, far from
the Eye of the World, between God and
ourselves. Hence, however necessary, they
are too generally neglected. Men find no
Void of Piety and Goodness within; be-
cause they never look within.

Instances of a partial Obedience are num-
berless. Nothing is more common, than
for Persons to become so enamoured of one
Branch of Virtue, to which they are pecu-
liarly devoted, as to comprize all Excel-
lencies in it; and for it's Sake to depre-
ciate

SERM. IV.  ciate every other Duty. If we are of an open and conversable Nature : then, to be sure, the social Duties are all in all, we have no Thoughts of living unto Him, by whom we now live, and with whom we are to live for ever: If we are of a recluse and melancholy Turn, then all Worth consists in sequestering ourselves from, and so becoming, in a great Measure, useles to, the World. Piety or Benevolence, Generosity or Oeconomy, Courage or Prudence are to be extolled at the Expence of each other. Whatever be the favourite Virtue, it is like an *Empiric's Nostrum* : it supersedes the Use of all other Virtues, just as that does of all other Medicines, and infallibly preserves the Health of the Soul, without taking any thing else. We are seldom liable to greater Mistakes, than in the comparative Value of several Duties : Because we do not submit our Fancy and Inclinations to the Examination of impartial Reason : All the Use we make of our Reason is to justify our Inclinations. Most Men are content with the mere *Title* of rational Creatures. They are *born rational* Creatures ; just as some are by their *Birth noble and honourable*, who are not over-solicitous to prove, by noble and honourable

honourable *Actions*, that it is *not* an empty SERM. IV.
Title. Men do not reflect what Duties are
of *most Importance* upon the *whole*, and *most*
productive of *Happiness*; but what suit
their own *Fancy*, or will make them most
beloved. A Man, who does wrong through
the *Rigour* and *Severity* of his native Tem-
per, is universally detested: But great Al-
lowances are made for Him, who through
an Excess of *Good-nature* wrongs himself
and his Family: Though he can be no
Man's real *Friend*, because he is every Man's
Property. Yet, in the true Estimate of
Things, he, who commits a Sin through
the *Easiness* of his Temper is *as guilty*, as
he, who sins through the *Hardness* of it:
and we no more ought to indulge the *kindly*
Propensions of our Nature, than the *un-*
friendly Passions, without any Check or
Control from *Reason*. Thus again, to use
the Words of an excellent Writer *, “ Tem-
“ perance, Faith and Devotion are in them-
“ selves perhaps as laudable, as any other
“ Virtues. But those, which make a Man
“ popular and beloved, are Justice, Charity
“ and munificence; and, in short, all the
“ good Qualities that render us beneficial to

* Mr. Addison, Spectator, No. 243.

SERM. IV. “ each other. For which Reason an ex-
 “ travagant Man, that has nothing to re-
 “ commend him but a false Generosity, is
 “ often more beloved, than a more finished
 “ Character, that is defective in this Par-
 “ ticular.”

Those Duties, which we do purely to recommend ourselves to God, (such as beating down our Passions in private, praying to Him, that his *Mercy* would remove the *Guilt*, and his *Grace* the *Dominion* of our Sins from us) must at least be as acceptable to that Being, for whose Sake they are done; as other more popular Virtues, with which the lower Views of recommending ourselves to the World are too apt to mix themselves. A Person comes into the World with a soft compassionate Make, susceptible of each delicate Feeling, each tender Movement. It is *no Self-denial* in him to *relieve* the Miserable: He must deny *himself* in *not* relieving them. It is well: He applauds himself, and all the World applauds him, for this happy Frame. But would this Man know, whether he does good through a solid consistent Principle of Virtue, or only through a kindly Impulse of Nature? Let him try, whether He, who is so willing to rescue

rescue People from the Misery of Poverty, SERM. IV.
 is equally willing to reclaim them from Vice,
 which is the *greatest* Misery; whether he
 is as industrious to discountenance Sin, as to
 remove Distress? If he is not, because here
 harsher Methods, unsuitable to the Gentle-
 ness of his native Temper are to be used;
 he does not pursue Virtue merely as such;
 he only pursues his own Inclinations.

Let us not then deceive ourselves. Vir-
 tue is *Reason*, or (what is indeed the *highest*
 Reason) the Will of *God* put in Practice.
 Whereas the Virtues of those, who are guilt-
 y of a customary Violation of any Branch of
 Duty, confessedly such, are only their *own*
Wills, their respective Inclinations, Caprice,
 and Humour reduced to Practice; and there-
 fore no Virtues at all. *Mere Taste* influ-
 ences them, or an *arbitrary* Agreement of
 some Duties to their Minds, in which *Rea-*
son has nothing to do, which enjoins us *e-*
qually to *practise*, whatever God has *equally*
 commanded, whether they be positive or
 moral, social or retired Duties; whether
 they relate to God, our Neighbour, or
 ourselves. They perform some Instances
 of Obedience exclusive of others, not as they
 are more *acceptable* to *God*, but as more
palatable

palatable to themselves: Verily they have their Reward in Hand, without any well-grounded Hopes of another in Reversion, who thus make it their Business to please themselves.

It is universally agreed, that in Works of Art, Architecture for Instance, Painting and Statuary, it is not one detached independent Part, however ornamental, which we call Beauty; it is a full Result and well proportioned Union of all the several Parts, which must have a noble and agreeable Effect upon the Whole. Thus in Life, it is not one single Accomplishment, how excellent soever, that constitutes the Beauty of a Christian Life: It is the Assemblage of all the moral Virtues, as far as in us lies. What avails one glaring Action or two, one shining Quality or more, which is not of a piece with the rest of our Conduct? It is but a purple Patch sown upon a Garment, every where else despicably poor, and only serveth to upbraid, by its ridiculous Splendor, the Homeliness and Coarseness of all the rest. The Truth is, *something* must be done to still the Clamours of an importunate Conscience: Men cannot be easy in an *intire* and avowed *Irreligion*. This puts
Men

Men upon obeying God by *Halves*. Yet SERM. IV:
whatever may be done with this View ;
nothing can be *effectually* done, till every
vicious *Habit*, that we know of, is dis-
charged. For though *Imperfections* may
be pardoned, and *single Acts* of Sin for-
given ; yet one *habitual Vice* endangers our
Salvation.





SERMON V.

The Duty of an uniform and unre-
served Obedience.

St. JAMES II. 10, 11.

*Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and
yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of
all.*

*For he, that said, do not commit Adultery;
said also, do not kill.*

IN a former Discourse, having shewn, 1st SERM. V.
the Reasonableness of an unreserved Second
Obedience to God, and 2^{dly} exempli- Sermon on
fied the Folly of a partial One in several this Sub-
Instances; ject.

III. I now proceed thirdly to obviate
Objections against the Duty, which the
Text enjoins.

After which, I shall lastly draw some practical Inferences from what has been laid down.

Some think themselves excusable for the Commission of any Fault, however notorious; because no Body is free from Faults: That is, because the best of Men are sometimes off their Guard, are liable to little Escapes and Inadvertencies, and are, now and then, guilty of Sins of Omiffion; therefore they may indulge themselves in Drunkenness, Debauchery, Malice, Dishonesty, and, what is indeed the Inlet to all other Vices, the Prophanation of the Lord's Day.

Nay they have recourse to Scripture to patronize a wicked Life. *The just Man sinneth seven times a Day*: A Text of their own Invention: For it occurs no where in the Bible. There are indeed these Words: *The just Man falleth seven Times and riseth up again: But the Wicked shall fall into Mischief*. It is not said, that the Just falleth into *Sin* seven Times, much less that he falleth into *Sin* seven Times a *Day*; which is an Interpolation of their own: The genuine and obvious Meaning is, *The just Man falleth seven or many Times into Calamity*, out of which God rescueth him. And this

this Sense is confirmed by a Parallel Passage SERM. V.
in the Psalms, *viz. Though the Just fall,*
he shall not utterly be cast down: For the
Lord upholdeth him with his Hand.

To as little Purpose is it to alledge the Examples of several great Men in the Old Testament in Favour of Vice. For either they were known Sins, of which those Men were guilty; or they were not. If the former, then the Severity of their Repentance bore Proportion to the Enormity of their Guilt. And who would chuse to catch a dangerous Distemper; because some of a strong Constitution, after they have undergone very severe Discipline, have, with much ado, and scarce with much ado, recovered their former Health? But, if they were not known Sins, such as perhaps were Polygamy, Concubinage, &c. what is that to us, who have no Title to the same Plea in behalf of the favourite Vice, which we retain? The whole Compass of moral Duties is more distinctly revealed, and more strongly enforced to us Christians by him, *who has brought Life and Immortality to Light*; than it was to the ancient Patriarchs and Jews. And therefore to urge *them*, as Precedents for us; is just,

} SERM. V. as if a Man, who should stumble in broad Day Light, should think of excusing himself by saying, that others did it, before *the Sun arose with healing in his Wings.* Our blessed Saviour expressly tells us, that *John the Baptist was the greatest among them, that were born of Women: But that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, or under the Gospel Dispensation, was greater than he,* i. e. The least Christian hath greater Advantages of Knowledge; than all the Prophets or *John the Baptist* had. They, to whom God had not by an express Revelation forbidden Polygamy, and Concubinage, might be in a State of invincible Ignorance as to the Unlawfulness of them, &c. And God requires no more of any Man, than he has given him Light to know, and Abilities to perform. But from us, to whom greater Degrees of Knowledge are communicated, greater Perfection is expected.

One Objection more remains to be obviated, *viz.* that it is inconsistent with the divine Goodness to consign *any Man*, who stands clear of all other Vices, to future Misery for one habitual Crime.

To which, in the first Place, I answer, ^{SERM. V.}
that future Misery is the necessary Consequence of one Habit of Sin; since one Habit of Sin disqualifies us for the Enjoyment of Heaven. For those reigning Passions, which are sometimes strong *in Death*, will be *stronger than Death*, and *crueller than the Grave*. That habitually bad Disposition, which the Decays of the Body often do not *weaken*, the Dissolution of it will not *destroy*. Be that one predominant bad Quality what it will, be it Malice, Pride, Lust, Ambition; it must render the Possessor miserable. The Joys of Heaven are like the Beams of Light: If they fall upon some Objects of a suitable Texture to reflect them, as upon Chrystal for Instance, they brighten and beautify them: But if upon others, they are quite lost and stifled; they present nothing to View, but one undistinguished *Blackness of Darkness*. There must be some Correspondence between the Objects, that are to make us happy; and the Soul, that is to be made happy by them. And as long as the Soul is defiled by one presumptuous Sin, that has *got the Dominion over it*; heavenly Joys cannot correspond with it. The Man is

SERM. V.

unhappy *in himself*; and while he continues so, nothing from *without* can render him happy. For Happiness must be seated in the inward Frame and Disposition of the Mind; and, before Objects can administer Pleasure, there must be an antecedent Determination of the Mind to receive Pleasure from them. There must be a previous Relish for heavenly Bliss, which Virtue can only give.

I answer farther, that it is so far from being inconsistent with God's Goodness to punish habitual Sinners; that from this very Attribute we may infer the Doctrine of future Punishments. For, if he be a Being of infinite Goodness, he must support the Cause of Virtue; which cannot be done, without discouraging Vice; as well as honouring Virtue. If he were a Being, that delighted in the Misery of Mankind; he would give an unlimited Scope to each irregular Passion, without any Fear of his Displeasure hereafter. For, as Vice is in it's natural Tendency productive of Misery to the Creation; he would encourage and embolden it, by taking off all Restraints, and removing all Apprehensions of suffering in the Life to come, in order to introduce

duce universal Disorder into it. It is therefore his Goodness, or his Regard to the Good of the Whole, which makes him punish those, who counteract the Good of the Whole. The better any Being is; the more he would endeavour to discountenance Sin, by the most awakening Notices of his Displeasure towards the Doers of it. Men should consult their Bible for just Apprehensions of the Deity: Otherwise, their reigning Passion will insensibly mix with their Reasonings; and have as great a Hand in forming their Notions, as it has in conducting their Lives. We shall view the Deity, not as he *is* in his *own Nature*; but through the *Mirrou*r of our *own* Passion, which will give a Tincture to, and cast it's own Colour on, the Object, which it represents. Thus a Man over-run with the black Passions sees the Deity, through his gloomy Temper, with all the dark Ideas of an unrelenting Judge, and represents him to his scared Imagination with all the *Pomp* and *Solemnity* of Horror; as if he were like Death, the *King of Terrors*, not the *Father of Mercies* and the *God of Comforts*. On the other Hand, a Person, whose Heart is open to every Gratification

SERM. V.

without Restraint, in the Flush of sanguine Health, and the Flow and Gaiety of his Spirits, represents him as nothing, but Benevolence *in himself*; and requiring nothing but Benevolence *from us*; though what other Duties may be necessary Qualifications for Heaven, he no more knows; than he does, what the Angels are doing in Heaven. The *august* Ideas of an *holy, great, and just Legislator*, are left out of the Account; and only those more *pleasing* ones of the *affectionate Parent* retained; without considering, that a Being, whose Love is directed by the Nature and Fitness of Things, not by Caprice and Humour, cannot love any Being farther, than it is lovely in itself; that a Being of infinite Goodness can take no Complacency in a Person, who is not, in some Degree, Good; that to *reward Sin* would be as contrary to Reason, as to *punish Innocence*. Both should consider, that the divine *moral* Attributes are nothing, but the divine *Reason* under *several Denominations*; pure unallayed Reason, without any Thing capricious, arbitrary, or unjust in his Nature; and, on the other Hand, without any Softness, Tenderness, and Indulgence, which are so many beautiful

beautiful Weaknesses in *our* Nature, but SERM. V. must be entirely removed from the *Divine*. Both should study to make themselves, as far as they can, like God; instead of representing God, without any Warrant from Scripture, like themselves. And all of us should make it our Business to adjust our Practice to the Terms of the Gospel; and not foolishly imagine, that God will abate of his Terms, or adjust them to our Practice. How vain is it to expect that he will soften and relax the Conditions of our Acceptance for *our* Sakes, who would not conform to them both for our own and *his*?

Indeed no other Scheme of Salvation could have been proposed more advantageous to Mankind. Had the Deity published an Act of Indemnity to Mankind in general without any Amendment of Life; this would have been to have left Virtue defenceless, and Vice triumphant: Had he on the other Hand resolved to consign all Sinners to Misery hereafter, notwithstanding their Repentance; this would have rendered Mankind, when they had once sinned, for ever after desperate. Had he, in the third Place, been graciously pleased to

SERM. V. to pardon Mankind for any *one* habitual Sin, provided they did not give a Loose to their Passions in any *other* Point; this would have introduced a strange Scene of Licentiousness and Disorder. One Person would have singled out Pride as most agreeable to his Nature; a second Drunkenness or Malice; a third Dishonesty, and Breach of Trust; a fourth Uncleaness, and so on. And thus every Vice would have been practised even under the Sanction of *his* Authority, who is too *pure* to behold Iniquity with *Pleasure*; and too *just* to let it pass with *Impunity*. A fourth Scheme there yet remained, the wisest Expedient to manifest at once God's Hatred to Sin, and his Mercy to the Sinner, *viz.* to forgive every Sin, through the Merits of our Saviour, upon a thorough Change of Life: But yet, lest Men should *continue in Sin, that Grace may abound*, to represent the extreme Folly of persevering in Sin, through the Hopes of repenting some Time or other; which is as absurd, as if a Man should through Carelessness suffer himself to be shipwrecked, and then depend upon a Plank to bring him securely to Shore.

And

And now what colourable Plea remains SERM. V. for that one Vice, which so *easily besets us*? If we only forego *those* Crimes, for which we have *no* Inclination; *what do we more than others*? Do not even *Publicans and Sinners the same*? But to abstain from Sins, to which we have a strong inbred Propension, to combat each inordinate Affection, *that wars against the Soul*, and to resist there, where there is a strong Conflict between Nature and Grace; this is the *only decisive* Proof of our Obedience to God. For the reigning Passion has much the same Influence over us, that *Herodias* seemed to have over *Herod the Tetrarch*. It shall not *intirely* restrain us from hearkening to the Voice of Reason in Points *uninteresting*; no more than she did from hearing *John the Baptist*: nay, it shall permit us to *do many* Things upon *it's* Persuasion, just as *Herod* did upon *his*. The Conflict between them is, when Reason persuades us to *put* that irregular Passion *away*, which *it is not lawful for us to have*, and to give it a Bill of *Divorce*: And then Reason is too often foiled and crushed. *Some Pleasures* may be *so enchanting* either by the Power of Custom, or the innate Dispositions

SERM. V. Dispositions of our Nature ; that there can be only *one greater* Pleasure, which is to renounce them by the Force of a commanding Reason. For there is a Pleasure in *being* thoroughly Good and *doing Good*, which none, but those, that are thoroughly Good, can know ; and those, that are not so, will scarce believe.

IV. I now proceed to my fourth general Head, which is, to lay down some practical Inferences.

1st, From hence we may infer, how necessary it is we should study the Scriptures, and there inform ourselves, what the Will of our Maker is ; otherwise, we shall dignify with the Name of Reason, whatever our craving Inclination warmly pleads for. For Reason, like a *weak Monarch*, sets it's *Hand*, and gives it's *Stamp* to those Things, which it's *favourite* Passion strongly recommends, and sees Things only, as it is pleased to represent them. Self-Partiality will incline us to think, that those Virtues, which we cultivate and are fond of, are Duties of the utmost Importance ; but those, which we neglect, are of little Consequence, or none at all. It

is the Indication of a self-conceited Fool to imagine, that Heaven and he are surely of a Mind; unless, where Heaven has declared it's Mind by some authentic Revelation. A wise and modest Man will reflect, that *God's Thoughts are not as our Thoughts, nor his Ways as ours. For, as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are his Thoughts than ours, &c.* and consequently he will be glad of any Light from above to direct his Steps, and *guide his Feet into the Way of Peace.* The Design of those, who would undermine Christianity, is plainly this: They are for carving out a Religion for themselves, instead of leaving that Work to a Being of unerring Wisdom: The Consequence of which is; that they always take up with a maimed and defective Morality, instead of a fixed determinate Scheme of Duties, complete in all it's Parts, and consistent upon the Whole. They are for contriving a Religion, that may set easy upon them, suited rather to their own vicious Relish of Things; than to the genuine Standard of uncorrupted Reason. They are for *doing what seemeth good in their own short-sighted Eyes,* dimmed by Passion; in lieu of acquiescing
in

SERM. V. in the Will of that Being, who *seeth not, as Man seeth*. If that Precept of Scripture, which confineth the Gratification of a certain importunate Appetite within the Bounds of Wedlock, were adopted into their Scheme, *viz. Marriage is honourable among all Men, and a Bed undefiled; but Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge*; it would very much thin the Number of their Profelytes: But they, apprehensive of this Consequence, inculcate a far more palatable Doctrine, *viz. the unrestrained Indulgence of that Passion without the Confinement of one to one: A Doctrine, however, that is contrary to those very Laws of Nature, for which they pretend so high a Regard in Opposition to Revelation. For that is confessedly contrary to the Laws of Nature, which, if universally practised, would interfere with the general Peace and Happiness of Mankind. In Cases, where one has as much Right to gratify himself, as another; whatever would be big with Evils, and productive of Misery, if all Men were to do it; cannot, for that very Reason, be lawful to any Man: Because any Man by so doing contributes his Share to the Introduction of that Misery and Disorder. But if*

if all Men were to think it lawful, and consequently to act, as if they thought it lawful, to transgress the Rules of Chastity, even where there is no Violation of the nuptial Bed ; what would be the Consequence of this universal Revolt ? It would make the whole World one wide Scene of Debauchery and Brutality let loose ; the very Reverse of Heaven in every Point but one ; that, by discouraging an Institution, which every wise State has encouraged as necessary to it's Welfare, there would be seldom or never any such Thing, as *marrying, or being given in Marriage*. I therefore conclude, that notwithstanding the ill-bred and brutal *Talk* of Libertines, than which nothing can be *more* brutal except it be their *Actions* ; Fornication is a Crime : Because it is to *do* that, which can never be for the Good of the World, that it should be *universally* done : It being impossible, that any *particular* Practice should be *warrantable*, which, if it became *general*, would be introductive of *Disorder* and *Confusion*.

Hence we may secondly learn, that a lame partial Obedience, instead of an entire universal Righteousness, is what we ought most

SERM. V. to guard against. The Majority of Mankind will never be thorough-paced determined Infidels : The great Danger is, that they will be only *almost* Christians, without being *altogether* so. To throw off *all* Obedience to God, is too presumptuous ; but to obey him by *Halves*, carries a *Form of Godliness, without the Power thereof*. It is true, several Books have appeared, that have, without Disguise, attacked the Christian Religion : But what Reception have they met with ? Why, they put one in Mind of those Bodies, which sometimes make their Appearance on the Theatre of Nature. No Body knew, from what Quarter they came ; and in a little Time no Body knew, whither they were gone : They served for a while to puzzle the Learned, and make the Ignorant wonder. They alarmed Mankind, and drew their Attention far more than those great Luminaries which move constantly above, and dispense a regular and beneficial Light : But then they soon disappear and are no more seen. Whereas the received Truths of the Christian Religion, like the great Lights of Heaven, still shine on with undiminished Lustre ; and though they may be some-

times eclipsed, and oftner overcast, yet break out again with triumphant Brightness. What is become of all those poisonous Books, that were written about the Close of the last Century, nay of some of a much later Date? Most of them, if not all, exploded and forgotten: *The Memorial of several of them is perished with them.* Little Writers compose Books apace: For Naturalists observe, that the less the Insect is; the oftner it lays, and the faster it propagates: But then their Brood is very short lived. Whereas Christianity, ever attacked and ever victorious, still stands its Ground; and will do so, as long as unbiaffed Sense, a just Way of Thinking, and a Regard for Virtue shall continue in this Nation. Christianity, which has weathered out the Storm of ten long Persecutions, is not to be born down by all the deliberate reasoning Malice of it's open Adversaries. Those are most to be dreaded, who, being not declared Enemies to Christianity, endeavour to find out easier Ways of going to Heaven, and to expound away the Sense of Scripture, when it interferes with any darling Notion.

What we are at present to be most apprehensive of, is an Indifference to Reli-

gion; a Vice sometimes more incurable, than open and flagrant Profaneness. Because there is a Principle of Religion in some Measure interwoven in our Nature: The Fear of an invisible Being will be working in us to the last, and more at last than ever, which will not suffer us to be intirely at Rest, while we continue in a professed Disobedience to our Maker. Men of a liberal Education can never go wholly into sensual Pleasure: They are not Brutes enough to plunge themselves into the lowest Sink of Vice and Profaneness. Their great Danger is, that they should rest in mere *plausible Forms*, a smooth *Surface* without any *Depth* or *Solidity*; like those Things, to which we gave a *fine Polish* and a *beautiful Gloss*, while what is *within* is untouched: that their *Religion* should be, like some People's *Civility*, merely *superficial*, a kind of *religious good Breeding*, in which the *Heart* is not at all interested. They will not fall into a *total* and notorious Neglect of God's Worship; for that would be to declare by their Actions, they thought there was *no* God to be *worshipped*. But they should consider, that if they only, *now* and *then*, *occasionally* and *accidentally* worship

worship him, this is in Effect to declare, SERM. V. that it is a *mere Accident* or *Chance Thing*, whether he is to be worshipped by them, or not.

To instance in other Matters, where a half-Religion, or half-Morality prevails. Men may, through the Advantages of a good Education, be shocked at any Instances of *Cruelty*, *Savageness*, and *Murder*, who yet live and die in an *Habit* of taking up *unjust Suspicions*, and passing a *rash precipitate* Judgment upon their Neighbours. And yet this is that very Disposition of Heart, from which Murder proceeds: For *he, that hateth his Brother, is a Murderer* in his Heart, though he may not be guilty of the outward Act. If we really loved our Neighbour; we should at least *wish*, that he was a good Man, and what we *wish* to be true, we are very apt to *believe* to be so. What is the Reason we cannot bear to be made the Subject of Scorn, Ridicule, and Contempt? It is because we truly love ourselves: And, if we loved *our Neighbour as ourselves*; we should therefore never make him a standing Mark of our scornful Censures, and spiteful Raillery. Thus again, in Matters of Justice,

SERM. V. we would not, for all the World, be guilty of Robbery and Theft : But do we, none of us, withhold from others, what they have an *equitable* Claim to ; though they have no strict *legal* Demand? Do we make it the Rule of our Behaviour in all Cases to do by them, as we should think it reasonable they should do to us ; were we in their Circumstances, and they in ours? Are we very careful not to prejudice any Person directly or indirectly in his Circumstances or Reputation? When we have to do with any Person, do we invert the Case, and consider his Affair, as if it were our own ; and our own, as if it were his? When Things concern ourselves, they lie too near and close to the discerning Faculty to be seen justly by it : We must therefore change the Point of View, and represent them as done by others, to see them at a due Distance, and in their proper Dimensions. If People were to act by this Standard, the World would be quite another Thing. In a Word, there are many who do not avoid the *Sins of Uncharitableness and Injustice* ; They only avoid what is *flagrant, glaring, and notorious* in those Sins. Yet those, who sin within
such

such Bounds, as not to make themselves scandalous, are the seldomeſt reclaimed. For the Extravagancies of Vice muſt have an End, and the *Overflowings* of Ungodlineſs, like all other *Overflowings*, ſpend themſelves, and are no more: But when Wickedneſs flows on in a *regular Channel*, and within ſome Bounds; it's Courſe is more laſting, and it's Tenour uninterrupted.

It is deplorable to reflect, that the very *loweſt* Part of the World (great Numbers of the loweſt) *lieth in Wickedneſs*: It is ſunk and immerſed in Corruption of all Kinds, Brutality, Swearing, Lying, &c. The *higheſt* Part of the World is barren and unfruitful: I ſpeak not of *All*; I know there are many Exceptions, heartily wiſhing there were more. Virtue and Religion ſeem to have fixed their chief Seat among the *midling* Part of Mankind, or thoſe that are not far above, or much below, that Situation. And yet here are there not many, who, if they ſhould act in their temporal Affairs as they do in thoſe of much greater Importance, their ſpiritual Concerns; would be reputed Fools? A Perſon, who ſhould think his great Neighbour or his King mightier than his Maker, would be reckon-

SERM. V.

ed, and undoubtedly is, a stupid Idiot: But, why is he not reckoned so too, who is more industrious to pay Homage and recommend himself to the Great, than to cultivate the Favour of his Maker? Or where is the Difference, whether I do not know the real Value of Things and Persons; or do not proportion my Regard to their real intrinsic Value? Again, a Man who should choose a glittering Ornament, that would please his Fancy for a while, before a great Estate, that would make him easy for Life, would be thought a Madman. But does he not, in the true Estimate of Things, act more madly and irrationally, who takes more Care to provide for this short Life, than to prepare for that blessed State, which will soon begin, and never end? The only Reason I can assign, why he is not thought so, is this, that the former is a Fool *out of the common Road, a Straggler from the common Herd*; the latter, though a much greater, is one *in the beaten Track of Thinking and Acting*. *Singular Follies* are indeed accounted to be such; but *epidemical Follies*, which have the Sanction of the Multitude, and which we see practised every Day, we therefore think no Follies at all. I question, whether,

ther, the most absurd Religion of all, the Popish, has admitted more Absurdities into it's Belief; than we too many of us do into our Practice. SERM. V.

To conclude, If Religion is false, why do we do so *much*? If it is true, why do we not do much *more*? Why have we just Religion *enough* to disturb us in our vicious Practices; which it will always do, till we either effectually discharge *it*, or *them*? But which of them shall we discharge? In the Case of presumptuous Sin, it will be impossible to bring over our Reason thoroughly and heartily to the Side of our wicked Inclinations. For, though the *Sensibility* of our Conscience, whereby we become uneasy at the Commission of any Crime, may be deadened by a long Perseverance in Vice; yet the *Light* of our Conscience, whereby we discern the Difference between Good and Evil, can perhaps be never totally put out. But this we may do, and this, if we are wise, we will do: We may, by repeated Endeavours, by Degrees, subdue our vicious Inclinations to our Reason. Perhaps you think to remedy All by repenting at last: Suppose this to be possible, which is often not the Case: Yet what is this, but

SERM V

to deal with God, as you would with an Enemy, to whom, when you have held out as long as possible, you then surrender yourself, and make the best Terms you can? And can you think that your Maker will be tamely put off after such a Manner? If you would *save your Soul alive*, it is not enough that you do not labour under a complication of Vices: One habitual Vice, one inveterate Distemper of Mind, will prove a *Sickness unto Death*; if you do not make it your Endeavour to be cured of it. Why do we not observe that Maxim in our Christian Warfare, which *Julius Cæsar* observed in military Affairs, never to think any thing done, while any thing material remaineth undone, while any one beloved Vice remains unconquered? Why do we not make the Desire of recommending ourselves to Him, who gave us Life, the main End of our living here; all our inferior Views in Life being made subservient to, and centering in this grand Design, like so many By-walks all ending in one ample spacious Avenue? Without this fixed and determined Desire to please God and gain his Favour; our Lives will be but one waking Dream. For as our sleeping Dreams are a Medley of
loose,

loose, disjointed, incoherent Thoughts; our Lives will be a Rhapsody of loose, fortuitous, inconsistent Actions, without considering what God, Reason, Eternity and our own Happiness require of us. Why do we not put these Questions home to ourselves? “What is the best End for me to drive at in all my Doings? Will such an Action be better upon the whole for my Good, for my eternal Good? How shall I wish I had lived, when I come to die?” God grant us all a right Sense of our Duty; that we may act agreeable thereto; and persevere in acting so to the End of our Lives.



SERMON VI.

How far an Affluence contributes to
Happinefs, confidered.

In a SERMON preached before the Uni-
verfity of OXFORD, 1741.

LUKE XII. 15.

*A Man's Life confifteth not in the Abun-
dance of the Things which he poffeffeth.*

IF a Man's Happinefs (for Life in this SERM. VI.
Place fignifies Happinefs) confifted in
Abundance; then a Man would be
happy in Proportion to what he *has*: An
Affertion, which the Compafs of every
Man's Obfervation difproves. We find
feveral, who have no confiderable Advan-
tages, either of Fortune, or Honour, or
Power, contented and eafy; and feveral,
who poffefs them all, yet extremely dif-
contented and miferable. This fhould in-
cline

SERM. V. cline us to think, that Happiness is chiefly seated within: That the Mind, as it is well or ill disposed, must endear the Relish; or pall the Flavour, of every earthly Blessing: that we must enjoy *ourselves*, before we can enjoy *any Thing else*.

Men *misplace* their Discontent: They are very well satisfied with what they *are*; They are only dissatisfied with what they *have*. Whereas the very Reverse ought generally to take place, and the *only* Desire which we ought to set *no Bounds* to, is that of *increasing* in *Goodness*. A slender Allotment of worldly Blessings will content an easy, modest, humble Frame of Mind: And no Allotment whatever, no Affluence how great soever, can satisfy an uneasy, restless, fretful Temper, ever seeking Rest and finding none, making to itself Disquietudes, when it meets with none; and improving them when it does.

A *rational* Way of thinking is therefore an essential Ingredient of Happiness. We must possess ourselves with *just* Apprehensions of Things: We wind up our Imaginations *too* high; and Things, as they are in *Nature*, will never answer to the gay florid Ideas, which a luxuriant *Fancy* forms

forms of them. The only Expedient therefore is to take *down* our Fancy, and bring it to the Truth of Things and the Standard of Nature. Unless we do this, we can never be tolerably easy: For our Uneasiness, in the *Absence* of such Things, will be proportionable to the Good which we *imagine* them to have: But our Happiness, in the *Possession* of them, will be only answerable to the Good that is *really* in them. The Consequence of which is, that the *want* of them may make us exquisitely *unhappy*; though the *Fruition* of them would be but a *slender* Addition to our *Happiness*. Consult then your *Reason*: Cool unbiaſſed Reason will teach you the true intrinsic Value of all the Gifts of God, itself the *most* valuable of any. Whatever you admire *beyond* the real Proportion of Good that is in it, you will soon disrelish as much: But a just *reasonable* Value will be as *unchanging* as *Reason* itself: And Time, which wears off the specious *gilding* of each imaginary Good, brightens and improves the *Sterling* Lustre of real Blessings. An undisciplined Imagination may suggest, “ O how happy should I
 “ be, if I could compass such a Situation
 “ in

SERM. VI. “ in Life!” But if calm Reason might be suffered to put in it’s Plea, it would answer, “ Why just *as* happy as those that are already in *Possession* of it, and that is, perhaps *not at all.*” If you place your Happiness in moderating your Desires, you may be happy even now : But if you place it in enlarging your Possessions, you would not be happy even then. For, however soon your Views are terminated in Life’s *low Vale* ; yet, as soon as you stood upon *higher Ground*, your *Prospect* would be *enlarged*, and the Scene *open* upon you. As fast as *new Streams* of Wealth flowed in, the *Channel* would *widen* to take in more.

Very remarkable are the Words of *Solomon*, *Every Man*, says he, *to whom God has given Riches and Wealth, and has given him Power to eat thereof, to take his Portion and to rejoice in his Labour : This is the Gift of God*, i. e. To enjoy is the Gift of God, who is the *Author* of every good *Gift*, and the *Object* of every grateful *Sentiment*. He may give a Man the *Power* to get *Wealth*, without the *Art* of enjoying or becoming it : He may give him the *Materials* of

I

Happiness

Happiness, without giving him *Wisdom* to SERM. VI. be, what it *only* can be, the *Architect* of it. For though *Fortune* (a great Fortune) may be the Result of undefigning *Chance*, or a Concurrence of *lucky Incidents*; yet *Happiness* must be always, more or less, the Product of *Design*, *Thought*, and Reason. Hence it comes to pass, that those, who are very fortunate, are not always very happy. We see how much a Man has, and therefore we, some of us, *envy* him: But we see not, (what is often the Case) how little he enjoys; and *therefore* we do not *pity* him. And yet we might see it too, if we did but observe him giving perhaps evident Proofs, that he does not *enjoy* himself, by his constant Endeavours to *forget* himself in Variety of Company and Diversions, shifting the Scene, and hurrying from Place to Place, in such a perpetual *Motion* of *Body*; that nothing can exceed it, but, what it plainly shews, the *Restlessness* of his *Soul*: Nothing more irksom to him, than being *long* at *Home*; except it be the entering into a *nearer* Home, his own *Breast*. Alas! Happiness is not a showy superficial Thing, that plays, for a while, upon the *Imagination*: *Real*
Happiness,

SERM. VI. *Happiness*, like *real Sorrow*, lies *deep* at the *Heart* : It is rooted in the *Ground* of the *Heart* : Otherwise it would soon wither away, because it had *no Depth*. Noise, Hurry and Crowds, as they call off our Attention, may *suspend* or *dissipate* *real Happiness* or *Sorrow*; but cannot give us a quick *Sensibility* of either.

Govern then your Inclinations and Desires: Keep your *Heart* with all Diligence: For out of *it* are the Issues of *Happiness*, as well as *Life*; of Happiness, which depends more upon the *right inward Frame* and *Disposition* of the Mind, than upon any *outward Circumstances* of Life, be they never so advantageous. The World may talk loudly of, and envy you for, your Happiness: But ask your own Heart; “ Do you feel it there? If you do, whence
 “ that continual Succession of Amusements,
 “ *most* of which are only so many poor
 “ Refuges from your own Thoughts, and
 “ *some* of which are only certain *Toils*,
 “ *gilded* over with the specious Name
 “ of *Diversions*, to make them go more
 “ glibly down? If you do not, you are,
 “ whatever your Circumstances may be,
 “ but a mere *Hypocrite* in Happiness; you
 “ have

to Happiness, considered.

“ have the bare *Form* and *Outside* of a
“ without the *Power, Energy* and inward
“ *Feeling* thereof: Your Happiness is *ti* it, 129
“ *atrical*, and you are not the Man ^{hard} SERM. VI.
“ *bind* the Scenes, whom you personate
“ upon the *Stage* of the World. *Anto*
“ indeed it is in Happiness, as in Virtue.
“ Those that *are* substantially virtuous and
“ happy, are not ambitious of *appearing*
“ such. They are *content* with *being* such,
“ leaving it to others to study *Appearances*,
“ and to hang out the *gaudy Sign* of Hap-
“ piness, where it is not to be found *with-*
“ *in, genuine* and unadulterated.”

Let us suppose that *all earthly* Blessings centered in one Person, so that he had nothing farther to *wish* in this Point; and *what* would be the Consequence? Why there is always a certain *Listlessness*, that attends the *Fulness* of *Prosperity*; as there is a certain *Restlessness* of Mind, while our Circumstances are *necessitous*. *Fierceness* of Desire on the one Hand; and a *nauseous Loathing* on the other, lye often so near the one to the other; that it is but the thin Partition of a Moment, it is but an invisible Line, that keeps them asunder. Men *are* always *uneasy*, till their Desires are compassed, and

ow far an Affluence contributes

ly craving Void filled up: And the
130 **H**iment that every craving Void was filled
SERM. VI. ever and their Desires compassed; they
Mould sink into a flat Indolence and a
Deadness of Spirit.

To examine more fully into this Point,

I. I shall first range the Pleasures under proper Heads, and consider, how much an Affluence contributes to the Enjoyment of each. And from thence

II. I shall secondly inculcate the great Duty of Contentment.

Pleasure may be reduced to these Heads, 1st, The Pleasures of the Senses; 2dly, Of the Imagination; 3dly, Of Honour and Esteem; lastly, Those of a moral and spiritual Nature.

I shall begin with the Pleasures of the Senses. The rich Man may fare sumptuously every Day: But to fare sumptuously and to fare deliciously are widely different. He, that feasts always; in reality, never feasts at all: His Appetite is palled by the Repetition of the same Entertainments. Whereas hard Labour and Exercise makes their homely but wholesom Viands far more re-

lishing to the Poor, than all the high-seasoned Delicacies and sumptuous Entertainments are to the Great. The clamorous Calls of an hungry Stomach are sooner appeased; than the Squeamishness of a vitiated Appetite removed. The greatest Emperors, who, after a long, tedious and laborious Flight from a victorious Enemy, have taken up with an ordinary Repast, have ingenuously owned, that a Simplicity of Diet, thus recommended by Hunger and Labour, has surpassed all the Pleasures, they have ever before met with, from the refined and studied Elegancies of a well furnished Table.

The Truth is: the Affluent must often use those Things, *viz.* Fasting and Labour out of *Choice*, which the Poor are obliged to by *Necessity*: They must have Recourse to Abstinence, which is but *voluntary Fasting*, and to Exercise, which is but *voluntary Labour*: Or they will be Sufferers upon the whole by their great and unweildy Fortune. They will want that Chearfulness and even Flow of Spirits, which Temperance, successive Industry and Ease beget, ill-exchanged for Epicurism and Sensuality.

Health is a temporal Blessing, which must give a Relish to every other : a Blessing, however, that we never know the full Value of, till we are deprived of it : like Objects *less* apparent, when too *near* the Eye ; it must be held *off from* us, to be seen, to *greater Advantage*, by us. Yet this Blessing, the Foundation of all the rest, is ofteneft the Lot of an honest and industrious Competency.

The same Author, the Author of Nature and the Scriptures, has expressly enjoined, that he, *who will not work* or employ himself, whether he be rich or poor, *shall not eat*. And it is the same Thing, whether the Inability arises from want of *Food* ; or want of *Health* and *Appetite*.

The next Pleasures, that fall under Consideration are, 2dly, those of the Imagination, *viz.* Order, Beauty, Regularity. And certainly Affluence must be owned to be very instrumental in supplying us with Pleasures of this Kind. It can command noble Buildings, regular Apartments, curious Pictures, Statues, Gardens, and what not ?

But *what Good is there to the Owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their Eyes ?* And what Pleasure therefore hath

hath the Owner more, than the Spectator, SERM. VI.
provided their Taste be equal? The Notion
of having a Property in these Things exclu-
sive of others may feed the *Vanity* of the
Proprietor; but does not administer any *na-
tural* Pleasure. For all the *natural* Plea-
sure results from a *Sense* to discern, and a
Taste to be affected with, Beauty of this
Kind. And as long as a Man of moderate
Fortune keeps the Idea of Property from
intruding and mixing with Delights of this
Nature; he may command as much Satis-
faction, as Men of over-grown Estates. Nay,
he may look upon the Rich as a kind of
Benefactors, who have supplied him with
a Set of pleasing Images, and beautified the
Prospect all around him, by polishing the
rougher Draughts of Nature with all the
additional Advantages of Art. Other Peo-
ple may have all the *Ostentation* of Life;
but he has all the *real* *Entertainments* of
it. He may reap all the Delight, which
magnificent Buildings, costly Furniture, ex-
pensive Curiosities, and fine Dress are by *Na-
ture* fitted to yield: And, as to any further
Delight, which results from *Property*; the
Pleasure of the Proprietor, to whom they
are become familiar, depends, in a great

SERM. VI. Measure, upon the Relish of the Spectator, who applauds his judicious Fancy in the Choice of his Ornaments. His Happiness consists in comparing himself with others, whom he imagines less happy in this Respect: And for the same Reason *another's* Magnificence must be *his* Uneasiness, when he compares himself with those, who outshine him in the elegant Accommodations of Life. Thus do Men multiply to themselves Causes of Misery, by misplaced Affections and a vitiated Taste: and there have been those who have disrelished all the substantial Enjoyments of Life, merely because another has appeared adorned with a Redundancy of costly Ornaments, which they could not purchase. Where *Vanity* (especially the little senseless *Vanity* of Dress) is; there is always, it's inseparable Attendant, *Vexation* of Spirit: So justly has *Solomon* joined them together. An expensive Trifle has begot in them an undue Complacency in themselves, mixed with a Contempt for others: Whereas the Want of it would have disconcerted them as much as a solid Misfortune. So light, so insignificant are the Things, which disturb or overjoy a Mind, that calls itself rational. And they,

they, who can laugh at a Child for being pleased with, or crying because it cannot have a Feather or a Gew-gaw ; betray an equally childish Fancy in being discomposed for the want of mere Play-things of another Kind ; forgetful of *that*, which is to be *loved above Gold and precious Stones* : Fond of every Thing rare and uncommon, except what is the most valuable Rarity of all uncommon Worth, exalted Piety, and Virtue, which the Influence of their bad Example tends to make *more* rare and uncommon. Every other Distinction in Life which may set them above the vulgar Herd, glitters in their Eye : This Distinction only has often no Charms for them : A Distinction, however, of infinitely more Worth than all the rest, which will set them above the rest of the World, when all other Distinctions are lost, to all Eternity. Whatever Beauty, Symmetry, and Regularity in Houses or Gardens an Affluence may procure ; there is one Symmetry and Regularity, which ought not to be forgotten, the Regularity of our Lives and Manners, the Beauty of Affections well ordered, that Harmony and Order within, without which no Order or Proportion in Things external can make us happy.

The Truth is, Nature has pointed out to us a set of Delights, easy, cheap, and serene: But a distempered Imagination has substituted in their Room those that are difficult of Access, and unsatisfactory in the Possession. Nature has made the most beautiful and pleasing Objects the most common, which several overlook, merely because they are so. They love to strike into new Tracks of Pleasure, despising those, in which the Bulk of Mankind can walk as well as themselves; and are so afraid of falling in with the *vulgar* Taste, that they refine themselves into one plainly *unnatural*. What are all the Beauties, which Genius can invent, Art exhibit, or Riches purchase; when put in Competition with the august Spectacle of the Sun, in the vernal Season, rising in it's full Strength, gladdening the animal Creation, brightning every Object, itself the brightest: In Comparison of which all human Glories, like the Stars, hide their diminished Heads, or rather, like a sickly Lamp, when confronted with it, have *no Glory*, by Reason of the *Glory which EXCELLETH*? Yet how many prefer the dull Luxury of a soft Bed and Ease, to this delightful, but alas! too early Scene?

The next Pleasures are, thirdly, those of Esteem and Honour. We

We are apt to consider Men, not as ^{SERM. VI} they are in themselves, but as they are gilded and set off to Advantage by their Fortune: Whereas did we view them apart from their Circumstances; instead of admiring their Greatness, we should, sometimes at least, find Occasion to pity their Littleness. It is surprising to observe, what a wide Disproportion of Respect is paid to a Man, by rational Creatures, according as he has more or less of Money.

When the rich Man speaketh, sayeth the wise Son of Sirach, every Man holdeth his Tongue, and lo! what HE sayeth, enforced with the substantial Eloquence of an ample Estate, is extolled to the Clouds. But if a poor Man speaketh, they are ready to say, what Fellow is this?

Yet, to balance the Account, let it be observed, that as for Men of *superior* Sense, they see through, and heartily despise all the officious Complaisance that is paid to their Quality, and not to their Person. No Honour, no Praise, but what comes *from the Heart* of the *Speaker*, can penetrate to theirs, and raise any delicate Sensations of Pleasure there. They laugh at all the Embarrassments of Greatness,

SEAM. VI. *ness*, which like Robes of State, must be worn on some publick Occasions, but are always heavy, cumbrous, and unweildy: They never enjoy themselves unless in the milder Lights of Life, when they put them off, and are in an Undress, free, and disengaged, losing the *great Man* in the *Friend*. Their *true Greatness* is, that they are *superior* to the *Greatness*, which they *possess*; and can see into the *Littleness* of it, when unaccompanied with a *liberal* Mind and *enlarged* Affections.

And, as to Men of *another* Turn, let it be observed, that the least Neglect, nay even the Omission of a Ceremony, shall extremely disconcert some, who have been trained up with high Notions of the Deference due to them, and are big with the Sentiments of their own Dignity. Of this we have a pregnant Instance in *Haman*. For, after he had summed up all his Wealth, Honour, and Greatness; he concludes: *Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai sitting at the Gate*, that is, not rising to make his Court, and pay Homage to him. This Disrespect and Slight put upon him could counter-balance all his Pleasures. To see another put above one, and
a *Di-*

a *Distinction* made, where we can see no SERM. VI.
Difference, however *trivial* and imaginary
an ill; yet gauls a Man of *high* Spirit more
than some *substantial* Grievances do the
Meeke and *Humble*. Those who are desti-
tute of true Greatness, put one in Mind of
those Animals, which are discerned by the
Help of Glasses: *Little* and despicable in
themselves, they must be *magnified* to ap-
pear considerable: Their Greatness may
be properly said to be extrinsic: For they
would escape the Eye of the World, and
dwindle into nothing, through a natural
Medium, without something *foreign* and
extrinsic to them, to *aggrandise* and enlarge
them.

In the Affluence of Fortune, where every
Humour is indulged, every Desire gratified
without Control, there the least Disap-
pointments, the least Provocation will disturb
a Man: He can scarce brook any Affront,
the natural Consequence of an uninterrupted
Self-Indulgence. For the more he indulges
himself in the pleasurable Things of Life,
the less he will think of his not deserving
them; and the less he thinks of his not de-
serving them, the less will be his Humi-
lity: till Sickness, Pain and Anguish, (no
Flatterers

SERM. VI. *Flatterers they, who only speak smooth things; they speak home to his Bosom, and give him a feeling Conviction of what he is) lower his swelling Ideas, and reduce the exorbitant Power of his Passions. At that Instant he feels, how little they avail to ease an aching Heart, to stifle the Clamours of his Conscience, and to suspend, what they often hasten, his Doom. At that Instant he will look upon them in that Light, in which a great Man of a neighbouring Country did some extraordinary Mark of Distinction and Honour sent him, as he lay on his Death-bed. " Alas ! (says he looking coldly upon it) " this is a mighty fine " thing here in this Country: But I am " just bound for a Country, where it will " be of no Service to me." Nothing would be more effectual to moderate our Desires for Things of this Nature, now we are *alive and well*; than seriously to reflect, in what Light they will appear to us, just at the *Article of Death*. No one can be more miserable than the Man of the World, who seldom thought of any thing beyond it, when he is not to continue any longer *in it*. Then such Sentiments as these, just at all times, will be almost *unavoidable* to him*

him at this dread Juncture. "Alas! that
 "mere Trifles in comparison of what is im-
 "mediately to follow, mere Shadows of the
 "good things to come hereafter, should
 "so far engage my Thoughts; as to make
 "that Glory, which is of an *exceeding* and
 "*eternal Weight in itself*, have *little or no*
 "Weight at all with *me*."

SERM. VI.

The last Pleasures I propos'd to consider are those of a moral and spiritual Nature.

These are indeed the most solid Satisfaction. And he is not possessed of true Wisdom and Virtue, who does not look upon every thing else as beneath them. Yet these Pleasures lye open to Men of every Condition in Life. It is true, a benevolent Man in low Circumstances cannot be as beneficial to the World, as he would be, if he adorned a higher Station. But though it might be *better* for the *World* that he had an ampler Sphere of Action; yet it will be the *same* thing to *him* at the last final Adjustment of Rewards and Punishments. For he, who has (the only thing in his Power) an hearty Inclination to do more good, shall not lose his Reward for want of (what was not in his Power) an Opportunity

SERM. VI. }
 tunity to exprefs that Good-will by his Ac-
 tions.

Our Virtue is at least as much endangered by Opulence, which administers numberless Incentives to Luxury, and Temptations to Insolence, as it is by Poverty. Nay, some who before seemed to want nothing but an ample Fortune, as soon as they have acquired that, have from that Time wanted almost every Thing else to make them valuable. The Heat and Warmth of Prosperity has called forth those Vices, which lay dormant before under the Rigour of Poverty. What Numbers have shortned their Days by abandoning themselves to all the unmanly Pleasures of a dissolute Life; who, if they had not been born to an affluent independent State, might have made a distinguished Figure in the World? If they had not had a Fortune to support their Follies, and keep Pace with their lewd Desires; they might have thought it necessary to lay in a Stock of moral and intellectual Endowments. No Wonder some annex the Idea of *Valuableness* and *Worth* to Riches, and of *Despicableness* and *Contempt* to Poverty: They are in the *right* to *value* themselves upon, what

is the *only* valuable Thing they have, their SERM. VI.
great Wealth.

After all, I am far from denying, that Riches give us larger Opportunities of doing Good: That several make this Use of them, and improve their *own*, by enlarging the *common* Stock of, Happiness; their Religion, like the *Altar*, that *sanctified* the *Gold*, *stamping* a *Value* upon, and dignifying, their Fortune. That their Greatness is not like that of old *Gothic* Buildings, an *irregular, encumbered* Magnificence, where there is nothing easy, unaffected and natural; but every Thing shews a stiff *awkward State*, and an ostentatious *Pride*: No, it resembles the Buildings of ancient Taste, where all Things were *simple, just*, and conformable to *Truth*, and *therefore* beautiful and great; where that, which was ornamental, was also commodious and useful. But this I affirm, that unless we guard against criminal Excesses, Riches will, as the Apostle expresses it, *bring us into a Snare, and into many hurtful and foolish Lusts, and such as drown Men in Perdition.*

The least Glance of Reflection may serve to shew, that Happiness, in a great Measure, consists in *subduing* each fierce, turbulent,
and

SERM. VI. and exorbitant Passion ; which they are not the most likely to do, who have the Means, in their Hands, of *gratifying* every one of them : Not to mention, that to *set* one's *Heart* upon the *Blandishments* of *Life*, (which is too often the Case of those, whose Fortune can command them) is to give the *Terrors* of Death a much *keener Edge*.

But this brings me to my

II. Second general Head, which is to inculcate the great Duty of Contentment.

The first Reason for which is: that Happiness is more equally dealt, than we, in our melancholy Hours, are apt to imagine. This is certain : that *one* Part of the World are tolerably easy, under such Circumstances, as would be insupportable to the *other*. And some have made it a Question, whether Riches do not *create* more Wants, than they *satisfy*. For none seem to be more contented, than those that are intirely unacquainted with the Delicacies of Life. Thus there is even here, in many Cases, though not in all, that regular Adjustment of Inequalities ; that he, that has gathered much the Materials of Happiness, *should have nothing over* ; and he, that has gathered

gathered little, should *have no Lack*. If the Poor envy the Rich, as exempt from that Drudgery, to which they are subject; the Rich may sometimes, with more Justice, envy the industrious and temperate Poor: because that very Drudgery prevents that idle Swarm of restless Thoughts, that Spleen, Distaste and want of Health, which high Enjoyment of Life, Luxury and Inaction sometimes breed in them. The Labour of the Body engrosses the Attention of the Mind, which otherwise *museth upon many Things*; and therefore hinders them from dwelling upon, and consequently heightning *real* Misfortunes, or from forming to themselves *imaginary* Grievances. Thus it procures them Peace of Mind, as well as Health of Body. And Happiness, as far as attainable here below, consists “in Peace of Mind, Health of Body, and Competency of Fortune.” Nay they bid as fair for a Competency, as the Rich themselves; if not fairer. For their Labour, to which they are constantly inured, takes up their Thoughts, and hinders them from straggling abroad, from making idle Excursions, and creating *fantastic* Wants, Wants, which Nature never design-

ed. Now these *imaginary* Wants are often more vexatious to the *Opulent*, than *real* Wants are to the *Poor*. For *real* and *natural* Wants are soon supplied, a very little sufficing Nature: Whereas the Wants of an irregular roving *Imagination* are endless. Hence the *Opulent* are sometimes very unhappy; as they are at leisure to frame a thousand chimerical Desires. And accordingly they often connect the Ideas of *Grandeur*, Retinue, costly Eating and Drinking, sumptuous Villas, Statues, Paintings, with the Idea of *Happiness*: Ideas, between which there is no *natural* Connexion; since many are happy without them; and several miserable with them: Ideas, which foolish *Man* has put together; but which *Nature* and the wise *Author* of Nature ever intended to keep asunder. They very ingeniously have contrived an inexhaustible Number of Wants, which require as inexhaustible a Fund of Wealth to supply them. If they *are* supplied, it is but *Vanity* and contributes very little to their real Enjoyments: As soon as the Gloss of Novelty is worn off, they become tasteless and insipid. If they *are* not supplied, it is a *Vexation* of Spirit, and a perpetual Source of Uneasiness.

ness. They have very often so joined and rivetted together the Ideas of *Grandeur* and *Happiness*, that they cannot retrench their Pomp and Equipage, even when their Fortune is considerably impaired. They must, through an ambitious Poverty, maintain the Shew, when the Substance is gone. Their Joys are pompous and *visible*, but *false* and fantastical; their *Cares* *secret* and concealed, but *real* and solid. Riches, by making Pleasures familiar to them, flatten their Relish for them, but give a keener Edge to every Pain which they must feel as well as other Men: They dull their Enjoyments, but point and quicken the Sense of Anguish and Affronts.

To proceed to other Instances, where Happiness is not so unequally dispensed, as we may be inclined to think: If the prosperous Villain looks down with Contempt upon the virtuous Sufferer; the virtuous Sufferer, in his Turn, may pity the prosperous Villain. For he finds within *himself* that genuine *Feeling* of real Worth, that *delightful Self-consciousness* of Virtue; which, whoever *sincerely* feels, can never be, at the lowest Ebb of Fortune, in the most complicated Distress, *intirely miserable*. He

can relish his very Being; he finds all right, at home, in his own Breast; his Self; his Nature, is agreeable; and God, the Author of Nature, is his Friend. But the prosperous Villain, whenever he has any Intervals, (as he must have Intervals,) for serious Reflection, must meet a distempered and wounded Spirit within him; he must feel a *Self-aborrence*, a *Self-loathing*, a total *Disrelish* of himself: perhaps a *greater*, but certainly a more *lasting* Torment, than any he can *inflict*. He that, out of a Principle of *malicious* Wickedness, *does* ill, must be conscious, he *deserves* ill: And he, that is conscious he *deserves* ill, must expect to *meet* with his *Deserts* from *that* Being, who *will render to every Man, according to his Deeds*.—But further,

If Men of a fine Imagination think themselves happy, that their lively Sense and Abilities let them into several Pleasures, that the Vulgar are Strangers to; the Vulgar are equally happy, that their want of Delicacy secures them from numerous Distastes and Disgusts, which too elegant a Taste exposes others to. If there are numberless refined Delights, which, like the delicate Strokes in Painting, are too subtle, exquisite and
fine

fine to affect Men of grosser Apprehensions; there are too numberless tender Solicitudes and soft Distresses, of which they have little or no Notion: So that the Account is exactly balanced; a quicker Sensibility of Pain and Grief bearing a just Proportion, in Men of finer Spirits, to that of Joy and Happiness. If the Learned value themselves upon their Superiority of Knowledge, the Unlearned are as content and sometimes more secure in that *Ignorance*, which as much contributes to the *Repose* of the *Mind*, as *Darkness* does to *that* of the *Body*. They travel on in the plain High-road of common Sense; whereas speculative Adventurers, by striking out into new and unbeaten Tracks, bewilder themselves and their Followers.

Single out, whom you please: Yet there are very few, whom we would exchange Conditions with, all Circumstances considered, in every Particular. Such an one you take to be, in *general*, very happy: But, if you descend to *Particulars*, and take into the Account, it may be, his Age, or his Health, or his Person, or his Abilities, or his Temper, or his Behaviour; you would rather continue as you are, than make a

SERM. VI. *thorough* Exchange. Some few there may be, who could wish they were not only almost, but altogether such, as some of distinguished Virtue are: But, generally speaking, whatever seeming Inequalities there may be, yet they are adjusted either by the real Satisfaction, which Virtue gives, or by the false Pleasures, which Conceitedness and Vanity affords it's Votaries.

Indeed it is impossible, whatever we may fancy, we should wish ourselves to be any other Person than what we really are. For it is too plain to admit of a Dispute, that a Man, in the Exchange, proposes some Advantage to *himself*. But what *Part* of a Man's Self could be better, if his *whole* Self was changed?

Secondly, The *Cause*, why Men generally *repine* at Misfortunes, is the very *Reason*, why they *ought* to be *thankful*. For the Cause, why we are so much discontented is the *Uncommonness* of our Misfortunes. If we were inured to Grievances, if we were acquainted with Grief, like Veterans, that have already received many Scars, we should bear up, with undaunted Courage, against any new Assaults: But being unaccustomed to Hardship, being not

trained up in the School of Discipline and Severity; the least Disaster unhinges our Minds: Just as the least Cold or Inclemency of the Air affects those, who have been bred up with over-much Delicacy and Tenderness. A thousand Blessings, which we have enjoyed, pass unregarded, merely because they are become *familiar* and *common* to us. One Affliction, merely because it is *uncommon*, leaves deep Traces behind it. Whereas the *chief* Sensibility or Repentment, that it ought to raise in us, is that of *Gratitude* to God, for sending those Chastisements so *rarely*. Thus, what is the Cause of our *Murmuring*, is, in Reality, a just Ground of *Thanksgiving*.

I may farther observe, that we lye under a Mistake, if we imagine, they are the *great*, *weighty* and *extraordinary* Misfortunes, that *sur* our Temper. For these too *rarely* befall the Generality of Mankind to beget in them an *Habit* of *Fretfulness*. They are the *little cross* Incidents of Life, some *trivial Neglect*, that is shewn us, some *Expression dropped* in Conversation that seems to reflect upon us, in short, *any untowardly* Affair, that in the *least crosses* our Inclinations, and does not *exactly* tally with our Designs,

SERM. VI.

which by Degrees intirely *imbitter* the Mind, and produce an *habitual Peevishness* and *Acrimony* of Spirit. And for the Truth of this Reflection I appeal to the Breasts of those, who have the Unhappines to labour under this Distemper. For these are things, which *do* or *may befall* us *every Day*; and therefore we must every Day guard against any ill Consequences, they may have upon our Temper; if we would preserve a perfect Harmony within.

Another Motive for Contentment is, that the Time is coming, and must shortly be, when, if we have *retained* our *Virtue* and *Integrity*, it will signify little or nothing, what *else* we have *lost*; but, if we have *lost that*, it will signify little or nothing, what *else* we have *acquired* or *retained*. However *rugged* and *uneven* the *Ways* may be, yet it is some Comfort; that, as one * expresses it, they *lead* to our *Father's House*, where we shall want nothing.

The 4th Reason for Contentment is, that, could we see through the whole Contexture of Things, we should find, we have as much Reason to thank God, for what

* Archbishop *Tillotson* in his Letter to Mr. *Hunt*. See his Life. he

he hath *withholden* from us, as for what he hath *granted* to us. We should leave it to *Him* alone to dispense his Blessings, as he pleases, who *alone* knows what will *prove a Blessing* to us, in the final Issue of Things. The Deity may administer *not* what is *palatable*, but what is *salutary* to us, who have *no Health* in us : And the Longings of a distempered feverish *Soul* are no more to be gratified, than the Longings of a sick feverish *Body*, without *increasing* our Distemper, *endangering* our Welfare, and making That, which might have been *cured*, a *Sickness unto Death*. God's great Will be done without Reserve : For if *ours* were done without Reserve, and each exorbitant Wish gratified ; there would need nothing else to make us completely miserable. We often *owe* our *Happiness* to *this*, that it is not in our Power to make ourselves *unhappy*, which we seldom fail of doing, when it is. The severest Curse that God inflicted upon the Israelites was—What? When he *curbed* and laid a *Restraint* upon their Inclinations ? No : it was, when he gave them up unto *their Hearts Desire*, and let them follow their *own Imaginations*. We pray for Honours : But God may with-

hold

SERM. VI. hold us from *Honours*, because he would not expose us to *Infamy*: Because he knows, whether those *Virtues*, which flourished in the Shade, might not wither away in the Sunshine. This *God* alone knows: what falls within the Compass of *our* Knowledge to abate our Fondness for Honour, is, that, unless a Man is born to Greatness, he seldom can *become great*, without being *little first*. I mean, he must stoop to a thousand Littlenesses and Basenesses, which a generous Nature disdains. To purchase *Honours*, he must part with that uncomplaining *Virtue* and Integrity, for which *all* the *Honours* in the World, the *World itself* cannot give him an *Equivalent*. Honour and Advancement *here* are often, like Death, the *Wages of Sin*; in the *next* World, they will be the *Gift of God*, and therefore the Reward of *Virtue*. Whatever Greatness is founded upon any *other* Basis; is not the Greatness of a *regular well-proportioned Man*; it is the Greatness of a *Monster*, where there is no Grace, no Comeliness that we should desire it; but every thing is misshapen, shocking and deformed.

We pray for Riches. But God alone knows, whether Riches would not beget in

us an undue Opinion of ourselves, and lay us open to the Impressions of Flattery from servile Dependants, that would practise upon our Weakness: whether a continued Succession of Gaiety, Pomp and Pleasure might not dazzle the Mind, and divert it from attending to *the one Thing needful*, the Pursuit of eternal Happiness by the Practice of Piety and Virtue; till we became, like the Soil, from whence our Riches were first dug out, unfruitful and barren. Add to this; that the same Wealth, which sits *easy* upon Persons bred up in *high* Life, would be an *awkward Incumbrance* to Men exalted on a sudden from a *low* Condition. So much Reason is there for that Prayer of the Philosopher. “ O God, avert from us, “ whatever is evil, though we do pray for “ it: and grant us, whatever is good, “ though we do not pray for it.” Or, in the comprehensive Words of our blessed Saviour, *Deliver us from Evil*; from Evil in *general*, without specifying or *particularizing* what is Evil; but leaving it to Him, whose unerring Wisdom can only determine in most Cases, what is evil for us; and whose unbounded Goodness will grant, whatever is good to us, upon our serious, constant

SERM. VI. constant and affectionate Prayers to Him. We should avoid all *Particularities* in Prayer. We may pray indeed for spiritual Blessings and eternal Happiness without Reserve. But we ought to pray for temporal Blessings under certain Restrictions, for just *as much* Fortune and Health, as is convenient for us, upon the whole of Things, submitting ourselves wholly to his *holy* Will and Pleasure, *Who loveth us as a Father doth his own Children, and can provide for us infinitely better; whose Goodness is as extensive as his Creation, and endless as his Duration.*

Here our Mistake lyes. We suppose that Happiness consists in indulging each gay and florid Fancy, each fond and effeminate Desire, each dear Conceit, that rises uppermost in our Minds, when our Spirits run high: And if this were true, it would follow undoubtedly, that an Affluence was necessary to Happiness. But God, who sees not as we see, knows that Happiness is produced by correcting our vain Imaginations, by disciplining our Passions, and by bringing us to a just Sense of Himself, of ourselves, and every Thing else, that concerns us. And let us co-operate
with

with the Deity: Let us look into our own SERM. VI.
 Hearts. “ Are there no clamorous Passi-
 “ ons there, such as Lust, Vanity, Envy,
 “ Covetousness, Rage, which, like so ma-
 “ ny wayward Children, the more they
 “ are indulged; the more headstrong and
 “ refractory they grow, distracting the Pa-
 “ rent Breast, that bred and cherished
 “ them? If there are, we may depend
 “ upon it, *this* World cannot make us hap-
 “ py; for *Heaven* itself cannot make that
 “ Man happy, who has these Sources of
 “ Wretchedness within him.”

You must form a true Relish of Life, just as you would do of Painting. You must not suffer your Eye to be captivated by gay glossy Colouring, by gawdy and ambitious Ornaments, however they may strike and dazzle you for a while. You must dwell upon the more austere and manly Graces, which never please upon a transient View, but when they have *once* pleased you, please you for ever after*. The Al-

* Difficile dictu est, quænam causa sit, cur ea, quæ maxime sensus nostros impellunt voluptate, et specie primâ acerrime commovent, ab iis celerrime fastidio quodam et satietate abalienemur. Quanto colorum pulchritudine et varietate floridiora sunt in picturis novis pleraque, quam in veteribus? quæ tamen, etiãsi primo aspectu nos ceperunt, diutius non delectant, cum iidem nos in antiquis tabulis illo ipso horrido obsoletoque teneamur. Cicero de Oratore, Lib. iii. Cap. 25.

lurements of sensual Pleasure are very striking, they catch the heedless and injudicious; but the Beauty of Holiness does not, at the first Glance, invite the Eye: It hath something severe in it; and you must dwell upon it, and consider it thoroughly to be enamoured of those Graces, which depend not on changable Fancy; but are founded on Truth and a Justness of Thinking; Graces which will never please you while you are thoughtless, nor be disrelished by you, till you become so. However wisely and industriously you may pursue Wealth, Honour, or Power, you can never be secure *against a Disappointment.* There is *one Pursuit*, in which you can meet with *no Disappointment*; and *that* is the Pursuit of *Virtue*: Since every honest and *spirited Endeavour* after Virtue is Virtue, in *some Degree*; which, if we do not slacken our Endeavours, will lead on to a greater; till our Goodness *skines more and more unto a perfect Day.*

SERMON VII.


The Reasons, why Men act contrary to Conviction, and their settled Principles, assigned.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of
OXFORD, 1741.



ROMANS I. 18.

Who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness.

THE Word, that is here rendered SER. VII.
bold, signifies in the Original to 
detain. They (the Gentiles) kept
the Truth shut up and confined as in a
Prison, and did not let it appear abroad in
their Actions. Or, as the same Apostle
explains himself in the next Chapter, *They*
did not obey the Truth, of which they had
just Apprehensions; *but obeyed Unrighteous-*
ness.

SER. VII. *ness.* These Words, though levelled against those Heathens, who, *when they knew God did not glorify him*, as such, yet are applicable to too many Christians: And it shall be my Business in the following Discourse,

I. To enquire how it comes to pass, that several act contrary to Conviction, or *hold the Truth in Unrighteousness*.

II. Idly, Having pointed out the Causes, to apply proper Remedies.

As to the First,

The Query is, whence it proceeds, that Men, who acknowledge the great Truths of natural and revealed Religion, should act in direct Opposition to them? What shall we say? That they are in Reality determined Atheists and Unbelievers, whatever they may pretend to be? No: Men of this Stamp are very rare. There may be indeed, and often is, a certain Degree of Unbelief, which is the Cause of the Inconsistency between Men's Profession and Practice. Men may be Believers in *general*, who yet are Disbelievers in *some Respects*. They are not thoroughly, it may be, persuaded of the Heinousness and Malignity
of

of some Sins, or of God's Displeasure against them: They have some crude indigested Notions, that Vice is not of so destructive and deadly Nature, nor God so strict a Being, as represented in Scripture. And it is this Kind of Unbelief, which St. Paul charges on the Israelites: *So then we see, that they could not enter in (into Canaan) because of Unbelief.* What Unbelief? Not Unbelief in general of God's Providence and their Religion: They had too many *glaring* and *repeated* Proofs of God's Presence among them to doubt of that: It was Unbelief as to *some certain Points, so far and no farther*, that caused them to be stubborn and disobedient: They did not heartily believe God's Promises and Threatnings, so as to be influenced by them. But, though this is often the Case, and accounts for a great deal of that Wickedness, which prevails among the Bulk of Mankind; yet it does not come fully up to the Point in Hand. For all the Knowledge in the World, all the *dry abstracted Reasonings* will signify little, till our *Affections* are engaged and *interested* on the Side of Virtue. And our Principles will only float useleſs in the Head; till the Heart, *out of which are the*

SER. VII. *Issues of Life*, is touched and warmed by them. Till our Inclinations, the great Springs of Action, fall in with our Duty ; we shall apply ourselves to it in a cold spiritless Manner, as a mere Task, as the unnatural Result of Force and Imposition upon us ; not as the genuine Offspring of our own ingenuous and manly Choice. Religion may exert itself now and then, in some few broken occasional Efforts ; but it will soon lose it's Hold upon us, like Water-works, the Effect of Art and Constraint, playing, however, occasionally, and rising to an uncommon Height ; yet ceasing to rise, and discontinuing to play upon the least Obstacle and Impediment : It is from the Fulness of the Heart, as from a rich and inexhaustible Spring, that a Religion must proceed, which *rejoices to run it's Course*, which surmounts all Obstacles, and bears down all Opposition, which breaks not out into *sudden interrupted Gushes*, but flows on with one *continued equal Stream*. A settled, animated Resolution to serve God, and nothing else, will overlook little Difficulties, and charge through great ones. A Man of a large compass of Thought shall be able to define

the Nature, state the Measures, and demonstrate the Reasonableness of each Virtue: In the mean Time he shall content himself with the barren Demonstration, leaving the Practice to others. On the other Hand, an ignorant Peasant, who knows not what a Demonstration or Definition means, shall discharge every Duty, which the other can demonstrate, through an affectionate Relish for Goodness, and from, what is generally the best Casuist, an honest Heart.

The Mystery of the whole matter seems to be here. It is not Truth as *such*, *uninteresting* Truth, the beautiful, but useless Furniture of the Head, that determines the Will: It is Truth *endeared to the Affections*, Truth *considered as important*, that powerfully touches the inmost Springs and Movements of our Nature. It is not enough to influence the Will, that we apprehend a Thing to be *good* and *valuable* in itself: For so we may apprehend several Branches of *Science* to be, which yet shall not determine us to prosecute the Study of them with Ardour. To move the Will effectually, it is farther requisite that we apprehend the Thing to be *necessary* to our


SER. VII. *well Being*, and find ourselves *uneasy* in the Absence of it. For *while* we are *easy without* it; a distinct Apprehension of the Excellency of the Thing, though it may produce a *supine spiritless Wish*, will never beget a *strong and vigorous Desire*: Which, by the Way, shews the Absurdity of resolving the Obligation of Morality into any thing, but the most affecting and interesting Considerations. A *craving boisterous Uneasiness*, that, conscious of superior Strength, demands to be relieved, will be always too hard for a *fine delicate Idea* concerning the Beauty of Virtue, which plays round the *Imagination*, but comes not to the *Heart*. Whereas everlasting Misery will have it's Terrors, and that Glory, which has an *exceeding and eternal Weight* in itself, will have it's Weight with every *wise Man*, who does not delude himself with the Hopes of an After-Repentance. Vice cannot stand the Test of such a Consideration, when brought home to our Bosoms, and pressed powerfully upon our Hearts: It flies before it, when it appears in it's full Strength: Just as *when the Sun ariseth, the Beasts of Prey get them away, and lay them down in their Dens*. It may be then easily seen, how a

Man with all his Knowledge may go astray, if he does not seriously consider Piety as an essential Ingredient of Happiness; and that too, at the very Time that he is proceeding to Action. Those *Truths*, and those *only*, will be constantly *present* to the Mind, with which we are warmly affected; just as we choose to have those *Persons about* us, whom we cordially *love*. If then we are more warmly affected with something else than with religious Truths; they will be often absent, or out of the Mind: And, since nothing can act where it is not; the Truths, which are not present to the Mind upon the emergent Occasion, will have then no more Effect, than if they had been never there at all.

From hence then it comes to pass, that Men of a sound Judgment in other Things, great Masters of Reason, are yet Slaves to their Passions; whereas Men of much inferior Abilities have been remarkably good. For it does not require any uncommon *Reach of Thought* or *great Discernment* to understand, that eternal Happiness is preferable to any short-lived Pleasure, the Favour of God to any worldly Views: All that is here required, is such a *Degree*

SER. VII. *of Affection*, as may keep these Truths present to the Mind, not let them slip out of it, or lie dormant in it. And, let a Man be never so dull, if he keeps his Eye fixed and intent upon that grand Point, *viz.* everlasting Bliss; he will have Light enough to direct him to Heaven. The fewer Ideas he has; the more he may attend to the most noble Idea of all, that of eternal Glory; while much brighter Men, who have Variety of Objects in View to call off their Attention, may miscarry through Supineness, Negligence, and Dissipation of Thought. He, who pursues his Journey with a determinate Steadiness, will sooner arrive at the End of it; than a Person of much greater Strength, who diverts into By-Paths in Pursuit of every thing, which strikes his Fancy. A very slender Share of Sense, with a GREAT deal of Watchfulness, Circumspection, and a pious Jealousy over ourselves, will go much further; than all the habitual Knowledge in the World without an actual Application of what we do know. The last is but the Wisdom of the Head: One Grain of the Wisdom of the Heart is worth it all. A vigorous and awakened Attention

Attention to our religious Notices of ^{SER. VII.} Things, such an undisturbed Presence of Mind, as to have all our good Thoughts about us in the very Article of Action, when any Temptation offers, is, in our Christian Warfare; what an undisturbed Presence of Mind in the very Article of Danger is to a General, in another Kind of Warfare: It shall be of more Service to him, than a thousand notional Theories and refined Instructions about the Art of War without it. In a Word, it is in every Man's Power to be remiss and negligent; or to be attentive and considerate; to dwell upon Religion, Heaven, and Hell, often and long; or to dismiss those Subjects, and shut out the Consideration of them. According as we do the one or the other; not according as our Abilities are great or small; we shall become good or bad Men. It is not want of Abilities, it is want of serious Consideration, that is the Inlet to every Vice. The Things above are like the Stars, which, however great in themselves, shine upon us, by Reason of their Distance, with a feeble Light and diminished Glory: But Consideration is a Telescope, which brings them home to us, gives them their proper

SER. VII  Dimensions and just Magnitude, and makes us consider, how little and despicable this Earth is, to which our Affections are attached, in Comparison of those numerous, great, and splendid Objects, which are above.

Men of superior Vivacity and Wit, when they take a wrong Turn, are generally worse than other Men : Because *Wit*, consisting in a lively Representation of Ideas assembled together, gives every sensible Object those *heightening Touches*, and that *striking Imagery*, which is unknown to Men of *slower* Apprehensions : Wit being to sensible Objects, what Light is to Bodies ; It does not merely shew them as they are in *themselves* : It gives an *adventitious Colour*, which is *not* a *Property inherent* in them : It *lends* them Beauties which are *not* their own. It does not barely *exhibit* Things to *View*, it *brightens* and *sheds* a *Lustre* on what it exhibits. Their Imagination is a *splendid Liar*, far more apt to impose upon us, than a dull flat Falsifier. In a Word, a fine Imagination may be necessary to *raise* the Passions, either in ourselves or others ; but there is Need of a well-

well-poised Judgment to allay and moderate them. SER. VII.

To this may be added, that there is sometimes a certain Self-Confidence and Self-Sufficiency in Men of great Quickness and Penetration; and when this is the Case, they seldom fail to betray their own Weakness, by depending too much upon their own Strength. Whereas Men of a plain Understanding may have a certain Diffidence of themselves, which is the best Guard and Preservative against any fatal Miscarriages.

When there is a *wicked Heart*, a *good Head* only plunges Men the *deeper* in *Error* and *Vice*: Because such Men set their Faculties upon the Stretch, and therefore find out a thousand Colourings and Evasions, which escape Men less inventive and refining. There is nothing so *absurd*, but that Man may *maintain*; nothing so *wicked*, but that Man may *do*; who has provoked *God*, through an overweening *Conceit* of himself, to leave *him* to *himself*. And this is perhaps the most satisfactory Account, how it comes to pass, that Men, who do not want for Understanding in other Matters, think and act so unaccountably

SEr. VII. ably in religious Affairs. The only Wisdom they want, is that, without which all other Wisdom is but Folly, a Wisdom unto Salvation.

How far this is a just Solution of the Difficulty, must be left to others to determine: Sure I am, that it is more rational than *another* Hypothesis, the Patrons of which boldly cut the Knot, instead of untying it, and assert that no Man ever acted upon Principle. That is, a Man shall know (for he, who has right Principles, certainly does know) that Vice is productive of Misery, and Virtue of Happiness: Yet, at the Instant he knows this, shall prefer Vice before Virtue, *i. e.* Misery before Happiness, or shall will Misery as such. However absurd this Notion is, yet it is a Maxim among them, that Virtue would be nothing, if it were not supported by Vanity, Self-Interest, &c. Though, why it should be a Maxim among them, another Maxim of a favourite Writer of theirs gives the best Account, *viz. that it is with certain good Qualities, as it is with the Senses: Those who have them not, not only cannot discern them in other People, but cannot apprehend there should be any such Thing.*

Thing. But is Virtue then only a Phantom SER. VII.
 or Apparition, which is often talked of,
 but seldom or never seen? Is it not Reason
 or Truth put in Practice? And cannot Man,
 who is a *reasonable* Creature, *act* reason-
 ably? Yes surely; or else it would follow,
 that God has given us a Principle, which
 we cannot exert, which is of no Use to
 us: A Supposition highly derogatory to his
 Honour, who has done nothing in vain.
 Whoever then affirms, that all our Actions
 are to be resolved into a Principle of Van-
 ity, Self-Interest, &c. must either maintain
 that a reasonable Creature *cannot* act *reason-*
ably or virtuously; or he must maintain,
 that *no* Man ever did *do*, what *every* Man
 both *can do*, and is *convinced* he *ought*
 to do.

To examine more particularly those fi-
 nister Motives, to which they would trace
 up our Actions, independently of our Opinions
 and Persuasions: The first of which is Va-
 nity. And it is very remarkable, that a
 Nation most distinguished for Vanity has
 produced those Writers, who have resolved
 all our shining Actions into that Principle.
 But, though *single* good Actions may, and
 often do, proceed from a Principle of Va-
 nity;

SER. VII. nity ; yet a continued *Course* of them must have for its Basis a fixed and determined Principle of Virtue. For, if so fantastick a Principle as Vanity could be the Source of a regular uniform Practice of Goodness ; then, where-ever Vanity was equally predominant, it would operate with equal Steadiness ; it would not break out into transient occasional Acts, but produce a standing and settled Habit of acting well ; which is contrary to Experience.

A second Motive, which they assign, is an Inclination to Pleasure. To which I answer, it is not Pleasure, as *such*, exclusive of our *Persuasions*, which puts Men upon Action : It is Pleasure *authorised* by a *Persuasion* and *Opinion*, that it is *not dangerous* so to do, or that the Good, which is in it, will *over-balance* the Ill : Which is plain from this : That no Man, however keen his Appetite might be, would taste the most delicious Viands, the Consequence of which he apprehended would be immediate Death. And, though several, through habitual Intemperance, *eat and drink their own Damnation* ; yet it is not, because they are prompted to it by Pleasure in direct *Contradiction* to their fixed Principles

ciples and Persuasion ; but *because it is their* SER. VII.
fixed Principle and Persuasion, however
delusive, that they shall avert the Danger
of Damnation by a Repentance some Time
or other.

A third Motive, which they pretend
sets Men at work independently of their
Principles, is their predominant Temper
and Complexion. Now, in Disproof of this,
it is obvious to observe, that even Men of
the most choleric and haughty Tempers,
never discharge their Choler, or express
their Haughtiness, against those, upon
whom all their future Expectations in Life
depend. What is it that lays a Restraint
upon these Men, but *prudential* Notions
and Considerations? And *religious* Notions,
far more weighty in themselves, if they were
present to their Mind in their full Force,
without any Subterfuges in Reserve, would
be at least as great a Check as the other.

I wave a fourth Motive, that of Self-
Interest ; because it is too plain to admit
of a Dispute, that Men have often acted
without any mercenary and foreign Re-
gards.

It is alledged further, in Defence of this
Hypothesis, that several Atheistical Philo-
sophers

SER. VII.

fophers have, notwithstanding the Badness of their Principles, been good moral Men ; as on the other hand several very orthodox Christians have led immoral Lives. As to the former. Not to mention, that a Regard to Decency and Reputation will be always a considerable Restraint upon Men of a liberal Education ; that a certain *Delicacy* and *Elegance* of Thinking goes, more or less, along with it, which gives a *Disrelish* for *coarse, sordid* and *brutal* Indulgences ; let it be considered, that Men, generally speaking, have seldom *more* than *one* strong *predominant* Vice ; that the only decisive Test of Goodness consists not in abstaining from Sins, for which we have no Relish, but in sacrificing that predominant Sin, whatever it be, to the Love of Virtue. Now Men, that have sequestered themselves from the World, to meditate in Solitude and Retirement, have no strong Biass to Intemperance, Sensuality and Dishonesty ; Vices, that are inconsistent with a Life devoted to Study. The Sins that *easily* beset them, are a splenetic Pride, Discontent, a Spirit of Opposition, and a Desire to be distinguished by the Singularity of their Notions. And it is as hard for them to get the better of
this

this inordinate Desire of Distinction ; as it ^{SER. VII.} is for Men long practised in the World to conquer their Love of Pleasure, Honour or Riches. Yet, by gratifying this dry, joyless, uncomfortable Pride, they shall do more Disservice to the World ; than the most abandoned Voluptuary by a Life spent in the mad Sallies of Intemperance. They shall lead the Lives of *Hermits*, that others, without Remorse of Conscience, may spend theirs in *Debauchery* : They shall teach People to be wicked upon Principle, which is the most incurable Kind of Wickedness. The Moon, that glides along in Silence with a pale, serene and sober Light ; yet is the Cause of all the working and swelling of the Deep, is a proper Emblem of these Men, who, at the same Time, that they seem to be unconcerned Spectators without mixing with the World ; are yet the great Occasions, by the Principles which they propagate, of the Disorder and Vice, which prevails in it.

As for the second Instance brought to prove, that Men never act upon Principle *viz.* of Christians, found in their Principles, yet leading immoral Lives ; I shall answer one Paradox by another, *viz.* that no Man, whether

SER. VII. whether Christian or Heathen, however he might act contrary to his present *Profession*, did ever act contrary to his present *Persuasion* or *Principle* of Acting. For can a Man *choose* that, which he is *persuaded* is uneligible? Here then the Difficulty lyes. It is plain on the one Side, that Good, either real or apparent, is the sole Object of our Love, that we cannot will Evil, as Evil; yet, on the other Side, we know, Lust, Malice, &c. to be Evils. It is certain, the Understanding does judge these to be Vices; and it is as certain the Will must follow the last Judgment of the Understanding. To take off the Force of this Objection, we must distinguish between our *general habitual* Notices of Good and Evil, which are the Product of a Mind at Ease, in the full undisturbed Possession of itself, when it is a still calm Mirrour, that gives true and impartial Images of Things; and the *particular actual* Judgments we make just upon the Point of Action, when perhaps Passion has got the Ascendant, the confused Sensations of a Dream, which vanish, when a Man awakes or comes to himself, to a serious, cool and recollected State of Mind.

When

When a Man then acts contrary to his standing general Persuasion; Things, it may be, appear to him in a different Light, at that Crisis, from what they do at other Times, through the Prevalency of some Passion: Not that the Passions, however violent, intirely bereave the Soul of *all* Sense of Right and Wrong: No, they leave a *confused* and *indistinēt* Sense of them, which is of little or no Service. For our Knowledge keeps Pace with our Ideas, and our Practice with our Knowledge: If therefore the Idea of an *Injury* just received be *fresh, lively* and *strong*, but the Idea of our *Duty*, at that Juncture, *faint, dim* and *indistinēt*; the Consequence is, I suppose, very obvious. Passion comes upon a Person, *like an armed Man*, and breaks through all the Bonds of Decency, Reason and Religion; just as, in the Scripture Language, *a Thread of Tow is snapped asunder, when it toucheth the Fire*: It precipitates him to Revenge, *as the Horse rushes to the Battle*, without considering the Consequences. That he ought to revenge himself, was not perhaps his Judgment some Hours ago; nor may it be some Hours hence; but it is his Determination at present, and according to

that he acts. It is plain, there is a Difference between his *general* Sentiments and Principles, and his present *actual* Persuasion; because he condemns in his *cooler* Hours, what he did in the *Heat* and *Ferment* of his Blood, when a violent Passion, like a boisterous Wind, put out the Light, that should *guide his Feet in the Way of Peace*. The Passions in general, when they are uppermost, give a wrong Tincture to, and discolour the genuine Evidence of Things. Observe a Man under a deep and rivetted Affliction of Mind: While the settled Gloom of Melancholy lasts; as if the World *without* were, what some have maintained, a chimerical *Scene within*; the *black* Ideas *within* shall darken the Face of Nature, and represent every Thing *black about* him. The Sun, which *rises on the evil and the good*, shines not to *him alone*; it has no lustre, the *Spring no Verdure* for him: All, All, is one universal Blank. Whatever Beams of Comfort you attempt to let in upon him, his *dark Mind*, which *refuses to be comforted*, *stifles* them all; just as *black Bodies absorb and suffocate* all the Rays of Light. All violent Affections have the same Effect: It is their Nature

to be never in the Wrong; they justify themselves, and misrepresent every Thing else. SER. VII.

Every Man, like the Prophet *Jonah*, for the Time that he is angry, thinks he *does well to be angry*. And so in every other Case, when he is passionately affected to any Thing, he *occasionally* judges it right to be so; though he did not think so in his cooler Hours before, nor may think so afterwards, when the Temptation is withdrawn.

It is a good Rule therefore, which *Cartesius* lays down for the Conduct of the Passions, *viz.* that a Man should forearm himself with this settled Persuasion, that, during the Commotion of his Blood and Spirits, whatever is offered to his Imagination in favour of his predominant Passion, tends only to deceive his Reason. Nor must it be omitted here, that what an Excess of Passion is to some Men for a short Space of Time, a native Impetuosity of Temper is to others during the main Tenor of their Lives. They are too hasty and impatient to suspend their Judgment, till they have considered the whole of the Case. In Action as well as Theory, they see a
N 2 little,

SER. VII. little, presume a great deal, and so spring forward to a Conclusion. The same Redundancy of Fire, Spirit and Energy, which raises them above the common Level in some Things, sinks them as much beneath it in others. As Men of a *cold intrenched* Temper are most liable to Sins of Omission; Men of too great a *Fulness* of Spirits are continually precipitated into Sins of Commission.

But this is not the worst of the Case: though a boisterous Passion may be, for a while, more powerful than Reason, yet the latter, if duly exerted, will, in Process of Time, weaken and reduce it's exorbitant Power: Just as, though Men in a Delirium and Frenzy may be stronger than those in their sober Senses, yet the latter seldom fail of subduing and binding the former. The Misfortune is, some, who are not unapprized of their Duty, go on in a calm Course of sinning, with a full Command over themselves. When these, who are hurried away by no violent Impulse, act contrary to their settled Principles, their Case is this:

Though they know the Nature of *Virtue* and *Vice* in general, they know not *themselves*; they are either ignorant, that they

they are guilty of a Breach of their Duty, for want of examining into the Springs of their Actions; or they explain their Duty away.

For Men's Heads are fruitful of Evasions to reconcile their Duty and their Interest, when they come in Competition: and Arguments, such as they are, are never wanting to make that appear *reasonable*, which is *agreeable* or *profitable* to us; except where the Case is very *glaring* and *notorious*. He, that earnestly *wishes* that a Thing *was* lawful, has *half consented*, that it *is* so. Dishonesty has already crept into his *Heart*, and the Transition from thence to the *Head* is very quick and sudden. Injudicious Observers hastily conclude, that such a Man only puts on the Appearance of Religion to deceive the World, and is no better than an Atheist in Disguise: But those who understand the various Windings and Turnings of Self-love and the Deceitfulness of Sin, know there are several Salvos, by which Men quiet their own Consciences, and deceive themselves. " Things were
" so circumstanced, that what is a Sin in
" general, was not so to them, in this par-
" ticular Case, all Things considered. The
" good Consequences, they apprehend or

SER. VII. “ rather flatter themselves, will over-balance the Bad : and therefore they did, what appeared to them best upon the whole.”

I question, whether Men are so often guilty of Dishonesty in their Dealings between *Man and Man*, as they are of an *inward* Dishonesty and unfair Dealing in their Intercourse with *themselves*. They are very artful in palliating their Vices and casting in Shades the Deformity of them. Vices, however the same in *general* and in the *gross*, are yet diversified, as to some *Particulars*, in each Individual. And, because their Vice has not the same Symptoms, nor is so strongly marked, as that of another Man; they, through Self-partiality, are apt to conclude it to be no Vice at all. We are oftner deceived by our Affections, the greatest Sophisters of all, than by any other Sophistry whatsoever. A Man may know Pride in *general* to be a Vice, and yet be ignorant *he* is proud : Because to consider the Nature of Pride and Humility in *general* does not at all *alarm* the Passions : It is *so far* mere *speculative* Knowledge, till we *apply*, what we know in *general*, to ourselves in *particular*. To form
clear

clear and distinct Notions of *Virtue* and *Vice* in general is an easy Matter : But to have clear and distinct Notions of ourselves, whether we are guilty of *such a Vice* or endowed with *such a Virtue*, is a Work of some Difficulty : Because, as to the former Case, there are *no Passions* to obstruct or clog the Mind in the Pursuit of *such Truths* any more, than any other *abstract* and *uninteresting* Truth ; but, in the latter Case, when we would bring Things home to our own Bosom, our *Self-love* is immediately up in Arms, and *darkens* Things *faster*, than our *Reason* can *clear* them up. Hence our *Pride*, whatever that of others be, is a Greatness of Spirit, Elevation of Soul, and a just Sense of our Worth ; our *Covetousness* is Frugality. Vice always puts on some advantageous Dress ; and appears in some specious Disguise to endear itself to our Choice. We see scarce *any* Thing, as it is, in a full and just Light, in *this* World ; and *ourselves* least of all : It is reserved for another World, that Vice, like *Destruction*, should have no Covering, and Virtue, like it's great Author, appear in perfect Beauty. Add to this, that, what is the Cause of most Errors in Speculation, is so likewise

SER. VII in Matters of Practice, *viz.* that many are *Half-thinkers*: They do not consider Things *thoroughout*: They do not give Reason it's *due Extent* and *general Influence* over their Actions. They take *Reason* for their Guide to such a *Point* or *so far*—and then *Custom* and the received *Practice* of the *World* usurp it's Place. Otherwise, it would be impossible, that Men of a serious religious Turn, in most Points, should act so irrationally, as they do in others, particularly as to the reigning Vices of Conversation. The Truth is, Men seldom *reason* about Things *common* and *familiar* and what occurs *every Day*: What is uncommon, indeed, strikes more forcibly upon them, engages their Attention, and puts them upon Thinking.

But if our Vices will admit of no flattering Disguise, there is still another Resource left, there is an After-game to play, we think of securing our Salvation by a future Repentance. This is the Case of *deliberate, determined, presumptuous Sinners*; Men, who *wilfully step aside out* of the Path of Innocence and Virtue, upon a *Presumption* of being able to *return into it* again, after they have compassed such a Situation in Life. But alas! *Vestigia pauca retrorsum.*

Thus

Thus have I shewn how Men come to act contrary to their *standing* Persuasion, and Principles: For they never act contrary to their *present* Persuasion: No, not even in the last Case. For these Men do not will Evil, as Evil; but think they have found out an artful Expedient to *enjoy* all the *Good* that is in any Object, and yet *fence off* all the *Evil* by a timely Repentance. This is their Persuasion, however erroneous.

It does not follow, however, from what is here laid down, that Men do not act upon settled religious Principles, or that such Principles are useless. For even, where some irregular Passion is predominant, they are very far from being so. They will make a Man even then, like *Herod*, do *many* things in Conformity to them, though not *every* thing, that is necessary to Salvation. And, though they are not *strong enough* to *reinstate* Religion intirely on the *Throne*; they shall not be *so weak* either, but they shall make Vice *uneasy* in it's *usurped Sovereignty*. They will be a considerable Check upon him, till they are erased. Thus a Man, who is guilty of some base and unmanly Compliances for the Sake of Preferment, would perhaps reject with

SER. VII. with Horrour any Proposal, that was visibly destructive of the Constitution; nor would he, whatever advantageous Overtures were made him, be induced to deny his Saviour, or write against Christianity. A Person who, in some little Matters, overreaches his Neighbour, would be alarmed at the Thought of adding Perjury to his Fraud, and murdering him in cold Blood: And so in several Instances. A resolved, sober and considerate Wickedness, which is founded upon bad Principles, is far more dreadful; than all the Irregularities and short-lived Excesses, into which a Man not unacquainted with the wisest Reasons for Virtue and the strongest Motives to it may be sometimes betrayed. For Vice cannot make any considerable Progress and go it's utmost Lengths, as long as good Principles are a continual Clog to it. But, when these are removed out of the Way, it would take Possession of the Soul without any Rival or Competitor to control it. Bad as the World is, it would then be infinitely worse; it would be filled with, the worst Kind of Brutes, a Set of rational Brutes, who made no other Use of their Reason, but to compass whatever their Hearts were set upon, by such refined Arts of Treachery as evade the Penalties of the

Laws: It would be a Wilderness, where scarce SER. VII. any Traces of any Thing that is human appeared; but almost every Thing was savage, wild and horrid: It would be a perfect Hell upon Earth, if all Apprehensions of a Hell to come were removed. In a Word, though religious Persuasions have not *all* the Effect they should have upon Men of habitual inordinate Affections; yet still *some* they will have, till they are intirely defaced: They will be, what a *virtuous* and *disinterested Minority* is in a divided Commonwealth, that of *Greece* or *Rome* for Instance: Though they cannot prevent some Measures from being carried, that are in a *less* Degree bad, yet they may be instrumental in defeating such as are *enormously* so: They will always make them uneasy by their Remonstrances, till they are crushed.

But if Principles have some Hold even upon those that are under the Dominion of Vice, it is needless to observe, what Influence they must have upon the Good; a determined and steady Course of Goodness must be resolved into Principles as determinate and steady.

Having thus pointed out the Causes why Men act contrary to Conviction, I shall
 now

SER. VII. now proceed to my second general Head, *viz.* to apply Remedies.

The grand Point is, how we shall engage the Affections on the Side of Religion. For till that is done, the Wheels will drive heavily on: And, when that is once compassed, every thing else is, in a Manner, superfluous: Now how is it that we become enamoured of any thing else? Half of our Affections are owing to an *arbitrary* Association of Ideas: And it would be very strange, that we should be incapable of a Passion for those Objects, where there is a *just* Connexion of Ideas, where the Idea of Happiness is *justly* connected with the Object.

There is scarce any thing, however un-affecting in itself, that some Men, one scarce well knows how, have not contracted a Passion, nay, a *reigning* Passion too for, (a *philosophical, political, or religious* Tenet for *Instance* of little or no Importance) till at last they comprize all Excellencies in it, and for the Sake of it disparage every thing else. This is matter of Fact. We see Instances of it frequently. Whatever they are talking, whatever they are writing upon, it is generally uppermost. They are for dismissing

missing all other Ideas, however important, as so many troublesome Intruders, that they may give themselves wholly to this peculiar Favourite. By fixing their Thoughts long and often upon it; they imagine they see in it, some endearing Charms, which escape every indifferent Person. They have associated the Idea of Worth and Valuableness so closely with it, that they cannot disjoin them. It is after some such Manner, that we must beget in ourselves a Love for Religion. However reluctant we may be at first; yet, by often musing upon it, the Fire will kindle for it. It is not the *mere View* of any Good, no not even a *sensible* Good, that will *interest* our Passions, and closely attach them to it. When any sensible Object presents itself to View, the Mind might still retain an Indifferency for it; if it did not suffer the Imagination to *dwell* upon it, till it took Fire, and by Degrees *shut out every* Idea that made *against* it, retaining only those that were *for* it. A *slight, transient, occasional* View may produce a *wish* for any Good; and so it will do for the greatest Good: But there must be several *deliberate Views* and *Reviews* to raise such an *animated and effectual Desire* for it, as shall be a Counterpoise to

to all Temptation. It is the *Presence* of *Notions* that gives them their Power: For those *Notions*, that we are constantly *conversant* about, like those *Persons* that are *continually with us*, will in some Measure gain the *Ascendant* over us, and *influence* our Lives and Actions. Every Man must judge of himself, whether he takes a competent Care or no by the Disposition he finds himself in. If a Man finds, that instead of gaining Ground over his Vices, they gain Ground over him, if he cannot withstand *common* and *ordinary* Temptations; he may take it for granted, he does not think often and long enough upon religious Subjects so as to allow them their due Weight, and give them their due Force. He has not recourse often enough to Reading, Meditation, Prayer, and Recollection; he *abhors* perhaps *all manner of spiritual Meat*, and therefore *his Soul is hard at Death's Door*. We must then season our Minds with religious Impressions; till they leave lasting and indelible Traces behind them, till they become so familiar, habitual, and natural to us; that we may as easily have recourse to these religious Counsellors within upon all Emergencies; as we can to a faithful
judicious

judicious Friend, whom we have received SER. VII.
 into our House, and lodged in our Bosom.


It is not enough to have a general Knowledge of our Duty repositèd in our Minds: No, we must have our Thoughts about us, like well disciplined Forces, ready at a Moment's Warning upon any sudden Invasion. We must not be contented to have Oil laid up in our Vessels: No; according to our Saviour's significant Expression, we must have our *Lamp* always *burning by us*; that *Lamp*, which is to be a *Light unto our Paths*. We must inure ourselves to a recollected Way of Thinking. We must accustom ourselves to such Soliloquies as these. "It is through God, that
 "I have *been bolden up ever since I was*
 "born. It is no more in my Power to exist
 "an *Hour, a Moment, of myself independ-*
 "dently of my Maker; than it was in my
 "Power to exist of *myself from all Eter-*
 "nity. The *Current* of my Being would
 "be immediately *dried up*, if it were not
 "fed by continual *Supplies* from him, with
 "whom is the *Well and Fountain* of Life.
 "This *Moment* I should relapse into *no-*
 "thing, and sink into utter Extinction of
 "Being; if he did not *uphold* me: And can
 "I then,

SER. VII. “ I then, *this very Moment*, sin *against*
 “ *him*, by *whom* I am upheld, and *act* in
 “ *direct Opposition* to *his Will* and Plea-
 “ *sure*, to whom I am indebted, that I
 “ *can act at all?*”

Farther, the Law of God will never be uppermost in our Hearts, till we contract a *Relish* for it. And a *Relish* for *Virtue* is to be acquired just as it is for certain *Kinds of Food*, which were at first distasteful and offensive. It is by using ourselves to them, till the first *Aversion* wears off, and a *Liking* for them succeeds in it's Room. By a *Custom* of doing good *Actions*, we shall learn an *easy Manner* of doing them; and an *easy Manner* of doing them will ripen into a *Love* for them, till we *hunger and thirst after Righteousness*; that is, we shall be uneasy, as we always are, in the *Discontinuance* of those *Actions*, to which we have been long habituated.

But whatever we do, we must do quickly. We must not put off Things to the very last, upon a vain *Presumption* of being able to repent whenever we please. *Youth* and *Manhood*, not advanced *Age*, are the proper *Stages of Life* for rectifying any wrong *Bent of Temper*. If our *Reason*,

son, that *Sun*, which God has lighted up, does not *dispel* the *Mists* and *Fogs* of Vice before the *Noon* of Life; it is generally *overcast* for the *whole Day*. Nay, those very Vices, the Practice of which require Vigour, and Strength of Constitution, do not so properly *forsake* us in old Age, as they retire from the *outward Acts* into the *Fancy*: Of which we have a remarkable Instance in a *Roman Emperor*, who, though very wicked in his younger Days, became a Monster of Vice in the Decline of Life, and repaired to *Capreæ* to be a Spectator of those Scenes of Wickedness, in which he could no longer be an Actor. The *Vice* is not so properly changed, as the *Seat* of it, which is now the *Imagination*, into which it retreats, as into a *Citadel*, when no longer able to *sally forth* or *take the Field* for want of sufficient *Forces*. However that be; when we love any Thing beyond the Proportion of real Good that is in it, the Inclination must have imposed upon the Judgment, by painting it beyond the Life. We annex to it some *additional* advantageous Ideas, that do not properly belong to it: By viewing it long and often in that false Light we rivet those Ideas to-

SER. VII.  together with it however independent; so that they become inseparable. Thus the Miser has so closely associated the Ideas of Happiness and Money, that he cannot part or keep them asunder even when near the concluding Scene of his Life; and at the same Time, that he grows more *indifferent to every Person in the World*, he becomes more strongly attached to the *Things* of it. This seems to be the Case of inveterate Habits. When Vices of a *deeper Dye* have once penetrated into the Substance, and given a *thorough Tincture* to the Soul; it seldom *recovers* its native and *unsullied Purity*: It seldom becomes *white as Wool*, when it's Sins have been *red as Scarlet*.

Let them then, that are as yet untainted with bad Impressions, endeavour to retain that Innocence and Virtue, for which nothing can give them an Equivalent. There is a Charm in the genuine uncorrupted Purity of a virtuous Life, which is far more amiable in the Sight of God, and indeed of every rational Being; than all the Acquisitions of Fortune, Honour, or even Knowledge. It puts one in Mind of the pure, unspotted, Whiteness of the Lily, which outshone all the artificial Hues and dazling

dazzling Splendor of Solomon arrayed in ^{SER. VII.}
all his Glory. But if we have formed any
bad Habits ; let us retreat betimes, and not
delay our Repentance to a Season of Life
not very apt to learn, and much less apt to
unlearn.



SERMON VIII.

The Case of Diversions stated, and
the Necessity of an early Applica-
tion to Wisdom shewn.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of
OXFORD, *March 2, 1739-40.*

PROVERBS XVIII. I.

*Through Desire, a Man having separated
himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with
Wisdom.*

DULL and insipid is every Perform-^{SER. VIII.}
ance, where Inclination bears no
Part: But a strong Desire to do
our Duty overcomes the Difficulties that
lye in the Way to the doing of it, and the
very *Labour of Love* is a Pleasure. The
Heart will set every Engine at work, when

SER. VIII *it is thoroughly engaged on the Side of Knowledge. No social Diversion, no Pleasure will interrupt it's Pursuits; because then it will be it's greatest Pleasure to seek and intermeddle with Wisdom.*

A total *Separation*, however, from Society, and the Pleasures thereof, cannot be the Meaning of my Author, because that is contrary to the main Tenor of the Book of *Proverbs*; and, besides it is obvious to observe, that any *one* Man's Sense, however excellent, unless it mixes in *Society*, with that of *others*, always degenerates into *Singularity* and *Caprice*.

In the following Discourse I shall therefore

Ist, Attempt to shew how far social Diversions are allowable.

IIdly, Point out the Necessity of an early and close Application to Wisdom.

IIIIdly, Subjoin some Reflections connected with the Subject.

Ist Then, I am to shew how far social Diversions are allowable.

In the first Place, when there is no Reason *against* any social (or indeed any other)

Pleasure, there is always a Reason *for* it, SER.VIII.
viz. that it is a Pleasure ; just as when there is no Reason to *undergo* any Pain, there is one always, why we should *not*, *viz.* that it is a Pain. To suppose the Deity would abridge us of any Pleasure merely as such, when it does not interfere with higher and nobler Delights, is a Notion highly derogatory to his Goodness, who, in forming the World, seems, in some Things to have consulted our Pleasure only, without any other apparent End in View.

2dly, Diversions are necessary to deceive the Cares, sweeten the Toils, and smoothe the Ruggedness of Life. Man is a strange Compound of *Greatness* and *Littleness*. There is something so *great* in our Frame, that we cannot be happy without such *substantial* Pleasures, as will stand the Test of our severest Reflections : and yet withal something so *little* in our Composition, that we cannot do altogether without such innocent *Amusements*, as may take our Minds off from their Abstractions, and gently lead them into the more familiar Traces of Thought. And he, who applies himself to his Studies or any other Employment with proper Intervals of Refreshment to

recruit his Spirits, will upon the whole do more good, as he bids fairer to prolong his Life; than he, who, by too eager and uninterrupted an Application, deadens his Spirits, impairs his Health, and wears out the very Springs of Life.

Further, Diversions are necessary under any Affliction. For the first Step towards a Recovery of Happiness is to steal ourselves gradually from a Sense of our Misery: And this is to be done, not by putting or keeping our *thinking* Faculty upon the *Stretch*; but by lulling our unquiet and too active Thoughts to *rest*. And, let Men say what they will; those Hours, which are wasted away in *indulging* an idle *Sullenness* or a mooping *Melancholy*, are no less placed to our Account; than those, which fly away unperceived in unthinking *Mirth* and *Gaiety*. It is the same Thing, as to all religious Intents and Purposes, whether our Time is mispent in *Vanity*, or in Anguish and *Vexation of Spirit*.

3dly, Diversions are requisite to endear us to one another. For it is a Mistake to think, that the *solid* and *material* Services we do one another are the only Cements of social Love and Union: Because we seldom
have

have it in our Power to do them; and, besides, they are expensive to the Giver, and often uneasy to the Receiver, who would not perhaps be obliged for very liberal Gifts, to any, but him, who *giveth liberally and upbraideth not*. But to comply with Men's Tastes, as far as we innocently can, in the *little* Incidents, and *daily Occurrences* of Life, to bear a Part in their favourite *Diversions* and to adjust our Tempers to theirs, it is this, that knits Men's Hearts to one another, and lays the Foundation of Friendships. On the contrary, the Want of the little Arts to render a Man pleasing and agreeable shall do him more Differvice, than an hundred substantial and manly Accomplishments can counterbalance or repair. And the Reason is obvious. Few have perhaps Understanding to discern, or Candour to acknowledge, or Generosity to reward *superior* and *solid Merit*: But the Bulk of Mankind can easily see, be affected with, and offended at, *little Singularities* and *Incompliances* in a Man's Behaviour, which lye exactly level to their Capacities. It is an easy Matter for a Person of superior Sense to soar *above* the common Sphere: His chief Difficulty

is

SER. VIII.

is to let himself *down to* the common Level, without which all his great Knowledge will be, in *some* Measure, *useless*. It is a Sign of an undistinguishing Judgment to imagine, that every Thing, that is *small*, is also *trivial*. That is *trivial*, which is of *no Consequence* : whereas *small* Matters may be the Foundation of *great* ones, and by our Behaviour in Them we form the Mind to good Habits, as I have shewn in a former Sermon, or contract habitually bad Dispositions.

But this puts me in Mind 4thly, that Diversions are requisite to enlarge the Usefulness and Influence of a good Character.

The Man, who though *generally* intent on *great* Matters, yet can *occasionally* condescend to *little* Things, without making *himself* little, *singular* in nothing but *Goodness*, and *uncomplying* in nothing but *Vice* : The Man, who is in all Things like unto *us*, *Sin* only *excepted*, takes the most effectual Method of making us like unto *Him* in *Virtue*. Whereas a Person, who looks upon all Pleasantry as criminal, whatever *other* Duties he may practise, forgets one of the most *material* of all, that of *gaining over* others to the *Interests* of Virtue, by making it *appear* to be, what it really

is,

is, a lovely Form. It is true, that, instead ^{SER. VIII:} of paying an implicit Obedience to Custom, and blindly following a Multitude to do Evil; it is our Duty to be humble enough to follow a good Example, where it is, and yet brave enough to set one to the World, where it is not. But Singularity in Matters of *no* Moment discredits a Man's Virtues, and disqualifies him from being useful in Affairs of *Consequence*. It is natural for Persons to imitate those, whom they love: It would be therefore worth the while for the Good to endear, by little Compliances, their *Persons* to the *Affections* of Mankind, that they might recommend their *Actions* to their *Imitation*.

Our Blessed Saviour was so far from giving Religion a gloomy Appearance, that the first Miracle, which he wrought, was at a Scene of Festivity, where he *turned the Water into Wine*. And he, who gave and exemplified the *strictest Rules* of Life, gave a Sanction to the innocent *Comforts* and *Refreshments* of it. His Life was indeed the very *Beauty of Holiness*, a *faultless* Form, *finished, regular and exact*; yet softened by an *easy Sweetness* and Humility; An *unaffected* Grace, without any *forbidding*

SER. VIII. *bidding* Mien, gave a powerful and *endearing Charm* to it. When he was asked *why his Disciples fasted not*; his Answer shews, that he was far from putting, at first, *hard*, and *rigorous Duties* upon *raw* and *tender Minds*; the obvious Meaning of *not putting new Wine into old Bottles*: a Rule, which, if it had been observed by some well-meaning Reformers among us, might have prevented that religious Despair and Frenzy, of which we have seen some shocking Instances among their Followers. Religious Severities are certainly necessary in some Degree, and under proper Regulations; but an Excess of them, as we must have observed in some late Examples, however it may have *blunted* the Edge of the *sensual Appetite*, has set a much *keener* Edge on the *Spirits*, and embittered the Temper. If it has mortified the Deeds of the *Flesh*, and damped the Inclination to animal Pleasures; it has produced far more incurable Vices, *viz.* spiritual Pride, Rancour and an Uncharitableness equal, at least, to that of the Papists. The same Temper, which, in a continued *high Enjoyment* of Life, would discharge itself in sudden *Eruptions* of *Rage* and *Fury*; in too *low* and

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reduced

reduced a State of Body, settles into a last-
ing *Peevishness*, Acrimony of Spirit, and a
splenetic Disrelish of every thing in this
World, which surely is not very consist-
ent with an affectionate Love to the Maker
of it. A *Dissipation* of Thought may be
sometimes as requisite for the *over-pensive*
and thoughtful; as a *Recollection* of Thought
is for Men of quite *another* Turn. That
Retirement, that Application to Meditation
and Reading, which may be necessary to
reduce the Volatile and Airy into a sober
and composed way of Thinking; might
drive others of a melancholy Cast of Mind
into Despondency or even Despair: As the
same Diet, which would be very fit to re-
duce a pampered and over-sanguine Con-
stitution, might be prejudicial to a thin,
meagre and consumptive Person.

This Caution, however, in *general*, is
highly necessary: that we ought to *guard*
most against *that* Extreme, to which hu-
man Nature *leans* the most; which is, by
no Means, that of an *over-strict* *Applica-*
tion to *Wisdom*. For we are rather apt to
lessen, than enlarge the Bounds of our *Du-*
ty; and on the other Hand to *extend* too
far, than to shorten the Line of our *Li-*
*ber**ty*.

If

SER. VIII.

If it be asked, when we exceed the Bounds of Reason in pursuing our Diversions ; I answer, If, after having made a Party in some Entertainments, the Soul can recal her wandering Thoughts and fix them, with the same Life and Energy, as is natural to us in other Cases, upon any Subject worthy of a rational Creature ; it is plain we have not gone too far : Under these Regulations, we may be gay without Folly, and virtuous without Moroseness. But, if they leave behind them a Disrelish for, and an Indisposition to better Things ; if the Thoughts of what we have seen, heard or done intrude into our Minds, quite dissipate our Attention, and demand an Audience of the Soul ; we have acted contrary to the End of Diversions, which is to unbend, and not to enfeeble the Vigour of the Soul.

It is farther to be considered, that though certain Amusements, the little Play-things of Life, may not seem intirely foreign to a more *youthful* Age ; they certainly trifle away *this* Life with a very ill Grace, who stand just upon the Verge, of *another* : It shocks one almost as much, as to see a Man playing and dancing upon the Brink of a Precipice,

Precipice, from which he is every Moment SER. VIII. in imminent Danger of falling : — that, though some Men place their chief *Happiness* in Diversions, yet they are, in themselves, strong Proofs of human *Misery* : For, if we were happy *in* ourselves, there would be no Occasion to divert our Thoughts *from* ourselves. And which of the two is the most pitiable Object ; he, who goes to other Men's Doors to beg his *daily Bread* ; or he, who goes thither to beg his *daily Happiness*, being too poor to furnish out his own Entertainment ? He, whose Company is an insupportable Burthen to himself, is very much obliged to the good Nature and Easiness of his Companions, that it is not an insupportable Burthen to them too.

There is such a Principle of Activity in human Nature, (especially in Youth,) that there is no great Danger, we should fall into an Habit of doing just *nothing at all* : The greatest Hazard is, that we should contract an Habit of doing nothing to the *Purpose*, and of fooling away Life in an impertinent Course of Diversions. And inactive State of *Inaction* is not to be dreaded : what we are to guard against, is, that we do

SER. VIII.

do not fall into an *easy Insignificance* of Action, persevere in it, and then go *out* of the World with this melancholy Reflection, that we have scarce done one Action, for which it was worth coming *into* it: Our Lives being like a *Tale that is told*; a Tale harmless, it may be, inoffensive and far spun out, but very insipid, trifling and unmeaning, containing no useful Moral, or rational Entertainment; scarce *worth* the *mind- ing*, while the *Thread* of it was *carrying on*, ending as *poorly* as it *begun*, and *for- gotten* almost as soon as *over*.

II. But this brings me to my second Head, *viz.* the Necessity of an early and close Application to Wisdom.

It is necessary to habituate our Minds, in our younger Years, to some Employment, which may engage our Thoughts, and fill the Capacity of the Soul at a riper Age. For, however we may roam in Youth from Folly to Folly, too *volatile* for *Rest*, too *soft* and *effeminate* for *Industry*; ever ambitious to make a splendid Figure, and to *shine before Men*, but never endeavouring to *glorify our Father which is in Heaven*: Yet the Time will come, when
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we shall outgrow the Relish of *childish* SER. VIII. Amusements. And, if we are not provided with a Taste for *manly Satisfactions* to succeed in their Room, we must of course become miserable at an Age more difficult to be pleased. While Men, however unthinking and unemployed, enjoy an inexhaustible *Flow of vigorous Spirits*; a constant *Succession* of *gay Ideas*, which flutter and sport in the Brain, makes them pleased with *themselves*, and with every *Frolick as trifling as themselves*. But, when the Ferment of their Blood abates, and the *Freshness* of their Youth, *like the Morning Dew*, passes away; their Spirits flag for want of Entertainments more satisfactory in themselves, and more suited to a manly Age: And the Soul, from a *sprightly Impertinence*, from *quick Sensations*, and *florid Desires*, subsides into a *dead Calm*, and sinks into a *flat Stupidity*. The Fire of a glowing Imagination (the Property of Youth) may make Folly look pleasing, and lend a Beauty to Objects, which have none inherent in them: Just as the Sun Beams may paint a Cloud, and diversify it with beautiful Stains of Light, however dark, unsubstantial and empty in

SER. VIII.

itself. But nothing can shine with undiminished Lustre, but Religion and Knowledge, which are essentially and intrinsically bright. Take it therefore for granted, which you will find by Experience, that nothing can be *long ENTERTAINING*, but what is in some Measure *beneficial*: Because nothing else will bear a calm and sedate *Review*.

You may be fancied for a while, upon the Account of good Nature, the inseparable Attendant upon a Flush of sanguine Health, and a Fulness of youthful Spirits: But you will find, in Process of Time, that among the wise and good, *useless good Nature* is the Object of *Pity*, *ill Nature* of *Hatred*; but Nature *beautified* and *improved* by an Assemblage of *moral* and *intellectual* Endowments, is the only Object of a solid and lasting *Esteem*.

There is not a greater Inlet to Misery and Vices of all Kinds, than the not knowing how to pass our vacant Hours. For what remains to be done, when the first Part of their Lives, who are not brought up to any manual Employment, is slipt away without an acquired Relish for Reading, or Taste for other rational Satisfaction?

factions? That they should pursue their Pleasures? But, Religion apart, common Prudence will warn them to *tye up the Wheel*, as they begin to go *down the Hill* of Life. Shall they then apply themselves to their Studies? Alas! the Seed-Time of Life is already past: The enterprizing and spirited Ardour of Youth being over, without having been applied to those valuable Purposes for which it was given; all Ambition of excelling upon generous and laudable Schemes quite stagnates. If they have not some poor Expedient to *deceive the Time*, or, to speak more properly, to *deceive themselves*; the Length of a *Day* will seem tedious to them, who perhaps have the Unreasonableness to complain of the Shortness of *Life* in general. When the former Part of our Life has been nothing but *Vanity*, the latter End of it can be nothing but *Vexation*. In short we must be miserable, without some Employment to *fix*, or some Amusement to *dissipate* our Thoughts: The latter we cannot command in all Places, nor relish at all Times; and therefore there is an absolute Necessity for the former. We may pursue this or that *new Pleasure*; we may be

SER. VIII. } fond for a while of a *new* Acquisition :
 But when the Graces of Novelty are worn off, and the Briskness of our first Desire is over, the Transition is very quick and sudden, from an eager Fondness to a cool Indifference. Hence there is a restless Agitation in our Minds, still craving something new, still unsatisfied with it, when possessed ; till *Melancholy encreases*, as we *advance* in Years, like *Shadows lengthening* towards the *Close* of Day.

Hence it is, that Men of this Stamp are continually complaining, that the Times are altered for the worse : Because the Sprightliness of their Youth represented every Thing in the most engaging Light ; and when Men are in high good Humour with *themselves*, they are apt to be so with *all* around : The Face of Nature brightens up, and the Sun shines with a more agreeable Lustre. But when old Age has cut them off from the Enjoyment of false Pleasures, and habitual Vice has given them a Distaste for the only true and lasting Delights ; when a Retrospect of their past Lives presents nothing to View but one wide Track of uncultivated Ground ; a Soul distempered with Spleen, Remorse
 2 and

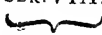
and an Insensibility of each rational Satisfaction, darkens and discolours every Object; and the Change is not in the Times, but in them, who have been forsaken by those Gratifications, which they would not forsake. SER. VIII.

How much otherwise is it with those, who have laid up an inexhaustible Fund of Knowledge! When a Man has been laying out that Time in the Pursuit of some great and important Truth, which others waste in a Circle of gay Follies; he is conscious of having acted up to the Dignity of his Nature; and from that Consciousness there results that serene Complacency, which, though not so violent, is much preferable to the Pleasures of the animal Life. He can travel on from Strength to Strength: For, in Literature as in War, each new Conquest, which he gains, impowers him to push his Conquests still farther, and to enlarge the Empire of Reason. Thus he is ever in a progressive State, still making new Acquirements, still animated with Hopes of future Discoveries.

Some may alledge, in Bar to what I have said, and as an Excuse for their Indo-

SER. VIII. lence, the Want of proper Talents to make any Progress in Learning. To which I answer, that few Stations require uncommon Abilities to discharge them well; for the ordinary Offices of Life, that Share of Apprehension, which falls to the Bulk of Mankind; provided we improve it, will serve well enough. Bright and sparkling Parts are like *Diamonds*, which may adorn the Proprietor, but are not necessary for the Good of the World: Whereas common Sense is like *current Coin*; we have, every Day, in the ordinary Occurrences of Life, Occasion for it: And if we would but call it into Action, it would carry us much greater Lengths than we seem to be aware of. Men may extol, as much as they please, fine, exalted and superior Sense: Yet common Sense, if attended with Humility and Industry, is the best Guide to beneficial Truth, and the best Preservative against any fatal Errors in Knowledge, and notorious Misconducts in Life. For none are, in the Nature of the Thing, more liable to *Error*, than those who have a Dislike for *plain sober Sense* and dry *Reasoning*; which yet is the Case of those, whose *warm* and elevated *Imagination*,

whose *uncommon Fire* and *Vivacity* makes SER. VIII. them in love with nothing, but what is *striking, marvellous, and dazzling*. For great Wits, like great Beauties, look upon mere *Esteem* as a *flat insipid Thing*; nothing less than *Admiration* will content them. To gain the Good-Will of Mankind by being useful to them, is, in their Opinion, a poor low groveling Aim: Their Ambition is to draw the Eyes of the World upon them by dazzling and surprizing them; a Temper which draws them off from the Love of Truth, and consequently subjects them to gross Mistakes. For they will not love Truth as *such*; they will love it only, when it happens to be *surprising* and *uncommon*, which few *important* Truths are: The Love of *Novelty* will be the predominant Passion; that of *Truth* will only influence them, when it does *not interfere* with it. Perhaps nothing sooner misleads Men out of the Road of Truth, than to have the wild dancing Light of a bright Imagination playing before them. Perhaps they have too much Life and Spirit to have Patience enough to go to the Bottom of a Subject, and trace up every Argument, through a long tedious Process,

SER. VIII.  to it's Original. Perhaps they have that Delicacy of Make, which fits them for a swift and speedy Race; but does not enable them to carry a great Weight, or to go through any long Journey. Whereas Men of fewer Ideas, who lay them in Order, compare, and examine them, and go on, Step by Step, in a gradual Chain of Thinking; make up by Industry and Caution, what they want in Quickness of Apprehension. Be not discouraged, if you do not meet with Success at first. Observe, (for it lies within the Compass of any Man's Observation) that he, who has been long habituated to one Kind of Knowledge, is utterly at a Loss in another, to which he is unaccustomed; till, by repeated Efforts, he finds a progressive Opening of his Faculties: And then he wonders, how he could be so long in finding out a Connexion of Ideas, which, to a *practised* Understanding, is very obvious. But by neglecting to *use* your Faculties, you will, in Time, lose the very *Power* of using them: According to that of our blessed Saviour, *from him that hath not any additional Improvement, shall be taken away even that which he hath, the original Talent intrusted to him.* Others

Others there are, who plead an Exemption from Study, because their Fortune makes them independent of the World, and they need not be beholden to it for a Maintenance. That is, because their Situation in Life exempts them from the Necessity of spending their Time in *servile* Offices and Hardships; therefore they may dispose of it, just as they *please*: It is to imagine, because God has impowered them to single out the *best* Means of employing their Hours, *viz.* in Reading, Meditation, in the highest Instances of Piety and Charity; therefore they may throw them away in a Round of *Impertinence, Vanity, and Folly.* The Apostle's Rule, that, *if any Man will not work, neither should he eat*; extends to the Rich, as well as Poor; only supposing, that there are different *Kinds* of Work assigned to each. The Reason is the same in both Cases, *viz.* that he, who will *do no Good*, ought not to *receive or enjoy any.* As we all are *joint* Traders and *Partners* in Life, he forfeits his Right to any Share in the *common Stock* of Happiness, who does not endeavour to contribute his *Quota* or allotted Part to it: The publick Happiness being nothing, but the Sum
total

total of each Individual's Contribution to it. An easy Fortune does not set Men free from Labour and Industry in *general*; it only exempts them from some *particular* Kinds of Labour. It is not a Blessing, as it gives them Liberty to do *nothing at all*; but as it gives them Liberty wisely to chuse and steadily to prosecute the *most ennobling* Exercises, and the most *improving* Employments, the Pursuit of Truth, the Practice of Virtue, the Service of that God, *who giveth them all Things richly to enjoy*, in short the doing and being every Thing that is *commendable*: though nothing *merely* in Order to be *commended*. That Time, which others must employ in tilling the Ground (which often deceives their Expectation) with the Sweat of their Brow, they may lay out in cultivating the Mind, a Soil always grateful to the Care of the Tiller. The Sum of what I would say is this: That, though you are not confined to any *particular* Calling, yet you have a *general* one: Which is to watch over your Heart, and to improve your Head; to make yourself Master of all those Accomplishments, *viz.* an enlarged Compass of Thought, that flowing Humanity, and Generosity,

Generosity, which are necessary to become SER. VIII. a great Fortune ; and of all those Perfections, *viz.* Moderation, Humility, and Temperance, which are necessary to bear a small one patiently ; but especially it is your Duty to acquire a Taste for those Pleasures, which, after they are tasted, go off agreeably, and leave behind them a grateful and delightful Flavour on the Mind.

Happy that Man, who, unembarrassed by vulgar Care, Master of himself, his Time and Fortune, spends his *Time* in making *himself wiser* ; and his *Fortune* in making *others* (and therefore himself) *happier* : Who, as the Will and Understanding are the two *ennobling* Faculties of the Soul, thinks himself not complete, till his *Understanding* be beautified with the valuable Furniture of *Knowledge* ; as well as his *Will* enriched with every *Virtue* : Who has furnished himself with all the Advantages to relish Solitude, and enliven Conversation ; when serious, not sullen ; and when chearful, not indiscreetly gay ; His Ambition not to be admired for a false *Glare of Greatness* ; but to be beloved for the *gentle and sober Lustre* of his *Wisdom* and
Good-

SER. VIII. *Goodness.* The greatest Minister of State has not more Business to do in a publick Capacity, than he, and indeed every Man else, may find in the retired and still Scenes of Life. Even in his private Walks, every Thing that is visible convinceth him, there is present a Being invisible. Aided by natural Philosophy, he reads plain legible Traces of the Divinity in every Thing he meets: He sees the Deity in *every Tree*, as well as *Moses* did in the *burning Bush*, though not in so *glaring a Manner*: And when he sees him, he adores him with the Tribute of a grateful Heart.

III. I shall now, as I proposed, draw towards a Conclusion, by subjoining some Reflections which have a Connexion with the Subject.

1st, Let us set a just Value upon, and make a due Use of those Advantages, which we of this Place enjoy, who are here *separated* from the busy World to *seek and intermeddle with Wisdom*.

One considerable Advantage is, that regular Method of Study, too much neglected in other Places, which obtains here. Nothing is more common elsewhere, than for
Persons

Persons to plunge, at once, into the very ^{SER. VIII.}
Depth of Science, far beyond their own, without having learned the first Rudiments: Nothing more common than for some to pass themselves upon the World for great Scholars, by the Help of *universal Dictionaries, Abridgments, and Indexes*: By which Means they gain an *useless Smattering* in every Branch of Literature, just enough to enable them to talk fluently, or rather impertinently, upon most Subjects; but not to think justly and deeply upon any: Like those, who have a *general superficial Acquaintance* with almost every Body: To cultivate an *intimate* and entire *Friendship* with *one* or *two* worthy Persons, would be of more Service to them. The true genuine Way to make a substantial Scholar, is, what takes Place here, *viz.* to begin with those general Principles of Reasoning, upon which all Science depends, and which give a Light to every Part of Literature; to make gradual Advances, a slow, but sure Process; to *travel* gently, with proper Guides to direct us, through the most beautiful and fruitful *Regions* of Knowledge in *general*; before we fix ourselves in, and confine ourselves to any *particular Province*

SER. VIII. *Province* of it: It being the great Secret of Education not to make a Man a complete Master of any Branch of Science, but to give his Mind that *Freedom, Openness,* and *Extent,* which shall *empower* him to master it, or indeed any other, *whenever* he shall turn the Bent of his Studies that Way: Which is best done, by setting before him, in his earlier Years, a GENERAL View of the whole intellectual World: Whereas an *early* and *entire* Attachment to one *particular* Calling narrows the Abilities of the Mind to that Degree; that he can scarce think out of that Track to which he is accustomed.


The next Advantage I shall mention is, a Direction in the Choice of Authors upon the most material Subjects. For it is perhaps a great Truth, that *Learning* might be reduced to a much *narrower* Compass, if one were to read none but *original* Authors, meaning by original Authors, those, who write chiefly from their own Fund of Sense, without treading servilely in the Steps of others.

Here, too, a generous Emulation quickens our Endeavours, and the *Friend* improves the *Scholar*: The *Tediousness* of the *Way*

to *Truth* is insensibly *beguiled* by having SER. VIII.
Fellow-Travellers, who keep an even Pace
 with us: Each Light dispenses a brighter
 Flame, by mixing it's social Rays with
 those of others. Here we live sequestered
 from Noise and Hurry, far from the great
 Scene of Business, Vanity, and Idleness,
 our Hours all our own. Here it is, as in
 the *Athenian Torch-Race*, where a Series
 of Men have successively transmitted from
 one to another the Torch of Knowledge;
 and no sooner has one quitted it, but ano-
 ther equally able takes the Lamp to dispense
 Light to all within his Sphere*. But the
 greatest Commendation of these Semina-
 ries is, that they have been constantly
 blackened by the Enemies of Religion and
 Goodness. Those, who have planted their
 Batteries against the Christian Religion,
 have always singled out the Universities as
 the Mark of their Hostilities: which is
 virtually to confess, that they are the Bul-
 warks of Religion, and that they can ne-
 ver succeed in their audacious Attempts, till
 they have brought them into Discredit.

Others there may be, who censure them
 without just Grounds. For it is a Fault,

*— Quasi cursores, vitæ lampada tradunt. *Lucretius.*

SER. VIII.  to which Men are very subject, to dislike what is confessedly *good*; because their *crude Conceptions*, never reduced to Practice, may suggest something in their Opinion *better*. But, in Fact, where is there a better Method of Education to be found? It is easy to form fine *Utopian Theories*; it is easy to *govern* and manage our *own Ideas*, the World *within*: For nothing is *more* pliant and obsequious, than our *own Ideas*: But to govern the World *without*, far *more stubborn* and *uncomplying* than our *Ideas*, and new model it to our Schemes, this is the great Difficulty. If they were to proceed from Theory to Fact, they would find several Difficulties start up, which they were not aware of; and that Things upon Experiment never fully answer the flattering Notions, which they may entertain in their Imaginations.

Dismissing therefore these Visionaries, let me proceed to tell you, that our Hopes are placed upon you; that, whatever Clamours may have been raised against you by Men, who weakly or wickedly *confound* the *Innocent* with the *Guilty*, by a *Judgment* directly contrary to THAT of the *last Day*, (for *that severs* the one from the other;)

other;) yet we look upon you for so considerable a Part, as the most uncorrupt Part of the Nation, in Principles at least; and, I think, in Morals too. And may you long continue so! For the Universities have been justly called the *Eyes* of the Nation: And if *the Eyes of the Nation be evil, the whole Body of it must be full of Darknes,* Ignorance and Vice. SER. VIII.

May none of us therefore, 2dly, complain, that the Discipline of the Place is too strict; when all the World besides are complaining of the Remissness of it. May we rather reflect, that there needs nothing else to make a Man completely *miserable*; but to let him, in the *most dangerous* Stage of Life, carve out an *Happiness* for himself, without any Check upon the Sallies of Youth. Those to whom you have been over-indulgent, and perhaps could not have been otherwise, without proceeding to Extremities, never to be used but in desperate Cases; those have been always the most liberal of their Censures and Invectives against you: They put one in Mind of *Adonijah's* Rebellion against *David* his Father: Because *his Father had not displeas'd him at any time in saying, Why hast thou*

SER. VIII *done so?* It is a certain Sign, Men want Restraints, when they are impatient under any ; too headstrong to be governed by Authority, too weak to be conducted by Reason.

It were to be wished that they, who claim greater Indulgences, would seriously reflect, that the glaring *Irregularities* of *two* or *three* Members bring an *undistinguishing* Censure upon a whole *Body*, make a Noise in, and alarm, the World, as if all Flesh had here corrupted their Ways: Whereas the *sober modest Worth* of a much *greater* Number, who here in private attend the Duties of the Wise and Good, must, in the Nature of the Thing, *escape* the *Notice* of the World. *Notorious Disorders*, how *few* soever are concerned, *strike* upon the *Senses* of some, and *affect* the *Passions* of many more ; by which (their Senses and Passions) the Gross of Mankind generally judge of Things : but it requires some *Expence* of *Reflection*, to which the Bulk of Mankind will never put themselves, to consider, that *great* Numbers must have spent their *Time profitably*, formed *Habits* of *just* Thinking here, and laid *in* that Stock of *Knowledge* which they have

have produced into View, in a more public SER. VIII. Sphere: that those Vices, which they complain of, may not be the *native Growth* of the Place; but *imported* from *irregular* and *undisciplined Families*, from *Schools*, and from the *worst* of Schools, the *World at large*, when Youth are entred into it too soon.

Lastly consider, that it is a sure Indication of good Sense to be diffident of it. We then, and not till then, are *growing wise*; when we begin to discern, how *weak* and *unwise* we are. An absolute *Perfection* of Understanding is impossible: He makes the nearest Approaches to it, who has the Sense to discern, and the Humility to acknowledge it's Imperfections. Modesty always fits gracefully upon Youth: It covers a Multitude of Faults, and doubles the Lustre of every Virtue, which it seems to hide: the *Perfections* of Men being like those Flowers, which appear more beautiful, when their Leaves are a little contracted and folded up; than when they are full-blown, and display themselves, without any Reserve, to the View.

We are, some of us, very fond of Knowledge, and apt to value ourselves upon any

SER. VIII. Proficiency in the Sciences: One Science, however, there is, worth more than all the rest, and that is the Science of Living well: which shall remain, when, *whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away.* As to new Notions, and new Doctrines, of which this Age is very fruitful, the Time will come, when *we shall have no Pleasure in them*; nay the Time shall come, when they shall be exploded, and would have been forgotten, if they had not been preserved in those excellent Books, which contain a Confutation of them; like Insects preserved for Ages in Amber, which otherwise would soon have returned to the common Mass of Things. But a firm Belief of Christianity, and a Practice suitable to it, will support and invigorate the Mind *to the last, and most* of all at last, at that important Hour, which must decide our Hopes and Apprehensions: And the Wisdom, which like our Saviour cometh from above, will through his Merits bring us thither. And indeed all our other Studies and Pursuits, however different, ought to be subservient to, and center in this grand Point, the Pursuit of eternal Happiness, by being good in ourselves, and

useful to the World. Soon, very soon, the ^{SER. VIII.}
Disputer of this World may be no more:
Of *this* World, says *St. Paul*: For Disputes
will have no Place in another. But the
meeke and *humble Christian*, who chiefly
desired to *understand*, that he might *direct*
his *Will*, and to *know*, that he might *act*
rightly, is a Character, which will stand
us in Stead for ever——When Pride and
Self-Confidence shall be no more. *For* we
shall no more know in *Part*.



SERMON IX.

On the Government of the Thoughts.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of
OXFORD, 1734.

PROVERBS IV. 23.

*Keep thy Heart with all Diligence : For out
of it are the Issues of Life.*

THE Meaning of which Words SER. IX.
is : Keep a strict Guard over the
Workings of your Mind, your
Thoughts and Inclinations, of which the
Heart is commonly supposed to be the
Seat : For your Life and Conversation will
be conformable to the main Current of
your Thoughts and Desires.

All Sin confessedly consisting in the
Will ; he, that wills the Commission of
a wicked Action, is as guilty before God,

Q 4

who

SER. IX. who seeth in Secret, as if he had actually committed the Fact. For what should hinder the Man, who deliberately indulges sinful Thoughts, from reducing them to Practice? It is not the Fear of God: For then he would not have given an uncontrolled Loose to his Thoughts, awed by that Being, who is of too discerning Eyes not to behold the Impurity of his Heart, and of too pure Eyes to behold it with Pleasure.

No: It was another Principle that restrained him, a Fear of what the World would say. A Conduct highly affrontive this! To be Fool-hardy towards God, and a Coward towards Man; to brave the Almighty Displeasure of his Maker, and yet dread the impotent Censures of the World.

The Soul is ever busy and at work: There is no Pause, no Suspension of Thought, at least while we are awake. Think we *must*—But what to think upon—what *Track* to pursue, instead of giving ourselves an unconfined Range, in that wide and spacious *Field* of Thinking, which opens itself to us on every Hand—This ought to be our Study, and shall be my present Enquiry.

Suffer me then,

I. To enquire how far we have or may have a Command over our Thoughts, and consequently how far we are accountable for them.

II. To lay down some Directions for the Government of our Thoughts.

I. I am to enquire how far we have or may have a Command over our Thoughts, and consequently how far we are accountable for them.

1st, It is impossible to hinder *irregular, fantastick*, evil Thoughts from *rising up* in our Minds. *Ill* Thoughts, like *ill* Company, will be sometimes obtruding and forcing themselves upon us: But then we may chuse, whether we will cultivate a Familiarity and intimate Acquaintance with them: We may do as we please, whether we will give them a friendly Entertainment; or on the other Hand, dismiss these audacious and impertinent Intruders, with this significant Rebuke; “*Away from ME, ye wicked Thoughts, I will keep the Commandments of God.*”

2^{dly},


2dly, It is not in our Power to prevent Distractions, Interruption, and Avocation of Thought, even in our religious Addreffes to God. While the Soul is *immerfed* in Matter, it will be fometimes too languid to *raife* it's Thoughts, or too volatile to *fix* them *fteadily* upon God. This is our *Frailty*, our *Misfortune*, but will not be imputed to us as a *Sin*, provided we *ftrove* againft it: And when we have done *all we can*, we have *done* all we *ought*. For this Reason, as foon as we enter the Sanctuary, we fhould beg the Affiftance of God's Spirit, that our Thoughts may be *fixed*: That we may be collected in ourfelves, and ferve God with that *undivided* Attention, which is due from a Creature to his Creator; as knowing, that it is ridiculous to expect *God* will hear *us*, when *we* really do not hear ourfelves; which is the Cafe, when our Lips move as it were mechanically, but our Minds are abfent and inattentive. It was with this View, * that in the ancient *Greek* Liturgies, the Deacon was ordered to cry aloud, ἐκτενῶς δεηθῶμεν, *Let us pray fervently*; and again, fome Time after, ἐκτενέσσορον, let us pray *more* fervently. And

* See *Biffe's* Beauty of Holinefs.

it would be well, if we would make this use SER. IX.
of that exhortatory Admonition, which occurs so often in *our* Liturgy, *viz.* “ Let us
“ pray :” And which was inserted with this
Design, among others, to rally our undisciplined Thoughts, to recal our straggling Ideas, and to put us in Mind, that we ought to be praying with *an Affectionate Application.*

3dly, Our Thoughts are not absolutely free, just after we have received some considerable Loss or Disaster. All that we can do, is to take Care, that we do not give up our Mind a Prey to Melancholy, and *willfully* indulge our Sorrows ; which is the Case of many, even under *imaginary Grievances.*

They will supinely sit in a pensive Posture, with folded Arms, brooding over their Woes, till they imagine themselves upon the Confines of another World ; or, if they be of a religious Turn, they shall fancy, that *the Arrows of the Almighty are within them, the Poison whereof drinketh up their Spirits.* Their Reason shall be either entirely suspended, or only employed to dwell upon and heighten those darksome Ideas, the Imagery of a Melancholic Fancy, which

SER. IX.  which present themselves to View. Thus their Mind shall resemble a Room hung about with black; their Understanding being like a feeble Glimmering Taper, that serveth only to *shew* the dismal Scene, and to render the Horrors *visible*.

Some of these, during the Time that their rational Faculties are darkened with the Fumes of Melancholy, shall be haunted with *blasphemous Thoughts*, which, they complain, they cannot get rid of: Never considering, that *our Thoughts* are no farther *ours*, than as we *choose* them; that all *Sin* lyes in the *Will*, and all *Will* implies *Choice*: That those Thoughts therefore, which are not *our Choice*, which we reject with a settled *Aversion* and *Abhorrence*, will never be placed to *our Account*. Men, under this Depression and Despondency, should with a manly determinate Resolution rouse themselves from their Lethargy, and apply themselves with Vigour to some Employment, which may fill the Capacity of their Minds; or they must have recourse to Company, innocent Diversions, or Exercise, which may lull their unquiet Thoughts asleep, and put their Animal Spirits into pleasing and agreeable Motions.

In the fourth Place, *angry Thoughts* fall SER. IX.
 under our Consideration. And here, there
 are three Things to be considered. 1st, The
Passion of Anger. 2^{dly}, The *first Starts*
 and *Sallies* of this Passion: And lastly, the
deliberate and *settled Consent* of the *Will* to
 them. It is impossible entirely to root
 out the Passion of Anger, it being inter-
 woven in our Nature; nor is it always in
 our Power to prevent the first Sallies and
 Starts of it—those *primary Motions* of
 the Mind; though we may go a great Way
 towards it, by keeping a *constant Guard*
 over ourselves, and by inuring the Mind to
 an habitual State of Recollection. But still
 we are invested with a Power to *with-hold*
 the determinate *Consent* of the *Will* to these
primary Motions: We may lay the Ax to
 the Root of the Tree, and quell them at
 their first Insurrection; we may use the like
 Expedient as *Cæsar* did, which was
 to repeat the Letters of the *Greek* Alpha-
 bet to himself, as soon as Passion began to
 ferment: Or we may counterbalance *one*
 Passion by *another*, and may turn their Ar-
 tillery upon themselves: We may call in
 our *Fear* to subdue our Anger.

So far then as our Thoughts are invo-
 luntary,

SER. IX.

luntary, so far they are not sinful. After all our Endeavours to dress the little Garden of the Mind, ill Thoughts, like Weeds, will spring up; they are the native Produce of the Soil: But if we take Care to root them up, as fast as possible, as well as to cultivate and cherish each generous and beautiful Plant; this is all that God requires of us.


The Mind is *passive* in receiving it's Notices of Things, whether *pure* or *impure*; but it is *active* in it's Determination, whether to *harbour* or *discard* them. As far as it is *passive*, it is entirely innocent; as far as it is *active*, it is accountable; and it certainly is *active*, when we *dwell upon impure Thoughts* with Complacency; when we *strengthen* ourselves in Wickedness, by *cherishing* the Remembrance of past guilty Joys, and laying Scenes in our Imagination, for the Entertainment of *future Pleasures*. The Soul takes in Ideas of *all Kinds*, like the Net in Scripture that gathered of *every Kind*: But then the *Judgment* is *active* in *sorting* them; in *putting the Good*, as it were, *into Vessels*, and *casting the bad away*. Here the Mind can exercise it's invisible Empire: It can, in most Cases, say to

one

one Idea, go, and it goeth; and to another, come, and it cometh: As well as to the Organs of the Body, do this, and he doeth it. For Instance, out of that Variety of Objects which present themselves, it can single out for a more particular and distinct View the following ones, viz. eternal Happiness or Misery; that all-knowing Being, who is the Witness of our Actions here, who will be the Judge of them at the last Day, and the Rewarder or Punisher of them to all Eternity. We can inure ourselves to such Considerations (every Evening as we lye down, and every Morning as we rise up) till our Spirits almost mechanically run in the same beaten Track: Till our Thoughts almost as naturally flow in the same pure, unsullied Current, to which they have been habituated; as a River does in the Channel, to which it has been long accustomed. They must know little of human Nature, and the Workings of their own Minds, who do not observe that the Train of their Thoughts, and Motions of their Souls, depend almost as much upon Custom, as the Motions of their Bodies do.

If a Man fixes his Thoughts, for Example, upon Money, and turns in his Head

all

SER. IX.  all the Ways and Means of having his Portion in this Life, his Soul, his groveling Soul, will *cleave* to the *Dust*: If he fixes his Thoughts deliberately and seriously, [Morning and Evening] upon the immortal Welfare of his Soul, it will stedfastly *cleave* unto *God*.

Only take this along with you, that good Thoughts must not just *pass* through the Mind, like a *Guest that tarrieth but an Hour*: No; they must *dwell* there, till our *Hearts* be pierced with a feeling Sense of them, as well as our *Heads* convinced of the Truth and Importance of them. Good Thoughts will not court our Acquaintance, and make the first Advances to us: But if we often *read* and meditate on religious Subjects, if we, at stated Hours, invite them to come and make their Abode with us, they will at last come of themselves, without waiting for the Formality of a set Invitation. Religion deeply imbibed, like profound Knowledge, must be the Offspring of Silence, unbroken Meditations, and oft repeated Thoughts. Thus, and thus only, God will reign in the *little* World within us, as he does in the *great* World, Supreme, *over all blessed for evermore*, and
 evermore

evermore blessing us: Our Hearts will be a little Heaven, where the Deity rules enthroned and uppermost, with an unrivalled Influence; each Passion, like *Wind and Storm, fulfilling his Word.*

But farther the Soul has a Power lodged in itself to with-hold it's Approbation, when a sensible Object is presented; till it has examined, whether *all things considered*, upon the Balance of the Account, it be for it's *Good in the Whole*, or no. We can as well *suspend our Judgment*, till we have got *moral Evidence*, that such an apparent Good will *really* conduce to our Happiness; as we can *stand still*, when we are not assured, that such a *Path* leads to our *Journey's End*: "Our *mature Examination* is the *consulting of a Guide*; the "Determination of the Will thereupon, is "the *following of that Guide**." Here then we see, in what the Government of our Thoughts *consists*: They are not *criminal*, till they have the *Consent of the Will*; and the Soul can with-hold that *Consent*, till it has *sufficiently* considered the whole Case: Otherwise we should have no more Remorse for willing and acting upon a rash and

VOL. I.

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precipitate

* *Locke's Works*. Vol. I. Page 112.

SERM. IX. precipitate Judgment; than we should condemn a Stone for falling, or Fire for burning: For we could never have any Compunction of Conscience for that, which we were sensible we could not help. The Will then cannot be irresistibly enslaved by any *finite* Gratification, because it may still think of a *greater*; and, allowing *that* it's just Weight, give it the Ascendant over the *lesser*. We may habituate ourselves to the Contemplation of the *greatest* Good, and then lesser Delights will shine with a diminished Lustre, or rather *have no Glory*, by reason of the *Glory that excelleth*.

Our Ideas are of no Manner of Service, when they lye as it were in *Heaps* in our Mind, *buddled* and confused: We must *draw* them *out* and *unfold* them, before we can put them to Use. Thus, for Instance, the Consideration, that there is a God, is a great Restraint from Sin: But it is not this Thought in the *Gross* only: The Idea must be *opened* and unravelled, and what is contained in it laid distinctly and in Order before us, to make it an effectual Preservative against Vice: As that He, who made and upholds every Being, must be intimately present to every Thing; that a
Being

Being infinitely holy must detest Vice; a SERM. IX.
 Being infinitely just must punish it; that
 when we do ill, we forfeit his Favour, who
 can overcast the Soul with a Gloom of
 Horror and the very Blackness of Dark-
 nesses, or brighten it up with the Fulness of
 Bliss and Glory:—that *of* Him we and all
 Things are, as our Creator; *through* Him
 we and all Things continue, as our Prefer-
 ver; and *to* Him all, that we *are*, is to be
 ascribed; and all that we can *do*, is but
 our bounden Duty.

If it be possible for a Man to *sin* with
 such clear, open and explicit Notices of God,
 appearing, without any Reserve, in their full
 Strength to his Mind; it will be impossible
 for him to *repent*: For Repentance is owing
 to the Recollection of such Thoughts as
 these, to the rallying those Forces of the
 Mind, which were put into such Disorder
 and Confusion, that they could do no Ser-
 vice, by the Onset of some Passion.

I have here anticipated some Things,
 which fall more properly under my Second
 Head; because in shewing what Power we
 have over our Thoughts, it was necessary to
 consider what Power we had, if we ob-
 served certain Rules.

II. I proceed now more particularly to lay down some Rules for the Conduct of our Thoughts.

In the 1st Place, we must not give too much into light Amusements. Vagrant, disorderly, ungoverned Thoughts are as naturally the Result of a playing, visiting, wandering Life ; as a commanding Reason and well-disciplined Thoughts are the Result of Watchfulness, frequent Meditation and Recollection. It is an evident and acknowledged Truth, that Sensuality is destructive of true Piety : But I believe, that a continued Succession of Diversions, and an impertinent Course of Life, will as effectually take off all religious Impressions, as even Sensuality itself : Because the Mind is so narrowed by confining itself to a poor Set of low, little, childish Notions ; that it cannot, in Process of Time, open wide enough to admit such grand and august Objects, as those of God and a blessed Immortality.

The Mind, by being fixed on Trifles, is disabled and indisposed for greater and more important Business : Hence a Soul giddy with silly Joys, or burdened with imaginary Cares. It is the same Thing, whether the
the

the good *Seed* is sunk in *Mud*, in Gluttony SERM. IX. and Intemperance; or it is burnt up by the *Heat* of the *Sun*, by the Brightness and Gaiety of what we call a genteel Life.

What a shocking Thing it is to see Creatures, who have Families to take Care of, or, at least, their own Souls to save, doing little or nothing, but *eating and drinking, and then rising up to play*; while their Minds are agitated alternately by the Hopes of Winning, or the Fear of losing! Each liberal Sentiment and every other Passion is suspended, to give Way to the Exercise of, the most illiberal and fordid of all the Passions, the Desire of Gain. This Diversion is, one would think, the Device of those who cannot shine in Conversation, to put themselves upon a Level with those that can. In lieu therefore of Conversation, they have substituted this Amusement, than which nothing, except their own Conversation, can be more insipid. And if this were the Design of those who have as little to *say*, as they have to *do*; they have effectually compassed their Ends; there being no Room for useful Reflection, no Place for good Sense to instruct, or Wit to entertain the Company; all Distinction between Po-



verty of Thought and a rich Fund of Knowledge, where this has no Opportunity to display, nor that to expose itself, being lost and confounded: And when they retire home, they have this comfortable Reflection to make; that a Soul, capable of enlarging it's Stock of Ideas, and improving it's Love of Virtue, has, for a considerable Time, been conversant with no Ideas, but those which were exactly suited to the Capacity and Taste of a Child. The Mind is enlarged or contracted, just as the Objects, upon which it chuses to dwell and is most familiar with, are great or little.

Diversions, however innocent in themselves, may be very injurious in their Consequences; because they destroy a Greatness and Manliness of Soul, and occasion that unfettled Levity of Temper, which exposes us to the Inroad of Temptations, and makes us susceptible of bad Impressions. A determinate Steadiness of Mind being once lost, which is the *Anchor* of the Soul; she becomes the Sport of Passions, and is carried away with every Wind.

2dly, We must avoid the reading of bad Books. For it is certain, that as good Books adorn the Mind with the Treasures of good Sense

Sense and beneficial Knowledge ; ill ones must store it with a Fund of impure and immodest Ideas. Thus many Plays, instead of ennobling the Soul with generous Sentiments, fully the Imagination, by describing Lust with all it's Incentives and Allurements, and awaken those Passions which lay dormant before. If we say, we read them for their Wit, and not for their Impurity, it may be true ; but then it ought to be considered, that the Poison of Vice never goes more glibly down, than when Wit is made the Vehicle to convey it. It is granted, that good Writers make the deeper Impression, when they make their Court to the Fancy by bribing it with agreeable Metaphors, Paintings, and lively Imagery : because the Soul being obliged to use the Ministry of the Senses, if we would gain an Access to, and procure an Audience from the Soul, their Sovereign ; we must first address ourselves to the Senses, as we do to other Ministers. Must not therefore impure Ideas, as well as virtuous ones, find an easier Admittance to the Mind, and meet with a more favourable Reception, when they come recommended by the agreeable Dress of Wit ; especially if we consider the

SERM. IX. inbred Corruptions of the Heart, and that they have a strong Party within? Spritely Sallies of the Imagination, the Heightnings of Poetry, and artful Turns of Thought, dazzle the Mind, and hinder it from considering the Deformity of the Vice which they insinuate. The more *beautiful* any Genius is; the more Injury it does, when it is *prostituted* to Lewdness. But these Writings are more especially baneful to young, raw, and unfurnished Minds; like Poison, which always operates the most powerfully upon an empty Stomach. And perhaps the Difficulties, which some People are obliged to conflict with upon the Account of their Virtue, would not have been so great; if it had not been, in some Measure, blasted in the Bud by some of those loose Authors, with whom this Nation abounds more than perhaps any other.

I would not be thought to pass a general, undistinguishing Censure upon *all* Plays: Some of them are rational and manly Entertainments, and may be read with Improvement, as well as Delight. As for the rest, I would offer it to the Consideration of virtuous Persons, whether it be consistent with their Character, as such, to read in
the

the *Closet*, or hear on the *Stage*, such lewd SERM. IX. and immodest Sentiments, as it would not be consistent with Modesty to hear or utter in private *Conversation*? Whether most Plays are not full of such gross Ideas and impure Speeches, as a modest Person would think himself obliged to resent, if addressed to him in Company? Add to this, that those, who lay themselves out in perusing Books addressed wholly to the Imagination, will look upon every other Composition, as dry, jejune, and tasteless: Just as those, who are accustomed to high seasoned Delicacies, which inflame the Blood; have a Distaste for plain and simple Food, however nourishing and wholesom.

3dly, Call in other Ideas to your Aid, as soon as ever any Passion begins to ferment: For you break the Force of any one Idea, however strong and importunate, by summoning in others. One violent Passion does, for a Time, engross the whole *Brute*; because Brutes have *not* a *Command* over their past *Perceptions*, so as to assemble them, when they *please*: And hence their Rage, or their Grief, or their Lust, is *genuine* and *unmixed*, without any Check or Restraint upon it from a Power of *reflecting*
upon

SERM. IX. upon *something else*. And if one Passion engrosses the whole *Man*, he so far *degenerates* into a Brute: For, from this *Power* over our Ideas, which Brutes have not, we are *stiled* reasonable Creatures; and, by the *Exercise* of this Power, we become in *Faët* so. We must then *immediately*, upon any Temptation, strive to turn our Thoughts into another Channel. I have already mentioned the Example of an *Heathen*: here I shall recommend that of a *Christian* Emperor, who constantly, upon such Occasions, said to himself the Lord's Prayer, lest he should be overset by any sudden Gust of Passion, before he had time to call in the Succours of mighty Reason, and almighty Grace. Or, as Novelty may have sometimes a greater Effect, than what is familiar to us; we may, for Variety, substitute in the Room of it, this or any other Prayer, which, by Reason of it's Shortness, may easily be remembered:

“ O God, may thy Mercy pardon what I
 “ have been! May thy Grace reform what
 “ I am! And may thy Wisdom direct
 “ what I shall be!

When we observe in ourselves the least Approaches towards *Anger*, Lust, Envy,
 2 and

and Discontent : we are not to put off our Application to God for his Grace, to some prefixed *Distance* of Time : No, we should *forthwith* desire his Assistance, and pray for the Succours of his holy Spirit. For by immediately recollecting ourselves, and desiring his Assistance upon the first Solicitation of any Vice, which we may do silently in public as well as in private, in a Crowd as well as in our Closet ; we stop the Progress of Evil, by introducing another Train of Thinking : Whereas by delaying our Addresses till the stated Periods of Prayer return, we let the Poison work in us, without applying the proper Antidote in Time. No Doubt, Morning and Evening Prayers are indispensable Duties ; and some *Part* of our Time ought every Day to be dedicated to God, as an *Acknowledgment* that the *whole* of our Time is his Gift. But we ought to take Care, that our *formal* Petitions do not supersede our *habitual* and constant Endeavours. And if we would know the Reason why some, who are constant to their Devotions, yet are as envious, censorious, fretful, and impatient as others ; it is, because they use Religion merely as an *occasional, formal,*

set

SERM. IX. *set* Thing ; but never *habitually* apply it to the common Occurrences of Life. They put it on like some particular Dress, at *set* Times, and on some Occasions ; and then lay it aside again for the rest of the Week. On the other Hand, if upon the first Motions towards Anger, Impatience, Uncharitableness, &c. they without Delay, upon the Spot, prayed to God, and invoked his Aid ; this would be, upon every Incident, an Expedient to expel bad Thoughts, before they had gotten full Possession of the Heart, by bringing others more worthy into their Room. We must feel, if we are attentive, the Disorders of the Mind, as well as the Distempers of the Body. We must know, when any Glance of Ill-Nature, Lust, or Discontent, comes across our Minds : And to turn our Thoughts to God, upon that emergent Occasion, by a mental Prayer, is instantly to withdraw the Mind from Evil, to retract the bad Design, before it has made any Advances in our Hearts, and to endeavour after the opposite Virtue. Whatever Methods we take to govern our unruly Thoughts, we must employ them, when they *first* take up Arms. We must before Passion makes Head, and
becomes

becomes formidable, recollect such Thoughts as these: “How often have my *second* cooler Thoughts disapproved, what my *first* Apprehension of Things, upon a sudden Provocation, have suggested? When Storms arise in my Breast, I will wait for the *second* surer Report, which my Judgment shall bring in, for the still small Voice of Reason.”

4thly, We must often descend into ourselves. Some are, in a bad Sense, most busy, when and where they have nothing to do: We too, in another Sense, must be most busy, when, in the Language of the *World*, we have nothing to do; but, in the Language of *Reason* and *Christianity*, have our eternal Salvation to *work out with Fear and Trembling*. We must ask our Hearts the following Questions. “Tell me truly, O my Conscience, am I really better than other Men? Or am I a more artful Hypocrite? Am I not like an Actor, who may chuse perhaps to sustain the Character of a Saint or some worthy Man on the Theatre, before the Eyes of the Public; but, when withdrawn behind the Scenes, is upon a Level with those who acted the Parts of a Villain or

SERM. IX. “ an abandoned Debauchee? Am I intrin-
 “ fically good, good through a Principle
 “ of obeying and pleasing my Maker?
 “ Or do I only study to save Appearances
 “ with Regard to the World? Instead of
 “ wasting my Time in those Follies, which
 “ fill the Circle of an useless Life, do I
 “ grow wiser, humbler, and meeker, as
 “ I increase in Years? Or is the Heat
 “ and Passion of Youth only succeeded
 “ by the Peevishness of a more advanced
 “ Age; like Wine fermenting when it is
 “ new, and growing sour and eager when
 “ it is drawn to the Dregs?”

Without such Questions often asked, and seriously answered, without sounding the Depth of our Hearts; our Lives will be one universal Void, one undistinguished Blank, without any Act of substantial, well-grounded, inward Piety, to fill the Space between the Cradle and the Grave. They will be, what they are often compared to, a Dream indeed, where Caprice and Fancy governs, but Reason lies asleep. We are often enquiring into other People's Concerns: We are industrious to know, and glad to communicate, how much such a Man has, how much he expends, and
 whether

whether his Expences suit his Income: SERM. IX.
 But alas! it would be much better for us
 to turn our Thoughts inwards, and to view
 the Workings of the Soul. Are we reluc-
 tant and unwilling to do it? Then we may
 take it for granted, there is something amiss
 within. For that Life can no more be
 found at the Bottom; than that Religion,
 which dreads the Test of a fair Examina-
 tion. Fain would I persuade those, with
 whom Novelty has so great Charms, that
 they spend their Time in little or nothing, but
hearing, seeing, or telling something new, to
 add yet *one new Thing more*, new, I mean,
 to *them, viz. one serious Thought* upon the
 following Question. “What would become
 “of them, if God should require their
 “Souls this Night? What, if upon that
 “Supposition they should be finally lost and
 “miscarry for ever? What, if upon that
 “Supposition they are going to give an Ac-
 “count, before the *greatest* of Beings, of a
 “Life, that they cannot reflect upon, even
 “in *private* and by *themselves*, without the
 “utmost Shame and Confusion?” We are,
 too many of us, at a great Expence of Time,
 Health, and Fortune: One Expence, how-
 ever, is necessary, an Expence of Thought,
 and of that we are very sparing. But

SERM. IX.

But this brings me lastly to mention another Preservative against evil Thoughts, I mean, the Pursuit of Knowledge.

For, in Proportion as our Love for Contemplation increases, a Relish for criminal Pleasures will deaden and abate. The more Variety of Knowledge the Mind is enriched with; the more Channels there will be to divert our Thoughts into. When once the Soul, which has a restless Activity, and must be at work, is provided with proper Materials to work upon, when once early Custom has made a rational and solid Train of Thinking easy to you; you will be comparatively happy, unless some uncommon Disaster befall you, for the remaining Term of your Life. Most other Pleasures, besides those of Knowledge and Virtue, are either idle Diversions to sooth the Soul into a Forgetfulness of it's Miseries, and to make Life pass away unperceived; or they are tumultuous Joys, which put the Soul into a Ferment, and give it too violent Agitations: But *your* Pleasures will be the Perfections of human Nature; and yourself an Ornament to it. Reading and Thinking will quicken all the still Scenes of Life, and direct you in all the busy

busy Parts of it. Whereas if you neglect SERM. IX. this early Culture, you will fall into the *most uneasy* Situation of Mind, that of being *wearry of yourself*, and yet be incapable of relishing any Company, but what is as poor and uninstruative as your own. Your Time will be a Burthen to you, and yourself (for such is that Man, who does little or no Good) an uselefs Burthen to the Publick. Your Mind, like your Body, came *naked into the World*; and *naked* will it *return*, unenriched with Knowledge, unennobled by Virtue. The Fierceness of your Passions will indeed, in the Decline of Life, abate and die away: And it is very providential that they do decay. For a weak infirm Body could not bear those violent Transports of Passion, to which Youth is subject: They would be like *new Wine in old Bottles*: The Ferment would be too strong and impetuous for the weak Inclosure; it would burst through, and destroy them. But, though the Passions contract themselves; your Folly will only receive different Modifications, according to the different Stages of Life: And, what was an active vigorous Impertinence in Youth, will be in Age a joyless Dulness: It is the same shall-

SERM. IX. low Stream still ; only what ran before with an empty Noise, will be, in the Winter of your Days, frozen and motionless. Of a profligate Youth, an untimely Death or a distempered old Age is the necessary Consequence ; of a giddy impertinent Youth a frivolous old Age, and all the Childishness of our former Years, without the Vivacity of them : You must have Recourse to a thousand Trifles to fill up the mighty Void of Thought, to shut out, that importunate Intruder, Self-Reflection, and to keep off that Sullenness, which must come upon a Mind conscious of no intrinsic Worth : And when some Years, each succeeding one more flat and insipid than the foregoing, are thus spent ; you can have no Reason to wish for a longer Continuance in this World, but merely because you dread what will be your Condition in another. Idleness will either end in a confirmed Stupidity ; or it will break out into an ill-natured Activity, into Spleen, Fretfulness, and Impatience ; just as it meets with a phlegmatic, or a warm Complexion. The Soul, when withheld from it's proper Sphere of Action, either settles into a listless Stagnation ; or it preys upon itself, and contracts a rancorous

rous Eagerness of Spirit, dissatisfied with itself, and out of Humour with every Thing else. Business, on the other Hand, Application and Industry will shut up all the Avenues to Temptation, fill the Compass of our Minds, and exclude those vicious Ideas, which will be laying close Siege, and pressing for Admittance.

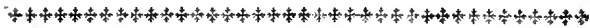
May God defend us from all Adversities, which may happen to the Body; and from all evil Thoughts, which may assault and hurt the Soul!





SERMON X.

On the Reasonableness of Prayer in
general, and of public Worship.



ROMANS XII. 12.

Continuing instant in Prayer.

TO preserve upon our Minds a ^{SERM. X.} Sense of God, and our Dependance on him, the Apostle here recommends constant Prayer.

To enforce which Advice, I shall
Ist, Shew the Reasonableness and Advantages of Prayer in general.

IIdly, Of publick Worship.

IIIdly, Of Family Prayer.

IVthly, Conclude with an Exhortation to Prayer.

Ist, Then I am to shew the Reasonableness and Advantages of Prayer in general.

Certainly nothing is more reasonable, than that we, who *know* *, that *every good and perfect Gift cometh from above*, should *acknowledge*, that it doth so by looking up to that Being, *from whom our Help cometh*. Were, indeed, what we receive, a Matter of strict *Debt*; then we might say, who is the Lord, that we should pray unto him? But as our Enjoyments are the Effects of his undeserved Mercy; it becomes us to ask if we would receive. In a Word, they, that are sensible of their Dependance every Moment upon God, ought to perform such Acts as are expressive, in the most significant Manner, of that Dependance: Now Prayer is the most significant and expressive of our Dependance upon him: Since not to pray, would imply, that what is conveyed to us was not of free Grace, but a Matter of undisputed Right.


Again, if Prayer be beneficial to human Nature, God, as a good Creator, must necessarily desire the Performance of a Duty, which is for the Good of his Creatures: But, that Prayer is beneficial to human Nature, is evident:

* See Dr. Clarke's Sermons. Vol. IX Page 437.

Because, in the first Place, it has a Tendency to beget in us those very Graces and Virtues, which we pray for. For what we constantly and seriously pray for, that we shall earnestly desire; and what we earnestly desire, that we shall endeavour to attain: Warm Desires naturally ripen into correspondent Actions.

Secondly, what can humble the Soul more in Prosperity, than to prostrate ourselves before him, *who is clothed with Majesty and Honour?* Or what can brighten up the Soul more in Adversity, than to consider him who is the Almighty *Helper of the Friendless?* Nothing is more deeply riveted in human Nature, than a Spirit of Self-Sufficiency and Independency: And nothing is more requisite to beat down this Spirit, than Prayer, which is the Confession of Insufficiency in ourselves, and our Dependance on our Maker. When we are praying, we either do, or ought to consider ourselves, as so many Malefactors imploring the Mercy of our great Sovereign, *whose are the Issues of Life and Death:* and what can lower the Pride of Man more, than such a Consideration?

Thirdly, It is the best Expedient to compose our Passions. We must not pretend it is impossible to govern our Passions. For what we can govern in the Presence of a King, or any great Man; that we may certainly do by the Consideration of the Presence of the King of Kings. And yet it is a melancholy Truth, that Thousands, who act a Part with great Applause on the public Theatre of the World, would not for a great deal, that Mankind should see what they act behind the Scenes, when withdrawn from the Eye of the World into Privacy and Retirement. The Misfortune is, we do not habituate ourselves to a vigorous Sense of God's Presence. Now Prayer supplies this Defect: It sets God before us, makes us consider ourselves as acting immediately under his All-seeing Eye, and possesses our Minds with a lively Reverence of his tremendous Nature. And to consider, that a Being, whom *the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain*, is *about our Path and about our Bed, and spies out all our Ways*; that he, *in whom we live and move, and have our Being*, must be nearer to the Soul than any Object whatever; and that therefore, in a much nobler Sense than this Say-

ing was used formerly, “ we are never less SERM. X.
“ alone, than we are thus alone,” holding 
an Intercourse, and walking with God; is
a Thought enough to rouse the most indo-
lent, and fix the most unsteady. If it be
said, that Meditation on God, which some
would substitute in the Room of Prayer,
would answer the same End; I reply, that
to address ourselves, and present our Petiti-
ons to a Person respectable for his Worth
and Dignity, much more to him, who is
infinitely better entitled to a Reverential
Fear, than all the World besides, must in
the Nature of the Thing strike the Soul
more forcibly, and awe the Passions into a
serene Composure; than merely to contem-
plate his Goodness, or entertain the most
raised Thoughts of him: Not to mention,
that Prayer is, what Meditation is not, an
actual Exercise of the Virtue of Humility
and Trust in God, and an Acknowledg-
ment of our Dependance on Him.

Fourthly, Prayer is highly useful to be-
get and cherish in us an universal Benevo-
lence. Whenever we have any Difference
with a Neighbour, let us, instead of in-
dulging little spiteful Reflections, fall on our
Knees, and pray for him with a serious Re-
collection

SERM. X.

collection of Mind, begging that God would adjust his Supplies to his Necessities, protect him with his Power, direct him by his Wisdom, and crown him with Mercy and Loving Kindness: After such particular, earnest and repeated Applications to the Throne of Grace, we should find all ill-natured and cankered Passions die away: and a tender sympathizing Temper, a flowing Humanity, and a liberal Open-heartedness succeed in their Room. We shall think no Instance of common Civility too great to be shewn to him, for whom we sincerely and constantly desired eternal Happiness. And to this universal Intercession for their bitterest Foes and for all Mankind, which was the constant Practice of the primitive Christians, perhaps it was owing, that whenever the Plague raged in any of the most populous Cities, such as *Rome, Alexandria, &c.* they sent Supplies to relieve the Necessities, and administered Medicines to cure the Diseases even of their Persecutors. While their Friends and Relations forsook them and fled; the Christians stood their Ground, and endeavoured to save the Lives of their Enemies at the Hazard of their own. We could not be
guilty

guilty of any unkind, angry, peevish Behaviour to him in public; for whose spiritual and temporal Welfare we daily, seriously, and affectionately put up our Prayers in private: to pour forth the Overflowings of a benevolent Heart towards any Man in Prayer to God for him; and to vent the Overflowings of our Gall in Company against him, being as incompatible as Light and Darkness. Those generous Sentiments, to which we had habituated the Mind by the stated Hours of Devotion, would open and enlarge the Mind with the most animated and impartial Good-will, would free us from all Rancour to our Foes, all partial Attachments to our Friends, and all Indifference to the rest of Mankind; would gain Admittance for an extensive Charity, where it was before a Stranger, and cultivate it's Interests, where it was already a well received Guest. To offer up our Prayers for all Mankind daily to him, who is the universal Parent of Mankind, is Benevolence, as well as Devotion, put in Practice every Day.

Every Vice is checked and every Virtue kept alive by a fixed awakened Sense of the Deity, by a due Regard for, and Fear of him.

Now

SERM. X.

Now constant attentive Prayer best preserves this Regard and Reverence for an invisible Being; just as a constant Correspondence cherishes the affectionate Remembrance of an absent Friend, and revives those Impressions, which Length of Time would wear out and deface. God therefore grants our Petitions, not merely because we *pray*; but because Prayer, attentive Prayer, though it does not make him more *willing* to *bestow*, makes us *fitter* and more *qualified* Subjects to *receive*, the Emanations of his Favour. It is true, God will grant us what is fit; but then it is as true, that it is not fit he should prostitute his Favours upon those, who will not pray for them with an humble Sense of their Dependance, and receive them with a grateful Sense of his Goodness. We do not pretend that the Deity is altered by our Prayers; but that the Relation which we bear to the Deity is so, when from irreligious and indevout Sinners we commence sincere Votaries of Religion. God, who *accepteth according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not*, will not reject the poor weak Efforts of an indigent dependent Being, willing to express, in the best Manner
he

he can, the Notices he has upon his Mind of SERM. X.
 the divine Excellency; yet unable to perform
 any Act of Adoration, which bears the least
 Proportion to his Greatness. And he, who
dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands,
 delighteth to dwell in, a much *nobler* Tem-
 ple, that of an humble and contrite Spirit.

Add to these Arguments that Prayer is
 exemplified in our Saviour's Life, incul-
 cated in his Precepts, and enforced by this
 strong Motive, that he will give his holy
 Spirit to them that ask him. And it is
 highly reasonable to suppose, that a Being
 always benevolent to us, always intimately
 present with us, will not be wanting in the
 gracious Assistances of his Spirit to that
 Soul, which is not wanting to itself in
 humble Addresses joined with it's own vi-
 gorous Endeavours. And Vice is perhaps
 nothing, but the smothering and stifling
 the Beams of divine Grace; as Blackness
 is nothing, but the absorbing and suffo-
 cating the Rays of Light.

It would be ridiculous to deny the Ope-
 rations of the holy Spirit, because we are
 not sensible of them, and do not know,
 how God actuates the Soul. We ought
 rather to reason thus: We know, that we
 have

have been *holden up by God ever since we were born*; but yet have not an intimate Conscioufness and Feeling of that Influence, by which he supports us, or any Knowledge, how he upholds our Existence: Just so we prove from Scripture, that he conveys his Grace to us, but are Strangers to the Manner in which he dispenses it. We no more can have our spiritual Life, than we have our natural Life independently of God's Assistance, and are equally in the dark as to the Conveyance of either. It is no Objection to this Doctrine, that, as an ingenious Writer * expresseth it, "the Powers of Nature and the Influences of Grace are so blended within us, that we cannot easily unravel them. For no more can we, in all Cases, precisely distinguish our foreign Acquirements from our original Selves." We can no more exactly determine in every Point what is natural to us, and what is acquired by us, than we can what is the Result of our own Endeavours, and what is the Operation of God's Spirit. Those who disbelieve the Assistances of divine Grace, because they have not an inward Sense of them, should consider, that

* Mr. Mudge's Sermons.

an inward and distinct Perception of the Motions of God's Spirit, would be inconsistent with that Degree of Freedom, which is necessary in a State of Probation. Could we trace the inward Workings of the Spirit, it would lay too great a Restraint upon us, and overpower the Will. We should no more dare to sin, when we clearly and distinctly perceived the divine Spirit checking us, with the most awakening Notices, in a sensible Manner; than we should, if God himself were to appear to us in some visible Symbol of his Glory. Such a glaring Evidence of the divine Presence in us, as it is contrary to his common and uniform Method of acting, would be too overbearing and irresistible. It was necessary therefore, that we should *walk by Faith, and not by Sight: By Faith* grounded upon rational and substantial Proofs; *not by Sight*, not by any sensible Indications of the Spirit dwelling in us, and working distinctly from us.

To return from this Digression, the Mind of Man naturally affects Independence: To check this Temper, God has obliged us to ask for the Assistance of his holy Spirit; our being obliged to ask, continually

SERM. X.

tinually reminding us of (what we are very apt to forget) the Dependance we have on him for our spiritual as well as natural Abilities. What we could receive without petitioning for it, we should look upon as entirely our own Acquisition, exclusively of our Maker. This seems to be the most obvious Reason, why God has annexed the Promises of his Grace to the Performance of this Condition: That Prayer might be a perpetual Memorial of our Reliance on him, calling us to such a State of Humility, that whenever we do *well*, we should in the Words of the Psalmist acknowledge: *Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord; but unto thy Name be ascribed the Glory*: And whenever we do *ill*, we should in the Words of *Daniel* confess: *To thee, O Lord, belongeth Righteousness; but unto us Confusion of Face*.

There is another Argument for Prayer, which must not be omitted: We ought to cultivate that Duty, which is the distinguishing Perfection of our Nature: Now Religion (and by Religion, the Worship of God is chiefly intended) seems to bid the fairest for the distinguishing Perfection of our Nature: Brutes shewing some Symptoms at least

least of Reason in their Actions, though they discover none of Religion: Or, to speak more properly, Brutes seem to be endowed with Reason in a *lower* Degree, as far as it is necessary to preserve themselves, or to propagate their Kind: But Man alone is ennobled with Reason in *so high* a Degree, as enables him to lift up his Heart unto God in Prayer, and his Understanding in Contemplation. And we should make it our chief Business to excel the rest of Mankind in that very Perfection, *viz.* Religion, by which Mankind excel the brute Creation.

SERM. X.

Having thus shewn the Reasonableness of Prayer in general, I proceed

Illy, To that of publick Worship.

1st, God is to be regarded as the universal Benefactor of Mankind from whom we all have received publick *Blessings*, and to whom therefore we owe publick *Acknowledgments*. For private Praises and Thanksgivings are, by no Means, proper Returns for publick Mercies.

2dly, Every Creature ought to do Homage to his Creator; he ought to pay the Tribute of Honour, where Honour is due. Now the Honour of God is more promoted

by his being worshipped publicly, than privately: Because private Prayer is Piety confined within our Breasts; but publick Prayer is Piety exemplified and displayed in our outward Actions: It is *the Beauty of Holiness* made visible; our *Light shines out before Men*, and in the Eye of the World; it enlarges the Interests of Godliness, and keeps up a Face and Sense of Religion among Mankind.

Were Men only to repair to their Devotion, as the Disciple of Quality did to his Lord and Master, secretly and by Night for Fear of the *Jews*; Religion thus lonely and unfriended would soon decay for want of publick Countenance and Encouragement. For, what would be the Consequence, if Religion sought the Shades, and lived a Recluse entirely immured in Closets; while Irreligion audaciously appears abroad, *like the Pestilence that destroyeth at Noon Day*? It requires no great Depth of Penetration to perceive, nor Expencc of Argument to prove; that the want of a publick national Religion, or a general absenting from that national Religion, must end in a general national Irreverence to the Deity; and an Irreverence to the Deity in an universal Dissolution of Morals, and all *the*

Overflowings of Ungodliness. The Service of the Church, and the Word of God read and expounded, must awaken those Reflections, which it is the Business of bad Men to lay fast asleep, and let in upon the Soul some unwelcome Beams of Light: But, when these constant Calls to Virtue are neglected; Men will become gradually more and more estranged from all Seriousness and Goodness; till at last they end in a professed Disregard to all fixed Principles.

The Fear of that Being, whose Judgments no Power can fence off, no Skill elude, being absolutely necessary; it is the Duty of every Man, not only to cultivate this Reverence in himself, but to promote it as far as he can in others. Now he, that would promote a sacred Regard to the Deity, must do it by such Actions, as are most significant of that Regard: He must express and exemplify to others, that awful serious Sense of the Deity, which is impressed upon his own Mind, by a solemn and avowed Acknowledgment of his Power and Glory in Assemblies set apart for that Purpose. Whoever thinks justly, must be sensible, that *private* Religion never *did* in *Fact* subsist; but where some *publick* Pro-

feſſion of it was regularly kept up: He muſt be ſenſible, that if publick Worſhip were once diſcontinued, an univerſal Forgetfulneſs of that God would enſue, whom to remember is the ſtrongeſt Fence and Preſervative againſt Vice: And that the Bulk of Mankind would ſoon degenerate into mere Savages and Barbarians, if there were not ſtated Days to call them off from the *common* Buſineſs of Life, to attend to what is the *moſt* important Buſineſs of all, their *Salvation* in the next.

But I need not labour this Point: Since it is allowed even by thoſe who are declared Enemies to Religion. They look upon Religion, and publick Worſhip, as a political Engine, to awe the common Herd into a Senſe of their Duty, not founded on Reaſon, yet neceſſary to the Good of Mankind. How abſurd this Scheme is, may eaſily be ſhewn. For if they do not admit the Exiſtence of the Deity; they may be, without much Difficulty, confuted; the Exiſtence of God being one of the moſt obvious Truths. But if they do admit it; they muſt grant likewise, that an infinitely good Being muſt will, whatever is for the Good of his Creatures; and
conſequently

consequently Religion and publick Worship, which they own to be conducive to the Good of Mankind, must be his Will: But, what is the Will of the Deity, must be founded on Truth and Reason. What is *necessary* to the *publick* Happiness, is *therefore* true. For though our *private* Interest and Truth may not alway coincide; yet there is alway a strict Correspondence, Harmony, and Alliance, between Truth and the *general* Happiness.

Religion being once set aside; there will be nothing left to restrain the better Sort, but a Fear of Shame and Disgrace; and nothing to restrain the lower Sort, but the Dread of temporal Punishments; which yet will be of little Avail. For he who is weary of Life, who wants to lay it down as a Burthen, may command yours, or mine, or any Body's else. And what should hinder him? The Fear of the World to come? That will be out of the Question, when once a Sense of Religion is extinct. The Fear of this World, of an ignominious or a lingering Death? Alas! Temporal Punishments derive their chief Efficacy from the Dread of divine Vengeance. For, without that, a Man may evade them, by be-

ing his own Executioner. There are a thousand Avenues to Death; and though the Vigilance of the Magistrate may secure some of them; yet others will stand open to receive the determined and resolved, and place them beyond the Reach of the impotent Power of their Fellow-Creatures. To destroy Religion therefore, is to let loose the wretched and the desperate (a formidable Body) upon the easy, affluent and the happy. One would not chuse to live in a World, which has no Notion or Belief of another. For however advantageous one's Circumstances may be, we should lye at the Mercy of those, who despair of bettering their own, but by Violence or Fraud: There being nothing in this Life to check that Man, to whom Life itself, as it is circumstanced, is an insupportable Load.

We may observe, that a Disregard to all Authority is the distinguishing Character of the Age: Children are undutiful to Parents, Servants are disobedient to their Masters, and Subjects to those that are set over them. And can they wonder at it, who seldom or never recognize, in the most open and conspicuous Manner, the Authority of that Being, in whom all Authority, in the last

Link

Link of the Chain, terminates; and from whom it must be derived to Governors, Parents and Masters? An abandoned Profaneness, Dissoluteness and Debauchery in the lower Sort of People are too often owing to that thorough Contempt of Principle, which reigns among Those, that are called the better Sort; who, by neglecting the publick Observance of Religion, have, in some Measure, destroyed the publick Regard to it; who, frequent at every other Assembly, forsake only one Assembly, *the assembling themselves together* in a religious Manner. Indeed a Sense of Decency contracted by conversing with the well-bred Part of Mankind may give a superficial Polish to their Manners, and an Elegance of Thinking may create an Abhorrence of any gross, shocking and beastly Excesses. But the Vulgar, who learn from their Example to have no Fear of God before their Eyes, but are Strangers to delicate Ideas, will plunge at once into the lowest Sink of Vice: *Sin* in them will appear *exceeding sinful*, in it's genuine Deformity, without any Veil thrown over it. Things are already brought to that Pass, that it is a Question, whether the Vices of some in the lowest Class of Mankind are a

SERM. X. } greater Object of our Hatred and Detestation; or their Poverty, sometimes the Effect of those Vices, of our Pity and Compassion.

It is too *flagrant* a Truth to be *concealed*, and too *melancholy* a one to be *told* with *Pleasure*, that a fashionable Indifference to every Thing serious and sacred has obtained especially among those, from whom one might expect better Things; and from thence, as all Fashions do, has descended to the meaner Sort. And whoever would trace the universal Depravation of Morals up to it's Fountain-Head; must, I believe, resolve it into that glaring Contempt of natural and revealed Religion, which has prevailed among Persons of Rank and Figure. Inferiors are proud to form themselves upon the Model of their Superiors *: And when, those,

* L. Lucullus ferebatur quam commodissime respondisse, cum esset objecta magnificentia villæ Tusculanæ, duo se habere vicinos, superiorem, equitem Romanum; inferiorem, libertinum; quorum cum essent magnificæ villæ, sibi concedi oportere, quod iis, qui inferioris ordinis essent, liceret. Non vides, Luculle, à te id ipsum natum, ut illi cuperent, quibus id, si tu non faceres, non liceret?—Quis non frangeret eorum libidines, nisi illi ipsi, qui eas frangere deberent, ejusdem cupiditatis tenerentur? Nec enim tantum mali est peccare principes, (quanquam est magnum hoc per

those, who are bound by all the Ties of ^{SERM. X.} Gratitude to that God, who *giveth them all Things richly to enjoy*, to advance the Interests of Religion, and enlarge it's Empire, stamp a Credit upon Vice and Irreligion; when those who, as they move in a higher Sphere, ought to be the great Luminaries of the World, cease to dispense a salutary Influence: The Dissolution of the *moral* World is as much to be expected; as the End of the *natural* World will be, when *the Sun shall withdraw it's Shining, the Moon be turned into Blood, and the Stars fall from Heaven.*

In a Word, public Worship is the great Instrument of securing a Sense of God's Providence and of a World to come; and a Sense of God's Providence and a World to come is the great Basis of all social and private Duties.

Hitherto I have argued the Point merely upon the Foot of *natural* Reason. Before I dismiss this Head, it may not be improper se ipsum malum) quantum illud, quod permulti imitatores principum existunt.—Non solum vitia concipiunt ipsi, sed ea infundunt in civitatem; neque solum obsunt, quod ipsi corrumpuntur, sed etiam quod corrumpunt, plusque exemplo quam peccato nocent.

Cicero de Legibus, Lib. tertius, Pag. 219. &c. Editio Davis.

SERM. X.

proper to shew what Obligations we have to this Duty, as *Christians*. The same Reasons, that oblige us to be *admitted* into the Church by Baptism, lay us under a Necessity of *continuing* in a constant *Communion* with it. For by forsaking this Communion, we forfeit those Privileges, to which our Admission into the Church gave us a Title. The Church is called *the Body of Christ*; and a Member, when cut off from the Body, must lose those vital Influences, which were imparted to it from the Head; *as not holding the Head, from which all the Body, by Joints and Bands, having Nourishment ministred, and knit together, increaseth with the Increase of God*. Our Saviour erected a visible Society, into which all Christians are to be embodied: *And he gave, besides some extraordinary Officers, Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the EDIFYING THE BODY OF CHRIST; that we may grow up unto Him in all Things, who is the Head, even Christ: From whom the whole Body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every Joint supplieth, according to the effectual Working of the Measure of every Part,*
maketh

maketh Increase unto the edifying of itself ^{SERM. X.}
in Love.

From which Words we may fairly infer, that by deserting the Church, the *Body* of Christ, we cut ourselves off from all *Union* with him, who is the *Head* of it; and consequently, whatever Pretences to Morality we may make, from all those *Graces* and *Benefits*, here and hereafter, which are to be had by *Virtue* of that *Union* *. *As the Branch cannot bear Fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine; no more can we, except we abide in Christ.* By refusing to associate with any *Body* of Christians, and to partake of those *Ordinances*, by which we have a *Fellowship* with Christ, we relapse into a *State of Nature*, and have no *covenanted Title* to that *Salvation*, which is the *Gift of God*, through the *Merits of Jesus Christ*. What was the *Sense* of *Antiquity* upon this *Head*, a very great *Master* of it † informs us, whose Words I shall take the *Liberty* to transcribe. “ Not one Example of any

* *Iraeneus*, Lib. III. Cap. XL. Ubi Ecclesia, ibi et Spiritus Dei.

Cyprianus de unitate Ecclesie. Habere jam non potest Deum patrem, qui Ecclesiam non habet matrem.

† See Archbishop *Potter's* excellent Discourse on Church Government, Page 28. 3d Edition.

“ Christian

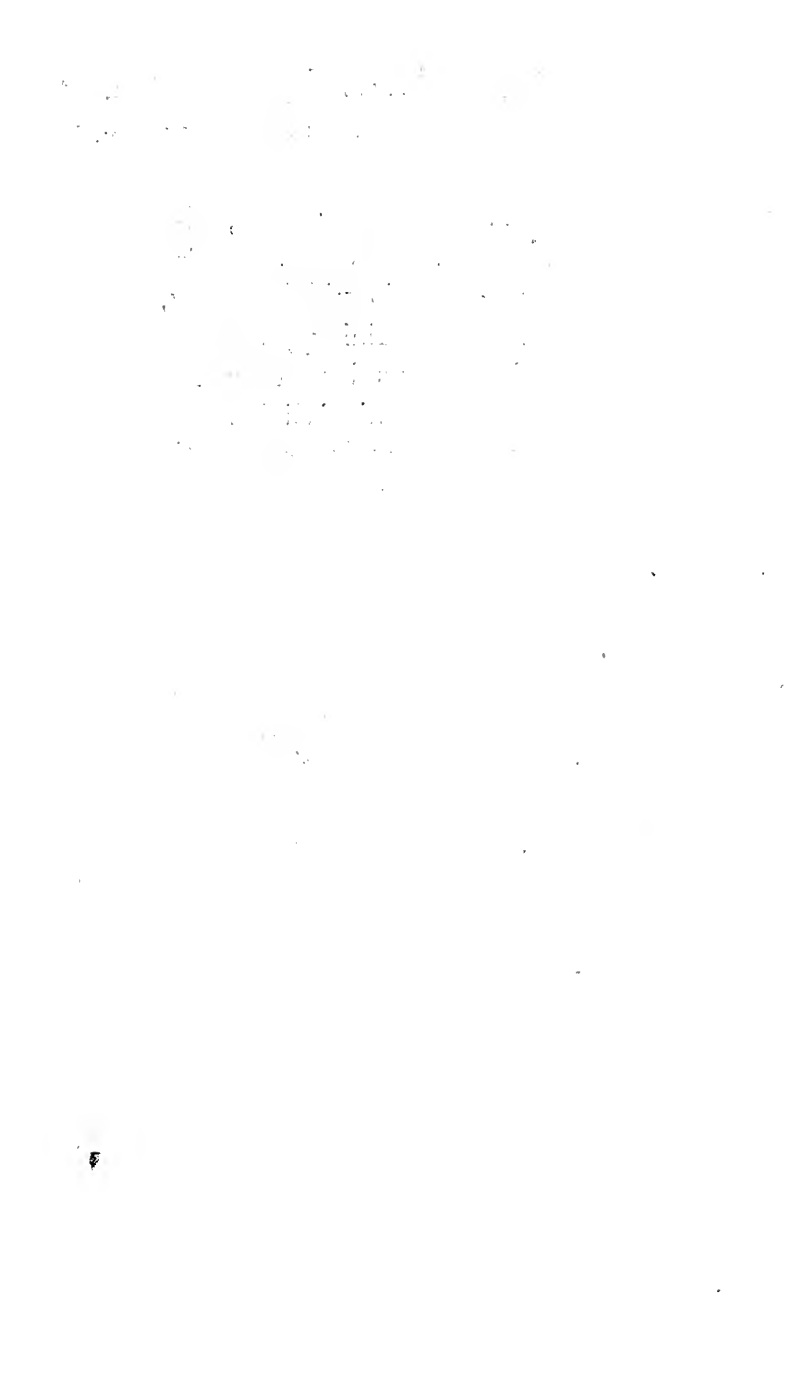
SERN. X. “ Christian Church can be produced through
 “ the whole World, where the Sacraments
 “ were not administered, the Gospel preach-
 “ ed, and the Worship of God celebrated
 “ in an open and public Manner. Even in
 “ the sharpest Persecutions, the Christian
 “ Assemblies, though it may not be so
 “ openly as in Times of Peace, were con-
 “ stantly held and frequented: And who-
 “ ever did not chuse to endure the *most*
 “ *cruel Death*, rather than *preserve* his
 “ *Life* by *absenting* himself, was thought
 “ unworthy to be called a Christian.”

We find that, after our Saviour's Ascension, his Followers *continued stedfastly in the Apostles Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers*. We are commanded *not to forsake the assembling* of ourselves together. Had Christianity been, agreeably to the Notion of a certain Person *, *a divine Philosophy, existing in the Mind, without public Worship, or any thing that looked like a Church*, it must soon have expired of itself: The internal Relation which we bear to Christ would have been forgotten, where there were no publick Observances, expres-

* *Algernon Sidney*. See Bishop *Burnet's Secret History*, Vol. I.

five of it, kept up. The Light would SERM. X.
have gone out, which was to be kept so
close, as not to *shine out before Men*, by
any avowed Profession. But our blessed Sa-
viour, by the Settlement of a *visible* Society,
by appointing a standing Ministry, and ob-
liging his Disciples to attend to their In-
structions, has perpetuated his Religion, and
founded it *upon a Rock, against which the*
Gates of Hell shall not prevail.





SERMON XI.

The Duties of Family and private
Prayer, considered.

ROMANS XII. 12.

Continuing constant in Prayer.

HAVING in a former Discourse proved, SERM. XI.
Ist, The Reasonableness of Prayer
in general; and
IIdly, Of publick Worship.

I now proceed

IIIdly, To consider the Duty of Family
Prayer.

It is the Business of every Man, within
the Compass of his Abilities, to promote
the Honour of God; and consequently of
every Head of a Family to warm those,
that are beneath him, with a Sense of Re-
ligion, and to see, that nothing, as far as
the Sphere of his Power extends, be *hid*
from the Heat thereof.

If

SERM. XI.

If then to instruct your Family in religious Duties, and to pray fervently with them, as well as for them, would be of any Service to promote Piety; if every Man ought to promote Piety, as much as he can, in the Station in which God has placed him: Then it is the Province allotted you, as the Head of it, to *walk*, as the Scripture expreffeth it, *in your House with a perfect Heart*, and by your Example to *provoke* them (the *only* Way one would willingly provoke any Person) to *Love and good Works*.

You may say, it is true, Prayers at periodical and stated Times are necessary to revive those Impressions of the Deity, which would otherwise be effaced by the Business or Pleasures of Life; it is requisite to shift the Scene, and commune with the Father of Spirits, to prevent that Disrelish for, and Deadness of Affection to heavenly Things, which a continual Intercourse with sensible Objects would else occasion. But why may not this be done in the Closet? What Occasion is there for Family Prayers?

To this I answer, that this is to make a wrong Estimate of Things; it is to consider your Family, as entirely consisting of
Persons,

Persons, who have a competent Knowledge SERM. XI.
how they ought to pray, and a hearty Inclination to set about the Performance of this Duty, which is far from being the Truth of the Case: It is to consider them, as what one could wish them to be, instead of what in Reality they are: It is to argue from Theory to Fact. It is granted, that Men of a sober and dispassionate Reason will reflect, that, if they live, as it were, without a God in this World, without ever praising and adoring him; they must expect to be separated from him for ever. But then it should be granted too, that the Bulk of Families will not be at this Expence of Reflection: And if you would bring them to a just Sense and right Apprehension of these Things; you must light up Devotion in their Breasts by your Instructions and Example.

For, when they see you employing, and teaching them to employ, the noblest Principles of the Soul, Love and Gratitude, upon God the noblest of Beings; when they see you warmly affected with a Sense of what you are doing, proportionably to the Value and Importance of the Things you pray for; they, who are thus com-

SERM. XI.



modiously placed under the direct Influence of such a burning and shining Light, will be disposed to catch the Flame from you, and to feel their Breasts, if they are susceptible of good Impressions, burn within them with the same generous Ardour.

Besides, the *united* Devotions of a whole Family acting in Concert will be more effectual, than the *solitary* Prayers of any single Member, when detached from the whole Body: As they have a Tendency to beget in others a correspondent Piety, to propagate the Flame from Breast to Breast, and to encourage, countenance, and give a Sanction to exemplary Holiness: But chiefly, because God has promised, that *where two or three are gathered together, he will be in the midst of them.* It is a beautiful and amiable Sight to behold a well-regulated Society, glorifying God with one Heart and one Mouth, cancelling their former Sins by Repentance, and forming settled Resolutions of Obedience for the future.

Add to this, that the joint Devotions of a *Family* are as necessary to derive a Blessing upon a Family, and to return Thanks for Blessings already received; as the Applica-

tions of each *Individual* are to beg of God, or to thank him for, his own personal Advantages. SERM. XI.

If ever then you would have your Children to be dutiful, and your Servants faithful; if ever you desire your small Community here should join hereafter with the great Congregation of Men and Angels in one Chorus to their Maker; be sure to cultivate the Spot of Ground committed to your Care, teach them to look up to God in every Step of their Conduct, impress upon them, and keep alive in them, by repeated Prayers, a manly, serious, and devout Frame of Mind; and set apart some Portion of the Sabbath to read, or hear them read such good Books, as may instruct them in the strong and decisive Evidence of Christianity, the great Work of their Redemption, and the whole Compass of their Duty. From a Neglect of doing this, it comes to pass, that our Youth, as soon as they launch out into the World, fall an easy defenceless Prey to those Professors of Iniquity, who *go about seeking whom they may devour*; that they become Profelytes from the best Religion the World was ever blessed with, to no

SERM. XI. Religion at all; and that those, who should be the *Flower* of the Nation, are too often the very *Dregs* of it.

You think it a Duty incumbent upon you to let your Charity begin at Home, in furnishing your Family with their *bodily* Sustainance: And is it not much more your indispensable Duty, as Eternity is of infinitely greater Concern, to make Provision for their *spiritual* Well-Being? He is *worse than an Infidel*, who doth not provide for his own *House* in this Respect, as well as the *Meat*, which *perisheth not*, who doth not take Care to make them happy in themselves, serviceable to the World, and acceptable to God.

And to compass this End, the spiritual Nourishment of your Family; it is not enough, though that should by no Means be omitted, that you instruct them in the Duty of Prayer. Instructions are but Virtue set before them in *Theory* (lifeless Theory) which, though a lovely Form in the Eye of abstract Thinkers, yet is too delicate to make any strong Impressions upon the Gross of Mankind, who must be affected by what is sensible. But your own good Example is

Virtue *realized* and *alive*, it is not a mere abstract *Notion*, it is something *substantial*, it is Virtue brought down to their *Senses*, with all it's attractive Charms; it is Piety as it were *incarnate*; we behold it's external Glory, *full of Grace* and Loveliness.

It is not difficult to convince Men of the Reasonableness of Prayer: All the Difficulty lyes in engaging them to the Practice of it. And as long as a Desire of Imitation is confessedly a strong Principle of Action, one bright domestick *Pattern* in a Person of superior Character and Authority, shewing such a distinguished Regard to the Deity, that Morning and Evening come not more constantly in their Course, than his stated Hours of calling his Family to Devotion, will have more Effect upon all beneath him and about him; than a thousand dry *Instructions* without it, which will operate but faintly in Comparison. By the one you only point out their Duty; but by the other (joining with them in Prayer) you call it forth into Action: You help to raise a groveling and low-thoughted Soul, which before was cleaving to the Dust. By so often seeing the conspicuous Lustre of your Goodness, they

will be led to the approving it; and from approving to imitating it; and from imitating it to be *not only almost, but altogether such* as you are.

IVthly, I shall now subjoin an earnest Exhortation to Prayer, particularly with an Eye to that of the Closet.

Degenerate Souls, wedded to their vicious Habits, may disclaim all Commerce with Heaven, refusing to invoke him, whose infinite Wisdom is ever prompt to discern, and his Bounty to relieve the Wants of those, who *faithfully call upon him*; and neglecting to praise him, who is *great and marvellous* in his Works, *just and righteous* in his Ways, infinite and incomprehensible in his Nature: But all here, I would persuade myself, would daily set apart some Time to *think on him*, who gave us Power to think: He was the *Author*, and he should be the *Object of our Faculties*.

And, to do this the better, let us take Care, that every Morning, as soon as we rise, we lay hold on this proper Season of Address, and offer up to God the First-Fruits of our Thoughts, yet fresh, unfulled, and serene, before a busy Swarm of
vain

vain Images crowd in upon the Mind. When the Spirits just refreshed with Sleep, are brisk and active, and *rejoice*, like that Sun, which ushers in the Day, to *run* their *Course*; when all Nature just awakened into Being from Insensibility, pays it's early Homage; then let us join in the universal Chorus, who are the only Creatures in the visible Creation capable of knowing, to whom it is to be addressed.

And in the Evening, when the Stillness of the Night invites to solemn Thoughts, after we have collected our straggling Ideas, and *suffered not* a Reflection to *stir*, but what either looks upward to God, or inward upon ourselves, upon the State of our Minds; then let us scan over each Action of the Day, fervently intreat God's Pardon for what we have done amiss, and the gracious Assistance of his Spirit for the future: And, after having adjusted Accounts between our Maker and ourselves, commit ourselves to his Care for the following Night.

Thus beginning and closing the Day with Devotion, imploring his *Direction*, every Morning as we rise, for the following Day; and recommending ourselves, every Night before we lye down, to his *Protection*,

who neither slumbers nor sleeps ; the intermediate Spaces will be better filled up : Each Line of our Behaviour will terminate in God, as the Centre of our Actions. Our Lives all of a piece will constitute one regular *Whole*, to which each *Part* will bear a necessary *Relation* and Correspondence, without any *broken* and *disjointed* Schemes, independent of this grand End, the pleasing of God. And while we have this one Point in View, whatever *Variety* there may be in our Actions, there will be an *Uniformity* too, which constitutes the Beauty of Life, just as it does of every Thing else ; an Uniformity without being dull and tedious, and a *Variety* without being wild and irregular.

How would this settle the *Ferment* of our youthful Passions, and sweeten the last *Dregs* of our advanced Age ! How would this make our *Lives* yield the calmest *Satisfaction*, as some *Flowers* shed the most fragrant *Odours*, just at the *Close* of the Day ! And perhaps there is no better Way to prevent a *Deadness* and Flatness of Spirit from succeeding, when the *Briskness* of our Passions goes off ; than to acquire an early Taste for those spiritual Delights, whose *Leaf withers not*, and whose *Verdure*

ture remains in the Winter of our Days. SERM. XI.

And when this transitory Scene is shutting upon us, when the Soul stands upon the Threshold of another World, just ready to take it's everlasting Flight ; then may we think with unallayed Pleasure on God, when there can be little or no Pleasure to think upon any Thing else. And our Souls may undauntedly follow to that Place, whither our Prayers and Affections, those Forerunners of the Spirit, are gone before.

One of the greatest Philosophers of this Age being asked by a Friend, who had often admired his Patience under great Provocations, by what Means he had suppressed his Anger ? answered, “ that he was naturally quick of Resentment ; but that he had by daily Prayer and Meditation attained to this Mastery over himself. As soon as he arose in the Morning, it was, throughout his Life, his daily Practice to retire for an Hour to private Prayer and Meditation : This, he often told his Friends, gave him Spirit and Vigour for the Business of the Day : This he therefore recommended as the best Rule of Life. For nothing, he knew, could support the Soul in all Distresses
“ but

SERM. XI. “ but a Confidence in the supreme Being :
 “ Nor can a rational and steady Magnani-
 “ mity flow from any other Source, than a
 “ Conscioufness of the divine Favour.” *

Of *Socrates*, who is said to have gained an Ascendant over his Passions, it is reported, that his Life was *full* of Prayers and Addresses to God †.

And of *Confucius* the *Chinese* Philosopher, another great Example of Virtue, it is expressly recorded, that (contrary to a Fashion now prevailing) he never did eat of any Thing, but he first prostrated himself, and offered Thanks to the Supreme Lord of Heaven ‡.

Leave not off praying, said a pious Man : *For either praying will make thee leave off sinning, or sinning will make thee leave off praying.* If we say our Prayers in a cold, supine, lifeless Manner now and then, I know no other Effect they will have, but to enhance our Condemnation : In effect we do not *pray*, we only *say* our Prayers : We pay not the Tribute of

* See *Boerhaave's* Life in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

† Ἦν ὁ βίος Σωκράτους μετὰ εὐχῆς, Max. Tyrii Differentio, 30.

‡ *Harris's* Collection of Travels, Folio, Vol. II.

the Heart, but an *unmeaning Form* of Ho-
mage; we draw near to God with our
Lips, while our Heart is far from him.
And without Perseverance in Prayer, the
Notions of the Amendment of our Lives,
and a sacred Regard to the Deity, will
only float for a while in the Head, with-
out sinking deep, or dwelling long upon
the Heart. We must be inured to a con-
stant Intercourse with God, to have our
Minds engaged and interested, and to be
rooted and grounded in the Love of him.
But, if we invigorate our Petitions, which
are otherwise a lifeless Carcase, with a se-
rious and attentive Spirit, composed, but
not dull; affectionate, but not passionate
in our Addresses to God: Praying, in this
Sense, will at last make us leave off sin-
ning; and Victory, decisive Victory, de-
clare itself in Favour of Virtue. Praying,
as a Thing merely of *Course*, without a
due Preparation of Mind, will have no
Influence. But praying with a *Sense* of
what we are *about*, must put us upon en-
deavouring to be, what we pray to be.
For can a Man pray to God to forgive his
Sins, and enable him to get the better of
them, who is resolved all the while to
conti-

SERM. XI.
~

SERM. XI.

continue in them? Not certainly, if he bestowed the least transient Glance of Thought upon what he was doing. A Prayer against Sin must call up uneasy Reflections in his Mind, who goes on in a Course of sinning: And he must either *break off* those *Sins by Repentance*, which make Prayer irksom to him; or bid adieu to those Prayers, which suggest distasteful Considerations: Piety and Vice cannot very long alternately share a divided Empire in our Breasts: We cannot keep both to Prayer, Prayer offered with *Life and Energy*; and to our Lusts: *Either we will hate the one, and love the other; or else we will hold to the one, and despise the other.* Let us, however, remember that the Efficacy of Prayer does not depend so much on the *outward Act*, as that *inward Frame and Disposition of Mind*, with which we pray.

It would be of admirable Service to us, when we are praying, to have this Expression frequently in our Minds. “Am I
“ doing so *important* a Business in so *slight*
“ and *perfunctory* a Manner? The most
“ important Business of all, with *Supine-*
“ *ness and Indolence?*”

After all, there may be some little Singularities cleaving to Men of distinguished Piety,

Piety, which those, *who sit in the Seat of* ^{SERM. XI.} *the Scornful*, seldom fail to make the standing Mark of their Raillery. But the Question is, whether, when we come to die, we would chuse to be of the Number of those, who have been most charitable and devout, though over scrupulous, and to have our *Lot among the Saints*; or of those who have lived in an open flagrant Neglect of the Deity, as if he, the Father of Beings, were the only Being, with whom they were resolved to have nothing to do. A thousand little *Weaknesses* in Acting or Thinking will easily be forgiven in those, who have *meant well*, and have to the best of their Power *acted up* to that honest Meaning: a Sense of their Infirmities begetting in them a due Humility, and Humility *covering a Multitude* of pitiable Infirmities. But Faults committed with an *high Hand*, and from an *haughty Heart*, Faults proceeding from a *disdainful Irreverence* and a *stubborn Disobedience* to the *Fountain* of all Good, and therefore the *Object* of all *Duty*, who has the justest Claim to every Instance of our Obedience, are much more unpardonable, than all the little Frailties incident to human Nature, if they met together in one Subject.

SERM. XI. *ject.* The Laughter of Fools may soon be no more: And then we shall be sensible (why are we not so now!) that it is infinitely better to be for a while *ridiculous* for our *Infirmities*; than to be *odious*, perhaps even here, for our *Vices*, and *miserable* to all *Eternity*.

Dost thou labour under a Load of Guilt? *Come unto Christ all that travel and ARE HEAVY laden, and he will give you Rest.* Dost thou feel the Pressure of Affliction, or the Blast of Censure? Instead of loathing thy Being, instead of breaking out into sudden Bursts of Passion against thy Foes, or contracting a settled Gloom of Malice; unbosom thy Secrets, and disburthen thy Cares to him, who is both able and willing to resettle thy discomposed Mind. All that envenomed Rancour, which is apt to embitter our Spirits against Mankind in general, and our Enemies in particular, when we suffer, or think we suffer undeservedly, will abate and die away, as we strive to *set our Affections on Things above.* Our Thoughts, like the *Waters of the Sea*, when *exhaled towards Heaven*, will lose their offensive *Bitterness* and *Saltiness*, leave *behind* them each *distastful Quality*, and *sweeten* into an amiable Humanity and Candour, till they descend in
gentle

gentle Showers of Love and Kindness upon our Fellow-Creatures. SERM. XI.

As we invoke *the Father of Lights* to rescue us from every material Error, *the Father of Mercies* to pardon our Sins, and *the God of all Comforts* to relieve our Distresses; we shall be assured, that *all Things*, sooner or later, *will work together for Good* to us, who love God: And that he, to whom the whole *Family of Beings in Heaven, in Earth, and under the Earth, do bow and obey*, will be both now and evermore our mighty Protector; too great to need our imperfect Services; too good not to accept of them, when they flow from a Mind humbly desirous to do his Pleasure, and recommend ourselves to his Favour. For though to an infinitely *powerful* Being *nothing* can be *serviceable*; yet to an infinitely *gracious* Being *every Thing* must be *acceptable*, which cometh from a *grateful* and an *humble* Heart, which would *be* and *do every Thing* that is *agreeable* to him, and *be* and *do nothing* which is *not* so; conscious, that to him who is infinitely good in himself, ever *Thing* that is good in us must be referred: *To whom be ascribed as is most due all Might, &c.*



SERMON XII.

On the Duty of Resignation.

In two SERMONS.

JOB II. 10.

*Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God,
and shall we not receive Evil?*

TH E S E are the Words of *Job*, SER. XII. when reduced from the Height of Prosperity, to the lowest Depth of Misery. When Calamities, a dire Train, succeeded one after another; his Wife, harassed by Misfortunes, advises him to put an unnatural Period to his Life. But he, with that unconquered Spirit, which neither his former Prosperity had softened, nor his present Misfortunes had broken, replied, *Thou talkest like one of the foolish, or irreligious Women*: For shall we, Beings of a mixed Character, expect pure

and unmixed Happiness from our Creator ? Shall we, who do so much Evil, refuse to suffer any which he sends ? *Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and shall we not receive Evil ?*

How mean and unmanly, in Comparison of *Job's*, is the Behaviour of that gloomy Race of Mortals, who have Recourse to the Instruments of Death under any severe Affliction, who launch out into another World, weary of the Pleasures, or impatient under the Pains of this ? Who without Understanding the Value of Life, or the true Ends of Living, contemptuously return back to God the Present, which he has made : As if, what he, the Author of every good Gift, had bestowed, was a Trifle not worth the keeping ?

Their Friends may view with weeping Eyes, and even an unrelenting Crowd with some Concern, a *mangled and disfigured Carcase* : But Men of larger Views will extend their Reflections farther, and lament the Miseries of a *wounded Spirit*, which has rushed unprepared into the Presence of an incensed Deity. A ghastly *Corpse* will give *them* the least Touches of Compassion : But to consider the Case of

a *Soul*, that has done a Fact which leaves no Room for Repentance, that has plunged itself into an Abyfs of endless Misery ; to confider that a new Light is probably let in upon the unbodied Mind, a Light more sharp, powerful, and piercing, than even that Instrument, which dissolved the vital Union, and divorced the Soul from the Body ; — this is what will make the deepeft Impreffions upon any *thinking* Spectator. God has joined Soul and Body together : And *what he has joined together, let no Man, unauthorifed by him, put afunder.* To commit Self-Murder is an abfolute Defiance, or a desperate Difbelief of his Providence. It is to difmifs *ourfelves* from this State of Probation, before *God* thinks fit to difmifs us : It is in Effect to tell him, we will not patiently endure the Chaftefements, which he wifely inflicts.

Not fo holy *Job* : He confidered, that he, who fent him into the World, alone knew when he had fulfilled thofe Ends, for which he fent him : That he alone therefore was a competent Judge, when he was to be difcharged from any further Service here, and to be admitted to a better State. *All my appointed Time,* fays he,
X 2
will,

SER. XII. *will I wait, till my Change come.* It is a hard Matter to determine, whether in Prosperity he relieved the Wants of others more generously ; or in Adversity bore his own Miseries more patiently. In the former Case, he was a *Father to the Fatherless*, he made the *Blessing of him that was ready to perish, come upon him* : And in the latter Case, he could reflect ; *Naked came I into the World, and naked shall I return : The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away : Blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

To suffer undauntedly, shews a greater Strength of Mind, than even to act greatly. For to act greatly depends upon a brisker Flow of Spirits, and a warmer Ferment of the Blood : But to suffer undauntedly, requires an uncompliyng Integrity, and a determinate Firmness of Mind. And therefore we have Examples of those, who have dared nobly in the Field of Battle, and yet have shewn a cowardly Dejection of Mind, when Death has approached them slowly and gradually in all it's Pomp of Terrors upon a sick-Bed or a Scaffold. A sudden *Flush* of Courage might animate them in the former Case :

But there must be a *settled Temper* to support them in the latter; and to act steadily, a Man must think solidly.

SER. XII.

From this famous Example of Resignation I shall endeavour to shew,

Ist, How far we are allowed to grieve for our Calamities, or how far Grief is consistent with a State of Resignation.

IIdly, Upon what Principles our Resignation to God is to be founded.

IIIIdly, I shall lay down some Rules for the Practice of this Duty.

Ist, I am to shew, how far we are allowed to grieve for our Calamities, or how far Grief is consistent with a State of Resignation.

Christianity may regulate our Grief, as it does every other Passion; but does not pretend to extinguish it. Let us say what we will, and do what we can; yet ungrateful and unwelcome Things will make harsh and ungrateful Impressions upon us. It is a Mistake to think, that even a liberal Education and a refined Turn of Thinking makes Men more Proof against Misery, than other People. No, on the other Hand,

SER. XII.

our Sensibility, whether of Joy or Misery, arises in Proportion to our Ingenuity. A Man of a coarser Frame shall slight those Afflictions, which fall heavy upon a more refined Disposition. The Vulgar in Life, as well as in the Drama, are incapable of being touched by a fine Distress. The same Ingenuity and Delicacy of Mind, which sheds a more lovely Lustre upon Prosperity, casts a deeper Shade upon Adversity : It imparts a more exquisite Relish to every Joy, but gives a keener Edge to Pain and Misery : Just as the finest Glass, which transmits each kindly and enlivening Beam of Light, suffers the most by each contagious Damp. An over-refined Delicacy, however, is almost as bad an Extreme, as an unfeeling Stupidity : and he, who is too tender to bear the least Blast of Adversity, is not fit to live in the World.

It is allowable, nay it is commendable for us to feel a generous Movement of Soul, and to be touched with the Distresses of *other* People : And certainly it cannot be blameable for us to be grieved at our *own* Misfortunes : Nay, I do not know, but Grief in some Cases is so far from being blameable, that it may be even necessary, to
take

take off any Hardness of Heart ; and to make it more pliant and ductile, by melting it down. If our *Self-Feeling* be the Foundation of our *Fellow-Feeling* ; then, as soon as Reason can shine out in it's full Strength, the Virtues of Humanity and Tender-heartedness will shoot up, as from a willing Soil, in a Mind prepared and softened by Grief, *like the tender Grass springing out of the Earth by clear shining after Rain.* However that be ; the first Starts and Sallies of Grief, under any Calamity, are always at least pardonable : It is only a long and continued Course of Grief, when the Soul *refuses to be comforted*, that is inexcusable : And it is *most* inexcusable, when it bears no Proportion to it's real Cause ; when it tinctures our whole Way of Thinking, and destroys the Relish of our Being—when the Hours, too swift in their Career during our Prosperity, lag heavy and tedious, as if they were to us, what we are to ourselves, an insupportable Burthen—when the Wheel of Time seems clogged, and to drag along with a slow encumbered Motion through the foul and rugged Ways of Adversity, which glided swiftly over a smooth and pleasant Surface. The Passions and Appetites

cease to be clamorous and importunate in their Demands ; the Activity of the Soul is deadened, and all it's Powers stand still — all, but those of the Imagination, which is then most busy, to heighten real Grievances, and to *call Things, that are not, as though they were* ; to call up a thousand groundless Apprehensions and idle Sorrows, which have no Being, but in Thought, and then to disturb itself as much, as if they were so many Realities. And it always works more strongly, in Proportion to the Weakness and Emptiness of the Mind. For which Reason *it is not good* for such Persons, in such a forlorn and disconsolate State, *to be alone*. For the Imagination of such Men, in Solitude, where Reason has left a vacant Space, will be sure to people the Void with Creatures of it's own, with ghastly Chimæras, visionary Perplexities and Spectres of Horror and Distress.

Melancholy in Excess is an accursed Spirit, which if we *resist*, it *will flee from us* ; but if we indulge it, what was for some Time a pitiable Weakness, becomes, at length, a deliberate Crime. Violent tempestuous Sorrows are like Hurricanes ; they soon spend themselves, and all is clear and serene

serene again : There is more Danger from a silent, pensive Grief, which, like a slow, lingering Fog, shall continue a long Time, and blot the Face of Nature all around. That soft soothing Melancholy, which some indulge, is far more injurious to the Health ; than the turbulent and boisterous Passions : For it saps and undermines our Strength by Degrees, and imperceptibly preys upon us. It gives us wrong Ideas. For Persons and Things appear to us, just according to the Disposition we are in to receive grateful or disadvantageous Impressions from them ; and not as they are in their own Nature. And there is as much Difference between the Face of Things, when viewed in a cheerful Serenity of Temper ; and when discerned in a sullen Gloominess of Humour ; as there is between the same Object, when presented to View by a clear, open, unclouded Sunshine, which gives the Sight it's full Play, and does the Object full Justice ; and when seen by the sickly Light of a lonely Taper, which dims it's Lustre, and shades it's Beauty.

Whatever Allowances therefore may be made for the first Workings of the soft and tenders Passions ; yet we must guard against
any

SER. XII.

any settled Habit of Grief. Because, *1st*, While it lasts, we shall view the Deity, the World, and ourselves in a wrong Light : The melancholy Damp must be done away, before the Mirrour can give us just and impartial Images of Things. Because, *2^{dly}*, It is our Duty to promote social Happiness: Now Cheerfulness and inoffensive Pleasantry make us agreeable to others, and others easy and happy in our Company ; whereas habitual Melancholy spreads an universal Gloom, and damps the Good-Humour of Society. Because, *3^{dly}*, Not to enjoy with Cheerfulness the Blessings, which remain to us, is not to treat them as what they are, *viz.* Blessings, and consequently Matters of Joy and Complacency ; it is to act contrary to the Design of our Sovereign Benefactor in pouring them upon us, who would have us *taste and see how gracious He is*. Because, *4^{thly}*, it is the same Thing, whether we consume ourselves by a slow, lingering Poison, or dispatch ourselves by an immediate Death : We are equally guilty of Self-Murder, whether we knowingly wear away the Springs of Life gradually, which is the Case, when we abandon ourselves to wasting Grief ; or we cut at once the Thread of it violently asunder. Lastly,

Lastly, Sorrow is criminal, when we have little or nothing to torment us, but, what is the greatest Tormenter of all, our own uneasy Spirit; when we create fantastic Grievances, where there were none before; — or aggravate them, where they were; — or when we neglect the necessary Duties of Life, to indulge a fruitless Grief: — or when we suffer Grief to prey upon our Vitals, without unburthening *all our Care upon Him, who careth for us.* — When we do not consider, that either his Providence will rescue us from our Miseries, or his Grace support us under them, or his Wisdom make all Things *work together for Good* to us, at the last final Issue and Adjustment of Things.

They, who are continually complaining of Inconveniences, seem capable of relishing any Thing but Heaven; for which a complaining Temper will by no Means prepare them. Whereas, not to repine at the Inconveniences we meet with here, may bring us to that Place, where only there are no Inconveniences at all. And he, who is not discontented with a slender Portion of Blessings, may have the greatest Blessing of all, the Deity to be his *Portion for ever* and ever.

But

SER. XII.

But this brings me,

Idly, to shew, upon what Principle our Resignation to God is to be founded.

And this is no other, than what *Job* founded his upon, *viz.* a full Confidence in the Deity, that he would make the Sum of his Happiness, either here or hereafter, greatly exceed that of his Misery. *I know,* says he, *that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand, at the latter Day, upon the Earth; and, though Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine Eyes shall behold, and not another.*

To tell a Man, to whom Life is become a Burthen; that *there is no Help for him in his God*; but yet he must not lay violent Hands upon himself; because it is eternally and indispensably fit, that a Creature should be resigned to his Creator; that he is placed in the Station of Life by God, as a Soldier at his proper Post, which he must not relinquish, till released by his Commander; notwithstanding the Inclemency of the Season beats hard upon him, notwithstanding that Commander will neither punish him for a Breach of his Duty, nor reward him

for

for a strict Performance of it : To talk thus to him, when the Disadvantages of Life greatly overbalanced the Advantages of it, would be an Affront to his Understanding, and an Insult upon common Sense. In such an uncomfortable Situation, I do not see why Persons greatly distressed might not fly to Death before *their appointed Time* ; just as Persons harassed with Fatigues, or enfeebled by Sicknefs lay themselves down to Rest, before the Night cometh, which putteth a *natural* Period to our Labours. But prove to him, that there is a particular Providence to redress his Grievances, and that his Afflictions will work out for him an exceeding Weight of Happiness ; then indeed Resignation to God becomes an indispensable Duty, and Self-Murder a Crime ; then he may argue, *Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and shall we not receive a little Evil ? Father, if it be possible, remove this Cup from me ; nevertheless not my Will, but thine be done.* To found Virtue upon the Will of God, enforced by proper Sanctions, is founding it upon a Rock : The Rains may descend, and the Storms of Affliction beat hard against the Structure ; yet it will stand firm and unmoveable ;

SER. XII.

moveable ; because it is founded upon a Rock, the Will of God, the Rock of Ages. The Consideration of a Being, whose Power created, whose Wisdom governs, and whose Justice will judge the whole World, will have an Influence in all Cases. But Arguments from the unendowed Beauty of Virtue, and from the abstract Finesses of Things, are of too fine and delicate a Texture to combat the Force of the Passions, or to stand the Shock of Adversity.

Indeed, setting Revelation aside, I know of little or nothing, that can make the present State of Things supportable to a thinking Mind. The Hopes of a better World can alone make this, where *there is one Event to the Righteous and the Wicked*, tolerable to us. And we know little of a future State from the Light of Nature. The best Argument, and indeed the only one, on which any Stress can be laid, is ; that, since there is here an undistinguishing Distribution of Good and Evil, there will be a future State to adjust all Inequalities. But this Argument, though it may prove a future State in general, is very far from making out the Eternity of that State, or the

the *Degree* of Happiness : Since a much less Compass of Duration, than Eternity, a much less Degree of Bliss, than an exceeding Weight of Glory, will be sufficient to set to Rights all seeming Disproportion and Inequality of Favours during the short Term of our Lives here below. According to the Gospel Promises, *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive those Things which God has prepared for them that love him.* All the Ideas we can form of future Felicity are widely disproportioned to their great Originals. Suppose a Man, that had been blind from his Birth, should, being restored to his Sight by a Miracle, immediately survey the lively Verdure of the Earth, the Arch of Heaven, the Glories of the Sun, and the unmeasurable Expanse of the Creation ; what Raptures would he be affected with at the sudden View of a Scene so entirely new to Him ? Much greater undoubtedly will the Soul be transported with, when she shall be admitted to that Fulness of Bliss, which would at present overpower her feebler Faculties. That God will put the repenting Sinner (and the best of us are but repenting Sinners)

SER. XII.

ners) upon a much better Foot hereafter, than the unrepenting ; is a clear Dictate of Reason : But that he will admit Him to a State of unallayed exceeding and everlasting Happiness, without any Punishment for his Sins, without any intermediate State of Trial and Probation, without any Tincture of Sorrow and Pain, can only be proved by Revelation. So highly necessary was a Revelation to ascertain these beneficial Truths ; that, whereas every Man's Death without it would be, in a great Measure, what an Atheistical Philosopher said of his, a great Leap into the Dark ; the Promises of eternal Life are, through our Saviour's Merits, infinitely valuable ; and, through his Veracity, infallibly sure.

We cannot say, consistently with Reason and Modesty, that God *must* pardon our Sins upon Repentance : All, that we can pretend to, is, that he *may* pardon them. But then the same Reasons, that induce us to conclude that he *may* pardon them, should make us apprehend, that he may *not* pardon them. For what God *may* do, that he may likewise *not* do ; just as the *Summa rerum*, the general Good of the whole requires. It must be allowed, that
Sins

Sins of a deeper Dye are the just Objects of Punishment. Now for the same Reason, that *any* Sin is the just Object of divine Vengeance, *all* Sin is so likewise. For all Sins are of the same *Nature*; and one differs from another only in *Degree*. And the same Right, that God has to inflict Punishment upon *notorious* Sinners; the very same he has to punish proportionably, and in a less Degree, every *lesser* Sinner. Either then we must say, that *no* Sin whatever renders us obnoxious to divine Vengeance; or it must be granted, that *all* Sin does so too. And if so, can it be proved by the Light of Nature, that God will treat us hereafter, as, what we are not, innocent Beings, that deserve no Punishment?

Here then Reason was at the End of it's Line, it stood upon the Shore, eyed the vast Ocean of Eternity which lay before it, it saw a little, imagined a great deal; but Clouds and Darkness soon terminated it's narrow Prospect. Revelation, on the other Hand, has enlarged our Views, it insures to us, what Reason could never prove, a Fulness of Pardon, upon our Repentance, from God, without clogging it with any Exceptions whatever; and an uninter-

ed Enjoyment of clear Happiness, Truth and Virtue, for ever and ever: It assures us, that this Life is our only State of Probation, and that in the next the Good shall be as the Angels of God: And were we once in that blessed State, we should be perhaps more reluctant to come back again to this World, though we were to enjoy the most distinguished Advantages in it; than those, who enjoy the most distinguished Advantages in it, would be to be thrust down into a dark noisom Prison. These are glorious Thoughts, which ennoble the Soul at all Times, and support it under any ~~se~~very Trial. With such animated Hopes full of a blessed Immortality, the primitive Christians gave the strongest Proofs of their Virtue, (like Incense fragrant, as it consumes in the Fire,) at the same Time, that they felt the severest Tortures.

They therefore, who would disprove Revelation, endeavour to deprive us of what is our best Guide in the Day of Prosperity, and our only Comfort in the Day of Adversity. The Generality of Infidels may be divided into two Sorts. The greater Part of them live on in one uninterrupted Track of Debauchery, without deviating often into
Thought

Thought and Consideration. And these ^{SER. XII.} are the happy Men among them, if Happiness consists in want of Thought: Men, whose Mouths speak against Christianity, from the Abundance of a wicked Heart; for it cannot be said, they speak against it from the Abundance or Fulness of the Head: Standing Monuments of the Insufficiency of that Reason, which they so highly extol, and of the Necessity of that Revelation, which *giveth Wisdom to the Simple*: Men, who espouse the Cause of Infidelity for the same Reason, or rather no Reason, for which they wear a particular Mode of Dress, merely because it is the prevailing Fashion among their Acquaintance: gleaning Objections, that are dropped in Conversation from much shrewder Men; humbly content to *gather up the Crumbs, that fall from their Master's Table*, without ever thinking for themselves, or laying in a Stock of Knowledge. But those few Infidels, who love to be at a great Expence of Reading and Thinking, have their Minds generally overcast with black and melancholy Ideas; out of Humour with themselves, (so far perhaps they have Reason,) and with every Thing else; the

great Disturbers of the Repose of Mankind and their own, who are for subverting Revelation, without giving, or indeed being able to give us any Equivalent in lieu of it: The Rewards and Punishments discoverable by natural Reason, being not clear nor determinate enough to afford sufficient Encouragement to the Good, and Discouragement to the Bad.

To be a thoughtless Deist, is confessedly to be a Fool; To be a thinking Deist, is to be a Wretch: But to be a sober serious Christian,* is the best Way to make us tolerably easy through all the changing Scenes of Life; to heighten the Pleasures, and lessen the Miseries of it: The Precepts of Morality in Scripture are our best Counsellors in Life, and Health; and the Doctrine of the Redemption our only sure Support at the Hour of Death. To be a thinking Infidel, is to consider, how vain, unsatisfactory and precarious, all our present Pleasures are; how soon we may be snatched from them, or they from us: It is to look upon this Life, as a Dream; and on the next, as one undistinguished Void, one univereal Blank, of which he can know little or nothing, without the Help of that Revelation, which he rejects. It

It is Christianity, which teaches us to despise the Follies, abhor the Vices, and combat the Miseries of this World ; which, instead of affording such dry and jejune Consolations as Philosophy afforded it's Votaries, informs us, that Afflictions are sent to wean us from this World, and fix our Hopes on a better;—that they are the Chastisements of that Being, who *pitieth us as a Father pitieth his own Children*:—that we ought patiently to submit to *natural* Evil, which he inflicts upon us, by Way of Atonement for *moral* Evil, to expiate the secret Sins of the virtuous, and to bend the stubborn Minds of presumptuous Sinners.—That what we must feel as Men, we may bear as more than Men, through the Grace of God, who, if he does not always proportion our Trials to our natural Strength, will adjust the Assistances of his blessed Spirit to our Exigencies, giving us the Security of divine Protection, at the same Time that we are subject to the Frailties of human Nature:—that, whereas we are apt to look upon the present State, as an intire unconnected independent Scene, which has no Relation to a future State ; God views both Worlds at once, and con-

SER. XII.

considers what will be for our Advantage, with
 Regard to the whole Extent of our Being ;
 —that, if we make a due use of Calamities,
 our Patience under them will endear us to
 Him,—that the Time will come, and must
 shortly be, when we shall consider all Trou-
 bles in that Light, in which *Moses* taught the
Israelites to regard the *Egyptians* just upon
 the Brink of the Red Sea : *These Egyptians*
whom ye have seen to Day, ye shall see them
again no more for ever : These Troubles,
 which ye have hitherto undergone, ye shall
 no more undergo ; Pain and Sorrow shall
 be no more, but one undetermined View
 of Bliss for ever and ever be before you,



SERMON XIII.

On the Duty of Resignation.



JOB II. 10.

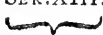
*Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God,
and shall we not receive Evil?*

HAVING, in a former Discourse, SER. XIII. shewn, *Ist*, How far we are allowed to grieve for our Calamities, or how far Grief is consistent with a State of Resignation;

And, *II^{dly}*, Upon what Principles our Resignation is to be founded:

I proceed to my *III^d* general Head, *viz.* To lay down some Rules for the Practice of this Duty.

In the first Place, do not expect perfect Happiness: It depends not upon ourselves alone; but upon a Coincidence of several Things, which seldom hit all right. *Several* Ingredients are necessary to make up

SER. XIII.  the costly Composition ; but *one wrong* Ingredient is enough to poison the whole, and render it distasteful.

When we first make our Entrance into the World, we are too apt to form sanguine Notions, and to propose to ourselves high Enjoyments^s in this World. But by that Time we reach the Noon of Life, frequent Disappointments, Crosses, and Pains call home our Thoughts, lower our swelling Ideas, and reduce them to a just Sense of Things, to what is really attainable in this State, which is at best, for any length of Time, nothing but Ease, Tranquillity, and moderate Satisfactions. *All the Rivers run into the Sea, says Solomon, yet is not the Sea full :* So should all earthly Pleasures, without those of a moral and spiritual Nature, center in one Soul ; yet would not that Soul be filled or satisfied ; Because, the Soul being a spiritual Being, none but spiritual Pleasures can be suited to it's Nature, and proportioned to it's Greatness ; because in the next Place Virtue is the Health of the Soul, which is as necessary to give a Relish to any Pleasure within, as the Health of the Body is to make us relish our Meat and Drink.

2dly,

2dly, If you would not be overmuch troubled at the Loss of any Thing ; take Care to keep your Affections disengaged. As soon as ever you have placed your Affections too intensely beyond a certain Point on any Thing below ; from that Moment you may date your Misery. Whether Riches, Pleasure, or Honour, be the chief Point in View ; take it for granted, there is not that earthly Thing, but what is sufficient to make you very unhappy, when once you become too strongly attached to it. Whenever you are deprived of it, you will be indifferent to all the Blessings of Life, which you are possess'd of: There will be a craving Void left aking in the Breast, which it will be no easy Matter to supply and fill up. A sure Indication this, that God has design'd himself, in whom there is *a Fulness of Joy*, to be the principal Object of our Desires. And some have been of Opinion, that the Soul feels stronger Pangs in being torn from those Things, for which she has contracted a long habitual Fondness ; than she does in being divorced from that Body to which she has been long united. Guard then betimes against any growing Passion, whether for Riches, Pleasures, or Honours ;
and

SER. XIII. and you will find the Loss of them will sit less heavy upon you. We rest with the main *Bent* of our Souls upon earthly Things, as our principal Supports; the Consequence of which is, that, when they *slip* from *under* us, our *Fall* is more *hurtful*, in Proportion to the *Weight* and *Stress*, with which we relied upon them.

2dly, Reflect on the Advantages you have rather, than be always dwelling on those you have not. Turn your Thoughts to the bright Side of Things. The Pleasures of Conversation, the Endearments of Friendship, the solid Satisfactions of Virtue and Benevolence, are more or less in every Man's Power. Lead a Life which knows no Vacancy from generous Sentiments, and then *the Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infirmities*.

We are affected with delightful Sensations, when we see even the inanimate Parts of the Creation, the Meadows, Flowers and Trees, in a *flourishing* State. There must be some rooted Melancholy at the Heart, when all Nature appears smiling about us, to hinder us from corresponding with the rest of the Creation, and joining in the universal Chorus of Joy. But if Meadows and Trees in their chearful Verdure,

ture, if Flowers in their Bloom, and all the *vegetable* Parts of the Creation in their most advantageous Dress, can inspire Gladness into the Heart, and drive away all Sadness but Despair; to see the *rational* Creation happy and flourishing, ought to give us a Pleasure as much superior, as the latter is to the former in the Scale of Beings. But the Pleasure is still heightened, if we ourselves have been instrumental in contributing to the Happiness of our Fellow-Creatures, if we have helped to raise an Heart drooping beneath the Weight of Grief, and revived that *barren and dry Land, where no Water was*, with refreshing Showers of Love and Kindness. Reflections upon our Benevolence to our Species, next to those upon our Piety to God, will be to us, what they were to *Job*, who dwelled much upon them, our best Comfort under the Pressure of Adversity.

Consider, that Blessings you enjoy are the *free Gifts of God*: But the Calamities you suffer are the just *Wages of Sin*. And yet perhaps you are insensible of, and ungrateful for the former, though unmerited Favours; while you murmur and repine at the latter, which you have fully deserved.

Think,

SER. XIII.

Think, how many are more miserable than you. Think, at the same Time, that you are cursing the Day of your Birth, or, wishing for that of your Death, upon the Account, it may be, of some trifling Loss or Disappointment ; how many are perhaps dying of Poverty, and a broken Heart ; or are living, (but had better be dead,) abandoned to extreme Want and Despair ; how many may be sinking at once into the devouring Deep, with Thoughts more disturbed and embroiled than the Deep itself ; *wondring, but there is none to save ; looking, but there is none to uphold.* And whatever Misfortunes you labour under ; be thankful to God for one inestimable Advantage, that you still have Power and Opportunity to secure, the greatest Blessing of all, everlasting Life : An Advantage, that thousands want, who may, this Instant, be lying under the Agonies of a Death-bed Repentance, just ready to plunge into the Depths of unutterable Woe. What would these poor Wretches give, that they were in your Condition !

4thly, Let us reflect, how reasonable it is, that our Wills should be conformable and resigned to the divine. Could you
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compass some favourite Scheme in View, the Center of your Wishes, and the End of your Endeavours; eternal Misery might, for any thing you know, to a Mind like yours, be the Consequence of it. Should those Calamities come upon you, which you dread and fence against; they may be the effectual Means of your Salvation. For Calamities, God's extraordinary Means of reforming Sinners, may penetrate that Heart, which the common Occurrences of Life could not reach or affect. Because, though God's Hand may be legible in them, yet it is only so to an attentive Observer: But violent Afflictions will rouse the Soul, just as a Hurricane does the Body, from the most profound Repose.

No Body ought to pray for Wealth or Honour, in an unreserved Manner, or without such Restrictions as these. “ O thou
“ eternal Being, the sole Author of every
“ Thing that is good *in itself*; and the
“ sole unerring Discerner of what is good
“ *for us*; if thou see'st that I shall be more
“ beneficial to the World, and more happy
“ in myself, by an Accession of Fortune;
“ then may thy Goodness confer it upon
“ me: But if thou foreknowest, that, in-
I “stead

SER. XIII. “stead of doing more Good thereby, it
 “will dazzle my Mind, and make me
 “forget my Friends, forget Thee, the
 “best of Friends, forgetting most of all
 “myself, the better Part of myself;—then,
 “rather strip me of every Thing, but my
 “Virtue; than grant me all the Enjoy-
 “ments in this World, without that well-
 “grounded Peace of Conscience, which
 “this World cannot give, and the Loss of
 “which nothing, which it can give, can
 “countervail.”

Perhaps you are uneasy, that you are despised, and your proud Heart rebels within you. Alas! Men do not, properly speaking, so much despise you, as they do your Fortune: And can you wonder they should despise that, which is despicable and little in itself? Nothing can be less, except it be *their* Minds, who disregard you upon that Account; or your *own*, who are troubled above Measure at it. If you had an ample Fortune, they would idolize you; though, like an Idol indeed, you *had Eyes and saw not* any Thing in a true Light; *Ears and heard not* the Voice of Reason; so very contemptible, that nothing can be more so, except it be those who *put their Trust* in you. Are

Are you sorry to see Worth and Virtue neglected, while Vice thrives and is advanced? Why thus it generally has been, and thus it always will be, without a Miracle. For Worth and Virtue is backward in making Advances, content with a Conscioufness of deserving those Honours, which it seldom gains. Whereas the Worthless leave no Stone unturned to compass that by Dint of Assurance and unwearied Application, which they despair of upon any other Foot. Add to this, that the Worthy will rise, if at all, by worthy Means. They will scorn, after a great Example *, to do that *for* Preferment, which even the Worthless would not do, *but* for Preferment. And when they find all the *direct* Avenues to Greatness blocked up, when they cannot *enter in* by the proper *Door*, which is that of Virtue; they will not poorly and abjectly *climb* or creep up some *other Way*, like a *Thief* and a *Robber*, by any indirect and sinister Artifices. Whereas the Bad are not scrupulous, they can carefs little Engines of Power, prostitute their Conscience, and make a sorry Purchase at the Expence of Honour and Religion.

* See *Chillingworth's* first Letter at the End of his Works.

But which is the most happy? the former or the latter? He is far happier, who even amidst the *universal Wreck* of his Fortunes has preserved *one invaluable Pearl*, his Virtue, worth infinitely more than all he has lost; than that Man is, who, whatever else he remains possessed of, has made Shipwreck of a good Conscience. The Man, *that has lost his own Soul*, is miserable indeed; but he, who amidst *all* his *Losses* has not lost *himself*, that *better* Part, which is *chiefly* himself; has within him that conscious Worth, and that bright Prospect before him, which will abate the Edge of his Misfortunes. Not *all* the *united* Evils, which human Malice can invent, or Power execute, are comparable to *one single* Evil, *viz.* that of *Guilt*; when one has incurred the Wrath of that Almighty Being, *in whose Pleasure is Life*, and whose Displeasure is worse than Death. He who is happy in nothing but his Innocence, may enjoy himself much more, than the most prosperous Villain, who, if he thinks at all, must have several Hours of exquisite Anguish, when by himself; which his Pride conceals from Company, and the View of the World. The Person, whose Sins are
like

like a sore Burthen, too heavy for him to ^{SER. XIII.}
bear, feels a greater Load, than any he can
lay upon another. There is a Pleasure even
in the silent Melancholy of a quiet Conscience,
far superior to all those noisy, and
therefore empty Joys, which are designed
to divert the Thoughts of a guilty One.
When all the World frowns upon him,
and every Thing looks black about him;
that Being, whose *the whole World is, and*
all that is therein, can lift up the Light of
his Countenance upon him, so that there
shall be nothing black or dark within him.

Are you sorry to see the Madness of the
World, to see, that Reason, though, like
our Saviour, it came into the World to
reign and bear Sway; yet, like Him, has
no Kingdom of this World; like Him, it
is born down by Nonsense, Rage and Fury,
by Faction and Tumult; that Debauchery,
amassing Wealth, and propagating
senseless Opinions, is the great Business
here; that Irreligion flourishes, and Christianity
decays? Remember, that Truth,
though, like our blessed Saviour, it may
be buried for a while, yet will rise victorious,
and surmount all Opposition. Remember,
what God said to *Elijah*, when

he complained that *He only was left* of the true Believers: *Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, who have not bowed the Knee to Baal.* Yet are there several thousands, Men, whose distinguished Sense and Judgment nothing can equal but their Piety, Humanity and Virtue; who, after a thorough Examination, chuse to live in, and would dare to die for, the Christian Religion. Whereas, cool-thinking Infidels are as rare to be met with, as cool-thinking Villains, (to whom I would be understood to compare them only in Respect of Number;) though those that are so are generally incurable. It has been observed, that there is seldom or never any such Thing as a disinterested Malice in cold Blood against any Man: All sedate Malice arising from some real or imaginary Opposition of Interest. The same holds true as to Christianity: There is perhaps no such Thing as a cool, sedate, disinterested Malice against it: The Hatred towards it arises from hence, that it is not some Men's Interest it should be true; that it lays before them such distasteful and unpalatable Truths, as that they must be eternally miserable, if they go on still in those Practices, to which

long Custom has wedded them. Hence all that Bitterness and Virulence against it. Christianity is too *strict* for the criminal Pleasures of several in *high* Life; too *simple and rational* for several in *low* Life, who are carried away with pompous Appearances, and overbearing Pretensions: Hence *Irreligion* is spreading among the *Gentry*, and *Enthusiasm* among the *Populace*. But yet, amidst all our Melancholy Apprehensions, it ought to be some Comfort to us, that in an Age and Nation, where bad Books and bad Principles are industriously dispersed, Divine Providence has taken Care, as it always does, that there should be Variety of Antidotes at Hand, and that the Remedies should at least bear Proportion to the Poison. And nothing, that has been advanced in favour of Infidelity, is left *unanswered*; but, what *must* ever be *unanswerable* by us, that *audacious Insolence*, and *ill-bred Raillery*, with which shameless Writers have treated sacred Subjects.

But perhaps public Grievances do not affect you so much; let us then proceed to those of a private Nature.

Are you deprived of your Friends? Convinced by sad Experience, upon how pre-




carious a Tenure we hold, that most valuable Blessing, Friendship; we should learn, from hence, to cultivate *one Friendship more*; a Friendship *unprecarious* and unperishable, a Friendship with that Being, who is the Almighty *Helper of the Friendless, who will never leave us, nor forsake us*. Instead of sorrowing, as Men without Hope, for our departed Friends; let us consider, that the greatest Instance of our Kindness to the Memory of the Dead, is to think, live and act; as we may reasonably presume, they would desire of us, and expect from us, if alive; and their Desire would be, that we should not disquiet ourselves above Measure.

Those, whose Lives have been drawn out to any length, must have survived several of their Friends; and, though new Ones may succeed, and be adopted into their Room; yet after having tasted the Pleasures of old Friendships, they seldom greatly relish the new; because they *say*, and think, *the old were better*. The Reason of which probably is, that Men insensibly join the pleasurable Ideas of their younger Years, with the Ideas of those Persons, with whom they then conversed. The Remembrance
of

of that Season of Delight, associates itself with, and gives an agreeable Lustre to, what was said and done then, and to those who said and did it. After the Loss of an old Acquaintance, to whom we used to pour forth all our Soul, (and no Wonder, for he was *as our own Soul*,) nothing can so effectually bear up the Mind, as a Conscience, that we have acquainted ourselves with God, who was our *Guide from our Youth*, will not forsake us, *when our Strength faileth*, and will be *our Portion for ever*.

Are you, though innocent, deprived of your Reputation? When Persons through Ignorance mistake, or through Villainy misrepresent your Actions; can you wish for a nobler Theatre to display your Virtues, than the Heaven of Heavens; for an august Assembly to applaud them, than the united Host of Men and Angels; or for a greater Judge to reward them, than He, who is at once the unerring Judge of Perfection in others, and the consummate Standard of Perfection in himself? In the mean Time you will best answer all Objections against your Goodness, by doing Good; as the Philosopher answered the Cavils

SER. XIII.  against Motion, by moving, and walking about: And, when by this Means you have established your Character; you may despise each idle Blast of Censure, as *a Wind that soon passeth away, and cometh not again.*

Does the Fear of Ills appall you, which must certainly come upon you some Time or other; as Sickness, for Instance, or the Apprehensions of imminent Death? Nature, or rather the wise Author of Nature, supplies us, during our Illness, with several Resources of Comfort, which we were not before aware of. When we are in full Health, we cannot imagine, how we should brook Pain, Sickness, and Confinement: No sooner are we ill, than we find a new Set of Desires, a new Train of Ideas, a new Frame of Mind, suited to the present Occasion. We no longer eagerly covet that Liberty, those Diversions and Enjoyments, which were before our favourite Desires. In short, most Ills, in this Particular, resemble a Fog: While we are at a Distance, they seem so solid, as to shut out each Glimpse of Light; but no sooner do we approach them, than we find they are much thinner, than they appeared.

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Are you obliged to sit down under some grievous Disappointments? Perhaps you might have been as much disappointed, if you had succeeded; by finding, that Things upon Enjoyment seldom answer the gay flattering Ideas, which we form beforehand; and that your Reason had been the Dupe of your Imagination, which had painted Objects bigger than the Life. Many, who have concluded, they should be thoroughly miserable, if they miscarried in their Pursuits; yet, some Time after their Miscarriage, have been quite easy and contented. An absolute Despair of gaining a Point, will as effectually put a Stop to the Craving of our Desires, as the very Possession of the Thing desired: The Soul will be no longer restless, but take Things as it finds them, and enjoy what it has. From hence we may learn, that, though every Man must know what he *desires*; few or none know, what they do *not want*; not want, I mean, in regard to the real Necessities, or valuable Conveniencies of Life; though they might wish for them to furnish a Supply for their Vanity, or for the Gratification of some exorbitant Passion. It must be owned, for the Honour of Nature (or rather of

SER. XIII. the Author of Nature,) that half the Miseries in the World are owing to Follies, of which Nature is entirely innocent. Besides those Inclinations, which are originally interwoven in our Frame; Education, Custom, and the Fashion of the World, have begot in us several artificial Desires. Now, if Providence has made the Gratification of our natural Appetites easy under proper Regulations; it is no Reflection upon his Goodness, that he has not put it in every Man's Power to satisfy those acquired Cravings, and fantastick Desires, which we have created in ourselves. We seldom fail to revenge upon ourselves the Wrong we have done Nature, by severely suffering for departing from it's Simplicity, to introduce a Taste for expensive Follies. We are first uneasy, because we imagine we want such Things; and, when we are in Possession of them, we are uneasy, because we find such Things are wanting in themselves.

Are you aggrieved by oppressive Power? What then, shall Virtue be injured here; and shall it's Grievances not be redressed? Surely, *then have I cleansed my Heart in vain, and washed my Hands in Innocency.*—But hold, impatient Man—Wait thou with
humble

humble Resignation of Mind; till, at the last grand Revolution, all Distinctions, but (the only valuable Ones) those of a religious and moral Nature, shall be no more; till that Glow-worm Lustre, with which some, at once both bright and despicable, have been invested, shall disappear at the Dawn of everlasting Day!

Wouldst thou be grieved at a *Minute's* Uneasiness, which should be productive of Happiness for the *whole* Term of thy following *Life*? No surely. Why this Life bears no more Proportion to Eternity, than a Minute does to thy Life below. It is but a *Point*, in Comparison of thy *whole* Existence. Submit then to Afflictions, which God severely kind lays upon Thee: Afflictions, which are but for a Moment; yet, if patiently endured, will work out for you an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. Carry thy Eyes upwards to that blessed Place, where thy Nature shall be, as it were, cast anew; purified from all drossy Mixtures, and coarse Alloys of human Frailty; but brightened and refined, as to the sterling Lustre and genuine Excellencies of the Soul. Here is one continued Repetition of the same unsatisfactory Objects, and
there

SER. XIII. *there is nothing new under the Sun:* But there, far perhaps above the Sun, new Scenes, new Beings, new Wonders, new Joys will present themselves to our enlarged Views.

Look then upon this World, as one wide Ocean, where many are shipwrecked and irrecoverably lost, more are tossed and fluctuating; but none can secure to themselves, for any considerable Time, a future undisturbed Calm. The Ship, however, is still under sail; and whether the Weather be fair or foul, we are every Minute making nearer Approaches to, and must shortly reach the Shore: And may it be the Haven, where we would be!

Then shall we understand, that, what we mistook for and miscalled Misfortunes, were, in the true Estimate of Things, Advantages, invaluable Advantages. Then shall we know, why Riches were withholden from us, and Poverty our Lot; namely that Riches might have begotten in us an Indifference to Religion, Sloth, Luxury, Insolence to distressed Merit, and a Contempt of our Fellow Creatures: Whereas Poverty was the Parent of an Affection for the Things above, and of all
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the lovely Train of Sister Virtues, *viz.* ^{SER. XIII.} Temperance, Patience, Humility, Meekness, and Industry in our respective Callings.

Then will it signify little or nothing, whether we have gone down to the Chambers of Death, by an easy gradual Descent; or have been violently pushed off the Precipice of Life; whether we have been tossed by Storms and Tempests: or had a smooth and easy Voyage, to the Shore of everlasting Rest. Unless it be to repent of the Sins of our past Lives; it is scarce worth our while to look backward: Let us then look forward to that Life which is to come. Let us consider all the splendid Amusements of this World, as so many gay Follies; and all the more important Transactions of it, as so many sober Follies; if they interfere with our Preparations for the next. Let us repose an unreserved Trust in that Being, whose Almighty Power will protect us, whose unerring Wisdom will direct our Goings, and whose infinite Goodness will overpay our slight Sufferings with an unfading Crown of Glory.

When all human Means fail, the Deity can still, upon any extraordinary Emergency,

SER. XIII. gency, adapt his Succours to our Necessities. His Relief can come, just as our Saviour did to his Disciples, *When the Doors were shut, then stood he in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you.* The Doors are never shut against the *divine Assistance*: That can find a Passage, and gain an Admittance, when *nothing else* can: It can speak Comfort to the Desponding, and Peace to the Dying, the *Angel from Heaven*, that must *strengthen* us in our last Agonies. And sometimes the Deity defers his gracious Aid, till there be no Probability of human Relief; that, what is done at this Crisis to save us from imminent Ruin, we might discover to be his Doing, and acknowledge it *to be marvellous in our Eyes.*



SERMON XIV.

On Evil-Speaking.

JAMES IV. II.

Speak not Evil one of another, Brethren.

IT is a melancholy Consideration, that SER. XIV. Conversation runs very low; that, if any Topic of Religion is started, it brings us under the odious Imputation of Cant and Hypocrisy; if any Topic of useful Learning, it lays us open to the Censure of Pedantry and Ill-Breeding: that, if the Thread of Conversation be very fine, it is often immediately and abruptly broken off; but, if it be of a coarser and more homely Contexture, it is generally more durable and lasting. Strange! that a Set of Creatures, distinguished by Reason and Religion from Brutes, allied to Angels, and capable of holding an Intercourse with God, should rarely utter one Religious Sentiment worthy of a reasonable Being: While several have Recourse to Oaths and Imprecations, to fill

SER. XIV. fill up the mighty Void of Sense, and to supply the Vacancy of Reason; making the sacred Names of their Creator and Saviour, which ought to suggest the most awful and august Ideas, to be in their Discourse, what they themselves are too often in the World, idle insignificant Expletives.

But what falls under my present Consideration, is the reigning Vice of Evil-Speaking. I shall therefore shew,

Ist, The Extent of the Precept in my Text.

IIdly, The Causes of Evil-Speaking.

III dly, The Unreasonableness of it.

Ist, Then, I am to shew the Extent of the Precept in my Text.

In the first Place, This Precept does not extend so far, as to hinder us from telling another Man his Faults, with a View to his Amendment: We may speak Evil of a Man, with a Design to do Good to Him. *Thou shalt, in any wise, rebuke thy Neighbour; Thou shalt not suffer Sin upon him.* But we are guilty of a Breach of our Duty, when we give our Advice in a supercilious magisterial Manner, rather to shew our
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own Authority and Superiority in Wisdom, than to benefit the Party concerned. We must consult the gentlest Manner and softest Seasons of Address: Our Advice must not fall, like a violent *Storm*, bearing down and making that to droop, which it was meant to cherish and refresh: It must descend, as *the Dew upon the tender Herb*; or like melting Flakes of Snow; the *softer* it falls, the *longer* it *dwells* upon, and the *deeper* it sinks *into* the Mind. If there are few, who have the Humility to receive Advice as they ought; it is often, because there are as few, who have the Discretion to convey it in a proper Vehicle, and to qualify the Harshness and Bitterness of Reproof, against which corrupt Nature is apt to revolt, by an artful Mixture of sweetening and agreeable Ingredients. To probe the Wound to the Bottom, with all the Boldness and Resolution of a good spiritual Surgeon; and yet with all the Delicacy and Tenderness of a Friend, requires a very dexterous and masterly Hand. An affable Deportment, and a Complacency of Behaviour, will disarm the most obstinate: Whereas if, instead of calmly pointing out their Mistakes, we break out into unseem-

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SER. XIV. ly Sallies of Passion, we cease to have any Influence. So far then as Men tell others of their Faults with an Intention to reform them, and in a proper and becoming Manner; so far they do not offend against the Prohibition in my Text.

2dly, It is no Crime to descant upon the Faults of our Neighbour, which are *publick* and notorious. For where can be the Harm for any Man to talk, of what *every* One knows?

3dly, Though nothing can justify ill-grounded uncharitable Opinions; yet in Cases, where we have a sufficient Information, a wide Difference is to be made between what we say in a mixed Company, and what we disclose to a particular Friend; who is virtually under a Covenant with us, not to betray our private Conversation. For we cannot forbear to communicate our *whole Soul*, without any Reserve to him, who is, as it were, a *Part* of our Soul. To be always upon our Guard, is like being always in Armour: It is cumbersome and uneasy: However we may wear it for our Self-Defence among Enemies, or Persons whom we do not know to be otherwise; yet, among intimate Friends, one chuses

to put it off, and to be free and disengaged. SER. XIV.

Nor, 4^{thly}, Do we act contrary to the Meaning of the Text, when we are called upon by lawful Authority to speak what we know against a Criminal. For we are not obliged to bear *no* Witnesses at all against our Neighbour; we are only to *bear no false Witness*. This Rule extends to giving Testimonials and Characters of Servants, or Candidates for an Employment. To give them no Character at all, is to all Intents and Purposes the same, as giving them a bad one: And to give them a good Character upon the whole, when they do not deserve it, is to be easy and good-natured at the Expence of Truth and Justice.

5^{thly}, We are so far from acting against the Precept of my Text, that it is an Act of Charity, as well as Justice, to strip the Wolf of his Sheep's Clothing, which he has put on to make a Prey of the innocent and unsuspecting. It is a Matter of great Consequence to the Public, that the Characters of wicked Men sometimes should be universally known, as well as the Characters of the virtuous. It is highly necessary, those should be undeceived, who

repose a Confidence in one that may bear a fair Character, but is no better than a Villain. Accordingly, our Saviour, who exemplified an universal Good-Will to Mankind in all his Actions, yet takes off the specious Gilding from those Hypocrites, who *for a Pretence made long Prayers, that they might devour Widows Houses.* He removed the thin Veil of Hypocrisy, and discovered those mean Designs, which lurked beneath their Pretensions to an uncommon Sanctity. Where a Man's Vices only hurt *himself*, and terminate in his own Person; there we have no Right to *publish* them: because we can answer no good End thereby: But where they affect, or may affect *others*, it is our Duty to warn as many, as we think proper, a due Regard being had to our own Safety. Only let us take this Caution along with us: Before we endeavour to undeceive others; let us be sure, we are not deceived ourselves. That Rule, which a celebrated Philosopher laid down for the Conduct of the Understanding in judging of the Truth of Things, is as necessary for our Conduct in judging aright of the Characters of Men, *viz.* Always to suspend our Judgment, till we have got clear,

clear, distinct and decisive Evidence. Never proceed upon any slender Surmises, and precarious Conjectures, the Workmanship of the Brain. Proportion your Assent to the Clearness of the Proofs upon which it is built.

The Sum of all is this : We may speak ill of a Man, after we have gained a Competent Knowledge, and formed a right Judgment of his Character,—provided we think it necessary to detect him ; either because the public Good requires it, or lest any particular Person, whose Good we have at Heart, should be infected by his Company, or over-reached by his Cunning. But where, as one expresseth it, there are no Reasons of *Conscience* to make a *Good Man speak out* ; there are always Reasons of *Prudence* to make a *wise Man hold his Tongue*.

There is one Remark, which falls under this Head, that must not be omitted, *viz.* That we are obliged, by a Principle of Self-Defence, to set a Mark of Infamy on those who have injuriously branded the Reputation of their Neighbours. For he, who has injured *one* Person, either in his Reputation or Fortune, *threatens every Body*. And therefore common Prudence will teach us to give such a Man his just Character,

that he may not be able to make disadvantageous Impressions upon the unwary and undefigning, by giving every Man else a bad one.

If a Man's Vices are so flagrant, and his Character so infamous, that there is no Danger he should impose upon others; what are we to do in such a Case? I do not say, it is unlawful to speak Evil of him: But the less we say of him, so much, I think, the better; unless it be our Design to raise an Indignation in ourselves or others against the like Practices. To be often inveighing against his Vices, however notorious, looks as if we took a Complacency in dwelling on his Faults. And it is not the Property of *Charity*, or of a *charitable Man*, to rejoice in Iniquity. *Let the Dead bury their Dead*: Let those, that are dead to all Sentiments of Virtue, delight to throw Dirt upon Men in the same State with themselves.

It may be asked, whether it be lawful to speak ill of the Dead: And the Answer is, that it either must be lawful in some Cases, and under proper Restrictions; or we must condemn all Historians (the sacred Ones not excepted) who have transmitted
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the Faults as well as Virtues of the Dead to Posterity. There is a Tenderneſs due to the Memories of thoſe, who are no longer in a Capacity to ſpeak for themſelves : And therefore we ought to be very careful not to charge any Crimes upon them, of which we have not ſtrong authentic Proofs, either from perſonal Knowledge, or from Perſons of unſuſpected Veracity. Where there is even a faint Probability, that the Fact, of which they are accuſed, might be otherwiſe than it is repreſented ; there we ought to be ſilent. But where the Facts are ſo notorious, that they admit of no Doubt ; ſo flagrantly bad, that they need no Aggravation ; there we ought to conſider, that there is a Curſe denounced upon the Wicked, that their Memories ſhould rot ; as there is a Promiſe to the Righteous, that they ſhould be had in Remembrance, and their Memories be embalmed. It is wrong likewiſe to ſpeak Evil of the Dead, for the *Sake* of Evil-Speaking, without a View to the Information of the Living.

Laſtly, Though it is our Duty not to ſpeak ill of any Man, without ſome of the Reaſons, which I have mentioned ; yet

SER. XIV. it does not follow, that we ought to speak well of every Body promiscuously, and in general : Because we ought to make a Distinction, where there is a Difference : We ought to pay the Tribute of Praise, where Praise is due ; otherwise we rob the Good of that Fame, which is a Debt to Merit only, by putting all Mankind upon a Level. He, who commends every one, in Effect commends no one at all. An undistinguishing Praise confounds the Characters of Men, as well as an undistinguishing Censure : Just as overmuch Light has the same Effect, as overmuch Darknes ; we see nothing as it really is. By throwing an undistinguished Glare of Praise on every Object, we perceive no Object at all in it's just and genuine Light. There has been so much Prostitution of Applause, that scarce any Commendation is valuable ; but what comes from those, who can discommend with Impunity, and commend without an Expectation of a Reward.

Idly, Having thus stated the Extent of this Duty, I proceed to point out the Causes of Evil-Speaking.

The

The first of which is an Affectation of ^{SER. XIV.} Wit.

To do Justice to a great and good Character, requires an uncommon Judgment, Delicacy and Discernment. But nothing is more easy than to turn any Person, however deserving, into Ridicule : It is only to exchange one Idea, which furnishes no Matter for Ridicule, for another near akin to it which does ; that of Seriousness, for Instance, and a composed Behaviour, for that of a stiff Formality and Solemnity ; and then the Work is done. The Vulgar may be easily made to mistake the one for the other : And when they have once viewed a valuable Person in a ridiculous Light, they are scarce capable ever after of considering him in any other : The ludicrous Representation recurs to their Memory, as often as the Person thus misrepresented offers himself to View. Thus what is only the Sport of a wanton Fancy, may be worse than Death to an innocent Man.

But whatever Pleasure Men of this Turn may take in Ridicule, it is better to be innocently dull, than to have all the Wit in the World, and yet, by the Misapplication of it, to make one worthy Man one's Foe.

SER. XIV. One humane and generous Sentiment is of more Worth, than all the merely ludicrous and witty Thoughts, that ever were. For one humane Sentiment towards our Fellow-Creatures touches the *Heart*, and diffuses a sedate and lasting *Complacency* there: But Thoughts merely witty and ludicrous only please the *Fancy* for a while, and raise a Blaze of *Mirth* as short-lived, as the *Crackling of Thorns*, to which *Solomon* compares it. An ill natured Man may be a Prodigy of Parts: He may have an uncommon Brightness; but then it is, like that of a Summer's Sun, an *intolerable* Brightness; to shun its scorching Beams, we retreat to the *Shade*, and had rather bury ourselves in Retirement, than endure his Conversation. That Wit is truly amiable, which gladdens and enlivens every Thing, which shines with a Lustre gentle, but not faint; and powerful, but not glaring.

He, who endeavours to oblige the Company by his Good-Nature, never fails of being beloved: He, who strives to entertain it by his Good-Sense, never fails of being esteemed: But He, who is continually aiming to be witty, generally miscarries of his Aim: His Aim and Intention is

to be admired, but it is his Misfortune either to be despised or detested ; to be despised for Want of Judgment, or detested for Want of Humanity. For we seldom admire the *Wit*, when we dislike the *Man*. There are a great many, to whom the World would be so charitable, as to allow them to have a tolerable Share of *common Sense* ; if they did not set up for something *more* than common, something very uncommon, bright and witty. If we would trace the Faults of Conversation up to their original Source ; most of them might, I believe, be resolved into this : That Men had rather appear shining, than be agreeable in Company : They are endeavouring to raise Admiration, instead of gaining Love and Good-Will : Whereas the latter is in every Body's Power, the former in that of very few.

The 2d Cause is an Hastiness or Precipitancy in Judging, before we know the whole of the Case. Nothing is more common than to pronounce, with a decisive Air, upon a Man's whole Character from a suspicious Circumstance ; and that too in Cafes, where none, but those who are intimate with him, can have decisive Evidence.

Actions

SER. XIV.
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 Actions appear absurd, which are yet founded upon weighty and substantial Reasons, known to the Party concerned, but unknown to us. The Motive he acts upon may be a Secret confined to his own Breast. Several have, I believe, incurred the Imputation of Covetousness, who really could not have expended more than they did, without being injurious to their Families, and perhaps to their Creditors.

A single Circumstance *slipped in*, will envenom a whole Relation ; and there may be often a Circumstance *omitted*, which would give quite another Turn to the whole. Incline always to the favourable Side, when Things are doubtful. If you should be mistaken on the charitable Side, God will overlook your Mistake, and accept your Charity. But if you mistake through Uncharitableness,—All that I shall say is, May your Hearers consider your Invectives with Judgment, and your Maker with Mercy !

3. A third Cause is Malice. A good-natured Man will be far from thinking, that nothing can give Life and Spirit to Conversation, but Scandal and Raillery : He will take Care that, after some Hours spent

spent in his Company, none shall reflect SER. XIV.
upon any Expression of his, which shall dwell upon their Minds with Pain and Uneasiness. Whereas unhappy Tempers take a fullen Satisfaction in blasting Characters: And it must be owned, they have often a very unlucky Turn that Way: Keen Glances of Censure proceeding generally from a dark involved Temper, like Flashes of Lightning from a gloomy Sky.

Or perhaps a malicious Man shall go a more artful Way to work. “ Such a
“ Man, says he, has several good Quali-
“ ties, and I cannot say, but I have an
“ Esteem for him. But what a Pity is it,
“ that he should act in so ridiculous a
“ Manner, as he has done lately? I am
“ heartily sorry for it; I know more than
“ I will say; But I love not to dwell upon
“ Faults.” Thus he shall express a World
of Sorrow for his Neighbour’s Misconduct; when after all this extraordinary Concern he shall not fail to set it out in the most aggravating Circumstances: He shall express more than is true; and intimate more than he expresses: He shall introduce what he has to say against a Man, with a Recital of some valuable Qualities, on Purpose to give himself
himself

SER. XIV. himself an Air of Impartiality ; and then shall usher in a Character, which would not be received from a declared Enemy, or an angry Man. A malignant Praise has been always the most successful Vehicle to insinuate Slander ; as Poison is never more artfully conveyed, than in Perfumes.

It must be observed, for the Honour of Human Nature, that a much larger Majority in Towns and Villages are the peaceful and inoffensive Inhabitants : Except in very large and populous Places, there are not, generally speaking, above five or six troublesome intermeddling Persons, *Enemies unto Peace*, and the Pests of Society. And yet these, by forging Falshoods, and grafting upon the Truth several inflaming Circumstances, by misrepresenting what is innocent, perverting what is good, and aggravating what is Evil, shall disturb the Peace of the whole Neighbourhood, spread Lies, and foment Divisions. I do not know what Pleasure Men of this Stamp may take, in supposing themselves to stand clear of those Vices, which they charge upon others. But this I dare venture to say, that the same Meanness and Littleness of Soul, which makes them so inquisitive to know, so glad
to

to hear, and so industrious to spread any SER. XIV.
 Fault of others, would make them commit
 the very same; provided they had the same
 Temptations and Complexion. For Vice
 proceeds from nothing, but the Meanness
 and Baseness of a depraved Soul.

To this Class of ill-natured Persons those
 must be reduced, who love, as they ex-
 press it, to speak their Minds upon all Oc-
 casions, privileged Talkers; affronting those
 above them, insulting those beneath them,
 and displeasing every Body. But if they
 will always speak *freely*, what they think;
 they should first take Care to think *justly*,
 as they ought, *tenderly* of others, *humbly*
 and soberly of themselves.

The most delicate Pleasure, is to impart
 it to our Fellow-Creatures; complaisant,
 but never insipid; frank, but never rude
 and unguarded; general in our Civility to
 all the Company, and particular to each
 Person, by Turns; when the Discourse is
 directed to us, lending a favourable Atten-
 tion, and making pertinent Replies; like
 a fine Picture, which seems to fix an Eye
 upon, and direct it's Views to each Person
 in the Room, who looks upon it, and eyes
 it attentively. And, if Politeness (Polite-
 ness

SER. XIV. } nefs I mean as to the main Effentials) be an Attention to fay and do thofe Things only, which may fend others away pleafed with themfelves and us, as far as is confiftent with Reafon and Truth ; then certainly Politenefs is a Part of natural and revealed Religion, the latter of which exprefly commands us to *be courteous* ; It is Good-Nature beautified and refined by Art : Good-Nature, which, like the Author of Nature, is not *extreme to mark what is done amifs*. Charity, the moft lovely of Virtues, represents others as lovely as poffible. It does not *merely* let us fee an Object, as it is ; it is a Kind of Sunshine, which *brightens* what it lets us fee. Whereas Ill-Nature paffes over all the fhining Parts of a Man's Character, and dwells entirely on the dark Side of it : As a Painter of low Rank fhall throw thofe Beauties into Darknefs and Shade, which his Eye cannot endure to behold ; becaufe his Hand cannot reach them.

The 4th Caufe of Evil-Speaking is Envy, or an Uneafinefs arifing from a Reflection that the Perfons envied are our Superiors in Fortune, or other Abilities. This prompts us to depreciate their Worth, and to bring down their Character to a Level with ours ; fince we cannot advance ours

to the same Eminence. We cannot outstrip SER. XIV. them by fair and direct Means ; and therefore we endeavour basely to supplant them.

Men of solid Sense and Virtue seldom envy others, or think themselves despised : Because few or none are apt to *think* themselves slighted, except those, that *deserve* to be so : They, on the other hand, have that genuine Feeling, that inward Conscioness of Goodness, that home-felt Satisfaction, which the vain and conceited may pretend to, but never truly perceive. This makes them never out of Humour with themselves : And when Men are not out of Humour with themselves, they see and represent others in the most lovely Light. One need not envy any Person, nor consequently detract from Him. Let a Person be our *Better*, as he is called ; provided he is not our *Better* in, what is *best* of *all*, Religion and Virtue. The Virtuous and the Good are the only Persons to be envied ; if there were not a better Way to be taken, which is to make ourselves as virtuous and good as they are, by *doing* all the Good we can, and *purposing* more, than we can do.

The 5th Cause is little personal Animofities, just after a supposed or real Injury,

SER. XIV. where there is no settled Malice. And therefore it would be a good Rule, that, before our Passions are thoroughly cooled, we make a Resolution to speak all the Good we know of our Adversary: But if we cannot do this, that then we resolve never to speak of him at all any further, than our own Self-Defence obligeth us. Because whatever *good* Qualities we can allow him at *that* Juncture; those, we may depend upon it, he *has*. But the *ill*-Qualities, with which we find a strong Inclination to charge Him, those perhaps he has *not*. For let your Knowledge of Mankind be never so great; yet you never can see Persons or Things in a true Light, unless you view them coolly and dispassionately: The same sober and dispassionate Temper, which qualifies a Man for an Enquiry into the Truth of Things, enabling him likewise to form a just Judgment of the Characters of Persons. Observe, what your Sentiments of the same Person are, after he has done you some signal Favour; and you will find this to be strictly true: You will find the Judgment, which you formed in the Heat of your Temper, intirely reversed. Let this then be the fixed Determination of your

your Mind, to forbear all offensive Words and Actions; till you are calm enough to examine the Affair minutely, and to give it a Re-hearing. Take it for granted, that, whatever the Ferment of Passion suggests, is either entirely, or at least in some Measure false. We all see through a Glass darkly; but Passion makes us see through a Glass falsely, which magnifies Injuries beyond their due Proportion. This we all acknowledge in our cooler Hours; yet it is ten to one we most unaccountably forget it upon the next Provocation. Such is our Nature; and it is amazing, that He, who has studied it, and knows his own Weaknesses, should be severe upon any Body, but himself.

The 6th Cause of Evil-Speaking is an ill Life in general. Those, who know a great deal of Ill of themselves, are apt to suspect Ill of every Body else. *Thou thoughtest wickedly, that I was such an one as thy Self*, is the Character, which the Psalmist gives of an immoral Person. They accuse People of Wickedness, which they do not know to be true; and censure them for what they cannot know to be true, viz. their Intentions, and the Thoughts of their

Hearts. They shall fancy, as *Nero* did, all to be inwardly as bad as themselves; though some are more artful to save Appearances. Thus their *Talk* is a constant Satyr upon others, and their *Actions* a living Satyr upon themselves. Let them *say* what hard Things they please; they can *do* much harder Things than they say. Their foul Language is nothing but the Overflowings of a much fouler Heart.

The 7th Cause of Evil-Speaking is Talkativeness. There are several who have neither a Fund of Sense enough to talk well, nor Modesty enough to be silent. They must either act the Part of *Mutes* upon the *Stage* of Life; or they must have Recourse to the standing Topics of Conversation, which are to defame public Parties, or vilify particular Men. It is beneath the worthy to *go about as a Tale-bearer among the People*; that is the Province of the worthless; meer leaden Pipes: though the Metal be dull, base and ignoble, they serve to convey fresh Streams of Intelligence to every place: We apply Gold, and the nobler Metals, to other Uses.

It must, however, be owned, that Men, who deserve well in other Respects, shall
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be sometimes guilty of this fashionable Vice; SER. XIV.
 either because, though they have a general and standing Conviction that Evil-Speaking is a Crime; yet they do not consider and attend to the Malignity of it at that Juncture; or because the Commonness of the Crime insensibly reconciles it to their Thoughts: They see it practised every Day, and that makes it familiar to them, and takes off every Idea of Horror. To obviate those ill Effects, which Custom may have, let us consider,

III^{dly}, The Unreasonableness of Evil-Speaking.

For Men are not more mistaken in any Thing, than in the Estimate they make of Crimes. They seem to judge of them more from their *Uncommonness*, than from the baneful *Consequences*, which attend them. Whatever Crime is *uncommon*, is *surprising*, and consequently *more shocking*; than others perhaps of a deeper Dye, which, because we see them committed *every Day*, we therefore think very *small* or *no* Crimes at all. They do not excite that *striking* Disgust and Aversion, which they would do, if more *unusual* and *infrequent*. It is obser-

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v able,

SER. XIV. vable, that in Fashions, Opinions, and Modes of Dress, nothing *seems* absurd, to which Men have been *accustomed* from their Infancy. It is the same in Sins: Nothing moves Horror, that is familiar to us. To rob a Man of his good Name, is not so shocking a Vice, as to rob him of a Sum of Money: Yet he, who does the latter, knows, how much he has taken, and what Restitution to make: but it is impossible for him, who does the former, to make an adequate Judgment, how much the injured Person has suffered, and what Reparation he ought to make. For he cannot tell, what Advantages the Person might have received, if no disadvantageous Impressions had been given of him.

Many value Reputation more than Life, which, without Reputation, is but a Burthen. The *Tongue* therefore, that wounds *that*, may be a *sharper Sword*, than any *other*, which can only hurt the *Body*. He whose *Teeth are Spears and Arrows*, may pierce deeper to the Heart, than if he, in a literal Sense, employed those Weapons against his Adversary.

It is certain, that, according to the common Saying, so much Reputation is so much Power;

Power: and in Proportion to Men's Credit, Esteem and Character in the World; their Weight, Influence and Power to do themselves and others Good will be greater and more extensive. In *some* Stations of Life, to deprive a Man of his good Name, is to deprive him of his Livelihood, of his *All* in this World, as in Matters of Trade and Commerce; and in *all* Stations and Callings, a great deal depends upon the Character which we maintain; and whatever sullies the Brightness of our Reputation, lessens our Usefulness.

Let us consider, whether it would do the World or ourselves any Harm, if that Scandal, that precious Knowledge, of which we are so communicative, should die with us. If it would not do any Harm; then it is one of the first Principles of Morality, not to give others Pain and Uneasiness, not to wound them, either in Mind or Body, without a *sufficient Cause*, without a Design to compass some valuable End; and take it for granted, whatever Pleasure you may feel in giving Utterance to ill-natured Suggestions; there is a much greater in stifling them. But if *out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth must speak*: If the

SER. XIV. Fulness of your Soul impatient to asperse others upon *every* Occasion, upon *no* Occasion, must have a Vent; then you are certainly in the very *Gall of Bitterness, and the Bond of Iniquity*. On the contrary, what Commendations does he deserve, who at the same Time that he has too much good *Sense* to *think well* of the Worthless; has too much *Charity* to *speak ill* of them, when there is no Necessity for it?

What, if a Person, who in the Main has led a good Life, should yet, contrary to the general Tenor of it, be guilty of some unaccountable Weakness? What should we learn from this? Not certainly some poor Materials for idle Conversation, in which whatever Expence of *Words* there may be, there is no Expence at all of *Thought*: No, it ought to teach us something far more useful and noble, a Lesson of Diffidence of ourselves, Watchfulness and Circumspection; lest we, who *think we stand*, should also *fall*. The Miscarriages of a good Man, which give an ill natured Pleasure, to *little* Minds, suggest to every *great* Mind the most *melancholy* Ideas of the Weakness of *human Nature in general*, but no *spiteful* and *venomous* Reflections against *his* Weakness

ness in *particular*. Far from insulting SER. XIV. over his fallen Worth, he views his Down-fal with a generous Pity, and warned by it, *works out his own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. As when the young, the blooming, and the vigorous, who bade fair for length of Days, yet pine away, or are cut off by some sudden Sickness; it teacheth us to be more temperate, and cautious to preserve the Health of the *Body*: So when the Good and Virtuous, from whose former Actions we might expect an uninterrupted Course of Piety, are overtaken, we scarce know how, in any notorious and flagrant Vice: this should put us upon our Guard, and make us take all due Precautions to preserve the Health of the *Soul*. This is the Use we are to make of these pitiable Instances: They are no Subjects for wanton Merriment, Pleasantry and witty Spleen: No, they are Subjects for a serious Consideration on our own Frailty: They teach us not to be too sanguine, or over-secure. “ Tell me, O my Conscience, have I ever done, or shall I ever do any Thing like this?” Would to God we would talk and commune oftner *with ourselves*: We should the seldomer

SER. XIV. *talk vainly about ourselves, and uncharitably about others.*

Lastly, It is no unusual Thing to hear some complaining, that their Abilities to do Good, and to abound in Works of Charity, are cramped within a narrow Sphere, though their Inclinations are very large and extensive. Now, if these Men are in earnest, I will point out one Kind of Charity, which will be not expensive to themselves, and yet endear them to their Fellow-Creatures. Their Circumstances may not enable them to cherish Merit by their Generosity, and to relieve Distress by their Charity: But this charitable Office is daily in their Power, to cast in Shades their Neighbours Misconducts, and to set out in the most advantageous Point of View their good Qualities; to extenuate their Failings, and to do Justice to their Virtues; to produce an obscure Character into Light, and to rescue an injured one from Obloquy. *Silver and Gold they may have little or none; but such as they have, they may give, viz. what is better than Silver and Gold, a Good Name and Reputation to their Neighbours.*

I shall conclude with some Advice to those who suffer in their Reputation.

Let

Let them consider, that “ if the Invec-^{SER. XIV.}
 “ tives against them are true, they ought
 “ rather to correct themselves, than make
 “ Reprisals upon others * : But if false, a
 “ Contempt of them will destroy the Be-
 “ lief of them; but a Concern will argue
 “ the Truth of them.” Let them endeavour to *put to Silence the Ignorance of foolish Men, by well-doing.* Let them make it their Business to acquire a sufficient Stock of Merit; and great Merit, like Light, cannot be intirely concealed; though it is most amiable, when it does not shew itself in too open and full a Glare. The Veil of Modesty cannot long hide genuine Worth; any more than the Mask of Hypocrisy can long cover our Vices. He, who *is* substantially good, will, in Despite of all Defamation, e’er long *appear* so. The Arrow may be drawn to the Head, and levelled with a dexterous Aim; but cannot reach a Virtue, which rises to an uncommon Height. Let them, lastly, put their Trust in that Being, *who will make their Righteousness as clear as the Light, and their just Dealing as the Noon-Day.*

* The Advice of *Mecenas* to *Augustus* in *Dio Cassius*.

SERMON XV.

On the Love of God.

MARK XII. 30.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength. This is the First Commandment.

IT is the improved Ability of the *Head*,^{SER. XV.} that forms the *Philosopher*: But 'tis the right Disposition of the *Heart*, that chiefly makes the *Christian*. 'Tis our Love directed to that Being, who is most worthy of it; as the Center, in which all Excellencies unite; and the Source from which all Blessings proceed.

Love is the fulfilling of the Law. 'Tis not the *mere* Action that is valuable in itself. 'Tis the *Love*, from which it proceeds,

SER. XV.

ceeds, that stamps a *Value* upon it, and gives an endearing Charm and *Beauty* to it. When a fervile Fear engrosses the whole Man, it locks up all the active Powers of the Soul, it cramps the Abilities, and is rather a Preservative against Sin, than an Incentive to Virtue. But Love quickens our Endeavours, and emboldens our Resolutions to please the Object beloved; and the more *amiable* Ideas we entertain of our Master, the more *cheerful, liberal, and animated* the *Service*, that we render him, will consequently be.

Upon Love therefore the Scriptures have justly laid the greatest Stress, that Love, which will give Life and Spirit to our Performances. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength. This is the First Commandment.*

In discoursing on which Words I shall

Ist, Inquire into the Nature and Foundation of our Love to God.

II^{dly}, I shall endeavour to state the Measure and Degree of it.

III^{dly},

III^{dly}, I shall examine, how far the ^{SER. XV.} Fear of the Deity is consistent with the Love of him.

Ist, I shall enquire into the Nature and Foundation of our Love to the Deity.

The Love of God may be defined a fixed, habitual, and grateful Regard to the Deity, founded upon a Sense of his Goodness, and expressing itself in a sincere Desire to do whatever is agreeable, and avoid whatever is offensive, to Him.

The Process of the Mind I take to be this.

The Mind considers, that Goodness is every where stamped upon the Creation, and appears in the Work of the Redemption in distinct and bright Characters: It considers in the next Place, that Goodness, a lovely Form, is the proper Object of Love and Esteem; and Goodness to us, the proper Object of Gratitude. But as Goodness exists no where but in the Imagination, without some Good Being, who is the Subject of it; it goes on to consider, that Love, Esteem and Gratitude, is a Tribute due to that Being, *in* whom an infinite *Fulness* of Goodness ever *dwells*, and *from* whom *Emanations* of Goodness are ever *flowing*.

Nor

SER. XV. Nor does the Mind rest here : It takes one Step farther to reflect, that a cold speculative Esteem, and a barren, unactive Gratitude, is really no sincere Esteem or Gratitude at all ; which will ever vent itself in strong Endeavours to imitate, a Delight to please, and a Desire to be made happy by, the being beloved.

If we attend to what is here advanced, the Dispute whether the Love of God be disinterested or no, may be the more easily adjusted : And all the Confusion upon this Head has arose from considering the Love of God, under a partial and imperfect View, from considering it merely as a *Philosophical Esteem* for Him, without taking into the Account, what the Love of God chiefly implies, a sincere and *effectual Desire* to *recommend* ourselves to the *Favour, Approbation, and Blessing* of that Being whom we esteem. If the Love of God be considered merely as a *sacred Esteem* for him, 'tis in a great Measure disinterested. For Interest may indeed teach us to *speak* a Language foreign to our Heart : But we cannot really *esteem* any Person, till we *think* him worthy of our Esteem ; and then 'tis that *Thought*, not *Interest*, which is productive of

of our Esteem. 'Tis then the natural Result of a serious Consideration, that he is a Being, in whom there resides a full Assemblage of each lovely and endearing Quality, without the least jarring Mixture of any Thing harsh, cruel or tyrannical in his Nature; that he wills the Happiness of each Individual in the Creation, as far as 'tis consistent with his particular Rank and Station in the Scale of Beings, and the Good of the Universe in general. When a Man has inured himself to such a just and right Way of thinking upon the Deity; He cannot help loving, in the Sense of Esteem, what appears, upon repeated Views, so lovely to his Understanding. He cannot help loving him, whom he believes to be, what St. *John* has represented him, *Love* itself, pure, unallayed Love, without any Tincture of Caprice, Malice, or Ill-Nature.

For to whatever Cause such a Connexion of Ideas was originally owing, yet in Fact the Ideas of Goodness and Esteem are in most Minds inseparably connected. The Union seems almost necessary. If it were an early Association, 'tis such an Association as cannot easily, if at all, be broken.


But if the Love of God be considered not only as a mere Esteem for Him, but what it undoubtedly, and principally is, an hearty and effectual Desire to recommend ourselves to his Love, Favour and Approbation ; the Love of God so far at least is interested ; and, though we may *esteem* him for what he is *in Himself*, yet we desire to *approve* ourselves to Him, in Expectation of what he will do *for us*.

For what rational End or Motive could there be to endeavour to please a Being, who would neither shew his Pleasure by rewarding the Obedient, or express his Displeasure by punishing the Obnoxious ? Those, that make the Love of God disinterested, drop the most *material* and *essential* Part of it, that very Part, which chiefly makes it a practical Principle, operating upon our Hearts, and productive of Holiness in our Lives ; and give us a lame and imperfect Account of it.

For Love is not only a cold sedentary Esteem, which, like *Faith without Works, is dead* : 'Tis an active Principle, which prompts us to secure an Interest, and cultivate a Friendship, with the Being beloved ; and to feel a delightful Self-Complacency ;

when we please, or imagine we please Him. It is a *Compound*, of an *Esteem* for Him arising from an Apprehension of his Excellencies, and a *Desire* to be made happy by him here and hereafter. Had we no Desire or Expectations to be made happy by him, we should not serve him at all: And had we no Esteem for Him, did we not entertain the loveliest Impressions of Him; we should not serve Him with Pleasure. *Dry* and *abstracted* Reasons of Love to God operate very faintly; except we take into the Account the *affecting* Considerations of his being our Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Benefactor. His *internal* and *essential* Excellency may command our Admiration, sling us into Astonishment, and convince the *Understanding* that we ought to reverence him: But his *relative* Dignity, his making, supporting, and redeeming us, touch the inmost Springs of the Mind, call forth each liberal Movement of the Soul, and powerfully work upon our *Wills* and *Affections*, the active Principles in our Composition.

If it be objected, that we cannot love a Being that is invisible; I answer, that, what we chiefly love in visible Beings of

SER. XV.  our own Kind, is always something invisible. Whence arises the Relish of Beauty in our own Species? Do we love it merely, as it is a certain Mixture of Proportion and Colours? No: For, though these are to be taken into the Account as two material Ingredients; yet something else is wanting, to beget our Love; something, that *animates* the Features, and *bespeaks* a *Mind* within. Otherwise, we might fall in Love with a mere Picture, or any lifeless Mass of Matter, that was entertaining to the Eye. We might be as soon smitten with a dead, uninformed, unmeaning Countenance, where there is an exact Symmetry and Regularity of Features; as with those Faces, which are enlivened by a certain Chearfulness, ennobled by a certain Majesty, or endeared by a certain Complacency diffused over their whole Mien. Is not this therefore the chief Foundation of our Taste for Beauty, that it giveth us, as we think, some outward Notices of noble, benevolent, and valuable Qualities in the Mind? Thus a Sweetness of Mien and Aspect charms the more, because we look upon it as an Indication of a much sweeter Temper within: It is the habitual Disposition of the Soul,

appearing through, and impressed upon, the Features. The Face is often, though not always, the Index of the Mind; and those Ideas, to which the Soul is most habituated, leave behind them certain Traces and Impressions on the Countenance. Now if this be the chief (I do not say it is the only) Source of our Taste for Beauty, that it exhibits to us some Signatures of inward Benevolence, Generosity and Worth, which, after all, are very *uncertain*, and *only presumptive* Evidences of the internal Temper; why have we not the most affectionate Love for that Being, the Traces of whose Benevolence, Bounty and Greatness, are imprinted upon the Universe in *bright, legible, and undeniable* Characters?

In a Word, though the *Deity* cannot be seen, numerous *Instances* of his *Goodness* are *visible* throughout the Frame of Nature: And where-ever they are seen, they naturally *command* our *Love*. But we cannot love Goodness *abstractedly* from some Being, in which it is supposed to inhere: For *that* would be to love an *abstract Idea*. Hitherto indeed it is only the Love of *Esteem*: The Transition, however, from *That*, to a Love of *Enjoyment*, or a Desire of being

SER. XV. made happy by him, is quick and easy; For, the more lovely Ideas we entertain of any Being; the more desirous we shall be to do his Pleasure, and procure his Favour.

Having thus shewn the Foundation of our Love to God, I proceed, *Ildly*, To state the Degree, and point out the Measure of our Love to Him.

In order to which, it will be necessary to fix the Sense of the Words of my Text with some Accuracy. Because from Them, such a Degree of Love to God has been pleaded for, as is inconsistent with any subordinate Desires of inferior Things. The Meaning of these Words, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength*; is, that we are to serve God with all those Faculties, which he has given us: Not that the Love of God is to be exclusive of all *other* Loves; but of all other *Rival* Affections; that, whenever the Love of God and that of the World come in Competition, the former undoubtedly ought to take place of the latter. According to that of our Saviour: *He that loveth Father and Mother more than*

than me, is not worthy of me : And again, Seek ye first the Kingdom of God ; which supposes, that other Things may be sought after in their proper Rank and Order, without an *undue Preference*. We are not to desire nothing at all *but* him, we are only, as the Psalmist expresses it, to desire nothing in *Comparison with* him. Visionary Writers, who have sequestred themselves from the World, may attempt to prove, that all our Love ought to center in the Deity *exclusively* : But such Romantic Notions are unintelligible in Theory, and in Fact impracticable. They convince us of Nothing, but this : That those, whose Understandings are *over-refined* and *subtle*, are guilty of as great Errors ; as Those, whose Understandings are *waxed Gross* ; and that 'tis hard to tell, whether Men mistake oftner by *not* exerting their Abilities ; or by stretching them *beyond* their *Line*, beyond their determinate Sphere. If the one grovel on the Ground ; the other are continually soaring into the Clouds, quite beyond the View of common Sense. Instead of seeing all Things in the Deity, as some have fancied ; we discern plain Proofs of the Deity in all Things ; there being nothing in

SER. XV. Nature, of which we can give a plausible Account, without calling in the Deity to our Aid. We have no direct and immediate View of him, as He is in Himself; We see him *through a Glass*, through the Mirrour of the Creation. And if there were nothing lovely, and consequently the Object of our Love in the Creature; we could have no Grounds to love the Creator. The Love of the Creator therefore implies the Love of the Creation. Not being able to see Him *Face to Face*, we love Him in his *Works*, the Representatives, the faint Representatives of his original Loveliness. Accordingly, St. John says: *If any Man love not his Brother, whom he hath seen; how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?* That is: The visible Creation, and Man, the Masterpiece of the visible Creation, being the only Mediums, through which we discern the Loveliness of God, represented and reflected to us; if we have a splenetic Hatred and Disrelish for *them*, How can we entertain any Love for the *Maker* of them, of whom we can know nothing, but *by* and *through* them? They are the Steps and Scales, by which we must ascend, in the last Resort, to the Love of him, from whom

whom they derive, and to whom we must ascribe whatever is good in them. To love God therefore with all our Heart, is so far from excluding all inferior Complacencies, that it necessarily comprehends them. Our Love must begin with the Creature, and end in Him: We must love, as well as argue, upwards from the Effect to the Cause; and because there are several Things desirable even here under proper Regulations, conclude that He, the Maker of them, ought to be the supreme, not the only, Object of our Desires. We cannot love God in Himself, without loving him, *in* and *for* his Works.

What the Scriptures require, is easy to be understood; and not impossible to be practised, *viz.* That our Gratitude to God, and our Love of Him, ought to have the Ascendant, and to be the *governing* Principle; and that all other Regards ought to be subordinate to it. The main Design of Christianity is, that we should look upon worldly Things with the Indifference of a Traveller, whose *chief* Views are fixed upon his Journey's End, upon his abiding Country.

SER. XV.

The Words of my Text may be more minutely explained thus. *To love the Lord with all our Heart*, signifies to love Him with all Sincerity, with an undissembled Affection. For in this Sense, the Word is often used in Scripture. Thus *Isaiab*: *This People draweth nigh unto me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from me*, i. e. They are not affectionate and sincere in the Service they pay me. As some have strained this Duty too high, others have sunk it much too low, and made the Love of God, and the keeping of his Commandments, to be the very same Thing. Whereas to love God is not merely to do, what He commands; but it is to do it, because He commands it. God, who is the Searcher of Hearts, does not value any outward Homage, where the Heart is not interested.

To love God with all our Soul, signifies to serve him with the whole Soul, with an *unreserved*, and not with a partial Obedience. God is not to share a *divided* Affection in our Breast, an Affection divided between Piety and Sin: But he is to reign unrivalled by any darling Vice. *To love God then with all our Soul*, is the same as to have *Respect unto all his Commandments*.

For it is no Proof of our Love to God, SER. XV. that we obey him only, when our Passions do not draw a *different* Way: Then is our *Heart right and whole with Him*, when our Duty gets the better over any corrupt Inclination, which interferes with it. We are not to parcel out our Affections between Piety and Sin: Then is our Affection like a large Diamond, most valuable when it remains intire and unbroken, without being cut out into a Multitude of independent and disjointed Parts.

To *love the Lord with all our Strength*, is to put forth the active Powers of the Soul in loving and serving Him. It is to rouse ourselves from that Supineness and listless Idleness, which is far more painful than a continued Hurry and Multiplicity of Business, without any Respite. It is to quicken the Wheels and Springs of Action, that moved on heavily before: It is to do well, without being weary of well-doing. It is to lay out our Endeavours, that we may have a competent Sense to discern, a sincere Inclination to embrace, and a steady Resolution to hold fast, what is best and most pleasing to the Deity.

SER. XV.

The Sum of what I would say is this. *That to love God with all our Heart, is to obey him sincerely and affectionately : To love him with all our Souls, and with all our Minds, is to obey him intirely and un-referredly : And to love him with all our Strength, is to obey Him vigorously and constantly.*

The Love of God is a settled, well-grounded, rational Delight in Him, founded upon Conviction and Knowledge. It is seated in the Understanding, and therefore not necessarily accompanied with any brisker Agitations of Spirit ; though indeed the Body may keep Pace with the Soul, and the Spirits flow in a more sprightly Torrent to the Heart ; when we are affected by any advantageous Representation of God, or by a Reflection on his Blessings. This I thought necessary to observe ; because some weak Men of a sanguine Complexion are apt to be elated upon the Account of those short-lived Raptures and transient Gleams of Joy, which they feel within themselves ; and others of a phlegmatic Constitution to despond : Because they cannot work themselves up to such a Degree of Fervor. Whereas nothing is more precarious and

uncertain, than that Affection, which depends upon the Ferment of the Blood: It naturally ceases, as soon as the Spirits flag, and are exhausted. Men of this Make sometimes draw near to God with great Fervency; and at other Times are quite estranged from Him; like those great Bodies, which make very near Approaches to the Sun, and then all at once fly off to an unmeasurable Distance from the Source of Light. You meet a Person at some happy Time, when his Heart overflows with Joy and Complacency: He makes you warm Advances of Friendship, he gives you Admittance to the inmost Secrets of his Soul, and prevents all Solicitation, by offering, unasked, those Services, which you, in this soft and gentle Season of Address, might have been encouraged to ask: Wait but till this Flush of Good Humour and Flow of Spirits is over, and you will find all this Overwarmth of Friendship settle into Coldness and Indifference: and himself as much differing from himself, as any other Person can from another: Whereas a Person of a serious Frame and Composure of Mind, *consistent with himself*, and therefore *constant to you*, goes on, without any alternate Heats

SER. XV. Heats and Colds in Friendship, in an uninterrupted Tenor of serving, and obliging his Friend. Which of these two is more valuable in himself, and acceptable to you? The Answer is very obvious. Just so a Vein of steady, regular, consistent Piety, is more acceptable to that Being, *with whom there is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Change*; than all the passionate Sallies, and short intermitting Fits, of an unequal Devotion.

Truly to love God is not then to have a few warm Notions about the Deity fluttering a while in the Breast, and afterwards leaving it void and empty of Goodness. But it is to have the Love of God *dwelling* in us. It is not a Religious Mood or Humour, but a Religious Temper. It is not to be now and then pleased with our Maker in the Gaiety of the Heart, when, more properly speaking, we are pleased with ourselves. It is not to have a few occasional transient Acts of Complacency and Delight in the Lord rising in our Minds, when we are in a Vein of Good Humour, as the Seed in the Parable soon sprung up, and soon withered away, because it *had no Root and Deepness of Earth*: But it is to have

have a lasting, habitual and determinate Resolution to please the Deity rooted and grounded in our Hearts, and influencing our Actions throughout. SER. XV.

III^{dly}, I proceed to examine, how far the Fear of the Deity is consistent with the Love of Him.

There is Mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared, is a Passage in the Psalms very beautiful, as well as very apposite to our present Purpose. It is the Secret of fine Writing to make our Thoughts *natural* without being *common* or too *obvious*; and *surprising* without being *affected*. And here we have an admirable Exemplification of this Rule. The Thought is *surprising*; because it was obvious to think, the Sentence should have concluded thus: *There is Mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be loved*: And yet it is *natural* too; since we shall be *afraid* to draw upon ourselves *his Displeasure*, whom we sincerely *love*. The more we have an Affection for him, the more we shall dread a Separation from him. Love, though it casteth out all *servile* Fear, yet does not exclude such a Fear, as a dutiful Son shews to a very affectionate

SER. XV. fectionate, but a very wise and prudent Father: And we may *rejoice in God with Reverence*, as well as *serve him with Gladness*. For Love, if not allayed and tempered with Fear, and the Apprehensions of Divine Justice, would betray the Soul into a sanguine Confidence and an ill-grounded Security: Fear, on the other Hand, if not sweetned and animated by Love, would sink the Mind into a fatal Despondency. Fear therefore is placed in the Soul, as a Counterpoise to the more enlarged, kindly and generous Affections. It is in the human Constitution, what Weights are to some Machines, very necessary to adjust, regulate and balance the Motion of the fine, curious and active Springs.


Happy the Man, who can command such a just and even Poise of these two Affections; that the one shall do nothing, but *deter* him from *offending*; while the other *inspirits* him with a hearty Desire of *pleasing* the Deity. Yet, which soever of them we may imagine to be the prevailing Principle; he who proceeds in a steady regular Practice of his Duty to God, without any presumptuous and deliberate Sins, may dismiss all Apprehensions, and Misgivings,

con-

concerning his Salvation. It is true, God ^{SER. XV.} *is Love*; and he, that obeys Him, must obey Him in *Love*: But it is as true, that, where-ever there is a sincere and uniform Obedience, upon Principle, there is such a Degree of Love, as will render us acceptable to God. For *in this we know, that we love God, if we keep his Commandments*. A mere servile Fear indeed may be a Bar to our Salvation. But what is a *mere servile Fear*? Such a Fear, as clogs the Powers, and deadens the Activity of the Soul, by shutting out the Consideration of God's fatherly Goodness, and dwelling only on That of Almighty Power armed with Vengeance: Such a Fear, as the unprofitable Servant, in the Parable of the Talents, entertained of his Master, whom he misrepresented, as an *austere Being, gathering where he had not strewed, and reaping where he had not sown*; for which Reason he remained in a State of Inaction, and *hid his Talent in a Napkin*. It is such a Fear as the Devils have, who *believe, tremble*, yet never obey; one genuine *Blackness of Darkness*, without the least Glimpse of Comfort. It is a Religious Cowardice, which robs us of the Power of shunning those Dangers, which we dread. But

But a Fear, which is productive of an even stedfast Habit of Obedience, is always a filial Fear, recommended and endeared by an acceptable Mixture and Proportion of Love. For, *till* a slavish Dread *damps* each lovely Idea, and *blots* out each liberal Thought of the Deity, our Love of Him is *not extinguished*: And *when* a slavish Dread has *erased* these Impressions, then our Obedience, as well as Love, must *cease* of Course. The Mind will stoop beneath the Burthen, and sink overwhelmed with a Load of Despair. It is, methinks, impossible that any Man should habitually, in the Main, and conscientiously discharge his Duty to the *Father of Mercies and God of Comforts*, who is able and willing to do for him *abundantly above what he can ask or think*, without esteeming, honouring and loving Him. He may indeed at first obey Him only, because it is his Duty to serve the greatest of Beings, whose Power *ruleth over all*: But he will sooner or later obey Him likewise, because it is his Inclination to serve the best of Beings, whose *Mercy is over all his Works*. Suppose a Man lost in a great Measure to all ingenuous Motives, yet, persuaded by the Terrors

rors of the Lord, to break off his Sins by Repentance; he could not effectually set about this Work without *some* Regard to God's *amiable* Attributes, without *some Confidence* in his *Goodness*, which always implies some Degree of Love. He may fear Him, as an *Avenger to execute Wrath* upon the Impenitent; but he must confide in Him too, as one that is not willing any should be impenitent; not willing that any should perish, but that all should fulfil the Terms, and enjoy the Benefit of eternal Salvation. And, though Fear chiefly was the *Beginning* of his *Wisdom*; yet long Practice of Virtue will ripen into an Habit; and a settled Habit will give him a Relish for Acts of Virtue; till at last he *tastes and sees how gracious the Lord is*, who has abridged him of no Pleasure, but what a discreet and loving Father would withhold from his only Son; and enjoined him no Duty, but what is essential to, and interwoven with, his Happiness. He will at last love to serve Him, whose Service he experiences to be perfect Freedom. For good Men go on from Strength to Strength without confining themselves to any deter-

SER. XV.  mined Proportion of Goodness, beyond which they are to proceed no farther.

To a considerate Mind, that is all Harmony within, that is in perfect Good-Humour with every Thing about it; the Deity must appear like what he is, *in perfect Beauty*; all-loving, and all-lovely, without any forbidding and frightening Appearances: Just as a deep Stream, when clear and unruffled by any Storm, represents the Sun and Firmament in a gentler and milder Lustre; far more beautiful itself, by reflecting the Beauties of Heaven. Whatever uncomfortable Notices we entertain of God, they are either the just Forebodings of a Mind disturbed with Guilt; or the gloomy Imagery of a Fancy deeply tinctured with Melancholy. A vigorous Progress in Virtue will remove that horrible Dread of the Deity, which sometimes overwhelms the Minds of the Guilty.

To conclude,

Do we act in Concert with that Being, whose tender Mercy is over all *his* Works, by shewing Mercy, as far as we can, in all *ours*?

Do we conscientiously endeavour to discharge all the Duties he has enjoined us,
with-

without Reluctance; and to submit to all his Dispensations, without Murmuring? SER. XV.

Do we address ourselves to Him with that holy Fear, which awes the turbulent Passions into Composure; but does not depress the Spirit, or beget an abject and unmanly Way of Thinking?

Do we, who look (or ought to look) up to Him with Reverence, as the great *Judge* and *Lawgiver* of the Universe; chiefly *delight* to consider Him under the endearing Characters of a *Creator*, *Redeemer*, *Preserver* and *Benefactor*?

Do we, before we compose ourselves to Sleep, recommend ourselves to his Almighty Care, *who neither slumbers nor sleeps*? Do we, as soon as we rise, recommend ourselves to his Superintendency, *who maketh his Sun to rise upon the just and unjust*; humbly desiring, that, as that Sun disperses the Darkness and unwholesom Vapours of the Night; so He, the great *Sun of Righteousness*, who *arose with Healing in his Wings*, would drive us from all Evil; all Evil, whether of Mind, Body, or Estate?

Do we commit all our Concerns in general to his Providence, and fatherly Goodness; and upon every extraordinary Emer-

SER. XV.

gency, make a more particular Application to Him for his Direction, *who never faileth them that seek Him?*

If we do, these undoubtedly are the only genuine Tests, and significant Expressions of an undissembled Love to God: And they will procure for us the blessed Effects of that infinite Love, which being *stronger than Death*, disarmed Death of it's Sting, and the Grave of it's Victory.



SERMON XVI.

On the Foundation of Morality.

In two SERMONS.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of
OXFORD.

COLOSSIANS III. 23.

*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the
Lord, and not unto Men.*

TH E S E Words, though address-^{SER. XVI.}
ed by St. Paul to Servants, con-
tain Matter of Advice to All
Christians, as *knowing, that, whatever
Good any Man doth, the same he shall re-
ceive of the Lord, whether he be bond or
free.* We are commanded to *set God be-
fore us; to be holy, because He is holy;*
and therefore, *whatsoever we do, we are*

to do it as to him, who can discern each inward Grace of the Soul through the Veil of Modesty, and see each hidden Vice through the Mask of Hypocrisy. I shall therefore make it my Business, in what follows,

Ist, To prove that a Regard to the Deity is the Foundation of Morality.

Ildly, To enquire into the Characters and Motives of those, who, though Strangers to Piety and Devotion, yet pretend to be animated with the most exalted Sentiments of Probity, Generosity and Benevolence.

Ist, I am to prove that a Regard to the Deity is the Foundation of Morality.

There can be no Virtue in Actions *materially* good, Actions which we *chanced*, but did not *mean* to do. No, to stamp the sacred Character of Virtue upon our Performances, the *Intention* of the Agent must be taken into the Account. It is this *inward* Principle, that must make our Services grateful to the Deity; as it is the *Presumption* of this, that makes them so to our Fellow-Creatures. Thus it is the

presumed Intention of the Giver, which ^{SER. XVI.} chiefly recommends the Gift. *Silver and Gold* some may have little or none; but whatever they *take in Hand*, they *turn into Gold*: They beautify, whatever they do, by a frank, ingenuous and hearty Manner of doing it. Man, however, can only judge of us from our *outward* Actions and Demeanour; and, as long as we are artful enough to save *Appearances*, we are no farther accountable to him: *He* alone can effectually bind and oblige the *Heart*, from which all Goodness flows; who is alone the great *Searcher* and Discerner of our *Hearts*.

Virtue is the Observance of some Law, as Vice is the Transgression of it: But there can be no Laws at all without some Lawgiver; and there can be no Laws, which shall oblige us to cultivate *inward* Merit and Virtue (the only genuine Merit) without a sacred Regard to *that* Lawgiver, to whom our *inward* Virtue is only cognizable.

We are no further moral Beings, than we are accountable Beings. But to whom or what are we accountable? Not certainly to absolute Fitnesses, the Loveliness and

SER. XVI. Beauty of Virtue. To be accountable, implies, that we are accountable to some *Superior*; which Superior can only be God, or a *divine* Legislator: For if we leave a God out of the Scheme, *Human* Legislators can never reach the Conscience, which is a Principle discernible only by Him, *from whom no Secrets are hid*. Thus a *conscientious* Performance of good Actions, in the last Resort, in the last Step of the Scale, terminates in Him, who is the Dispenser of all Blessings, the Center of all Happiness, and therefore the Object of all Duty. And all the moral Virtues are only so many *Cyphers*, which may make an ample Shew, yet are but so many *empty* unavailing *Nothings*; unless the Deity be placed as the *principal Figure* at the *Head* of them, from whom they derive their Weight, Force and Significancy.

If it be objected, that, though we were not accountable to the *Deity*, yet still we are obliged to cultivate Virtue out of a Regard to *ourselves*, to the Ease, Tranquillity and Satisfaction of our own Minds: I answer, that if we could *oblige ourselves*, then we, who *impose* the Obligation on ourselves, must have an equal Power to
take

take it off, or dispense with it, whenever we please: that, they, who pursue Virtue for the Peace and Tranquillity of Mind, of which it is productive, will be obliged to deviate from it and forsake it, whenever they apprehend that an inflexible Adherence to the Rules of it will bring upon them any great and lasting Inconvenience, Hardship and Misery. Virtue is nothing, but a *rational* Conduct under the Circumstances, in which we are placed. But, what would be highly *rational*, and consequently *Virtue* upon the Supposition of a *future* State; would be *Madness*, and consequently *not* Virtue, if *That* were left out of the Account. Thus to *die* for the Good of one's *Country*, is a beautiful and noble Instance of *Virtue*. But it would be the Height of *Enthusiasm* in Him, who harbours no Fears, cherishes no Hopes, and entertains no Belief of a future State, to part with his *final* Happiness, his *All*, for *Nothing* in *Reversion*.

The *Understanding* may discern, just as it does any other *speculative* Truth, a *natural* Fitness or *Unfitness*, in Things, *i. e.* That some Things have a Tendency to promote, and others to obstruct, the public

lic Happiness. But to influence the *Will*, which is the *Seat* of *Morality*; to engage *it* to practise what is for the Good of the Whole; to bring Things home to our Bosom; a Regard for that Being, who is *mighty to save*, and able to destroy, must be the governing Principle. For, though the Understanding cannot but see the natural and essential Differences of Things, yet all *Morality* implies *Choice*: And Nothing can make, what is *naturally* fit or productive of public Happiness, the Object of our *steady Choice* (at least in *all Cases*) but the *Will* of *that* Being, who only can make the Love of *ourselves* and the Love of the *Public* to coincide without any *Interference*. We must carefully distinguish between speculative *abstract* Truths, and moral or *practical* Truths. The former may be independent on the Will of our Creator; but the latter (*viz.* Truths reducible to Practice) must be founded on a Sense of Duty to Him, who alone can enforce the Observance of them. For nothing can oblige us, but a View to our own Happiness. Now all our Happiness depends upon God. He therefore alone can lay an effectual Obligation upon us, who alone can make

our

our Happiness or Misery commensurate to the Extent of our Being. SER. XVI.

We have had a World of popular Harangues upon the abstract Beauty and intrinsic Valuableness of Virtue. Now there is no such Thing as *Valuableness* or *Worth distinct* from *Usefulness*: Nothing being valuable any farther, than it is useful. For what is a Thing valuable for, that is of no Use? And nothing is any farther valuable to any Man than as it promotes *his* Happiness. For what will neither give him Pleasure nor Pain, he must be intirely unaffected by; and what he is intirely unaffected by, to that he must be indifferent. And, after all our specious Refinements, *Virtue* must be built upon Interest, our *Interest* upon the *Whole*. Nay the more we endeavour to *abstract from* Self; the more Self will *return*: For the more we set apart all selfish Views; the greater will be our Self-Complacency, or the more we shall be pleased with ourselves. There are two Kinds of Pleasure, the one arising from pleasing *Sensations*, the other from delightful *Reflections* on our Conduct. He who denies himself the *former* (which are the *coarser*) Gratifications, is often *over-paid* by the *latter*,

SER. XVI. *latter*, but much more elegant Enjoyments.

I know it will be objected that Virtue may be still disinterested: For though the Pleasure arising from agreeable Reflections may be the Consequence of a virtuous Course of Life; yet it is not the Cause of it: which is a moral instinctive Sense, whereby we love what is good, and abhor what is evil, antecedently to any Act of the Understanding, or Reflection upon the Consequences of our Actions. Now, supposing the Genuineness of this moral Sense or Instinct, which several excellent Writers * have disputed; supposing, what is most unreasonable to suppose, that we need not *apprehend* or *understand* a Thing to be *lovely*, before we love it as such; that we need not *judge* a Thing to be *hateful*, previously to our *Hatred* of it; supposing our Love of Virtue and Hatred of Vice to be originally blind Propensions and occult Qualities: Yet a Virtue or Goodness, which proceeds wholly and sole-

* See what three very ingenious and considerable Authors have wrote on this Head, *viz.* the *Minwe Philosopher* in his third Dialogue, *Philemon* to *Hydaspes*, Part the Second, and Mr. *Law* in his Preliminary Dissertation to *King* on the *Origin of Evil*.

ly from this moral Sense or Instinct, is not ^{SER. XVI.} *our* Virtue or Goodness; but that of our *Creator*, who has implanted this Instinct. To make it, in any Degree, *ours*, we must *improve* upon the moral Sense, we must *cultivate, cherish* and *ripen* it: We must not impair, weaken and extinguish; but quicken and *stir* up this *Gift of God*, that is supposed to be in us. And then the Question will return, What Obligation we are under to do so? And no other can be assigned, but the Pleasure, that is immediately consequent to it; or the endless Happiness of the next World: So that, even upon this Supposition, Virtue, *as far* as it is *ours*, that is, as far as it is Virtue, must be resolved into the *interested* Scheme. He, who observes the Rules of Morality for the Sake of temporal Pleasures, will never perform any Act of Duty that is highly distasteful to him, or forego any Vice that is pleasant and palatable. The only sure Ground-Work of Morality is therefore the Prospect of heavenly Bliss.

But farther; If we closely attend to the Operations of our Mind, and carefully observe what passeth within us, at that very Instant, when we are doing a charitable or
friendly

SER. XVI. friendly Office ; I am apt to think we should find, that the Pleasure, which results from it, arises either from a Sense, that, what we are doing, may procure us the *Approbation* of Men ; or it proceeds from a Sense of having done our Duty, and recommended ourselves to the *Favour* of the *Deity*. Our Benevolence, as far as it is owing to the *former*, is not Virtue, but a Desire of *Fame* and Distinction ; as far as it is owing to the *latter*, it is *Virtue*, but *Virtue founded* upon the *Love* of God. Joy undoubtedly, like the Light of the Sun, never rebounds so strongly back again upon ourselves, as when it comes reflected to us from other Objects. The grosser Pleasures soon flatten upon the Sense, and grow insipid to a well-turned Mind : But then we feel the most exquisite and delicate, as well as most lasting Touches of Pleasure, when we communicate it, in any great Degree, to those about us. Yet that Pleasure, which is annexed to any generous and worthy Deed, may be compared to it's Opposite, *viz.* that Remorse, which is consequent to Wickedness. And it may be questioned, whether we should have any (or at least any permanent) Remorse, after having committed

an ill Action ; if we were sure we could fence off all ill Consequences, and neither be exposed to the Scorn and Hatred of the World, nor draw upon ourselves the divine Vengeance. Just so it may admit of a Dispute, whether the Pleasure we are speaking of would not vanish ; if we apprehended, that neither Mankind would commend and esteem us, nor the Deity reward us for our Goodness. It must be owned, that the Succession of our Thoughts is sometimes very quick, and the Transition from one to another very sudden : The Sensations of Pleasure are generally confused ; and the more exquisite any Pleasure is, the more confused and indistinct our Thoughts are at that Time. And I would desire those, who frequently do good Actions, minutely, and curiously to observe, whether there does not accompany them some confused and transient Glance of Thought, which will soon be lost and escape their Notice, if inattentive ; that they act under the Eye and Inspection of the Deity, who, as he is every where present, cannot but see what they do ; and, as he is infinitely good, cannot but behold it with Pleasure : or whether the Goodness of their Actions, is not allayed
by

SER. XVI. by some sinister Motives of Vain-Glory.

But supposing the Pleasure arises from neither of these Considerations; yet it can only, as I observed before, induce us to go on in the Paths of Virtue when they are smooth and even; if other Motives are set aside, we may deviate from them, when they are rugged, steep and arduous.

It is in vain to attempt, as some have done, to build Morality on the Ruins of Religion, and to propose a Scheme of it independent on future Rewards and Punishments, with nothing to support it, but absolute Fitnesses and a Taste for intellectual Beauty, Comeliness and Proportion. For *Morality* being designed for the Practice of *all* Mankind, must be built upon such *Notions* as lye level to the *Capacities* of Men in general; and founded upon such *Motives*, as may *affect all* Mankind: And those Motives, which address themselves to our *Hopes* and *Fears*, the two great Springs which actuate human Nature, effectually do this: But *high-flown* Theories about the *disinterested Loveliness* of Virtue are calculated only for some *few* select Spirits, if for *them*. *Exalted* Speculations of too fine a Thread and Texture are like very *costly* *Ornaments* and very *expensive*


penſive Delicacies ; Every Man cannot com-
mand them, and, God be thanked. No
Man's Neceſſities require them : Plain com-
mon uſeful Notions are like our *daily Bread*
and Nouriſhment, *All* ſtand in need of them,
and *All* may procure them with a moderate
Share of *Labour* and Application.

Let us, however, proceed to ſhew, what
Effect it is likely theſe fine Notions would
have firſt upon Men of Speculation, and ſe-
condly upon Men of the World. As to
the firſt,

It is much eaſier to *conceive* a thouſand
beautiful Thoughts concerning Virtue in our
Cloſet ; than to put one of them in *Practice* :
Becauſe Thoughts, Thoughts beautiful in
Speculation, are the Work of the *Imagina-*
tion, which is as much delighted with a
lovely *Idea*, as the *Eye* is with a lovely *Ob-*
ject : But when we would proceed from
Theory to Practice, we muſt combat the
ſelfiſh Paſſions ; we muſt get the better of
our Indolence and Love of Eaſe, which is
apt to grow upon ſpeculative Men. He,
whoſe *reigning* Pleaſure it is to *ſpeculate* and
think beautifully, will *not therefore act* beau-
tifully : Becauſe *Action* calls him off from his
favourite Pleaſure, that of Speculation : He

will be averse to Action, at least all *difficult* Action : which Aversion nothing can conquer, but much stronger and more forcible Motives, than those arising from the Loveliness of Virtue. And hence, I suppose, it comes to pass, that those, who have entertained the World and themselves with these lofty Notions, have not been very remarkable for the Practice of the active Virtues. A certain Elegance of Thinking may have restrained them from the grosser Vices of abandoned Sensuality and Intemperance, and they may have observed the Rules of Morality, as far as it was pleasant and agreeable to them ; but they have never served their Country, their Neighbours, or themselves at the Expence of their beloved Ease and Repose. There seems to be a certain *Vis Inertiæ* in *Souls*, as well as in *Bodies*, by which they resist all Change or Alteration of the State, in which they are : And it is a Matter of as much Difficulty to rouse the Speculative from their Indolence ; as it is to check the Career of the Sensual, the Worldly, and the Ambitious : Just as it requires as much Force and imprest Energy to move a Body at Rest ; as it does to stop a Body in Motion.

Pass we on from the Men of *Speculation* SER. XVI.
to the Men^s of the *World*. Let Virtue charm
never so wisely, they will *refuse to bear the*
Voice of the Charmer. The Figure of Life,
and the polite and elegant Enjoyments of it
are to *them*, what intellectual Order, Har-
mony and Beauty are to the Speculative.
Let the Studious rear their visionary Fa-
brics in the *Air*; they think it a much more
substantial Pleasure to erect grand and mag-
nificent Structures on solid Ground. Dis-
course to them, as long as you please, on
the Pleasure and Comeliness of well-ordered
Affections, and how much better it is to
govern the *Passions*, than to let them have
the Ascendant. They will answer, that
they can, with a full Command over them-
selves, go on in a *calm* sedate Pursuit of
Wealth and Honour: They can, as several
others have done before them, *without any*
Discomposure of Mind, drain and impoverish
the common Current of Good, to fill their
own private Canals. They scorn as much,
as you can, to plunge into the *lowest Sink*
of Vice; what they propose, is a studied
Luxury and a *Refinement in Pleasure*, to
enjoy the present criminal Gratifications in
such a Manner, as not to deaden by any

SER. XVI.  Excess their Relish for the future. The Ideal Excellency of Virtue they look upon as a painted Flame, which may delight the Eye of the Curious, but cannot dispense any active Warmth and Heat; the Dream of idle People, that write in their Closets, and the Amusement of idle People, who read there. But if you can thoroughly convince them, that eternal Misery will be the Consequence of a Life spent in pursuing forbidden Pleasure, and amassing Wealth by indirect Means; that there is no Salvation without Repentance; and no Repentance without refunding their ill-gotten Wealth: Such a Consideration pressed home is like a Mirrour held close to the Lips: if there be the least *Breath* of *spiritual* Life remaining in them, it will *catch* it and shew it; it will have some Effect, if they be not utterly incorrigible.

We shall never follow Virtue effectually till we cleave to it with full Purpose of Heart; with the Energy of a resolved Will; We shall never cleave to it with the Energy of a resolved Will, with the full Bent of our Inclinations, till we are uneasy without it; we shall never be uneasy without it, till we look upon it as essential to our Happiness,

Happiness, till we consider ourselves as un-^{SER XVI.}done *without* it for ever, but by it Heirs of eternal Happiness. He, that is at Ease, will never exert himself vigorously ; but Uneasiness is the great Spur to Action. To remove the Pressure of Uneasiness, a Man will apply every Engine ; just as he would heave off any incumbent Weight, that pressed him down. Now to make a Man uneasy in the Absence of Virtue, and under the Dominion of Vice, shall we set before him the *Fitness* and *Loveliness* of Morality ; Motives that apply themselves either to *pure abstract* Reason only, which is a cold sedentary Principle, or to the *calmer* Affections, which operate but faintly ? Or shall we call into our Aid, *religious* Considerations, the Dread of eternal Vengeance, and the Hopes of endless Felicity ; Considerations, which touch upon every Thing that is most dear and valuable to us, and call forth the Workings of Self-Love and the Desire of Happiness, the first great Wheel of the Soul, to which all the rest move in Subordination ? I do not believe that any Person, from the Creation to this Time, has been reclaimed, by the Strength of the former Motives, from a Habit of Vice to that of

SER XVI. *Virtue*: But several have been in all Ages reformed by the latter.

If the Beauty of *Virtue* has so little Effect upon us in the *calmer* Seasons of Life; it has still much less in the Hour of *Trial* and in the Day of *Adversity*. What may beautify and embellish the Soul in Prosperity, will be of little Service to invigorate and strengthen it under Affliction; like those Persons, who are the Ornaments of Peace, but are too tender to bear the rough Hardships of War, or to stand the Shock in the Day of Battle. An *uneasy Sensation* or a clamorous Appetite will be always too hard for a *fine delightful Reflection*: because it will press rudely in, demand to be heard, and break off the sweet Intercourse, which we may be holding with some beloved Idea. That *delicate Feeling within*, by which we enjoy ourselves and discern the Agreeableness of *Virtue*, will give Way to *another Feeling* of a *boisterous* Nature, that of Pain for Instance. Let us suppose the intrinsic Worth and absolute Loveliness of *Virtue* in *itself*, abstracting from all the *beneficial* Consequences and *happy* Effects of *Virtue*, that is, abstracting from every Thing *lovely* in *Virtue*: (For *Virtue* can be no farther lovely,

lovely, than as it is a Means to Happiness;) SER. XVI.
Yet the Loveliness of Virtue cannot be a Motive to *all* Men at *any Time*: For several have no Manner of Notion of it. Nor can it be a Motive to *any* Man at *all Times*: It would have just as much Influence upon a Man in deep Distress, as the beautiful Prospect of the Rainbow had upon the Person, who after a Shipwreck was just sinking into the Deep. “ All this, says he, “ is mighty fine; but what is it to Me “ who am perishing irretrievably?” The Love of Virtue, without Rewards either in Hand or Prospect, is like the Love of Beauty exclusive of all other Considerations. A Lover may form fine luxuriant romantic Scenes in his Imagination; yet all that Assemblage of soft, tender, delicate Ideas, the Product of a Mind at Ease, vanishes, as soon as Poverty comes upon him, *like an armed Man*. Just so a Man, at Ease in his Circumstances, or at Leisure in his Closet, may be transported with contemplating the Goodliness of Virtue: yet the rude Pressure of Adversity will soon put to the Rout those airy refined Notions, owing to the Enthusiasm of an over-heated Fancy, not the Suggestions of cool Reason, which never separates

rates the Beauty of Virtue from it's Usefulness, which is it's *only* Beauty. Nothing can support a Man in the Practice of his Duty in the Depths of Affliction, but the Consideration, that the Deity will enjoin nothing as a Duty, by which he shall be a Loser or a Sufferer upon the Whole : that, however his Happiness and his Duty may be disjoined at present ; yet the Streams shall unite again and flow for ever in the same Current. Whether do they act more rationally, who admire Virtue as a fine Piece of Painting or Statuary ; or they, who pursue it as the Source of solid everlasting Happiness ? They, who delight in it, just as they do in a *fine* Piece of *Painting* or *Statuary*, for it's Beauty : would *part* with it, *when reduced to Poverty*, just as they would do with a fine Piece of Painting, to purchase the *substantial Conveniencies* of Life. The Principles of Religion will support Virtue and us, and be, like God, a *present Help in Trouble* : But all other Principles, however entertaining at other Times, will, like false Friends, forsake us ; when we have most Need of Them, in the Day of Adversity.

Though there may be a *natural* Fitness or Unfitness in Actions, as they have a Tendency

dency to advance or hinder the public Good ^{SER. XVI.} antecedently to the Will of God ; yet their *moral* Fitness must be founded on his Will, as their only sure and solid Basis : For Morality supposes a *determined* Rule of Life and a *fixed* Pursuit of *natural* Fitnesses. Now He, who pursues what is naturally fit for the Sake of the *greatest* Good, eternal Felicity, may act *invariably*, because he goes upon the Strength of a *Motive* which *Nothing* can *outweigh*. But He who follows what is naturally fit for the Sake of some *temporal* Good, must change his Measures, when a *greater* Good, inconsistent with his Pursuits, offers itself. The Rule of right Reason in him, who believes no *other* State, would be to procure *all* the *Advantages* and *Pleasures* he could in *this* : And so all the Rules of what we now call Virtue, would be quite inverted. It would be reasonable to break through *any* or *all* of them to make *Life happy* when we *could* ; and it would be reasonable to *throw up* Life, when we could *not* : Setting the Will of the Deity aside, we should be so far from being under an Obligation to live *well*, that we should not be obliged to live *at all*. Either we must say, that Virtue is not *universally*

SER. XVI. *versally* obligatory at *all* Times and upon *all* Emergencies; not something *fixed, invariable* and *indispensable*, but only *occasional*; which is contrary to the very *Idea* of *Virtue*: Or we must say, that we are obliged to practise *Virtue* in all Cases of *Extremity*, though we shall be never the better for our uncomplying *Honesty*, nay though we be *finally Losers* by it; which is contrary to common *Sense*:—Or we must found *Virtue* upon the *Sanctions* and *Will* of the Deity, who alone can make it our *Interest* to practise *Virtue* in *all* Cases, in the lowest Ebb of Fortune, as well as in an uninterrupted Flow of Prosperity.

I do not, however, place *Virtue* upon *arbitrary* Will. For arbitrary Will is changeable, and no consistent Rule of Action, which *Virtue* implies, can take Place upon so precarious a Footing. No, *Virtue* must be fixed on the sure Basis of God's *immutable* and *necessary* Will. For it may be demonstrated, that the Creator *necessarily and immutably wills* the general Happiness of the Creation. And moral *Virtue* is, to *choose* what is in its genuine Tendency *productive* of the *general Happiness*, in *Conformity* to his Will, his *unchangeable* Will.

SERMON XVII.

On the Characters of Those, who pretend to Morality without Religion.



Preached before the UNIVERSITY of
O X F O R D.

COLLOSSIANS III. 23:

*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the
Lord, and not unto Men.*

HAVING in a former Discourse SER. XVII
endeavoured, *Ist*, to ascertain the
Foundation of Morality, and fix
it on it's proper Basis, *viz.* a Regard to
the Deity : I now proceed,

Illy, To enquire into the Characters and
Motives of Those, who though Strangers
to Piety and Devotion, yet pretend to be
animated

animated with the most exalted Sentiments of Benevolence, Humanity and Probity.

It is no easy Matter to understand, upon what Principles they can act, who make Pretensions to an exalted Worth; but are unfortunately lost to all Sentiments of Piety. If they disbelieve a future State, then to think, that they shall shortly be, as if they never had been, that they must soon be swallowed up in Annihilation, that bottomless Gulph, where all Distinctions are lost, as Rivers in the Ocean; is enough to pall each exalted and noble Thought, and to beget in them a Sullenness, Sourness and Discontent. A Fretfulness and Impatience, that will grow upon them, will make them so far from *fulfilling the Law by bearing one another's Burthens*, that they will be incapable of bearing their *own*. They must despise themselves and their Fellow-Creatures as a set of insignificant Reptiles, that are to crawl for a while upon the Face of the Earth, and then to mix with the common Mass of Things. And as they, who expect no *other* Life, ought to make the *most* of *this*, they must contract a narrow spirited and illiberal Cast of Thought.

But if they believe a future State, How ^{SER. XVII} can they have any Taste and Relish for Benevolence ; and yet have no Love for that Being, who has *endowed* Morality and *Benevolence* with an exceeding and eternal Reward? On the other hand, what delightful Perceptions must it give them to reflect, that at the same Time, that they are wishing, contriving, and promoting the Happiness of their Fellow-Creatures ; they are *Fellow-Workers* with that great and good Being, who is able and willing to give them as great a Happiness, as their most unbounded Good-Will can wish ; and far greater, than their narrow Understanding can conceive? How must their Hearts burn within them, who have so fervent a Zeal for Charity, to find, that this *Charity* shall *never fail* ; that these short-lived Instances of Friendship and Good-Will, which we shew to one another here, will be succeeded by an uninterrupted Intercourse of mutual Endearments for ever and ever? And what will most heighten their Humanity, will be, to consider, that we shall all be Partakers of the same common Happiness from him, *with* whom is the *Fulness of Joy*, and *from* whom continual *Rivers of Pleasures*

are ever streaming. It is then absurd to pretend a *Love* for *Benevolence*; and yet to be regardless of the *most benevolent* Being, that is. And it is likewise absurd to pretend to love Him, without a serious Examination into his Will; never dismissing, what bears that venerable Stamp, without a fair and impartial Hearing of the Evidences for the Truth of it. For, on whomsoever the World may bestow the Title of *moral* Men; yet an indifferent Carelessness, and a wilful *Neglect* to examine into his Will and Pleasure is *no Part of Morality*. Nay his Will, whose *Pleasure* we must either *do*, or whose *Displeasure* we must unavoidably *suffer*, ought to be the uppermost Consideration of every Man. Can he deserve the Name of a *good* Man, who does not *shew* the *least* Regard to *that* Being, to whom he owes *every* Thing: The Deity being the *Fountain-head* even of those Blessings, which are conveyed to him by his Fellow-Creatures, as through so many *Channels*?

But is it not, you will say, true in Fact, that there are several of strict Probity, Generosity and Worth without the least Tincture of Piety? To which I answer, several

have from their Infancy associated the Ideas ^{SER. XVII} of Happiness and Esteem ; of Misery and Disgrace. This makes them decline those Actions, which may entail Infamy and Disgrace upon them ; and pursue those, which may beget an Esteem for them ; Esteem being to them an essential Ingredient of Happiness. They have been taught to set an high Value upon themselves: which high *Value* of themselves is always, more or less, accompanied by a *Suspicion* or Mistrust, that they *over-value* themselves. For which Reason they are impatient to have the favourable Verdict, which they pass upon themselves, seconded and confirmed by the Approbation of others, and unwilling to do any Thing, that may lessen them in the Opinion of their Fellow-Creatures. It is then the Desire of Fame, not the Love of Virtue, which is their Incèntive to good Actions. And if we look abroad into the World, we find it thus in Fact. Persons of this Stamp will scorn to do a *little* Thing, through the *Abhorrence* of any Thing, that may make them *cheap* and *contemptible* in the Eye of the World : but they will not scruple to commit a *Sin*, upon which the *fashionable* World has stamped a *Credit*, and
given

SER. XVII given a *Sanction* to. A Person who is *ungrateful*, much more ungrateful to his *Sovereign Benefactor*, must be void of every thing, which is *great, glorious and beautiful* in the Soul. He may indeed be actuated by the Love of *Applause*, by *Caprice*, by the prevailing *Mode and Fashion* of the *Age*, in which he lives; but his Mind is too narrow contracted and ungenerous to be swayed by any *fixed and determined Principle of Goodness*.

He, who in a public Sphere seems to have the Good of his Country much at Heart, superior to all interested Views; in private Life blasts the Honour, wounds the Peace of a deserving Family, and does that, which he would think so unreasonable, as to warrant the keenest Resentments, if he were the Party injured. You wonder at this motley Mixture in his Character. But why should you expect a Consistency of Life and Manners from him, who has no religious, and therefore no consistent, Principle to act upon? The Case is this: What he acts in a *public* Sphere, he acts not as a *Duty incumbent* on Him, but as it *falls in* with his *reigning Passion*, his Fondness for *Popularity*, and a Desire to be thought of by Others, as highly

as he thinks of himself. In *private* Life, when the Eye of the *World* is *no more* upon him, his *selfish* and *sordid* Passions operate with their *full* Force, and draw him off from that Goodness, which he never practised for substantial Reasons: He hoped, that what he did in privacy, would escape the public Notice: But if it took Air, the World, the higher Part of the World, has dignified these Vices with the specious Name of Gallantry, given a Countenance to them, and, by the *Commonness* of them, lessened the *popular* Odium against them.

I answer farther, that there is a Distinction to be made between a *complexional* Benevolence, and a *rational* Humanity. The Former depends upon a finer Texture of the Body, a brisker Circulation of the Blood, and Flow of the animal Spirits; and is rather an *Happiness*, than a Virtue. And it is observable, that this Benevolence decays in some People, as they advance in Years: Those, who were open to every social and humane Pleasure, sometimes grow contracted in old Age, and center every Thing in themselves; like Rivers freezing in Winter, that before dispensed Plenty and Fruitfulness all around. The Truth of the Matter is: It

was only an occasional Complacency, operating by Fits and Starts, not deeply *rooted* in the *Soul*, but founded on the Temper and *Mechanism* of the Body; and therefore *ceased* of Course, when *that Mechanism* was *altered*.

The true genuine uniform Benevolence, which will stand the Test, must be seated in the *Soul*, and founded upon *rational* Principles: And the Question is whether there can be such a rational Benevolence, which is *always the same*, without any Regard to *that* Being, who is the *same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. Now Benevolence implies a Disposition to part with some Advantages, which we enjoy, in order to promote the Happiness of our Fellow-Creatures. And in so doing, the Man, who is actuated by a Principle of Piety, acts very rationally: What he *gives unto the Poor*, he *lends unto the Lord*, who *will repay* him again. But he, who foregoes his own Enjoyments for the Sake of another, without any Prospect of a Recompence, must love his Neighbour *better* than himself, contrary to the Dictates of cool unbiaffed, Reason. Though therefore there may be a constitutional or natural Generosity without any

Love of or Regard for the Deity; yet there ^{SER. XVII} can be no such Thing as a rational, steady and manly Benevolence, without it. For *worldly* Pleasure, Honour or Convenience can be his only rational Aim, whose Views are terminated by *this World*.

There is a *Fashion* in *Virtues*, as well as in *Vices*. Now *Charity* has the good Luck to be in *Fashion* at *present*: And it happens very fortunately, that an Age and Nation, which *abound in Sin* and *Vices* of all Kinds, should be distinguished by a *Virtue*, which *covers a Multitude* of *Sins*. There have been, I know, some who without any Appearances of *Piety* have expended large Sums of Money in Works of *Charity*. Now, not to examine whether this were owing to a kindly Impulse of Nature, or to the Desire of *Popularity* and *Applause*; let it be observed, that whatever they *do* by their *Charity*, they *undo* by the Influences of a *bad Example*. When Persons in low Life observe those, who move in an higher Orb, shewing an open Neglect of the Deity; they are too apt to copy after them, and then, having no Fear of God before their Eyes, give a Loose to those *Vices* which impoverish them and plunge

F f 2

them

them into Miseries of all Kinds. And thus irreligious Men of Rank and Figure introduce those very Miseries by their Influence, which they can only relieve in Part by their Benevolence. Nay this very Benevolence, a glaring popular Virtue, makes their Example more dangerous, than if they were consummately wicked: Just as, according to the *Mosaic Law*, a Man that was leprous only in Part, was more to be avoided; than He, whose Body was entirely overspread with the Leprosy. For a Man desperately wicked raises in us an Abhorrence, and is a Kind of Antidote to Vice: But when good as well as bad Ingredients enter into the Composition of the same Man; it is to be feared, that his shining Qualities, and especially so shining an one as Humanity, will give a Lustre to his Vices, and recommend them to our Imitation. All the Good, which he can do, will not counterbalance the ill Consequences of an Example tending to give disadvantageous Impressions of Religion, and to discountenance that public and reverential Awe of the Deity, which is the surest Guard of Virtue and the strongest Restraint from Vice. Imitation is confessedly a strong Principle of Ac-

tion, and the Imitation of the Richer to the lower Sort. Therefore He, who is acted by a *consistent rational* Principle of Benevolence, will for the same Reason, that he is *benevolent*, *be*, or at least *appear* to be, *devout*; which will be the *greatest* Instance of his *Benevolence*: as his good Example may prevent those Vices, and that Distress, the Consequence of those Vices, which an abandoned Profaneness and Ungodliness never fails to produce.

Many of those, who are void of religious Principles, make *Politeness*, which should be only the Ornament of their Behaviour, the sole Rule of their Actions. *Morality* has nothing to do in the Case, (whatever Pretensions they may make to it) which teaches Men not to *polish over* their Behaviour, but to be *intrinsically* good; not to *disguise* their Passions, but to get the *better* of them. The Passion, for Instance, of Malice is equally strong in some Men of a refined Education, as in those, who have wanted that Advantage: The only Difference is, the former hate with a *well-bred* Malice and a courtly Animosity; whereas the Hatred of the latter is more frank and *undissembled*: It discharges itself, which that

SER. XVII

of the former never does, in unseemly, scurrilous and outrageous Language. For the *Clothing* of Mens *Thoughts* differs, just as the *Clothing* of their *Bodies* does, according to their different Ranks: The Vulgar clothe their *Thoughts*, just as they do their *Persons*, in the *most homely* and *coarse* Attire: Whereas Men of Condition clothe theirs, which are often as corrupt as those of the former, in a *genteeler* Dress and more *delicate* Apparel. Vice is the same in Both: In the One it is an *open Sepulchre*, foul, noisom and unfightly: In the Other it is a Sepulchre *whited* over and beautified: What is *offensive*, is carefully removed *out* of Sight, and nothing *appears*, whatever may *be* beneath, but what conveys *genteel* and *polite* Ideas. This is all those Persons mean, if they have any settled Meaning, (as far as one can judge from their Practice) who have no Regard for Christianity, but yet are Advocates for the Beauty of Virtue. It is to practise some Virtues, or rather to put on the Appearances of some Virtues, such as Generosity, Courage, &c. because they are becoming, genteel and reputable, give them a considerable Figure, and bespeak an Elevation of Mind answerable to their


their Dignity: In the mean Time, they ^{SER XVII} leave others undone, such as Humility, Faith, Meekness and Abstinence; though as much founded upon Reason, as any other Virtues; merely because They have the Misfortune to be unfashionable. They do not so much detest *Vice*, properly speaking, as what is *low*, *vulgar* and *unbecoming* in each Vice, as I observed before in that of Malice, and might give many more Instances. Decency is the Idol, which engrosses all their Homage, exclusive of true genuine inward Virtue. And if that be the Case, they may be said to do, just as the Heathens did, who *sacrificed to the Graces*, but did *not serve the God of Heaven and Earth*. They do not abstain from Sin as such, but from Sin under such Modifications, as make it shocking and inconsistent with *fine Manners*.

After all, I will not deny, that *the Head of Man is deceitful, who can know it?* It mistakes mere Notions for Realities, as some talk and write about Chance, Fortune, and Necessity, as if they had an actual Existence. It may sometimes imagine, what is a mere *notional* Beauty of Virtue, *viz.* a Beauty *distinct* from it's Advantages, to be some-
F f 4 thing

thing *real and substantial*. It may form a *fine Idea*, and then fall in love with it's own Creation. For Enthusiasm does not *confine* itself to Religion, it extends itself to Virtue and to every Thing else. Our Notions generally take a Tincture from our Temper. And Men, whose *glowing and romantic Imagination* makes *plain Sense* flat and *tasteless* to them, will *disrelish* such a *Morality* as the Christian, which is *founded* on plain *sober Sense*: They must image to themselves something *rapturous* and *extatick*: And when they meet with no Object of this Kind in the *Nature* of Things, they strike out one for themselves by the Heat of a prolific Fancy. Rapt up into the *airy Regions* of Visions and Chimeras, where they *walk in a vain Shew* and please themselves *in vain*; they look down with Disdain upon meaner Mortals of a cooler Turn, who follow unaffected Virtue upon *solid Ground*. Sanguine Men are seldom *content* with Things as they *are*: To take a Liking to them, they must *imagine Beauties*, which they *have not*. And thus some may, for ought I know, have gone beyond the Verge of cool Reason, and worked themselves up into an Enthusiastick Ardour for Virtue by the

the Help of I know not what visionary and ^{SER. XVII} disinterested Charms, which they have supposed it to have, without any View to its real Excellencies, the Advantages it brings here and hereafter. The Mystery of the Affair lyes here. They feel a Warmth of Soul, when they have been long contemplating the fair Idea of Virtue: Now they imagine, that it is the Beauty of Virtue, all-lovely in itself, which warms them; and that *That* must be something *real*, not visionary, which can impart a *real Warmth*: Whereas there is *Nothing real*, but the *Ferment* and Glow of the *Imagination*, which always takes Fire by dwelling very long upon any Object. Instances, however, of this *lovely Frenzy* are very rare: The Gros of our Species are not susceptible of so *fine* an Enthusiasm.

The Generality of Men, who pretend to Morality independently of Religion, (except those in whom the original Goodness of their Nature gets the better of the Badness of their Principles,) are such, as have studied and practised the Art of being easy and agreeable, without incommoding themselves, or denying themselves any Pleasure within Bounds. The Difference between
the

SER. XVI.  the Vulgar and Them consists in this: that the former, like Marble in the Block, retain a *native Ruggedness*: whereas the latter have an equally impenetrable, but a more *smooth* and *polished Hardness* of Heart. *Cheap Favours*, an insignificant *Easiness* of Good-Manners, and all the *Outside* of Benevolence you may expect from them: But do not expect from them any solid and material Services; do not expect, that any Thing you can *say* should touch their *Hearts*, or that they will *do* any Thing, which comes warm *from thence*. Their pretended Benevolence is somewhat like the Religion of the Pharisees, who were insipidly exact, and frivolously punctual in *little unconcerning* Niceties, such as *Titling Mint, Anise and Cummin*, but neglected the *weightier Matters* of the Law, such as *Judgment, Mercy* and *Truth*: And to Both may be applied our Saviour's Saying, *These ought Ye to have done, and not to leave the Other undone*. Benevolence, any further than it is constitutional, in most of Those who disclaim all Piety and Devotion, is a fine sounding Word, of which we hear a great deal in their Conversation; but see little or nothing in their Practice. Is there a Man
who,

who, though a Stranger to Piety; yet, without being misled by Caprice or Ostentation, goes on in a regular uniform habitual Practice of doing Good; who raised above the common Wants of Life feels the Miseries of his Fellow-Creatures with almost as much Sensibility, as if he knew by Experience what it was to want; and relieves them with all the Bounty of one, who is not afraid to want himself? Such a Man would not be *far from the Kingdom of Heaven*. But I am afraid, such a Character is, for the most Part, visionary and romantic. We run from one Extreme to another: And Benevolence without Piety, to which it is closely allied, is commonly as much mere Pretence and Hypocrisy; as Piety without Benevolence was during the Time of the Grand Rebellion. Then Men were for giving *Glory to God*, without shewing *Good-Will to Men*, or promoting *Peace upon Earth*: And, since that Time, some have set up a Principle of Morality and Good-Will to Man, exclusive of all Devotion and Homage to the Deity. Both are inseparably united; and what God and Reason have joined together, let not Man put asunder. But Folly, like Matter, is continually shifting the Scene,
and

and subsisting under different Modifications.

SER. XVII

It is the Fate of some People to be governed by a Set of Words without any determinate Meaning annexed to them. *Seeking the Lord*, when Men were ravaging the Nation, was not more a Cant Term and mere Jargon, than the agreeable soft Sound of Benevolence is, generally speaking, at present, without that, which must be the Basis of it, an affectionate Love of God. A Man may indeed *do* Good occasionally *without* any Principle, the very Brutes doing several Acts that are materially good : But to *be* habitually good, to be all of a Piece and consistent throughout, there must be a fixed *Principle* of Goodness woven into the Soul. And He that will not do Good to his Fellow-Creatures for the Sake of God, who created him ; cannot, consistently with Reason, be obliged to do it upon other Motives. To lessen therefore our Love of God, is to weaken our Love of Mankind. That God would place to his own Account, whatever was done for *his* Sake to our distressed Brethren : is a Motive to do Good as much superior to all others, as He Himself is to all other Beings.

An excellent *Grecian* Historian *, who ^{SER. XVII} lived before those Principles of Irreligion had gotten Footing in *Rome*, to which he ascribes the Ruin of his own Country, has an Observation very apposite to my present Purpose. I shall beg leave to transcribe it, as I find it translated by a very eminent Writer †.

“ See now the Difference, [*i. e.* between a strict Observance of Religion and a Disregard to it] “ in *Greece*, he, that is intrusted with the public Money, (to pass by other Matters) though it be but of a single Talent, and though he gives a ten-fold Security, cannot be brought to discharge his Engagements: While among the *Romans* the mere Religion of an Oath keeps those, who in the public Administration or in foreign Negotiations have vast Sums of Money passing through their Hands from violating their Honour and Uprightness. And whereas in other Places (where Irreligion prevails) it is rare to find a Man, who keeps his

* *Polybius*.

† See the whole Passage in the *divine Legation*, vol. 1st, page 297, 1st Edition, with the Author's very judicious Reflections upon it.

SER. XVII “ Hands clean ; on the contrary among the
 “ *Romans* it is as rare to find any offending
 “ in this Kind.”

Thus far this Writer, from whose Country those very irreligious Notions were soon after introduced into *Rome*, which, in Process of Time, proved destructive to it too.

I shall close this Discourse with the following Remark, *viz.* That though a Man should violate some or even all the *social* Duties ; yet as long as a Regard to the Deity was not quite extinct in him, there would be still *some Hold* to be taken, and some faint Hopes of reclaiming Him. The *Root* of Virtue (for *the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom*) is still in the Ground : and it may yet put forth again, though several of the considerable Branches have been maimed and lopped off : But when a reverential Awe of his Maker is quite worn out and defaced, then indeed the *Ax is laid unto the Root of the Tree* : The very Foundation, upon which the Hopes of Amendment could be built, is destroyed : His Recovery is desperate and his Ruin sealed : There is nothing left to curb him from Vice, and bring him back again to the Practice of Virtue.

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