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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.*

By *JEREMIAH SEED*, M. A.

Rector of *Enham in Hampshire*, and late Fellow  
of *Queen's-College, Oxford.*

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The FIFTH EDITION.

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VOLUME II.

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LONDON:

Printed for R. MANBY, near *Ludgate-Hill*, and  
H. S. COX, in *Pater-Noster-Row.*

MDCCLVII.



T H E  
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# S E R M O N I.

The Notion of Pride stated, and the Pretensions to it examined. ....

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ROMANS XII. 3.

*Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly.*

**I**T is a common Observation, that how-<sup>SERM. I.</sup> ever forward Men may be to repine at the unequal Portion which God has allotted them of worldly Blessings; yet they are generally well satisfied with their Share of inward Endowments: it being as hard to meet with a Person, who humbly thinks he has too little Sense and Merit, as it is to find one, who fancies he has too great Riches and Honours.

What makes men uneasy in their Circumstances, is that they are continually setting to View the *bright* Side of *themselves*, and the *dark* Side of their *Condition* in Life;

SERM. I. the first to find out their own Grievances, and the last to discern their own Faults and Follies. Whereas if they took a contrary Method, they would perceive, that God had been kinder to the Worst of Men, than the very Best of Men could deserve.

Self-Love is a Passion interwoven in our Frame and Constitution; and if it be not kept under due Regulations, Self-Conceit will be the necessary Effect of it. For since we are apt to believe, what we wish to be true; Is it a Wonder, if we over-rate those Perfections, which we have, and imagine ourselves possess of those, which we have no Title to?

In our Youth, Pleasure has often the Ascendant; in the Middle of our Age Ambition; and Avarice brings up the Rear at the Close of Life. But this Vice, of which I am speaking, attends too many of us from the Cradle to the Grave: we being equally vain, whether we pursue Pleasure, Honour, or Wealth: The Master Passion of the Soul is the same, though its Servants are often changed according to the different Stages of Life.

For this Reason the Apostle ushers in the Words of my Text with a peculiar Emphasis

*and the Pretensions to it examined.*

3

SERM. I.

phasis and Force. *For I say, according to the Grace given unto me, to every one among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly.*

In which Words St. Paul adviseth us, and instead of viewing ourselves in that engaging Light, which the fervile Flattery of others, or our own assuming Vanity (our greatest Flatterer of all) might place us in, we should endeavour to form a true Estimate of our Worth, or in the Words of the Text, *think soberly.*

Among the many Imputations, which we are willing to fasten upon those whom we have an Aversion to, that of Pride is, I think, one of the most common. Now, if we would examine the innermost Recesses of the Mind, I doubt we should often find, that our own Pride is the Cause, why we tax others with it. Men elate with the Thoughts of their own Sufficiency are ever imagining, that others are wanting in their Regard to them, and therefore very apt to conclude, that Pride must be the Cause, why they withhold from them that Respect, which they have an unquestioned Right to in their own Opinion. Of this we have a pregnant Instance in Scripture: *You*

**SERM. I.** *take too much upon you,* said *Corah* and his Accomplices, when they themselves were taking too much upon them, and invading the Province of *Aaron*. Hence it is, that their Character seldom escapes the Brand of Vanity, who have the Fortune to be possess'd of those Accomplishments, which would make their Detractors vain.

But before we asperse others with this Censure, let us consider what Pride is, and correct our Mistakes about the Nature of it.

In the following Discourse I shall therefore *Ist* state the Notion of Pride.

*Ildly*, Consider the Unreasonableness of this Vice.

*Ist* then, I am to state the Notion of Pride.

Our Happiness, as well as Knowledge, arises from Sensation and Reflection; and may be reduced to these two Articles, *viz.* that of pleasing Sensations, and that of agreeable Thoughts. Now as to a Desire of indulging the former without Check or Control, are owing Lust, Drunkenness and Intemperance; so from a Desire of indulging the latter beyond Measure, Pride takes it's Original. And it is very remark-

able, and those, who most deny them-SERM. I. selves *pleasing Sensations*, will be, except they are very much upon their Guard, apt overmuch to indulge *agreeable Reflections* upon themselves. In Proportion as they resist the coarser Self-Indulgences, the more refined and spiritual Vices will gain an easier Entrance. Just as subtile and thin Matter finds Admittance and fills up the Vacancy, where Bodies of a grosser Contexture cannot penetrate. Pride springs from a partial View of ourselves, a View of the bright Side of ourselves, without balancing against it our numerous Imperfections and Defects, how little Good we *can* perform without the Grace of God, and how little we actually *do* perform even with it. It does not consist in the bare *Consciousness*, that we have some Accomplishments, as for Instance, good Sense, Beauty, great Abilities; but in that *Exultation* of Mind, which is consequent upon that Consciousness, unallayed by any Self-Dissatisfaction arising from a Survey of our Sins and Frailties. If our Virtues and Perfections (supposing them our own Acquisitions) were unallayed; then an unallayed Self-Complacency *might* justly be the Result of a Knowledge of them: But as

SERM. I. human Excellencies will have a Mixture of human Weaknesses, our Self-Complacency ought to be moderated in proportion to our Faults and Imperfections. The Difference between Humility and Pride consists in this, that the humble Man, whatever Talents he is possess of, considers them as so many Trusts reposed in him by God, which are so far from raising his Pride, that they excite his Caution; as knowing that to *whom much is given, of him much will be required*: Whereas the Proud values himself, as if he were not only the *Subject* but the *Author* of those good Qualities; and so makes an Idol of himself, instead of adoring and thanking God for them. The proud Man is dazzled with the Lustre of his own Excellencies: Whereas the humble Man, though not insensible of *particular* Endowments, yet thinks meanly of Himself *absolutely* and upon the *Whole*; and begs that God would *not weigh his Merits, but pardon his Offences*.


A total Self-Loathing, however, would be as great a Fault, as a clear and unmixed Self-Liking: It would deaden all the Powers of the Soul, and sink it into a State of Inaction. There is a Medium between a  
just

just Sense of our Abilities, and an exorbi-<sup>SERM. I.</sup> tant Opinion of them. The former is of admirable Service to Mankind, when qualified with a due Proportion of Discretion and Modesty. A just Consciousness of those Talents, with which God has entrusted us, will give Life and Spirit to our Undertakings, and be a powerful Motive to those Actions, which may make us truly glorious: Modesty and Discretion will be a Bar to those Attempts, which being above our Sphere may make us ridiculous. Thus do these two act in Concert, and while the former prompts us to display ourselves; the latter prevents us from exposing ourselves. The *Flame* will aspire upwards, but it will be with Trembling.

It is a false Humility to have low derogatory Thoughts of human *Nature* in general, as if it were entirely and essentially corrupt, without any Mixture of Goodness: True Humility chiefly teacheth us to have low Notions of those *personal* Differences, which *distinguish* one Man from another. Man ought to reverence himself, as a Being capable of Knowledge, Virtue, and everlasting Happiness: but then he becomes blameable, when he is elate upon

SERM. I. the Account of *accidental* Differences; if,   
 for Instance, being a Man of a large Com-   
 pass of Thought and deep Penetration, he   
 shall despise another, because he is of a dul-   
 ler Apprehension or perhaps an Idiot. For   
 it is to be considered, that the Soul is of   
 the same Kind in both, equally great as to   
 all essential Qualities in the one as in the   
 other: and the only Superiority he has con-   
 sists perhaps in a finer Contexture of the   
 Brain, or a livelier Flow of the Animal   
 Spirits: which is plain from this; that an   
 Accident or a Disease shall reduce a Man   
 of the most distinguished sense to the Con-   
 dition of a Natural. And it would be just   
 as reasonable to despise a Man, because He   
 could not work as well as we with wretch-   
 ed Instruments: as to condemn a Man, be-   
 cause He cannot reason as well with a Body   
 incommodiously formed for Thinking: The   
 Body being an Instrument to the Soul in   
 Thinking. The Soul of one Man is lodg-   
 ed as it were in a commodious lightsom   
 Mansion, where it can command a spaci-   
 ous Prospect, and take in Variety of Ob-   
 jects; and the Soul of another may be pent   
 up as it were in a dark Dungeon, where   
 there are few or no Inlets of Knowledge.   
 But



But when this earthly Tabernacle shall be SERM. I. dissolved, and the Mind enlarged, they will,  Both of them, be upon an equal Foot. When that Knowledge which is *in Part shall be done away*, and that which is perfect is come; a Man of the dullest Apprehension shall perhaps be in a Moment wiser, than the greatest Scholar after a Life laid out in painful Researches can be here. So little Reason is there to lay great Stress upon those *accidental* Differences which distinguish one man from another; at the same time that it is Ingratitude to God, as well as false Humility, to depreciate human Nature in general.

Pride then is, as the Text expresseth it, the *Thinking too highly of ourselves*. It is an over-weening Conceit of our Dignity, founded upon some real or imaginary Superiority to our Neighbours: which, when it expresseth itself in an imperious and overbearing Carriage, and a commanding Mien, is called Haughtiness; and is generally the Fault of a narrow Education: Whereas Men of an enlarged Conversation give into a more delicate Pride, which can never enjoy itself, but when it is so artful, as to conceal itself under the Mask of Humility.

The

*The Notion of Pride stated,*

SERM. I.

The Generality of Mankind consider only the Surface of their Actions, without ever founding the Depths of their Heart, and tracing the inward Workings of the Soul. Indeed we cannot but be sensible of the *violent* Emotions and Agitations of any Passion; but the *still* and gentler Movements oft escape our Notice. Thus when Pride becomes so enormous, as, in the Words of a judicious Writer\*, “to make Men use their Servants, as if they were Brutes, their Inferiors as Servants, and their Equals as Inferiors;” Men must be blind to over-look this Vice in others, or even in themselves. But when it conceals itself under studied Disguises and Refinements, it will, except we are very attentive, elude our Observation. To give some Instances, a Person is perhaps very liberal: but while he does not examine the Principle of his Liberality, he shall not perceive, that Pride is often the *Source* of it, that he only makes an Exchange of Money for Glory, and dispenses his Favours, because he values the Vanity of Giving, more than the Thing, which he gives. Another mistakes the Affability of the Gentleman, or Man

\* *Hosker's Works*, Page 520.

*and the Pretensions to it examined.* I I

Man of the World, for the Humility of SERM. I. the Christian. Whereas he ought to consider, that we oft beat down those Vices which are flagrant and glaring, by others which are secret and out of Sight. Thus we often get the better of Intemperance not by a Virtuous Principle, but merely by a passionate Fondness for long Life, by the Fear of Death or by Avarice. Thus we often sacrifice our outward Pride to an inward one. We keep in our Insolence, because a supercilious and contemptuous Treatment of others would only make us contemptible. But Affability and a Complacency of Behaviour opens us a Passage to the Hearts of Men, and gains us an advantageous Situation in their Minds. It may be a more artful Manner to engage that Respect which we seem to decline. Men of this Turn may be very affable, not to do Honour to others, but as they take Affability to be an Honour to themselves.

It has been observed, I suppose, by way of Compliment to the present Age, that one Vice at least, *viz.* that of Hypocrisy, seems to be banished from among us: But alas! unless we could divest human Nature of its Weaknesses, no Vice will ever be quite

SERM. I. quite extinct, though it may appear under another Form. Thus a *religious* Hypocrisy seems indeed in some measure to be no more: But in the room of it, there has started up a *genteel* and *polite* Hypocrisy, a certain Decency of Behaviour, which by putting on the *Appearances* of every Virtue, prevents the *Reality* of any. What is foul and loathsome in each Vice, Men must keep out of Sight, unless they would be public Nufances: but then they only part with its outward Deformity, without any Amendment of the Heart. Nay some, I believe, confound the Ideas of Politeness and Morality. They mistake the Aversion, which they have in themselves, to whatever is *ill-bred*, *unseemly*, and *offensive* in any *Sin*, for a genuine *Love of Goodness*: They imagine that to be a *Virtue*, which is only *Vice refined*.

The more a Man knows of the World, the more sensible he will be, that he must conceal the *odious* Part of Pride, unless he would be odious to *himself*. But then he may retire into himself, to cherish each favourable and delightful Idea of his own Worth, that soothes and flatters his Vanity, shutting out all humbling and mortifying Reflections,

Reflections, that like so many plain-dealing SERM. I. Friends would put him out of Humour with himself, by suggesting to him unwelcome, though necessary, Truths. And yet this is the very Effence of Pride.

For Humility consists in the inward Frame and Disposition of the Mind, in a right Judgment, in the main, of ourselves: It is when we ascribe the Glory of our Actions to God alone, who gives us Power to act; like polished vessels, which reflect back again the Rays of Light which they receive, instead of absorbing, imbibing and detaining them. It is to have a deep Sense that God created us out of Nothing, and that Sin reduceth us to a State worse than Nothing without the Mercies of God, and the Merits of our Saviour.

Though there may be a Sincerity without Humility, yet a Simplicity of Manners is a necessary Ingredient of it. For there is a Difference between Simplicity and Sincerity; or, in other Words, a Man may be very sincere without any Simplicity: He may not be ambitious to be thought what he is not; yet be too ostentatious of what he is: Unable to wait till others discover, he is impatient to display his own Perfections with  
all

SERM. I. all the Advantages which Art and Address  
 can give them. Whereas Simplicity is free from every Alloy of Vanity, or any Thing of a shewish Nature; it shines forth with natural and unstudied Beauties, *is not puffed up, seeketh not its own*, the Praise that is due to it; and its chief Ornament is, that it does not affect any. And yet the true *Sublime* of Life, as well as of Writing, consisteth in the *Simple*. For noble Actions and noble Qualities, like noble Thoughts, support *themselves*, they have an inherent Greatness and native Lustre, which needs not foreign Pomp and borrowed Ornaments. Nothing does them more Harm, than setting them off too much and over-charging them with Decorations.

To obviate Mistakes and to remove Scruples, it will be necessary to observe that Pride is not *merely* to think favourably of ourselves: For then indeed Pride, as some late Authors have maintained, would be an universal Vice; every Body being, more or less, biassed in his own Favour. But Pride is to think *so* favourably of ourselves, as to exclude a modest Diffidence of ourselves, and a salutary Sense of the Number of human Frailties, the Imperfection of  
 our

our Virtues, the Malignity of our Crimes, SERM. I. and our Dependance on God for every Thing good *in* us and *for* us. A Man may think himself *somewhat* wiser and better than he is; who, notwithstanding, may have an humble or low Opinion of himself upon the *Whole*, as being far from thinking himself wise and good *enough*: far from *thinking that he standeth* collected in himself, and therefore needeth not *take heed lest he fall*. A Man may not imagine himself quite so faulty as he is; (*for who can tell how oft he offendeth?*) who yet may deserve the Character of an humble Man; if, at the same time, that he endeavoureth to improve in Virtue, and get clear of every presumptuous Sin; he strives to detect, and begs of God to cleanse him from, his secret and unsuspected Faults. Pride is a Vice or moral Evil: And nothing can be Evil, any further, than it is in its genuine Tendency productive of Evil. But what evil Effects would an Opinion too favourable of ourselves be attended with; provided it did not rise to so high a Pitch, as to make us think presumptuously and securely of ourselves, contemptuously and uncharitably of our Fellow-Creatures, and behave irreverently

SERM. I. *is, I doubt, almost impossible to hold the Balance exactly even without the least Inclination to our Side; it is impossible for us, who are Parties, to pass Judgment on ourselves with the strict Rigour of Justice without the least Partiality, without any favorable Softenings and Allowances: All, that can be expected from us, is, what I believe every wise and modest Man doeth, viz. that looking around us and considering how apt every Man is in some degree to over-value himself, we learn from hence to entertain and cherish a constant Suspicion and Misgiving, that we do so too: which Misgiving disposeth us to look deeper into ourselves, to trust not so much to our own Abilities, as to our Vigilance and Circumspection, and God's Blessing upon us, and to make our humble Application to him, that he would look well, if there be any Way of Wickedness in us, and lead us in the Way everlasting.*

Having thus stated the Nature of Pride, I proceed, *Illy*, To shew the Unreasonableness of this Vice. And this I shall do, by examining our Pretensions to Pride.



Are we proud of Riches? Riches cannot alter the Nature of Things, they cannot make a Man worthy, that is worthless in himself: They may command an insipid Complaisance, a formal Homage, and ceremonious Professions of Respect, and teach a servile World to speak a Language foreign to their Hearts; but where a Largeness of Soul is wanting, they can never procure an affectionate Esteem, grateful Sentiments, and an undissembled Love, the willing Tribute of a generous Heart to Merit only. The Value of the Estate may be very great; but that of the Man is not at all greater; if he does not employ his Estate as the great Engine to procure moral Pleasures, and to do benevolent Offices. And if it be true Wisdom to think that *early*, which we must think at last; let us now be convinced, which we shall certainly be hereafter, that there is nothing truly valuable, noble and manly, but the good Sense to know our Duty, an hearty Inclination to practise it, and a determinate Steadiness to persevere in it to the End: That the only true substantial Greatness is rightly to apprehend, affectionately to worship, and diligently to imitate our heaven-

SERM. I.  
}

SERM. I. ly Father. The Unthinking may be carried away with Appearances, instead of Realities; but the Judicious should consider Things intrinsically, and think him the greatest, who strives, as much as in him lies, to make others happy by his Benevolence, good by his Example, and wise by his Instructions.

Do we value ourselves upon our Power? No; what is remarked by some body or other, is a great Truth, *viz.* That there is no Good in Power, but merely the Power of doing Good. Upon our worldly Prudence? Those, who are acquainted with History know, how often the best-laid Designs have proved abortive. Among all the Maxims of worldly Prudence, this is one of the best, *viz.* That we should endeavour to discover the reigning Passion in every Man, whom we would manage; and when we have found out that, we have got a Handle to turn him, which way we please. But then every Man, besides his reigning Passion, has his particular Caprice or Humour; which will make our Measures often miscarry. Besides, no one Passion is perhaps the *perpetual Dictator*: No, our Heart is rather a little *Commonwealth*; where

where they govern us with an alternate <sup>SERM. I.</sup> Sway, and sometimes our Ambition, sometimes our Anger, sometimes our Fear or some other Affection is uppermost.

Human Policy therefore must be uncertain, because Man, who is the Subject of it, is so uncertain, wavering and inconstant; and there can be no fixed and stated Maxims to please and manage so changeable and inconsistent a Creature: But we may by certain and unchanging Rules gain the Love of that Being, with whom *there is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.* No Prudence therefore but the Spiritual, *viz.* To please him who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,* can be certain.

Are you proud of your distinguished Virtue? He who is proud of distinguished *Abilities, Learning and Wealth,* is not the *less* able, learned and wealthy, *because* he is *proud* of them. But he, who is *proud* of distinguished *Virtue,* *ceaseth* to be *virtuous,* by his being so. For the Man that is pleased with any Degree of Virtue, merely because it is uncommon, would be sorry, if what he values himself upon, as a singular Mark of Distinction, should become

SERM. I. common, and all Mankind should rise to the same Eminence as himself in Morality. Now this Temper argues a Want of Benevolence, and, consequently, of Virtue. It shews a mean, narrow, selfish Turn of Mind, to triumph in any extraordinary Attainment, solely because it is peculiar to us, or confined to a select Few: A truly generous, benevolent, and virtuous Spirit would wish, that All *were not only almost, but altogether such as he is*; and be the happier in himself, if the Bulk of Mankind were Partakers of that Happiness which results from Virtue.

Besides, those, who *seldom* act or think nobly, may be *proud* of what they so *seldom* think or act. But to those, who *constantly* entertain great Thoughts, and do noble Actions, to them they are become so *familiar*, that they make no great *Impressions* upon them. At the same time, that they rise above the common Level of Action, they think they do nothing but what is common; because nothing but what is commonly done by *them*. The Favours, which you cannot receive without warm Emotions of Joy and Gratitude, they can bestow with great Coolness and Unconcernedness.

edness. Because, though to receive such Favours is something unusual to you; yet to do them is nothing new to them. SERM. I.

The more virtuous any Man is, the more modest and unpretending he must be. He must be sensible of the numerous Disorders which lurk within, of his sickly Appetites, and the Corruption of his Heart; and how often the precarious Light of Reason, that *Candle* which God has lighted up in his Mind, has been *put out* by some sudden *Gust* of Passion. If a Child could read those foolish, vain, wicked Imaginations, which the best of us have sometimes indulged; we should be ashamed to look him in the Face, and be out of Conceit with ourselves: And yet we do not sometimes stifle them immediately; though we know that He, whose tremendous Majesty fills the whole Compass of Heaven and Earth, cannot but be privy to them, and discern the secret Meditations of our Heart. The Knowledge of the Greatest Beings, who *understandeth our Thoughts long before*, hath less Influence, than that of the silliest of Mortals would have, supposing he could know the inward Workings of the Soul. We are not worthy to approach

SERM. I. Him, who *dwelleth in unapproachable Glory*,  
 but through the Merits of our Redeemer.  
 We could not expect any Instances of  
 Goodness from a Being less than infinitely  
 good.

And yet, notwithstanding our many Imperfections, I question whether, upon a Supposition that all of us were to be the Judges and Rewarders of our own Merits; *this World* would be half large enough, that *every one might take a little*. Several *other Worlds* must be taken in, to recompense us, as we think, fully, and adjust the Rewards to our imaginary Deserts.

He who thinks, that he has no Weaknesses to subdue, either wholly or in part; no virtuous Habits to acquire, or, at least, to improve and perfect; he who, in short, thinks himself quite good enough; proves, by the very Thought, that he is not so. then our Salvation is most in danger, when we dismiss all Apprehensions about it.

But if Virtue (human Virtue) affords no just Grounds for Pride; much less does human *Knowledge*, which bears no Proportion to our Ignorance. The greatest and the least Objects equally baffle our Enquiries. Too great and disproportioned an  
 Object

Object embarrasses and oversets the Under-SERM. I.standing; too little an one eludes, and escapes it. It is God *alone*, whose Almighty Power, nothing is so *great* that it can *encumber*; whose infinite Wisdom, nothing is so *little* that it can *escape*. Presumptuous Man! wouldst thou understand the Manner in which three Persons exist in the same unbounded Essence? Before thou strivest to fathom the Nature of the *Greatest* of all Beings; first, if thou canst, comprehend how the least of Beings exist, Animals a hundred Times less than a Mite, Myriads of such Animals, as can only be discerned by the Help of Glasses. If the whole Body be so minute, as to be undiscoverable by the naked Eye; how much less the Limbs, of which that whole Body is compounded? How much less still the Nerves, the Veins, the Blood in those Veins, the animal Spirits in that Blood; till we approach to the very Borders of Nothing? For these Animals contain in Miniature, all those Parts which we have in larger Dimensions. In short, for one Thing, that we can possibly account for in the Book of Nature, there are Millions of Things, of which we can give no Account:

SEK M. I. Yet we, who find almost all Things so puzzling and unaccountable in the Book of Nature, expect that every Thing in the Book of Grace, which proceeds from the same Author, should be plain and level to our Capacities.

True Knowledge is one of the strongest Fences against Pride. When good Sense and Reason speak, they come, like their great Author, God, in the *still small Voice*, without any empty Noise or Loquacity, or over-bearing Pretensions. And those who keep the best Sense within, seldom hang out the Sign of Knowledge. Men of this Stamp will own their entire Ignorance in many Things, and their imperfect Knowledge in all the rest. Whereas the Ignorant are sometimes peremptory and positive in Matters quite above their Sphere, and, like some Creatures, are the *bolder* for being *blind*. In a Word, the Ingenuous will confess the Weakness of their Reason; and the Presumptuous betray it by their being so.

If we are born without an Aptitude to learn, and a Genius for Knowledge; we may resemble the Woman in the Gospel, who had *spent all she had upon Physicians*, and yet *grew no better, but rather worse*. All the Tutors  
and



and Instructors in the Universe will avail nothing: For they *cannot open the Eyes of those, that are born blind.* But, granting the utmost Happiness of natural Parts, yet he, who confineth himself to one Province of Knowledge, cannot understand even that thoroughly. Because there is that Harmony and Alliance between the several Branches of Science, that one reflects Light upon another. He on the other hand who grasps at every Part of Knowledge, is only a superficial Smatterer in All; and is too general a Trader in the Republic of Letters to become rich. A Man of a slow Capacity is apt to sit down under a Despondency of making any Advances in Literature: Men of quick Parts are sometimes distracted with Variety of Pursuits. So many Thoughts are continually rising in their Minds, that, like Trees overladen with Fruit, they seldom bring any to its just Perfection.

After All, what signifies all the Learning in the World, without a just Discernment and Penetration? And what is the Result of our Penetration, but that we see through the Littleness of almost every Thing, and our own especially? That we discern, and are disgusted with, several Follies and Absurdities, which are hid  
from

SERM. I. from Persons of a slower Apprehension? So  
 that our superior Sagacity resembles the pretended Second-Sightedness of some People, by which they are said to see several uncomfortable and dismal Objects, which escape the rest of the World. This Man ranges the Circuit of the Heavens, knows the Laws by which the Planets revolve; sees every Thing regular; then descends into himself, and finds, by surveying the World within, that Man alone is irregular and eccentric. He can account for the Uses of Tempests, Earthquakes and Thunder; and perceives, that all Storms and Tempests, except those in a Man's Breast, fulfil the Word of God and obey his Will.

Some may perhaps value themselves upon the Strength of their Genius, the Largeness of their Heart, even *as the Sand upon the Sea Shore*, and the Brightness of their Parts. Alas! the Strength of the Passions, and the Quickness of the Appetites, generally keep Pace with the Brightness of the Imagination. And hence it comes to pass, that those who have, with an uncommon Compass of Thought, inculcated excellent Rules of Morality in their Writings, have sometimes broke through them all in their Practice:

The

The Brightness of their Parts enabling them to lay down fine Precepts, and the Strength of their Passions tempting them to transgress them. A Man may discourse admirably well upon Oeconomy, who never was Master of it in the Conduct of Life: Because he may take a Pleasure in discoursing upon Oeconomy, or any other Subject, upon which he can display a beautiful Fancy; but to look carefully into his Affairs, to balance his Accounts, and to proportion his Expences to his Income, is a Drudgery, to which he cares not to stoop. There is not a greater Inlet to Vice and Misery, than to have (which is generally the Case of Men of Wit, and the Cause of the Irregularity of their Conduct) too much Spirit to confine one's Self to the common Business of Life; and too much Fire and Passion to relish the calm Satisfaction of it. For this Temper puts a Man always in quest of something transporting, and every Way fitted to a high Taste. To a Man of *strong Sensations* every Delight, that is *gentle*, seems dull; and every Thing, but what is high seasoned, flat and tasteless. The Consequence of which is, that disdaining common Blessings, and not able to enjoy himself without something

SERM. I. thing out of the usual Road, he overleaps  
 these Bounds, which confine meaner Mortals, and precipitates himself into an endless Train of Inconveniencies.

But let us suppose, what is not a very common Case, that a Brightness of Imagination, and a well-poised Judgment, are happily united in the same Person; yet the ablest Writer, the brightest Genius, the greatest Man that ever lived; nay, an Archangel of the highest Class may say, "O my God! that I live, and that I please, if ever I please, is owing to thee. May it be then my uppermost View to do thy Pleasure, from whom I have the Ability to please!"

How vain and uncertain all Things are here below, appears from this, that we hold even Reason itself, that ennobling Quality, that boasted Prerogative, and distinguishing Perfection of human Nature, upon a very precarious Tenure; and something, as one expresseth it, with a human Shape and Voice, has often survived every thing human besides. The Brain, by too great Quickness and Stretch of Thought, like a Chariot Wheel, by the Rapidity of its Motion, takes Fire; the thin Partitions, which divided Wit from Madness, are

are broken down. The most penetrating SERM. I. and sparkling Geniuses border upon, and sometimes more than border upon, downright Frenzy. They shew us even then, in their lucid Intervals, the Monuments and Traces of what they have been, like the Monuments of old *Rome*, majestic even in its Ruins. Their sudden Starts of Sense, though soon broken off, give us more Pleasure, than the sober uniform Thoughts of Men of slower Apprehension: Just as the maimed Statues, the broken Pillars, and imperfect triumphal Arches of old *Rome*, delight us more, than the entire Performances of less able and less masterly Hands.

If then Reason itself, which distinguisheth us from Brutes, be so very precarious, and depends upon such a fine and subtile Contexture of the Brain, as is liable to be disordered by several Accidents; the Observation I would draw from hence is very material, and worth our Consideration: If Mankind were to be vain of nothing, but what is their lasting Property, of which they cannot be stripped; they would be vain of nothing at all; there would be no such thing as Vanity.

SERM. I.

Art thou then proud of Knowledge? Alas! the dim light of human Reason looks feeble and languid at the first Thought and Contemplation of that *Father of Lights*, in whom there is no *Darkness* at all. Dost thou pride thyself upon thy Power? All the little Grandeur we can boast, is lost in the Consideration of that *only Potentate*, who dwelleth in *Light* which no one can approach to. Art thou elate upon the account of an ample Fortune? Consider him to whom the *whole World* belongs, and all that is therein; who wanting nothing himself, supplies the Wants of every other Being. All human Pride shrinks into nothing, when we contemplate that great Being, who is *All in All*. And the Man, who is possessed with just Notions of an all-perfect God, will never make a God of any thing else, much less of himself.

Dost thou value thyself upon popular Applause, and a great Name? Think how many that have made a distinguished Figure in the World, are dead and unregarded, as if they never had been; their Deaths unlamented, their Vacancy filled up, their Persons missed no more, than a Drop of Water, when taken from the whole

whole Ocean. And is it worth our while SERM. I. to strive to please a vain fantastick World, which will soon disregard us, and think itself full as well without us; instead of laying out our Endeavours to please that Almighty Being, whose inexhaustable Power and Goodness will make his Servants happy to all Eternity? How ridiculous are all our Aims; except this be the grand Aim, in which all the rest center! A Man, for Instance, makes it his Business to ensure to himself a Name after Death; that is, to save four or five Letters (for what is a Name besides?) from Oblivion; and yet shall be neglectful of securing immortal Happiness: He shall be fond of an *imaginary* Life after Death; and yet make no Provision for that real Life, which is to last for ever and ever; solicitous to have *his Name* written and preserved in *any Book*, but in *that Book*, where it will only be of Service to him, *the Book of Life*. O Virtue! when this solemn Pageantry of earthly Grandeur shall be no more, when all Distinctions, but moral and religious, shall vanish; when this Earth shall be dissolved, when the Moon shall be no more a Light by Night, nor the Sun by Day;  
thou

SERM. I. thou shalt still survive thy Votary's immortal Friend, thou shalt *appear*, like thy great Author, *in perfect Beauty*; thy Lustre undiminished, and thy Glory unperishable.

*Let him therefore that glorieth, glory in the Lord.* He alone, who gave and upholds all the Powers of Soul and Body, he alone deserveth the Glory of them. As we are *Creatures*, the Work of God's Hands, we have nothing to *glory* of: But as we are *Sinners*, and, in that respect, the Work of *our own* Hands, we have much to be *ashamed* of. We then give the greatest Proof to God of our Worthiness, when we have a deep Sense, and make an humble Confession, of our own Unworthiness.

*To God therefore, and to Him only,  
Be ascribed, as is most due, all  
Might, &c.*



# S E R M O N II.

On the Advantages of Affliction.

Being a SERMON occasioned by the Death of Mr. *Burton*, of *Montpelier-Row*, in *Twickenham*.

Preached in *Twickenham-Chapel*, on *Mid-lent Sunday*, 1742; and published at the Request of the Audience.



PSALM LXXVII. 3.

*When I am in Heaviness, I will think upon God.*

**T**HE whole Psalm is written with SERM. II. a very beautiful Spirit of Poetry; and if we consider it merely as an human Composition, may justly challenge our highest Admiration. In the former Part, the Psalmist vents an Heart overcharged with Grief, and writes with the deepest Emotions of Sorrow. *In the Day*

SERM. II.

*of my Trouble I sought the Lord, my Sorran in the Night and ceased not, my Soul refused to be comforted. And again, at the seventh Verse, Will the Lord absent himself for ever, and will he be no more favourable? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in Anger shut up his tender Mercies? Thus does he discharge the Fulness of his Soul; 'till, by a very natural, and yet very surprizing Transition, from a Rehearſal of his own Woes, he paſſes on to celebrate the marvellous Acts of God. For, to relieve himſelf under the Preſſure of his preſent Afflictions, he has Recourſe to the former Mercies, which God had vouchſafed to the Iſraelites. Surely I will remember thy Wonders of old. This uſhers in thoſe ſublime Flights of Poetry, which are peculiar to the Genius of the Eaſtern Nations. The Waters ſaw Thee, O God; the Waters ſaw Thee: They were afraid: The Depths alſo were troubled, &c. Then, to repreſent the Unſearchableneſs of God, he compares him, by a very beautiful Alluſion, to a Being walking upon the Waters, the Traces of whoſe Feet could not therefore be diſcovered: Thy Way is in the Sea, and thy Paths in the great Waters, and thy Footſteps are not known.*

If

If we should set aside the Sanction of SERM. II. divine Authority, which stamps an additional Value upon the Psalm; yet it could not fail to affect every Reader of a refined Taste. And when we either consider those melting Strains, in which he describes his own Woes; or that exalted Vein, in which he represents the Majesty of God; we shall be at a Loss, whether to admire more the Greatness of that Genius, which could acquit itself with so masterly an Hand in both the pathetic and sublime Way of Writing; or the Justness of that Judgment, which could with so dextrous an Address, with so easy, and I had almost said, so natural an Art, glide from the one to the other.

The Author of the Psalm had a Mind deeply tinctured with Piety. When his *Heart was in Heaviness*, he *thought upon God*: But to think on him then with Pleasure, he must have set God constantly before him in the smooth Seasons of Life. This will lead me to shew,

*Ist*, The Happiness and Reasonableness of turning our Thoughts to God in general.

SERM. II.

II<sup>dly</sup>, The peculiar Advantages of Affliction, to bring us to a just Sense of God, and our Duty.

I<sup>st</sup>, I am to shew the Happiness and Reasonableness of turning our Thoughts to God in general.

To repair to God only, when under Affliction, is to use Him as some conceited Philosophers have done, who never have Recourse to Him, and take Him into their Schemes, but when they are in Distress, when they meet with some Difficulty, which they cannot plausibly account for or get over, without calling Him in to their Aid.

Besides, never is there more Occasion for Good-Humour, Cheerfulness, and an undisturbed Serenity of Mind, than when we form our religious Notices. For, though the brightest ideas of the Deity may be retained and cherished under any Indisposition of Mind or Body; yet, to retain and cherish them at that Juncture, they must be imprinted in indelible Characters on the Soul, when it was in an easy Situation: Otherwise, Religion will not brighten up our Minds, and *lighten the Darkness* of them;

them; our Minds will darken and disco-  
lour Religion. And what has given some SERM. II.  
People a Distaste for it, is; that having  
never applied themselves seriously to it, but  
when they were in a dull, joyless, sullen  
Humour, which represented every Thing  
they were conversant about to be dull and  
joyless; the Notions of Religion, and of a  
joyless State, have been, however unduly  
connected, ever after inseparable. By me-  
diating on God only, or even chiefly, in a  
melancholy Hour, you will associate the  
Idea of Gloominess and Horror with that  
of Religion: You will view Him, just as  
He was worshipped in old Gothic Build-  
ings, in a dim solemn Light, which sheds  
a pensive Gloom over, and saddens every  
Object. You will not serve Him with  
that Gladness which he requires: For  
God loveth a cheerful Worshipper, as well  
as a *cheerful Giver*. But you will repair  
with Reluctance and Constraint to that *Ser-  
vice*, which is *perfect Freedom*.

We are indigent Creatures, insufficient  
of ourselves for our own Happiness, and  
therefore ever seeking it somewhere else.  
But where we shall effectually seek for it,  
is the Question. Unless the Thoughtful

SERM. II. and the Pensive direct their Thoughts to, and cast their Cares upon God; there will be little Difference between Them and the Gay and Unthinking, besides this; that the Latter will have more of the *Vanity* of Life; but They themselves more of the *Vexations* of it. If there were not another Life, our Business would be, not to alarm the Thinking Faculty, but to lay our too active and unquiet Thoughts to Rest. The Mind would be like a froward Child, ever fretful when fully awake; and therefore to be played and lulled asleep as fast as we can. Our main Happiness would be to forget our Misery and ourselves; to forget, that we are a Set of Beings, who, after we have toil'd out the live-long Day of human Life, in Variety of Hardships; are, instead of receiving our Wages at the Close of it, to sleep out one long eternal Night in an utter Extinction of Being.

If Man had an ample Fund of Happiness in himself, without any Deficiency; whence is it, that he is continually looking out abroad for foreign Amusements; Amusements, which are of no other Use, but to keep off troublesome and ungrateful Impressions, and to make us insensible of the

the

the Tediouſneſs of Living; Amuſements, which rather ſuſpend a Senſe of Uneaſineſs, than give us any ſubſtantial Satisfaction; and keep the Soul in an equal Poize between Pleaſure and Pain? And is this the great End which we have in View? Suppoſing we could compaſs it; yet if it be better not to be at all, than to be miſerable; then certainly *juſt not to be miſerable*, without any *poſitive* Happineſs, is much at one, as *not to be* at all. Whence is it, that that reſtleſs Thing the Soul, too *enterprizing* to trace every Thing elſe, yea the deep *Things* of God; is yet too *cowardly* to enquire into itſelf, and to view the *Workings* of that ever-loved, yet ever-avoided Object? Whence is it, that the Mind, whoſe active Energy prompts her to give a free and unconfined Range to her Thoughts on other Subjects, nay, to make, if it were poſſible, the Tour of the whole Universe; yet, when ſhe comes to dwell at home, and to ſurvey the little World within, flags in her Vivacity, feels herſelf in a forlorn Condition, and finds a Drowſineſs and melancholy Gloom hanging upon her? Whence is it, but that the Soul, whenever it turns its Thoughts in-

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ward,

SERM. II. ward, finds within a frightful Void of solid Happiness, without any Possibility in itself of filling it up? Indeed, in a Circle of gay Follies, or in a Multiplicity of Pursuits, when a Succession of different Objects is continually striking upon the Mind, the Capacity of the Soul is taken up, and it forgets that inward Poverty and Indigence which nothing can effectually relieve but the unsearchable Riches of the Love of God: But when we step aside from the Noise and beaten Tracks of Life, into Solitude and Retirement; we soon perceive, that we are, without some Business to engage, or some Recreation to divert our Attention, an insupportable Burthen to our selves. You fancy the Man, whose daily Labour serves for little else but to get his daily Bread, and whose daily Bread just refreshes and strengthens him to undergo his daily Labour, to be a very miserable Object; and perhaps he is so. Would you make him more miserable? Give him a Fortune, which shall set him at Rest from his Labours, and leave him nothing at all to do: And then the Wearisomness, which resulted from a continual Drudgery, will be nothing comparable to another kind of Wearis-



*On the Advantages of Affliction.*

41

Wearisomness far more irksome — the being weary of himself. Observe great Numbers of the Opulent and the Great: What can be *oftner* from Home than their *Persons*? Their *Thoughts*, which are *continually* from Home, ever wandering abroad, and returning unsatisfied. None is more miserable, than a Man distracted with Variety of Business; except he who has no Business, no Amusement at all. Diversions and Pastimes, properly so called, (for they answer no other End, but to pass away our Time) may have the Effect of Opiates, to beget a short Oblivion of our Cares and ourselves: But the only Cordial to invigorate our Spirits, and to give us an exquisite Relish and Enjoyment of this Life, is the well-grounded Hope of a better, through the Merits of Jesus Christ.

If then any one should ask, *Who will shew us any Good?* Who will point out the Way to Felicity to us? We must answer, in the Psalmist's Words, *Lord, lift Thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon us.* For thou art our Happiness, who alone canst give a Stability to our moral Pleasures, and secure us from natural Evil, or support us under it. God has stiled himself *Light*:  
And

SERM. II. And as the whole material Creation would be involved in one horrid and uncomfortable Gloom, if Light did not enliven it with its Smiles, and beautify it with a rich Variety of Colours; so would the spiritual Creation live in an eternal *Blackness of Darknes*, did not God lift up the Light of his Countenance upon it, brightening it with the Beams of his Truth, and clearing it with the Influences of his Favour. Earthly Objects may indeed swell and puff up the Mind with unsubstantial Bliss: But nothing can fill up every Void in the Soul, and satisfy the whole Compass of our Desires with the Fulness of solid and unmingled Happiness, but that supreme Good, that infinite Being, *who is above All, and through All, and in us All.*

Such Truths as these we are too apt to overlook in the Day of Prosperity; and therefore,

*Idly*, Adversity has its peculiar Advantages, to bring us to a just Sense of God, and our Duty to Him.

For, *1<sup>st</sup>*, Adversity will make us, however unwilling, reflect and descend into ourselves.


When

When we enjoy one uninterrupted Flow SERM. II.  
of worldly Bliss, when we sail along a  
smooth and unruffled Surface with easy  
and gentle Gales; Reason, our Pilot which  
should sit vigilant at the Helm, is too often  
lulled into a fatal Security. But Adversity  
rouses the Mind from its Indolence, puts  
us upon thinking closely, and turning our  
Thoughts every Way. Those, who have  
met with no Misfortunes to mortify that  
Pride of Heart, which is the Growth of  
Prosperity, say to themselves: *Come on,*  
*let us enjoy the good Things that are present;*  
*let us fill ourselves with costly Wine and*  
*Ointments, and let no Flower of the Spring*  
*pass by us; let us crown ourselves with Rose*  
*Buds, before they be withered.* Thus the  
glittering Scenes of Life beget a thousand  
gay Ideas, a swarm of fantastic Images,  
which, like Insects, wanton and flutter in  
the warm Sunshine of Prosperity; but dis-  
appear, die, and are no more upon the  
first Inclemency of the Season.

It is amazing, that Men, in the Fulness  
of Health and Plenty, when every Thing  
smiles around them, should shut out the  
Consideration of that Being, to whom they  
owe the Fulness of their Health and Plen-  
ty:

ty; like Groves in all the Freshness of their Verdure, with all their Leaves thick upon them, shutting out the Beams of that Sun, to which they are indebted for their cheerful Verdure: Yet so it is. For what have the Majority of the Wealthy, the Mighty, and the Great, been doing in all Ages? Why just what they did in the Days of Noah: *They did eat, they drank; they bought, they sold; they planted, they builded;* that is, the Diversions and Business of this Life engrossed their Attention; *till the Day that Noah entered into the Ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them All.* Just so Men do now, till Sicknefs confines them to their Bed, or some dire Misfortune checks their Career. Which makes *Joseph's* Example more remarkable: *When God had established the Kingdom in his Hand, and he had Riches and Honour in Abundance; his Heart was lift up, not with Pride and Insolence, but IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD.*

How thoughtless, how unreflecting upon their past Conduct were *Joseph's* Brethren, till *Joseph's* hard Usage gave them a Compunction of Mind, and a deep Sense of their former Sins? *And they said one to another:*

another: *We are very guilty concerning* SERN. II.  
*our Brother, in that we saw the Anguish*   
*of his Soul when he besought us, and we*  
*would not hear: Therefore is this Distress*  
*come upon us. It is the Remark of the*  
*Prophet Amos, that they, who lie upon Beds*  
*of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their*  
*Couches, who chaunt to the sound of the*  
*Viol, who invent Instruments of Music, who*  
*drink Wine in Bowls, are not grieved for*  
*the Affliction of Joseph.*

I would by no means recommend a cen-  
sorious, sour Severity, which is perhaps as  
odious in the Sight of God, as a thought-  
less fantastick Levity; and is certainly more  
incurable. For a philosophical, superci-  
ous Sullenness, which proceeds from *think-*  
*ing* habitually in a *wrong* Channel, is a Vice  
seldom amended: because Thought, which  
should cure the Distemper, confirms and  
rivets it. But Faults arising from *Want* of  
*Thinking*, a collected Way of Thinking  
for some Time, will correct and set right.  
Now Sickness, Pain and Trouble, the most  
effectual and persuasive Teachers, will make  
a Man feel what he is, a poor helpless Crea-  
ture; recollect what he has been, and look  
forward to what he shall be to all Eternity.

Little

SERM. II.

Little do they think, who are inured to Ease and Delicacy, whose Affluence empowers them to do Good; how many Thousands are wearing out Life in a sad Variety of Pain; or are dying perhaps of Poverty and a broken Heart; at the same Instant that they are expending their Time and Fortune in a Round of Folly, Sin and Vanity, unconscious of each liberal, each tender Sentiment.

But Adversity quickens our Compassion, corrects that Levity, which is the Inlet to Vice; and begets a fixed Thoughtfulness and Sedateness, the Soil which Virtue loves: It takes off our Insensibility, breaks the Fierceness of our Nature, and softens us into Humanity. For when our Hearts are *like melting Wax*, they are most ductile, tender, and susceptible of humane Impressions. We are *acquainted with Grief*; and by feeling Misery and Pain, we learn to have a Fellow-Feeling for the Calamities of our Fellow-Creatures.

2dly, Adversity puts our Virtue to the Test, and proves the Sincerity of it.

It is *no great Virtue* for a Man to be honest, who possesses an ample Fortune; though it would be *a very great Crime* for him

him not to be so. For what Temptations SERM. II. can he have to Dishonesty, who has the Discretion to extract and enjoy the Sweets of a great Estate, without damaging or hurting the Flower from which they proceed? But *to hold fast to that which is good*, in the lowest Ebb of Fortune; to retain our Integrity and intrinsic Worth, when stripped of every Thing that we were worth besides, and surrounded with whatever is grievous, is the strongest Evidence that can be given of our Love of Goodness. Thousands have acted contrary to their Conscience, and, with a Behaviour more pitiable than their Circumstances, *crouched* beneath the *Pressure* of hard Fortune, to low and fordid Compliances; who, it is to be charitably hoped, would have stood upright and unbending without that galling Load upon them.

For how shall a Man possess his Soul in Patience, who has little or nothing besides to possess? Now he finds, that a little Merit, with a World of Suppleness, Dexterity and Address, may facilitate his Advancement; but great Merit, and a rigorous, unpliant Adherence to the Rules of Morality, are too often Bars to it: That  
the

SERM. II. the Way from low Fortune to Greatness, is up a *steep* and *craggy* Hill: To climb up it by a *straight* and *direct* Ascent, is almost impracticable: To reach the Summit of it, or even to rise to any Eminence, he must generally fall into *crooked* and *indirect* Paths, which have several artful *Turns* and *Windings*.

It is easy for him who has a Sufficiency of Fortune, and well-regulated Passions, to look upon a barren Superfluity of Wealth, without casting a wishful Look, or a passionate Side-glance towards it; to sit loose and *indifferent* to the World in one Sense, *viz.* To have no selfish and indirect Views; and yet in another Sense to be a great *Lover* of it, by affectionately wishing, and vigorously promoting, the general Good of it. The great Difficulty is, to act and think in some measure above the World, while Poverty exposes us to the Neglect and Contempt of it; to scorn to build our Fortunes on the Ruins of our Probity; to despise the little Injuries we receive, and to pity the little Men that do them; little I mean in themselves, and in the Eye of Reason; though they may be very great in the Eye of the World, and perhaps much greater in their own Eyes.

How



How despicable therefore are those, who, SERM. II. though flowing in Plenty, have lost a good Name, merely to gain a fine Title; have sacrificed the true Greatness of the Mind, for the Outside of Greatness, some external Mark of Distinction; and have ceased to be honourable, that they might be stiled so? How truly esteemable those, who have proved their *Love* of Virtue and Truth to be *stronger than Death*; by foregoing the Blandishments of Life, and encountring the Terrors of Death for the Sake of them?

Such were the primitive Martyrs, Men of whom this World was not worthy, and therefore worthy of a better. Such was (a Name above all Names) our blessed Saviour; who *left us an Example* of Suffering, *that we might follow his Steps.*

Had he appeared with all the Littleness of Greatness and Power, with which the *Jews* invest their Messiah; had he assumed a temporal Kingdom; had he *bound Kings in Chains, and Nobles in Links of Iron*; his Example would have been of little or no Use; or at least only to those who move in an higher Orb: Not to mention, how inconsistent such a Pattern would have been with a Religion, which teaches us to wean

SERM. II.

our Affections from earthly Things. But by submitting to a lower Scene of Action, by *taking upon him the Form of a Servant*, by being content to be ennobled by himself, which is the truest Ennoblement; his Example is of more universal Influence. This gave him an Opportunity to exemplify several Virtues, which the Bulk of Mankind has every day Occasion to practise: Such as Humility, Patience, Resignation to God, and Contentedness in the lowest Station. *Father, saith he, just before his Crucifixion, if it be possible, remove this Cup from me; nevertheless, not my Will, but thine be done.* And just before his Death he cries out, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* And again, *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit.* Here are no unnatural Rants, no undistinguishing Glare of Eloquence, no high-flown Expressions, such as the Pride of Philosophy has dictated to its Votaries: The Thoughts are great without being extravagant; easy without being low and groveling. As a *Man*, he wishes, if it were possible, the Removal of his Calamities, as a *good and great Man*, he resigns himself without Reserve to the Will of his Creator. He affects

*On the Advantages of Affliction.*


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affects no Insensibility of Pain; he speaks SERM. II. the genuine Language of human Nature, but of human Nature greatly strengthened by Grace and Reason, which may graft upon and improve, but never destroy Nature.

And indeed, through the whole Tenor of our Saviour's Life, there was nothing shewy or ostentatious; nothing, that was fitter to *dazzle the Eyes* of the Beholders, than to *guide their Feet in the Way of Peace*. The social as well as solitary Virtues shone with gentle, yet with sprightly Beams. Piety sat gracefully upon him, with an easy Greatness, with a sober Majesty, and without any frightening and forbidding Appearances.

3dly, Adversity is of service to disengage our Minds from earthly Pursuits, and to *fix our Thoughts, where true Joys are to be found*.

God, says Solomon, *has set the Days of Adversity over against those of Prosperity, that a Man should find nothing after Him, viz. after God to complain of, or to order for the better.* The Meaning is, God hath so balanced and mixed Adversity and Prosperity together; that a Man upon a Re-


SERM. II.  view of the Whole, upon a full and impartial Estimate of Things, should have no just Grounds to arraign the Conduct of Providence; but shall find he has had more good Fortune than he deserved, and as much as was beneficial to him; and no more ill Fortune than was necessary to correct his Faults, moderate his Affections, and exercise his Virtues.

Accordingly, we have Instances of those, who living in a pompous Worthlessness, and thinking at that Time that *to morrow would be as to day, and more abundant*, would, in all Probability, have been utterly undone for ever; if they had not been almost undone here by some signal Calamity. A Reverse of Fortune has forced them upon a Course of Life and Train of Thinking, which they would scarce have fallen into of themselves. Being obliged to retire from the great World, they have, in Process of Time, regretted nothing so much, as that they did not retire sooner, to think strongly, apprehend clearly, and reason justly; to penetrate deeply to the Bottom of Things, and to look far to the End of them. And when the Retrospect upon the past has afforded them no Comfort, they have opened

ed and brightened the Prospect before them. SERM. II.

For Riches oft beget in us a Fondness for the present Scene of Things, and a Deadness of Affection to God and heavenly Things. But Afflictions set the Soul free, and leave it disencumbered in the Pursuit of Heaven. Convinced by melancholy Proof of the Insufficiency of worldly Things, we take Sanctuary in the Fulness of the divine Sufficiency. Finding ourselves disconsolate in a barren and dry Land, where no Water is; we desire those Rivers of Pleasure, which flow at God's Right Hand for evermore.

Prayer is a natural Motion of the Soul to God in any deep Distress; it becomes then our necessary Refuge, even though it might not be our free Choice before: which proves, that Religion, however it may be stifled in Prosperity, is interwoven in our Frame. A Man greatly aggrieved by oppressive Power, without a Prospect of having his Grievances redressed below, cannot but make his humble, silent Appeal to the Great God of Heaven, as to the last Resort of Justice, *who helpeth them to Right, that suffer wrong.* We cannot help look-

SERM. II.  ing up to that Being, *the Father of Mercies,* and *the God of Comforts,* from whom our *Help cometh*; when we see ourselves abandoned and forlorn, when we look around us, but there is none to save us from imminent Ruin.

Then, whatever inborn Vigour of Mind we may have; we fly to God and beg an additional Strength from him to support us under our Calamities, Grace to turn them to our Advantage, and eternal Happiness to reward them. Then we chiefly value this Life, as it has a Connexion with a future; a Life in which we should be unwilling, were the Choice given us, to tread the same Round over, and to measure Time back again; and yet Man goes on, still deceived by past Pleasures, still depending on those to come; till his Days are run out to the very Dregs: Whereas the obvious Thought is: If so little Satisfaction is to be had, and so much Pain to be undergone in the Greenness and Verdure of Youth, *what shall be done in the dry Tree?*

To a Man *at Ease in his Possessions,* the Dread of Diffolution, which sometimes poisons all his Enjoyments, shall be often a greater and more painful Ill, than his Diffolution,

lution,

tion, considered in itself, and the *Shadow of Death* shall be more formidably large than the Reality: But a good Man in Distress could wish, if it were consistent with the Will of his Creator, *to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*: He wants to render unto God, what is God's, viz. his Soul, which bears that Image and Impress of the Deity, which it has been his Business to preserve bright and unfulled: He thinks it would not be worth his while to live a Moment here, if he were not to live for ever hereafter.

I have been led into this Train of Reflections by the Death of a Person, whom we all know, and to whom I have particular Obligations. The Loss of even an inoffensive Person, with whom we constantly travelled together in the common Road of Life, without any other Circumstance to endear his Memory, cannot but in some measure affect an humane Heart. Every Place where he generally was, suggests the Idea of him: We miss him there, and scarce at first recollect, that he is now no more; but as soon as we do, that very Recollection brings a melancholy Thought across the Mind; till, by degrees, the Im-

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pression wears off, and the Idea of him is disjoined from that of the *Place*, which must *know him no more*. How much more then ought some of us here to be affected, who have lately been deprived of a very worthy and esteemable Acquaintance, right in his Principles, regular in his Practice, and easy and affable in his Conversation?

Frank, open and ingenuous by Nature, cautious and prudent by his Knowledge of the World, ever ready to oblige; he lived without a formed Design of displeasing any body, and yet without the vain chimerical Hopes of pleasing every body.

He was a very proper Person to have Recourse to upon any intricate Emergency. For he at once preserved the cool Judgment of a disinterested Person, and yet entered as heartily and thoroughly into the Affair, as if he had been personally interested in it; fruitful of Expedients, with the good Sense to fix upon that which was best, and most to the Purpose.

He had so established a Character for Punctuality, Fairness and Honesty, in his Business, that People loved to have to do with a Man of his unsuspected Veracity; above those indirect Arts, which a *great*  
Soul



Soul *despises*, and a good one *detests*; the little temporary Expedients of Men, who want to serve a present Exigency, and procure some short-lived Advantages; but have not Sense enough to consider the *remote Consequences* of an Action, and to think of the Prophet's Question, *What will ye do in the End thereof?* For certain it is, that Knavery cannot long be concealed, nor Honesty counterfeited: and *the Lip of Truth is established for ever, but a lying Tongue is but for a Moment.* There was a Dignity in his Aspect, Weight in his Words, and an Openness and Simplicity in his Actions, which engaged Mens Esteem for him, and made them repose a firm Confidence in him. It seemed to be his Opinion, that in complicated Cases our second Thoughts were better than our first; and that we ought to deliberate long, before we proceed to Action: But that in plain Cases our first Sentiments, the Sentiments of genuine, untainted Nature, were better than our second; and that to deliberate, was only to endeavour to find out some specious Refinements and artful Glosses, by which we might, with much ado, reconcile those Practices to our Conscience, to which it was


SERM. II. at first View strongly abhorrent. He never  
 therefore deviated from the plain High-  
 Road of Honesty into those crooked and  
 intricate By-Paths, in which, where one has  
 shortened his Way to Riches, hundreds have  
 lost and bewildered themselves.

That he was an affectionate Husband to  
 one of the best and tenderest of Wives, and  
 a kind indulgent Master to his Servants, are  
 confessed Parts of his Character; and yet  
 these are the surest Tests of an habitual  
 Good-Nature, and a prevailing Sweetness of  
 Disposition.

Being bred a Scholar, he had a Capacity  
 and Knowledge, but not a Mind and Spi-  
 rit, above his Profession: For he as dili-  
 gently applied himself to it, as if he had  
 been by Nature and Education only fitted  
 for that Sphere. Before his Retirement  
 from Business and the World, he had an  
 enlarged Conversation in it: But though  
 he often kept Company with Men of loose  
 Principles, he never departed from his own,  
 which he had early imbibed, and thorough-  
 ly digested. For Men of this Stamp sel-  
 dom make any lasting Impressions upon  
 Persons of *strong Sense*, and a thoroughly-  
*good* Disposition: The utmost they can do

is to stagger *weak* Men, and to make those SERM. II. that are already in some degree *bad*, much worse. He was a constant Frequenter of the Church, during his Health; and, when his Illness confined him to his House, a constant Communicant at the three great Seasons, and received the Sacrament with that awful Composure of Behaviour, which bespoke a Mind recollected and attentive, and affected all about him with a correspondent Seriousness.

His Faults and Frailties were such as *all* Men are liable to: But his Perfections were the Attainments of *few* in Comparison; particularly the great Patience with which he bore the severe Trials which God laid upon him. He seemed to enjoy himself and his Friends under such afflictive Circumstances, as would have made most others a Burthen to themselves, and uneasy to every one that came near them; and was a signal Example that the *greatest* Advantage one Man can have above another in this Life, arises from the *Temper* and Disposition of the *Mind*; that Temper, which softens every Care, and improves every Blessing. For he seemed to have had more true Peace of Mind under a lasting

SERM. II.  Complication of Distempers, than others are possess'd of in the Fulness of Health and Vigour : who want they know not what, and are uneasy they know not why : And if at any Time his Spirits were deprest by long-continued Pain, Conversation with an intimate Friend would break the Gloom that hung upon him, and brighten up his Soul. Indeed his Malady grew upon him to that degree, that it was almost cruel to wish him a longer Continuance among us : All that his Friends could desire, was an easy Passage out of this World into a better, where *there is no Pain or Sorrow*. His Soul is now enlarged from that corruptible Body to which it was united ; and released from those Miseries, which, by virtue of that Union, it underwent. How soon we, who *in the Midst of Life are in Death*, may follow him, God only knows : Each Day brings us nearer to *Eternity* ; and it should be our main Endeavour, that each may bring us nearer to a *blessed Eternity*.

But, while we are in the Body, we must more or less struggle with Difficulties, and combat with Temptations. While we live, we must persevere, without slackening our Industry, *to fight this good Fight* : When  
we

we die, we have gained the decisive *Victo-* SERM. II.  
*ry*: and when we come before the Throne  
of Grace, we shall receive a glorious *Tri-*  
*umph*; a Triumph indeed, where instead of  
the senseless Noise of an undistinguished  
and undistinguishing Populace: a numerous  
Choir of ennobled Spirits shall hail with  
joyful Acclamations their happy Fellow-  
Servant: While, to crown all, the great  
Judge pronounces the blessed Sentence:  
*Well done, thou good and faithful Servant!*  
*Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*





# S E R M O N III.

On Faith, Benevolence, &c.

Being a Farewel SERMON preached in  
*Twickenham* - Chapel, *June 20, 1742* ;  
and published at the Request of the  
Audience.



I TIMOTHY I. 19.

*Holding Faith, and a good Conscience.*

**T**HIS being the last Time, that I <sup>SER.M.III.</sup> shall speak to you in the Capacity, which I now bear, of your Preacher and Minister ; I have chosen these Words, the Advice of *St. Paul* to *Timothy*, as containing the Sum and Substance of our Duty. In discoursing upon which, I shall throw together some few Thoughts ;

Ist, Upon Faith,

IIdly, Upon a good Conscience ;

IIIIdly,

III<sup>dly</sup>, Take my Leave of you, with a short Address to you.

I. The first Point is, that you would seriously consider the strong Evidences of your Faith; Evidences so strong, that he would be deemed a Madman, who was not determined by much less in his secular Affairs. If any one should go about to disprove the Conquests of *Alexander*, he would be thought not to be in his sound Mind: And yet there are much stronger Proofs for the Reality of the Miracles recorded in Scripture, and particularly in the New Testament; than there are for the Victories of *Alexander*, or even for the Being of such a Man.

Let it no more stagger your Faith, that there are so great a Number of *Unbelievers*; than it ought to influence your Practice, that there are so great a Number of wicked Men. Besides, you may be deceived, by mistaking *second* Qualities for *first*. A Propensity to think out of the common Road, may be by no means the *leading* Quality among those that are stiled *Unbelievers*: It may be only a *secondary* one, and subservient to a *primary* Desire, that of being in the *Fashion*. Those very Men, who now affect




affect to be thought Unbelievers, might, SERM. III. probably, if they had lived in the Times of the Grand Rebellion, have set up for Saints: Because a reputed Sanctity was as much the Mode of that Age, as Infidelity is of this. There is a Torrent of Opinions peculiar to almost every Age: Men of light unbalanced Minds, like light Matter, are borne down by the Current; and Men of solid Sense do not always meet with the Success, which they deserve, in stemming and opposing it. The principles of Christianity may be out of Fashion: But what they want in the Fashion, they make up in Weight, Solidity, and intrinsic Worth:

For one, that has been made a Profelyte to Deism, by Reading, Thinking and Studying, there are Multitudes, who become so by Conversation with those, who have no Way of keeping themselves in Countenance, but by discountenancing Religion. And what wonder is it, that Persons should be *laughed out* of Religion, who never *reasoned* themselves *into* it? A Man in his younger years must be well-disposed, and of a serious thinking Turn, to converse at large, and yet continue a Christian: But if he be of a serious Turn, and impartially


SEEM. III. Weigh the numerous Proofs for it, he cannot but continue a christian. For Christianity has too many and strong Appearances of Truth, for any, who deliberately and unbiaſſedly attends to them, to believe it an Impoſture. It has been *ſifted as Wheat*: And the Conſequence is, that ſome few trifling Conſiderations, which had been formerly alledged in favour of it, have been ſet aſide, *like the Chaff, which the Wind ſcattereth away from the Face of the Earth*; but its ſolid and ſubſtantial Arguments, like the *good Seed*, fall not to the Ground, but remain firm, without any debaſing Mixtures.

To reject Chriſtianity, becauſe of the Difficulties with which its Doctrines are attended; it is to reject it as *false* for that, which ſeems to be an Argument of its *Truth*. I will explain myſelf immediately. Chriſtianity, ſuppoſing its Truth, is a Revelation from God — A Revelation from God muſt contain ſomething of the Nature, Will and Counſels of God, as far as they relate to us. — Now, the Will, Counſels and Nature of an infinite Being, muſt be, in a great meaſure, unſearchable to, and incomprehenſible by, Beings of ſuch a ſcanty Pittance of Underſtanding, as we have.—

have.—That is, they must be encumbered SERM. III. with insuperable Difficulties. — To object  Difficulties then against Christianity, is to make that an Argument against the Truth of Christianity; which Christianity, *supposing its Truth*, must, in the Nature of the Thing, be attended with. The united Force of Unbelievers has never been able to invalidate the several Arguments that have been brought to prove the Truth of Revelation; and while these prove it to be true, Difficulties cannot alter the Nature of Things; they cannot make that to be false, for the Truth of which we have forcible proofs.

Listen not therefore to the Suggestions of designing Men. Under a Pretence of banishing your Apprehensions of a future Judgment, they will only dash your Hopes, and weaken your Expectations of a blessed Immortality; alarming those very Apprehensions, which they promised to remove, by adding to your other Terrors, this *new* Fear, which will continually haunt you; a Fear, lest you have sinned in dismissing your first Persuasion for very slight and frivolous Reasons. There may be several, who have just Sense enough to see there

SÉR.M. III. are *Difficulties* in Christianity ; but not  
 Sense enough to see they are *but* Difficulties : And these may be confirmed Infidels, *meer Reeds shaken with the Wind*, with every Blast of vain Doctrine. But where there are no insuperable Prejudices of Education in the Case ; take it for granted, that Men of cool Heads, who dare think home, who dare follow Truth with the same Indifference, as a Traveller enquires after the best Road that leads to his Journey's End, do not think so differently in material Points as you may imagine. They may hang out false Colours ; but, depend upon it, the utmost Length Men are capable of going, who are thoroughly willing and able to drive each Argument to an Head, is to have some Doubts and Scruples, which are preponderated by an exceeding Weight of Evidence on the other Side. Absolute infallible Certainty is in Heaven, and we are upon Earth ; but there is such a Degree of moral Certainty, as is sufficient to overbalance all Doubts. We know every Objection against Christianity as well as they do ; and there is not the least Shadow of a demonstration against it : But the Reasons for it are so strong, that though they do  
 not

not amount to a strict Demonstration, they SERM. III.  
make near Approaches to it. 

I know the Firmness of our Assent does not depend so much on *outward Evidences*, be they never so forcible, as on the *inward Frame* and Bent of the Mind. Yet I take it to be almost as impossible for a Man, supposing his Faculties to be good, and duly exercised, to be deceived *intirely* in a Point of Moment; as it is for him, when under the Influence of some criminal Passion, not to deceive himself in *Part*. The Case is the same in relation to very material Errors, as it is in regard to secret Vices. The latter may escape our Observation, as to any particular, distinct, explicit Knowledge of them: However, we have general, confused, indistinct Notices, that all is not right within, as to the Article of Sins in some measure unsuspected; and this is the Reason, why we are averse to search out our Spirits; lest we should find that to be too true, upon a mature Examination, which we mistrusted upon a careless, transient Glance of Thought. Just so it is in Matters of Belief. Where there is a moral Certainty, any wrong Affection may so far blind even a Thinking Man, that he shall not have a *thorough* and

SERM. III. *determined Conviction* of the Truth; but he cannot shut out or suppress the Evidences for it so entirely, as not to have a *general Distrust*, and an *implicit Suspicion*, that he is in the Wrong: Which general Distrust is the Cause, that he is so unwilling to look into a Book, which is written with great Strength of Reason on the other Side, lest he should let in the Enemy Truth to disturb his Repose.

There may be, however, some Exceptions to what is here laid down. Men may have something particular in their Temper; There is sometimes an unsuspected Wrongness of Understanding, which, because it does not discharge itself in Raving, escapes the Eye of common Observers; but yet shall leaven a Man's whole Way of Thinking: And it generally falls in with the reigning Bent of the Times. When the Nation was in a Ferment about Religion, and for, what was called, a greater Purity in it, it struck in with the general Vogue of the Age, and vented itself in all the Extravagancies of Fanaticism: But now, when Things have taken a different Turn, and Irreligion is the prevailing Mode; it has received a new Determination from thence.

Hence

Hence some are as distempered Bigots for their No-Religion, or what makes near Approaches to none; as others were about a Century ago for a farther Reformation. Some Persons who have travelled early into Countries, where Popery is established, have had Sense enough, in their younger Years, to see through the gross Impositions and Cheats, which are practised upon the Vulgar. But not being able to separate Religion itself from the undue Mixtures which were blended with it, they have unhappily contracted an Aversion for all Religion in general. They have associated with the Idea of Religion all those numerous Tricks and Fopperies, which have passed there under its sacred Cover. And the Case of those, who by this Means, or by any other Means similar to this, have conceived an early Dislike for Religion, resembles theirs, who have contracted an Antipathy to some Meats or Liquors, however wholesome and nourishing, by reason of some bitter and unpalatable Draughts or Ingredients being mixed with them: The disagreeable Idea always recurs, when they see them. This is certain, that offensive Impressions, which have been given us of Religion, Learning,


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SERM. III. { of any thing else in our tender Years, before our Minds come to a Steadiness and Consistency; are like those Marks which are made upon the Body of an Animal in its Mother's Womb: they are seldom or never erased, but we carry them with us to the Grave.

But whatever Allowances we may make for insuperable Prejudices, and invincible Ignorance, in this Case, and many others; it is a Mistake to think, that Deists are less easy of Belief, than the rest of Mankind. There may be a certain Stock of Faith, which we bring with us into the World; and as it has been observed of the *Affections*, that if they be with-held from their *natural* Gratifications, they will often discharge themselves on *improper* Objects: Just so, if Men do not place their *Faith* on *suitable* Objects, they will not cease to be Believers; they will *misplace* it on *unsuitable* ones; and whatever they want in a true Christian Faith, they will more than make up in believing strange Absurdities; of which numerous Instances might be given both in the past and present Times.

You may have bad Books industriously thrown in your Way: and you may have



an Imagination *apt to startle* at Difficulties SERM. III.  
 new to you. But if you have a Turn for   
 solid Thinking and Reasoning, *bring* your  
 Mind *close* to the Difficulty, and make it  
 take a *near* View of it on every Side; and  
 you will find that what *startled* it at a Di-  
 stance, was only some idle *Trifle*, which  
 Fancy had *dressed* up in a *formidable* Shape.  
 And if you have not, desire those, who  
 have studied the Point, to turn to such Pas-  
 sages in Books already published as contain  
 a sufficient Answer to it. For Infidelity  
 can only go *round* and *round* the same To-  
 pics, in an eternal Circle, without advancing  
 one Step further: It produces no *new*  
 Forces: it only brings those again into the  
 Field, which have been so often *baffled*,  
*maimed* and *disabled*, that, in Pity to them,  
 they ought to be dismissed, and discharged  
 from any further Service.

You may complain that you have not  
 Capacities sufficient for such Things. Sup-  
 posing your Abilities so very slender, that  
 you cannot perceive the Truth of an histo-  
 rical Fact well attested; yet one Thing  
 you may be sure of; that it is much better  
 for the Good of the whole, that Mankind  
 should abide by such a written Rule of  
 Faith

SERM-III. Faith and Practice, as the Christian is; than  
 that they should be left every one, in low  
 as well as high Life, to collect a Religion  
 for themselves, just as their Ignorance, Pas-  
 sions and Prejudices should mislead them.  
 You may see, that this Scheme, which is  
 that of Infidelity, would be destructive of  
 the general Happiness of the World: And  
 you may conclude, that whatever Scheme  
 would, at the Foot of the Account, leave  
 the World in a much worse State, than  
 it was before, in Point of Happiness, must  
 be disagreeable to his Will, who wishes the  
 Happiness of the World; and therefore con-  
 trary to Truth. What better Wish could  
 the best-natured Being form for the Bene-  
 fit of the World; than that the Doctrines  
 of Christianity, those strong Incentives to  
 Virtue, should be universally believed; and  
 its Precepts universally practised?

*Idly*, From a right Faith I now proceed  
 to what is, or ought to be, the Consequence  
 of it, a good Life.

A good Life is not one solitary and single  
 Virtue, however glaring; it is the Com-  
 bination and Meeting together of all the  
 moral and spiritual Graces; Just as Light  
 and

and Whiteness is not one single Colour and Ray; it is the Composition of all the Colours and Rays united and blended together. SERM. III.

Your first and leading Duty is Piety to God. And this takes in all religious Duties, whether moral or positive; whether we fully and clearly see the Reasons of them, or we see them dimly and indistinctly, or we do not see them at all; knowing this (enough for *us* to know) that an all-wise Being can enjoin no Duty, but for wise Ends and Purposes; and an all-good Being can command no Performance, but what is for our Good and Benefit.

Let not your Piety break out in sudden short interrupted Flashes, but let it shine on in one continued steady Day-light. Have not just Religion enough to make you uneasy; but enough to give you solid Satisfaction, and a well-grounded Assurance. Give God *all* you can: give him your Heart—for *that* is *all*. And then, instead of contenting yourself with thinking, how holy and charitable you would be, if you had such a Fortune, or were in such a Station; you will never be easy, till you are as holy and charitable as it is possible for you to be, in whatever Station you are, or whatever Fortune you have.


But

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But I have already discoursed often on this Subject: One Thing more however I beg leave to mention. You are, most of you, regular Attendants on the Service of the Church: Take care, that your Deportment out of Church, be correspondent to your Behaviour in it: Otherwise, you will do religion more Disservice, than if you were its open and avowed Enemies. For, pray observe: Though Piety be the most valuable Thing in itself, the Bulk of Mankind are not capable of forming fine *abstract* Ideas of it in *itself*; they must consider it, if at all, as it *lies before* them in the *Lives and Conversation of Men reputedly pious*. And when they see those who have that Character, laying Strefs upon Trifles, as if the whole of Religion consisted in them, and neglecting Essentials; when they see them prying into the Secrets of Families, or encouraging and listening to those that do so, addicted to Censoriousness and Superciliousness; the little low despicable Notions, which they form of Persons professing Piety, they will unjustly annex to Piety itself, and hold it ever after cheap and contemptible.

2dly, Let therefore your Piety to God SERM. III.  
 be joined with, what ought to be insepara-  
 ble from it, Charity to Man.

By Charity, I do not mean only Almfgiving; for that is only one Branch of it, one outward Expression of this Duty; I mean the most liberal Sentiments and the most enlarged Affections towards all Mankind. A charitable Man will endeavour too see every Thing through the Mirror of Good-Nature, which mends and beautifies all Objects, without altering any: Like fine Painting, which, without deviating from Nature, adds new Touches and Graces to it; it does not change, but only embellish it; it does not give a mere Likeness, much less a woful Likeness, it gives an agreeable and advantageous one. Far from *surmising* Evil, where there is *none*; he will rather *think no Evil*, where there really *is*; judging it better to err through a good-natured Credulity, than through an undistinguishing Suspicion; because a good-natured Credulity will only expose him to some temporal Inconveniencies; but an undistinguishing Suspicion will beget in him a settled Uneasiness, Jealousy, Hatred, and the whole Train of black Passions, which,  
 will

SERM. III. will render his Soul as dark as that Hell,  into which they will at last irrecoverably sink him.

To descend to particulars; *1<sup>st</sup>*, A charitable Man will never hate any Body or Community of Men, provided there be nothing immoral in their Profession; however he may dislike some Individuals in it. Nothing is more unjust, though I am afraid, nothing is more usual; than, if we have had to do with some wicked Men of any Fraternity, to cry out, *they are all become abominable*. Now an undistinguishing Censure upon a whole Profession, for the Faults of some few particular Members, is generally a greater Crime, than any we can fix upon those few particular Members. Because it tends to bring an undeserved Discredit upon a whole Body of Men, and thereby to lessen their Usefulness. To commend a whole Body in the gross, is an Indication of a weak, undistinguishing Judgment; and to condemn it in the gross, of Uncharitableness: Human Nature was never so good, but there were several worthless Members of every Profession; and never so bad, but there were several of distinguished Worth in every Condition of Life.

Life. The Scholar despises the Man of SERM.III.  
 Business, and the Man of Business the Scholar: Now, what estranges Men from each other, should, in the Reason of the Thing, mutually endear them: Because the general Good of the whole arises from the different Pursuits of the several Individuals: And if all Men were to go the same Way, and follow the same Track of Employment; it would cause a strange Embarrassment: The Road would be so much crowded, that none could get forward. *Honour* then *all Men*, even those of the meanest Occupations: Take in, with a comprehensive View, the whole Chain of the rational World, where, though the Links may be disproportioned in their Size, yet the least serves to strengthen and support the greatest, and both, by depending upon, and aiding each other, keep the whole Contexture from falling asunder.

*2dly*, As you ought not to conceive a Distaste for any Man, or Body of Men, upon the account of a different Profession; so neither should you, because they are of a different Persuasion, Sect, or Party.

Supposing yourself in the Right; you pity *corporeal* Blindness: why should you  
 not

SERM. III. not likewise compaffionate, instead of being  
 { angry with, the Blindnefs of the *Under-  
 ftanding*, when it cannot difcern certain re-  
 ligious Truths? I know no Reason but  
 this, which refolves itfelf into Pride; that  
 the *corporeally* blind own themfelves to be  
*fo*; but the blind in *Underftanding* main-  
 tain, that *we* labour under that *Distemper*,  
 and not *they*. Now we are not fo tho-  
 roughly convinced, that our Underftanding  
 and Way of Thinking is perfectly right in  
 all Points, as that we have the full Enjoy-  
 ment of our Eye-fight: And this makes us  
 fo angry with the one, while we pity the  
 other. Enfure your own Salvation as much  
 as you can, but do not think hardly of  
 thofe, who differ from you even in funda-  
 mental Points, much lefs confign them  
 over to Damnation. Our bleffed Saviour,  
 who difapproved the Worfhip of the *Sama-  
 ritans*, as appears from his Converfation  
 with the *Samaritan* Woman at the Well,  
 yet fingles out, in his beautiful Parable,  
 one of that Nation to do a generous Ac-  
 tion to the wounded Traveller, on purpofe,  
 one would think, to obviate this contracted  
 Turn of Mind, and to recommend thofe  
 to our Love, whole religious Notions we  
 diflike.



dislike. Whether a good Man, who is a SERM. III. Misbeliever in some Points, without any Faultiness or Irregularity of Will, will be damned for his *erroneous* Way of Thinking, may be a Question among some People; but I think it admits of none, that a Man will be damned for an *uncharitable* Way of Thinking and Acting.

3dly, You must not pass a hard precipitate Censure upon a whole Nation or Country. *Can any Thing good come out of Nazareth?* was a low, confined, ungenerous Thought: Goodness is not *limited to*, or *excluded from*, any Place: The Good are *diffused* throughout all Nations, all Sects, all Persuasions, all Ranks and Orders of Men. True Charity ever dwells with a Largeness of Soul, which takes in all Mankind, sincerely wishing, that all, who are in any material Error, may embrace the Truth; and all, that embrace it, may hold a pure Faith in a pure Conscience. And I question whether a generous-spirited Way of Thinking, a noble and exalted Ardor of Soul, with strong Passions, which sometimes transport a Man into Exorbitances, be not, upon the whole, much more commendable; than an insipid Regularity, and

SERM. III. a flat Correctness of Life, which creeps on in  
 one dull Tenor, without ever overflowing :  
 with too little Spirit to reach any Heights  
 in Virtue ; too languid Passions to be guilty  
 of any flagrant Vice : Just as the Critics  
 have preferred the Sublime in Writing, with  
 a great many Inaccuracies and Inequalities,  
 to a middling Stile, though very faultless.

In short, true Charity is to detest nothing  
 but Vice ; and to despise nothing but con-  
 tracted, illiberal Notions, which would con-  
 fine God's Favour, and most certainly limit  
 our Affections, within a narrow Circle.  
 Form as amiable Sentiments as you can, of  
 Nations, Communities of Men, and Indi-  
 viduals. If they are true, you do them  
 only Justice ; if false, though your Opini-  
 on does not alter their Nature, and make  
*them* lovely ; *you yourself* are more lovely,  
 for entertaining such Sentiments. When  
 you *feel* the bright Warmth of a Temper  
 thoroughly *good* in your own *Breast*, you  
 will *see* something *good* in *every* one about  
 you. It is a Mark of a Littleness of Spi-  
 rit, to confine yourself to some minute  
 Part of a Man's Character ; a Man of ge-  
 nerous, open, extended Views, will grasp  
 the Whole of it ; without which he cannot

pass a right Judgment on any Part. He SERM. III. will not arraign a Man's general Conduct for two or three particular Actions; as knowing, that Man is a changeable Creature, and will not cease to be so; till he is united to that Being, who is *the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*. He strives to outdo his *Friends* in good Offices, and overcome his *Enemies* by them. He thinks he then *receives* the greatest *Injury*, when he *returns* and *revenges* one: For then he is *overcome of Evil*. Is the Person young who has injured him? He will reflect, that Inexperience of the World, and a Warmth of Constitution, may betray his unpractised Years into several Inadvertencies, which a more advanced Age, his own good Sense, and the Advice of a judicious Friend, will correct and rectify. Is he old? the Infirmities of Age, and Want of Health, may have set an Edge upon his Spirits, and made him *speak unadvisedly with his Lips*. Is he weak and ignorant? he considers, that it is a Duty incumbent upon the wise to bear with those that are not so. *Ye suffer Fools gladly*, says St. Paul, *seeing ye yourselves are wise*. In short, he judges of himself, as far as he can, with the strict Rigour of

SERM. III. Justice; but of others, with all the Soften-  
 ings of Humanity.


From charitable and benevolent Thoughts, the Transition is unavoidable to charitable Actions. For wherever there is an inexhaustible Fund of Goodness at the Heart, it will, under all the Disadvantages of Circumstances, exert itself in Acts of substantial Kindness. He, that is substantially good will be doing good. The Man, that has a hearty determinate Will to be charitable, will seldom put Men off with the mere Will for the Deed. For a sincere Desire to do Good, implies some Uneasiness, till the Thing be done: And Uneasiness sets the Mind at work, and puts it upon the Stretch to find out a thousand Ways and Means of obliging, which will ever escape the Unconcerned, the Indifferent, and the Unfeeling.

The most proper Objects of your Bounty are the Necessitous. Give the same Sum of Money, which you bestow on a Person in tolerable Circumstances, to one in extreme Poverty; and observe, what a wide Disproportion of Happiness is produced. In the latter Case, it is like giving a Cordial to a fainting Person; in the former, it is like

giving Wine to him, who has already SERM. III. quenched his Thirst. *Mercy is seasonable in Time of Affliction, like Clouds of Rain in the Time of Drought.*

And among the Variety of necessitous Objects, none have a better Title to our Compassion, than those, who, after having tasted the Sweets of Plenty, are, by some undeserved Calamity, obliged, without some charitable Relief, to drag out the Remainder of Life in Misery and Woe; who little Thought they should ask their daily Bread of any but of God; who, after a Life led in Affluence, *cannot dig, and are ashamed to beg.* And they are to be relieved in such an endearing Manner, with such a Beauty of Holiness, that, at the same time that their Wants are supplied, their Confusion of Face may be prevented.

There is not an Instance of this kind in History so affecting, as that beautiful one of *Boaz to Ruth*. He knew her Family, and how she was reduced to the lowest Ebb: When therefore she begged Leave to glean in his Fields, he ordered his Reapers to let fall several Handfuls with a seeming Carelessness, but really with a set Design, that she might gather them up without being

SERM. III.  ashamed. Thus did he form an artful Scheme, that *he* might give, without the *Vanity* and *Ostentation* of giving; and *she* receive, without the *Shame* and *Confusion* of making Acknowledgments. Take the History in the Words of Scripture, as it is recorded in the Book of *Ruth*. *And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young Men, saying; Let her glean even among the Sheaves, and rebuke her not: and let fall also some of the Handfuls of Purpose, and leave them that she may glean them, and reproach her not.* This was not only doing a good Action; it was doing it likewise with a good Grace.

It is not enough we do no Harm; that we be negatively good; we must do Good, *positive* Good, if we would *enter into Life*. When it would have been as good for the World, if such a Man had never lived; it would perhaps have been better for him, *if he had never been born*. A scanty Fortune may limit your *Benevolence*, and confine it chiefly to the Circle of your *Domestics*, *Relations* and *Neighbours*; but let your *Benevolence* extend as far as Thought can travel, to the utmost Bounds of the World; Just as it may be only in your  
Power

Power to beautify the Spot of Ground that SERM. III. lies near and close to you; but you could wish, that, as far as your Eye can reach, the whole Prospect before you was chearful, that every Thing disagreeable was removed, and every Thing beautiful made more so.

I have dwelt so long upon this last Virtue, that I have not Time to discourse upon the rest. One Duty, however, I shall just touch upon, which will engage us to Performance of all the rest; and that is, frequent Self-Examination, or Self-Reflection.

We need not look far to meet with Persons who, though they have a competent Knowledge of the World, *know not what manner of Spirit they are of*; condemning the Want of Charity in others, with all the Acrimony, Fierceness and Uncharitableness imaginable; censuring People for the Defect of Candour and a Sweetness of Disposition, with that merciless Keeness and Eagerness of Spirit, which shews them to be, whatever others are, in the very *Gall of Bitterness*. Now the Use of such an Observation, is not so much to arraign them, as to suspect yourself. For he never knew himself rightly, who never suspected him-

SERM. III.

self. We seldom have that *Charity* which covers a *Multitude of Faults* in our Neighbours; and we much seldomer want that *Self-Love* which covers a *Multitude of Faults* in ourselves. The Truth is, the Bulk of Mankind do not reflect upon what they do: There could not be so many unkind Things said or done, and so many kind ones omitted by those, who are not void of a Sense of Religion; if they took a Survey of every Thing that passed. What is indeed *notorious, extraordinary, and out of the common Road* in our Conduct, will engage our Attention: For what is notorious, and glaring, forces itself upon our Observation: But upon what is *common, ordinary, and frequent*, in our Intercourse with one another, we *seldom reflect* at all, or at least very transiently. *Single Acts* of Sin may be owing to some violent *Sally of Passion*; but a continued *Course* of Sinning, in any one Instance, must be owing to *Self-Deceit*, occasioned by Want of *Self-Reflection*, or to the delusive *Hopes* of repenting some Time or other. For a Man cannot otherwise constantly allow himself, in the Practice of what he constantly condemns. Without *Self Reflection*, a Man may have every



every Vice under the Sun, without knowing SERM. III. he has *any*; provided he has it not in a *high* Degree.

Consider not what the World thinks of such a Crime, but what it is in itself. For the World, in Matters of Opinion, is sway'd more by Authority than Argument; in Matters of Practice, by Example than Rule; and in few Things is governed by pure Reason only. Are you as apprehensive of a Mistake, as cautious not to take wrong Measures, as vigilant and circumspect in your grand Concernment, your eternal Welfare; as you would be in Cases on which your Life and Fortune depended? If you are, you will seldom act amiss: If you are not, you shew that a Worldly Temper prevails more with you, than the Hopes of God's Favour, and the Desire of Salvation. Many excellent Books are written, many weekly Lectures are continually sounding in our Ears, with all the Strength of Reasoning, and Beauty of Eloquence, to persuade us to — What? one would think it should be something *seemingly hurtful* and *disadvantageous* to us.—No, no such Thing. It is only to persuade us, what, one would think, is no difficult Matter, and yet is the  
 most

SERM-III. } most difficult of all, that we would not  
 make *ourselves eternally miserable*, that we  
 would endeavour after *Eternal Happiness*.  
 For one, that perishes for want of know-  
 ing his Duty, there are Numbers, who are  
 lost for ever, for want of seriously confi-  
 dering it, and laying it to Heart. But I  
 am persuaded better Things of you, my  
 Brethren; you will reflect, that if there be  
 not another World, there is scarce any  
 Thing worth Living for here; and if there  
 be, our main Concern in *This*, is to fit  
 ourselves for *That*.

But this brings me, *III*dly, and *lastly*,  
 To conclude with a short Address to you.

It signifies little, what Notions, a Per-  
 son so obscure and undistinguished as I am,  
 entertain. But since several Persons have  
 been, without just Grounds, suspected of  
 believing differently from what they profess,  
 and to have an inward Doctrine, which they  
 reserve to themselves, or communicate only  
 to some few select Friends; I here declare,  
 in the Presence of God, that I am fully  
 persuaded of the Truth of Christianity, and  
 the important Doctrines thereof, which I  
 have, during the Space of nine Years, oft  
 inculcated

inculcated to you; that I chuse to live, and hope to die in that Persuasion; that, after having read the most considerable Books that have been written against it, I do not know any Objection, but what has received repeated and satisfactory Answers. A thorough Christian in *Principle*, I wish I was as good a one in my *Practice*: and then I should, in some measure, deserve that Approbation, with which you have honoured me.

I heartily thank you, that you have candidly overlooked my numerous Defects, kindly accepted my well-meant Endeavours to serve you, both from the Desk and from the Pulpit; and, what is more, generously encouraged them. And, to your other Obligations, which you have conferred on me, be pleased to add this, which will be the *greatest* Obligation of all, *viz.* to make Me, in some degree, instrumental to your Salvation, by deliberately weighing what I have laid down.

They are the last Words of a departing, though not a dying Friend; and let them therefore make a suitable Impression. Quit not your Religion, your Trust in God, your Virtue, for any Pleasure or Profit, which  
this

SERM. III. this World can give, for the World itself.


For all the Profit and Pleasure this World can give, this World itself may shortly be nothing to you: But Religion and Virtue will make you happy, when *Life's idle Employments*, and its idler Follies, when the World, when Time shall be no more. False Friends will forsake you, and true Friends may either leave you through necessary Avocations, or they may be divided from you by Death: False Friends will *stand afar off* in the Day of Trouble, and even true Friends can, in some Cases, *stand only looking upon* your Misery, afflicted indeed in all *your* Affliction, but without any Power to ease your Calamities: But God is a present Friend, infinitely powerful and good, in all Cases, at all Times, in all Places; He is able to hear us, wheresoever dispersed; and to relieve us, howsoever distressed: Almost every Thing may separate us from other Friends; But *neither Life nor Death, nor Principalities nor Powers*, nothing but Sin, can separate us from Him, and the blessed Influences of his Presence.

Some there *have* been here, and some there *are* here, to whom I am in a particular

cular Manner indebted; from whom I have received Obligations much greater than my Expectations, and only not so great as their enlarged Souls and generous Inclinations to do me good.—Some, of whom almost every one speaks well; and few or none can speak so well as they deserve. It is a Pleasure even *to be obliged* to Persons of their Turn, *who give liberally, and upbraid not*; a Pleasure only not so affecting as that (which is beyond my Abilities) of *obliging* them.

SERM. III.

Injuries I do not remember, that I have received any from any of this Place: And for whatever Kindnesses you have done me, may God reward you sevenfold into your Bosom. And I do not question but he will reward you: For they were designed to cherish and countenance Worth and Learning; though bestowed on me. My Relation to you, as a Pastor and Teacher, is now upon the Point of expiring; but there is one Relation, which will always subsist, and that is, of your affectionate and sincere Well-wisher: Whatever Distance of Place may be between us, I shall rejoice to hear of any Good that befalls you, and be heartily sorry for any Disaster that affects you.

SERM. III. you. My Prayers, my best Wishes (alas!  what can I say or do more?) shall always be yours: For I am still yours sincerely in all good and Christian Offices.

Finally, Farewel, my Brethren; To God's Grace I commend you. May he grant you everlasting Welfare, and as much Health and Prosperity, as are consistent with your everlasting Welfare! May your Souls, while you live, improve in every Christian Grace; and when ye die, may they be presented without Spot before the Throne of Grace! May God protect you by his Power, guide you with his Counsel through the several Stages of Life, and after that receive you into Glory!

# S E R M O N IV.

The Nature and Duration of future Punishments considered; and the Goodness of God fully vindicated, as to that Article, against the principal Objections of some late Writers.



MATTHEW XXVI. 24.

*It had been good for that Man, if he had not been born.*

**T**H E S E Words are spoken of *Judas Iscariot*, but they are applicable to every unrelenting Criminal; and the Sense of them is, Whoever lives abandoned, and dies impenitent, shall find his Miseries in the whole Extent of his Being to overbalance the Enjoyments he has had so far, that it had been happy for him not to have been at all; it being better not to be at all, than to be so miserable as he shall

SERM. IV. shall be: Or, in other Words, Non-Existence, though not a Blessing in itself, is so, comparatively with the Torments which he shall endure.

This is the plain express authentic Declaration of no less a Person, than our blessed Saviour; and it seems to overthrow the Opinion of *Origen*, who imagined, that the Damned should be admitted to everlasting Happiness after a determined Period of Woe. For then it could not have been said with any Truth, that the Sum of their Miseries should exceed their Pleasures; since an eternal Happiness would outweigh any finite Torments. Non-existence would not have been, in the true Estimate of Things, a Blessing to those, who were certain of an exceeding and everlasting Weight of Glory. It would be good for that Man to be born, who should some Time or other be happy for ever.

In the Prosecution of this Subject I propose,

*Ist*, To consider the Duration of future Punishments:

*IIdly*, To set forth the Nature of them:

*IIIIdly*, To make some practical Inferences.

As



As to the *I<sup>st</sup>*, viz. The Duration of future Punishments. SERM. IV.

When God shall set forth, before the united Assembly of Men and Angels, the Harmony and Consistency of his Providence, from the first Birth of Time to its last Period; it is to be humbly hoped, that merciful Abatements will be made for unavoidable Temptations, to which Men have been exposed by their Situation in Life; for the Want of a regular and virtuous Education, &c. And perhaps some Part of what is called *moral* Evil, may be, in the Eye of him, who *knoweth whereof we are made*, nothing but *natural* Evil; as owing to the native Impetuosity of some Mens original Complexions, and to the unactive Coldness of other Mens natural Tempers, which, whether they could wholly get the better of, God only knows. It may be likewise presumed, that the Number of the Damned will bear no more Proportion to that of the Blessed throughout the whole Creation; than a Workhouse or a Prison does to the whole Extent of a large Kingdom.

But whatever gracious Allowances may be made; it is an express Scripture Doctrine, that the Wicked *shall go away into everlasting*

SERM. IV. *ing Punishment; but the Righteous into Life*  
 } *eternal.*

Let us suppose, that Mankind were to live here for ever: Let us suppose, that some of them were become abandoned and *incorrigibly* bad: Would it be any unjustifiable Severity to confine Them for ever in Prison, that they might not seduce or annoy the rest of the Creation; or even to inflict positive Punishments upon them, in their Confinement, adequate to their Offences, in order to deter others? It is only therefore to suppose, that the Soul is in its own Nature designed for an immortal Duration; that those, who are consigned to everlasting Misery, are such as by a continued Course of Sinning have so disabled all the Powers of the Soul, that it is morally impossible for them, without the extraordinary Grace of God, to cease from Sinning: And then if it be *no Injustice*, as undoubtedly it is not, that *every Sinner* should be a *Sufferer*; there can be no Injustice, that every *habitual, eternal Sinner* should be an *eternal Sufferer*.

This Consideration, I think, takes off the Force of the Objection, *viz.* That there is no Proportion between temporary Crimes, and

and eternal Punishments. But, since some have laid great Strefs upon it, I shall consider it further.

*Ist*, Let it be considered, that though the outward Acts of Sin be temporary; yet the Defilement and Habit contracted by a Repetition of these Acts is, if we die in a State of Impenitence, eternal. And as eternal ill Habits are the Source of eternal Torments; it will follow that the Impenitent have entailed upon themselves everlasting Misery. If, when Death has closed the Scene, there be no After-game to play; if all Overtures of Grace then cease; if Vice be stamped upon the Soul in indelible Characters; if *he that is filthy, must be filthy still*; then it is an undeniable Consequence, that *he, who can never cease to be wicked, can never cease to be miserable.* The veteran Sinner is steeled against all Impressions, and the Miser does not cease to love this World *with all his Soul, and with all his Strength*, even when he stands just upon the Verge of another. How often have we seen Men, that, however inconsistent in every thing else, have been very consistent in obeying one ruling, habitual Passion from first to last? Nay, we have

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surprising

SERM. IV. *surprising Instances upon Record, besides that of a dying Miser; that even at the Close of Life, the grand and important Crisis, that is to determine a Man's Happiness or Misery; even then this ruling Passion would bear no Rival, no Competitor near the Throne. Even then, like a domineering Favourite, who has long maintained the Ascendant; it would not, for fear of being supplanted, admit any thing to his Death-bed, but what countenanced its Interests, and was subservient to its Orders. What our Saviour said to St. Peter, may be applied to an old habitual Sinner. When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and went whither thou wouldst; but when thou art old, another shall bind thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. His Sins shall bind him, and carry him into Captivity. He will be apt to think, if he thinks at all to the Purpose; Why had I not the same Sentiments when young, as I have now? Or why have I not now the same vigorous Strength, which I had then, to break my Bonds asunder? Some have so much enfeebled the Powers of the Soul, that their Reason, like the Light of the Sun, when the Face of Nature is over-*  
spread.

spread with Fogs, is just strong enough to shew and render visible the melancholy Scene, but not strong enough to overcome and disperse the Vapours. SERM. IV.

Thus often in *this* World Habits seem to be incorporated into the Soul, and to be, as it were, Parts of our Selves: And if we carry our Enquiries farther, with the Light of Revelation in our Hands, we shall discover, that they are for ever rooted in the Mind in the *next* World. St. Paul, in the xiii<sup>th</sup> Chapter of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, discourses upon Charity, not as an *occasional Act*, but as a ruling, *standing Principle*. *If I give*, says he, *all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing*: i. e. Though I should practise some occasional Acts of Charity, however great; yet unless it be a settled Principle, it will be of no Avail. Well, what becomes of this habitual Charity? *Charity never faileth; but whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away.* That is, Prophecies, Languages, and our imperfect Knowledge, which is but Ignorance in Comparison, shall end

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with

SERM. IV. with this World : But the Habit of Charity shall remain beyond this transitory Scene of Things, and accompany the Mind into Heaven, and there remain with it to all Eternity ; as immortal as the Soul, and as extensive as the Creation. Now if good Habits shall follow their Possessors into another World, and there abide with them ; then ill Habits will, by Parity of Reason, do so too.

This appears farther from the Case of Those Angels, which *kept not their first Estate*. Could any thing have reduced those accursed Spirits to a State of Submission to their Maker ; one would have thought, that the Fruitlessness of their former Attempt, the severe Vengeance they already felt, and the Dread of a much severer that hung over them, if they persisted in their Wickedness ; and the Hopes of mitigating their Doom, if they desisted ; might at least have made them *passively* obedient : But though they *believe and tremble*, yet still they go on to act contrary to the Conviction of their own Minds ; still they *go about seeking whom they may devour* ; still they proceed in a State of Hostility to their Creator : So steadfast is Malice, so unconquerable

querable is Pride. And this will be the SERM. IV.  
Case of the Damned. For as the Good are  
to be as the Angels of God; the Bad will  
be as the Angels of Darknefs.

Whatever inborn Freedom of Mind we might have; an inbred, habitual Slavery to depraved Affections, will, in Procefs of Time, destroy it: The Abilities may be cramped, and the Powers of the Soul, as well as the Organs of the Body, so far maimed, as to be incapable of answering those valuable Purposes, for which they were originally designed. *From him that hath not any Improvement, our Saviour exprefly faith, shall be taken away even that which he hath, the original Faculty and Power to do Good.* Besides, though we may endeavour to get rid of those *outward* Calamities, which are generally *forced* upon us, in opposition to our strongest Inclinations; we seldom make it heartily our Business to remove those *inward* Miseries, which we *voluntarily bring upon ourselves.* Though we feel ourselves unhappy; yet as they are our own *Choice*, we *applaud and justify* ourselves in it, through the unrelenting Stubbornness of a corrupt Will. Thus the Jealous, the Melancholy,


SERM. IV. the Envious, the Revengeful, dwell upon every thing that may foment and heighten their respective Passions, whatever Torments they may labour under from them; and shut out each Consideration that may make against them. A Man cannot practise Virtue, without effectually willing it: And how can he effectually will that, to which his Will, by a long uninterrupted Attachment to Vice, is utterly averie? A long Continuance in vicious Pleasures is to the Soul, what Iron Chains are to the Body of him, who has lain long in them: The Chains may be struck off, but the Canker, and Rust, if they have eaten into the Flesh, will remain, and may disable him ever after. Just so worldly Pleasures may cease with this World; but the Pollution, gross Conceptions and the Indisposition to refined and liberal Delights, which they leave behind, may continue to obstruct the Freedom of the Soul, and destroy its native Energy \*. Now when the whole Bent of the Soul stands the wrong Way, when all

\* Qui in compedibus corporis semper fuerunt, etiam cum soluti sunt, tardius ingrediuntur; ut hi, qui ferro vincti multos annos fuerunt. *Cicronis Tusculanæ Disputationes*: Page 66. Editio Davis.



our Desires are riveted to vicious Objects; SERM. IV.  
it is no hard Matter to foresee, that Misery, eternal Misery, must be the unavoidable Result. When we are as it were *bound Hand and Foot* by ill Habits; when the Spring of the Soul, by which she should recover herself, which every vicious Act must weaken, is, by a continued Reiteration of them, quite broken; the Consequence is, that we must be *cast into outer Darknes*.


Now where can be the Injustice, that God should suffer those Evils to take place, which a Man has brought upon himself, by counteracting the Will of God? Where can be the Injustice, that those should be for ever excluded from Heaven, who, by a viciated Relish, have disqualified themselves for heavenly Blifs? If Happiness be nothing but the Employment of the Faculties of the Soul upon *suitable* Objects; it is certain, that *celestial* and *spiritual* Objects cannot *suit* a Soul, which being long and deeply immersed in sensual Delights, has contracted an habitual *Distaste* for them. As Man was the Creature of God's Hands, he was enabled and designed to be a Partaker of Happiness, and a Sharer of a blessed Immortality with himself: But as he is an  
habitual

SERM. IV.  habitual Sinner, and in that Respect the Creature of his own Hands, he has made himself eternally miserable, by those Habits, which are the Foundation of Hell.

So far, perhaps, you may be willing to allow, there is no Colour of Injustice: But this, you will say, does not account for the Perpetuity of *positive* Punishments for temporary Crimes. To which I answer, that even the Threats of eternal *positive* Penalties are not the *rigorous* Decrees of *mere* Will and Pleasure; they are so many *kindly Forewarnings* of the *necessary* Effects of a rooted Aversion to Goodness. For it may be *necessary* to secure the Happiness of the Blessed, that, though the Good and Bad, like the Wheat and Tares, are blended together here; they should, at the End of the World, be finally *severed* the one from the other. It may be *necessary*, that if *every* Region of *Joy* and *Comfort* throughout the Creation be peopled with *unoffending* Beings; the desperately *Wicked* should be thrust down (which is a *positive* Punishment) into Places, where *no* Joy and Comfort dwells, and there for ever imprisoned; that their Rancour and Malice might prey upon themselves, or be discharged

discharged upon their Fellow-Criminals, SERM. IV. which, if let loose, might disturb the innocent Part of the World. The divine Sanctions, you see then, are not the arbitrary Impositions of Sovereign Power; they are the genuine Result of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, which, in Pity to the Universe, has enacted them, that the whole may receive no Detriment. And whatever other positive Punishments may be super-added; they will be exactly adjusted to the Demerits of each Offender. The Scripture expressly declares, that the Wicked will be beaten with fewer or more Stripes, in proportion to the different Degrees of their Wickedness.

*2dly*, Let those, who insist so much upon it, that the Punishment is disproportioned to the Crime; reflect, whether they do not consider Sin in *one* View, either as to the *Fact abstractedly*, or as to the *Time* which the Perpetration of the Fact takes up; without considering it in *all Views*, and in all its *Consequences*; which yet is the only Way to form a true Judgment of the Malignity of it. For the Punishment is not disproportioned to Sin, habitual Sin, if considered with all its numerous Train  
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SERM. IV.  of ill Consequences; the Consequences being such, that if unrestrained it would soon involve the whole World in one promiscuous Ruin and Defolation. It is true, one Man cannot do all this Mischief. But then one Man, who, for Instance, acts unjustly, contributes his Part to the Introduction of universal Disorder and Misery. If all should act as unjustly as himself, (and all have as much Right as any one Man) the Foundations of the moral World would be quite out of Course.

To explain this by a familiar Instance, one Person robs another of a small Sum of Money; he is taken and suffers Death for the Fact: Now what Proportion is there between the Punishment and the Crime; between depriving a Man of *what* he perhaps could very well *spare*, and depriving the Person that did it of his *Life*, of his *all* in this World? None at all, if we consider the Crime in this *Light only*: But if we view it in *all its Tendencies*, then the Crime is adequate to the Punishment; since it tends to render Property, and what is valuable in this Life, precarious, and to subvert the Peace of Society.

We know not, we cannot know, how far  
far

far the Consequences of any one Sin may extend, how far the Influence of our Behaviour may affect all that lie within the Sphere of our Activity, those beneath us, and about us, our Domesticks, Relations, and Neighbours. And these again may spread the Contagion farther. Those that are vicious in a less Degree, however they may blame the Corruption of the World in general, are accessary to that very Corruption. It is here as in a Battle: Every Person who fled, is apt to shift off the Blame from himself, and to lay it upon his Fellow-Soldiers: But if each Person, who gave way, had stood his Ground; what was a general Rout, would have been a complete Victory. Sin then deserves the *greatest Evil*, because it is opposite to the *greatest Good*, the *universal* Interest: and as a confirmed Habit of Sin implies the Love of it, a *continual Love* of what is opposite to the *greatest Good*, must *continually* or for ever deserve the *greatest Evil*.

We may harangue as long as we please upon God's Benevolence. But no Arguments can be drawn from it to soften the seeming Rigour of the divine Sanctions. For universal Benevolence must consult the Good  
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SERM. IV. of the whole; which can never be done by abating the Penalties threatned to Vice; and much less by removing all Apprehensions of suffering hereafter, and consequently emboldening Wickedness; but by awakening *careless* Sinners, and striking a Terror into *determined* Offenders. Whatever Sanctions are most effectual to compass this End, must be most agreeable to the Goodness of the divine Legislator, who cannot promote the Happiness of the whole, without securing the Observance of his Laws. If to *annex* such *Penalties* be for the *Good* of the *whole*; then what is for the *Good* of the *whole*, cannot be Injustice to any *particular* Person; since the *Good* of each *particular* Person is naturally and *originally* wrapt up in, and connected with, *that* of the *whole*. And there is a *previous Obligation* upon every one that comes into the World, either to *do* those *Duties*, or *submit* to those *Penalties*, which preserve or promote the *general Happiness*, with which *his own* was *primarily interwoven*. God would have enforced our Obedience to Him with *less* Penalties, if *less* had been *sufficient*. But it is plain, that *less* Punishments would not have answered the End; since even those

those that he has denounced, do not, in many Cases, check the Growth of Vice and awe a wicked World into a Compliance with his Will. SERM. IV.

It is a Mistake therefore, and a dangerous one too, to admit, as some late Writers have done, of no penal Evils in the next World, but what terminate in the *Benefit* of the Sufferer and are for the *Amendment* of the immortal Agent. Upon that Supposition, there would be *no Hell* properly speaking; there would only be a *Purgatory*: And the *abandoned* and *incurably* bad, who merit the *greatest* Severity, would escape with absolute *Impunity*; because *no Punishment* could produce an *Amendment* in them. Besides, all Punishments, which come from God, have not even in *this* Life been intended for the *Reformation* of the Criminal; some of them have been for the utter *Excision* and *Extirpation* of the irreclaimable, when once they have *filled up the Measure of their Iniquities*: Such were the Deluge, and the unprecedented Destruction of *Jerusalem*, not to mention many other Instances, Hell is every where in Scripture represented as the very Reverse of a Place intended for the

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SERM. IV. the Exercise of benevolent Affections, without which none shall inherit the Kingdom of God. It is described as a State of Horror and Despair, where, as St. *John* says, *they blasphemed the God of Heaven, and repented not to give God the Glory.* It cannot therefore be a proper Scene to reclaim the Guilty, and to purify the Soul.

Some there are, who take Shelter in the Thoughts of Annihilation, and hope, or pretend to hope, that God will uncreate the Soul, and deprive it of Being. And is Annihilation then their only Hope? A sad gloomy Hope, and an horrid Consolation! To be as if they had never been, devoid of Conscioufness, Sense and Motion, to have all those busy Workings of the Mind, all those active Thoughts, which wander through this World, and lose themselves agreeably in the next, lost and swallowed up for ever in utter Extinction of Being; is this their only Resource? this, at which Nature, which always struggles hard for Self-Preservation, starts back with Horror?

Yet, alas! they are even cut off from this dreadful, this, I had almost said, desperate Hope. For if Annihilation be the only Punishment which shall be inflicted  
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on Sinners; then all Sinners, however *unequal their Crimes* may be, would be *equally punished*. If all were alike to be deprived of Being; God would make *no Distinction*, where there is a very material *Difference*, between the greatest and the least of Sinners. SERM. IV.

Farther, the Soul is an uncompounded, immaterial Being, and therefore not corruptible as Matter is. Now if God has created the Soul in its Nature immortal; then he cannot uncreate, or render it mortal, without acting contrary to the fixed and stated Laws of Nature: But God never acts contrary to his stated Laws, except upon some extraordinary Emergency. Well then, where is the extraordinary Occasion, that the Deity should supersede his own Laws, and put forth an immediate Act of Almighty Power, to reduce those Souls to nothing, which he had empowered to subsist for ever? How can it be expected, that He, who never annihilates the *least Particle of Matter*, the least insignificant Atom, should annihilate a *spiritual Substance*? Why a Set of obstinately rebellious Creatures have plunged themselves into Misery, by wilfully, deliberately, and frequently breaking the Laws of *Morality*: And

SERM. IV. do they expect, that God will remove that Misery, by breaking through the Laws of Nature, which he has established upon the maturest Wisdom, for the Good of the Whole?

Yes, say the Objectors: For he does not love to inflict *useless* and *unavailing* Misery upon his Creatures: And it is asked, what Use the Punishment of these unhappy Objects can be of? To which I answer, that we, whose Judgments are very shallow, must not pretend to arraign his Proceedings, which are *like the great Deep*. This we may take for granted, that *no Evil* is suffered to continue in the Creation, but to prevent or avoid a *greater*. And the Continuance of these Beings in their wretched Existence may be of Advantage to let the *World in general* know the deplorable Consequences of an audacious Perseverance in a wilful Rebellion to their Creator, and to confirm the *Blessed in particular* in their Happiness. For the Blessed in Heaven are endued with Freedom of Will. We know indeed, because God hath promised it; that, notwithstanding this Freedom of Will, they will never fall from that blissful State. But whether the Reflection on the  
Punishment

Punishment of the Wicked may not be one considerable Means, among others, to keep them invariably firm in an uninterrupted Practice of Goodness, and consequently in an uninterrupted Enjoyment of Happiness; this, I presume, we cannot determine. In God's *House*, the World, *there are many Mansions*; and Variety of Beings may still continue to people the Variety of Apartments in the Universe, after this Earth is dissolved. Perhaps, as the Fall of the Angels is revealed to us; so these unhappy Sufferers may serve to give awakening Notices to others, who inhabit some other Part of the Creation, lest they also fall into the same state of Condemnation. Be that as it will; God has a thousand Ways of bringing Good, general Good, out of partial Evil, and making the Punishment of the Bad, as well as Happiness of the Good, terminate in his own Glory.

This may serve as an Answer to those, who ask, why God would produce into the World Beings, who he foresaw would be eternally miserable? The Reply is obvious. Why did he produce into the World Beings, that he foresaw would be exposed here to innumerable Misfortunes? Why

SER.M.IV. did he permit, what he could not but foresee, temporal Evils; such as Volcano's, Earthquakes, Famines, Plagues, &c.? But these *temporary Evils*, you will say, are productive of some *greater temporary Good*. Well; if God may permit a *temporary Evil*, which he foresaw, to take place, because productive of a *greater temporary Good*; why may he not permit an *eternal Evil*, which he foresaw, to take place, because productive of an *eternal Good*? Or will these Persons demonstrate, that no eternal Good can result by God's infinite Wisdom, from an eternal Evil? But there is a wide Difference between temporary and eternal Evils: It is granted; yet the same Principle, which vindicates God's Ways with Men, as to *temporary Curses*, acquits him likewise as to suffering *eternal Evils*, *viz.* That from both he can draw a much *greater Good*, and cause what is Evil *respectively* to a few, to be absolutely Good upon the *Whole*.

*Knowing the Terror of the Lord*, says St. Paul, *we persuade Men*. Yet some very worthy Persons, misled, I conceive, by an Excess of Good-Nature, have weakened, instead of alarming, the Terrors of  
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the Wicked. Those good Men, who oppose this Doctrine, may have to do with others that are not so; and one would be glad to know, where they *would*, or indeed where they *can* stop. If *eternal* Punishments be thought excessive by them, will not others remonstrate against a Punishment of a *thousand* Years as of too long a Duration for the Sins of this short Life? Nay, will not that of an *hundred* Years, or *fifty*; or indeed any *given* Space of Time, that is *considerable*, be liable to the same Objection? There is no End of yielding, and one Concession does but pave the Way to another. When once they have given up the Eternity of Punishments, when once they have deserted that Post which was strictly tenable; they may be driven backwards by those, who will dispute every Inch of Ground with them; till at last they have not sufficient Ground left to stand upon.

And let them seriously reflect, what they are doing. Whether at a Time, when the Torrent of Wickedness rises high, and makes every thinking Man besides themselves afraid; whether at such a Juncture it be proper to break down, or lower those

SERM. IV. Fences and Mounds, which keep out the  
 { Overflowings of Ungodliness? " Our Desire,  
 " and Love, and Hope, (says a great  
 " Writer \* ) are not so apt to be wrought  
 " upon by the Promises of Rewards and  
 " Happiness; as our Fear is from the Ap-  
 " prehension of the Divine Displeasure.  
 " For, (as he observes) though we have  
 " lost in a great measure the Gust and  
 " Relish of true Happiness; yet we still  
 " retain a quick Sense of Pain and Misery."

*Celsus*, though a professed Enemy to Christianity, yet commends the Christians for maintaining that *the Good should be happy hereafter; but the Unrighteous doomed to Punishments strictly eternal: From which Opinion, says he, neither let them, nor any other Mortal depart.* † But I proceed,

II<sup>dly</sup>, To consider the Nature of future Punishments.

Some there are, who will not allow, that *God* immediately and *directly*, by a *positive* Act, confers any Rewards upon Virtue, or inflicts any Punishment upon Vice,

\* Archbishop Tillotson, Vol. I. Page 3d.

† *Celsus apud Origenem*; Pag. 409. Editio Cantab.

Vice, here or hereafter. All the Penalties and Rewards they admit of are such, as *naturally* flow from our Actions. Thus they make Hell to be nothing but a Remorse of Conscience, an inseparable Attendant, as they think, on Wickedness. This is, in effect, to dethrone God as a Legislator, to weaken the Interests of Virtue, and to make dangerous Concessions in favour of Vice. For, if this Scheme were true; then the *greatest Sinners* would have the *least Punishment*, perhaps *none* at all: For the *greatest Sinners* are hardened, *past* all Remorse, all Feeling, but that of Pain. Those, on the other hand, that have made the *least Advances* in Vice, would bear the *greatest Punishment*, as they would feel the *most Remorse*. Whereas God most abhors, and consequently will *most severely punish*, those, who are so far from having any *Compunctions* of Conscience, that they *delight in Wickedness*.

SERM. IV.

We have standing Proofs of the Deluge to this Day. The *Exuviae* of Sea Creatures, the numerous Beds of Shell-Fish, and other Spoils of the Ocean deposited on the highest Hills, found not only in Islands, but in Continents, where the Sea could never

SERM. IV. come, but by a Miracle, are so many in-  
 contestable Demonstrations and *authentic*  
*Monuments* of the *Deluge*; as *that* is an  
*authentic Monument* of God's *Justice* and  
*Vengeance*; and that He, who cut off all  
 the old World except eight Persons, for  
 their Sins, is not a Being quite so easy in  
 respect of Vice, as we may fondly imagine.  
 In short, the whole Universe witnesseth,  
 that a Deluge of Waters once overspread  
 the Universe. And if even in *this* World,  
 which is designed for a State of *Trial* and  
*Probation*, and not for an exact distributive  
*Justice*, proportioned to Mens several Me-  
 rits and Demerits, God could involve all  
 Mankind, except some few, in one pro-  
 miscuous Ruin; what Punishments may  
 await the Impenitent, when the last deci-  
 sive *Day* of *Justice* and *Judgment* cometh?  
 May not those Senses, which God has cre-  
 ated to be so many *Inlets* of *Pleasure*, be-  
 come so many *Avenues* of *Pain* and *Anguish*?

I know some have denied a local Hell.  
 But it is very clear from Scripture. *Depart*  
*from me, ye Workers of Iniquity, into the*  
*Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*  
 i. e. Depart from the Place, where I am;  
 into



into that, where the Devil and his Angels SERM.IV.  
are to be. And again, the Devils *besought*  
our Saviour, that *he would not command them*  
*to go out into the Deep*; or, as it is in the  
Original, into the Abyfs. It appears then  
that the Bad go from this World, where  
there is only a *Mixture* of Evils, into a  
Scene of *mere* Misery, Horror, and Tor-  
ment. If God, who *delights* to communi-  
cate *Happiness* to as many Beings as the U-  
niverse can *conveniently hold*, has, in pur-  
suance of this Scheme, filled every *beauti-  
ful* and *agreeable* Province in it with Crea-  
tures *susceptive* of *Felicity* in the Pursuit  
of Virtue and Perfection; the necessary  
Consequence is, that those Creatures, who  
have *disqualified themselves* for *Happiness*,  
must be condemned to *dismal* and *uncom-  
fortable* Mansions; from which, probably,  
after the last Adjustment of Things, there  
will be no Outlet, nor Possibility of mak-  
ing an Inroad upon the rest of the Crea-  
tion. There will be a Congruity between  
the Nature of the Place, and that of the  
Inhabitants, which will settle them there;  
and every one, like *Judas*, *must go to his  
own Place*. It is idle to dispute, whether  
the Fire denounced against the unrelenting  
be

SERM. IV. be metaphorical or real. Suppose it a Metaphor; yet those Metaphors, which represent Things of another World, do not generally exceed the Originals, or the Reality of the Things designed to be shadowed out by them.

The Ingredients of future Punishment are partly positive, and partly the natural Consequences of bad Actions, *viz.* Appetites ever craving and clamorous, but ever unsatisfied; *Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul that doth Evil*: An eternal Banishment from the blessed Presence of God, and the Society of Angels, and *just Men made perfect*; and a Confinement to the Company of malicious Spirits, an everlasting Torment to themselves, and ever tormenting all about them.

*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Our Saviour cried out, when he felt only a *momentary* and *partial* Eclipse of the Light of the divine Countenance. But when a deep and genuine Despair saddens the Scene all around, without the least Beam of Light from any Point of Heaven; then — I was going to describe the Misery. But if Words can paint this Night-Piece of Horror, the Copy must be drawn by those,

those, whose Unhappiness it will be to be too well-acquainted with the Original. Here *the Body pressed down the Soul, and the earthly Tabernacle the Mind, that mus'd upon many Things* : But when the Soul shall be clothed with refined Matter, which will not encumber her in her Operations ; her whole Duration will be one continued Stretch of Thought, without any Pause or Intermision. And what a Misery must it be to be thinking still ; and yet to have little or nothing to think on, but endless Misery ? To be at once deprived of all sensual Delights, and cut off from the Enjoyment of rational and substantial Blifs, is a Misery that we cannot now conceive, and — may we never feel !

That this may never be our Portion, let us, *Illdly*, Attend to such practical Inferences, as arise from what I have before laid down.

*1st*, Beware of evil Habits. It is impossible to overcome intirely our *first* Nature ; and it is next to impossible to overcome long standing *Habits*, which are our *second* Nature. To destroy the Power of Vice is like laying *the Ax to the Root of the Tree* :

SERM. IV. *Tree*: And it is not *one Stroke*, however vigorous, or *one Endeavour*, which will bring the Tree down, and *root it up*; though it may contribute towards it: No, there must be *several repeated Strokes*, and a continued *Perseverance*, to gain the *decisive Victory* over it, and to finish its Ruin; however deeply rooted. When Sin has had for a long Time the Dominion over us, our Resolutions of Amendment will be, according to the beautiful Thought of St. *Austin*, “like the Endeavours of those, “ who are trying to wake out of a deep “ Sleep, into which they sink back again, “ overcome by the dead Weight, which “ hangs upon them.” Take care then of your Actions: Every evil Action is a Step towards an evil Habit; and every evil Habit is a Step towards that bottomless Gulph, from which there is no Return. For when once ill Habits are rivetted in the Soul, you are miserable for ever, by a *Necessity of Nature*: you have made yourself an Object incapable of Mercy, and indisposed to receive the Communications of the divine Favour. Let it be acknowledged that a sincere and thorough Repentance, implying an *entire Change* of the *Heart*, can never  
 be

be too late; but let it be likewise granted, that a late Repentance is very seldom in this Sense sincere. If the Man were reinstated in his former Health, *Ease* possibly might *recant the Vows, that were made in Pain, as null and void.*

2dly, As you are to avoid evil Habits, be sure betimes to acquire good Habits, as the necessary Qualifications for Heaven. Some seem to think, that Religion consists in some *broken disjointed Acts* of Piety: But let them not deceive themselves: True Religion consists in the *inward Frame* of the Mind, in the standing Bent of the Inclinations, in *settled Habits* of Piety constantly residing in the Breast, and, as often as there is Opportunity, breaking forth into outward Acts. Thus a Man shall think himself devout, if he now and then *occasionally* says his Prayers, and frequents the public Worship; though he often absents himself upon *every slight* Occasion, upon *no* Occasion at all. But let him not deceive himself: If he were really devout, he would have a Relish for Acts of Piety, his Heart would *cleave stedfastly unto God*: and then he would not neglect private or public Prayers upon frivolous Pretences. Thus again a Man shall think himself charitable,

SERM. IV. ritable, because he now and then performs  
 } *occasional transient* Acts of Charity: But  
 he alone is a charitable Man, who *loves*  
*Mercy* and *Charity*, and *sheweth* that he  
 loves them, by the main *Tenor* and *Current*  
 of his Actions; who, with a strong Bene-  
 volence of Soul, is glad to relieve proper  
 Objects of Charity when he can; and sin-  
 cerely sorry when he cannot. And yet the  
 very Sorrows of the Charitable give more  
 substantial Satisfaction than the Joys of the  
 Selfish. For Compassion for the Distressed  
 (a Sorrow of which the charitable are most  
 susceptible) gives them to understand, that  
 the habitual Disposition of their Mind is right;  
 And he, who does not feel that lovely Dis-  
 position within, must want a Pleasure, the  
 Absence of which no other Pleasure can  
 counterbalance. He is a thoroughly good  
 Man, who has often *tried* and *found* his Vir-  
 tue *genuine*, and *clear* of all *Ostentation*; who,  
 instead of *boasting* or *complaining*, loves to  
*conceal* the *Good* he *does*, and the *Ills* he *suf-*  
*fers*; who thinks *that* Happiness scarce any  
 at all, which is *solitary* and *uncommunicated*;  
 as Paradise was no Paradise to *Adam*, till he  
 had a Partner of it. Till we have acquired  
 an habitually-good Bent of Temper, we  
 have not acquired those Qualifications, which  
 are

are the main Ground-work and Foundation SERM. IV  
of our future Happiness: We are not *meet*  
*to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the*  
*Saints in Light.*

Therefore, *3dly*, Let us all consider, that our *future* Misery or Happiness depends upon our *present Behaviour*. Our Happiness in *Manhood* depends upon those early Accomplishments, which we have acquired in our *younger* Years. If that proper Seed-Time of Life be neglected, we must expect no Harvest in the Autumn of it. Just so our Felicity in *another* Life must be owing to the Preparations we make for it *here*. And what we *must be to all Eternity*, will be the Consequence of what *we have been in this World*.

There is a certain *Fool-hardiness* prevailing among us in relation to a *future State*. Men *live* as carelessly or profligately, as if they *never* were to *depart* this Life; and then *depart* this Life with as much Stupidity and Hardness of Heart, as if they *never* were to *live again*. They rush unprepared into the Presence of the *just*, the *holy* Legislator of the whole World, as inconsiderately and audaciously, *as the Horse rushes to the Battle*, a Creature not capable of being frightened with Consequences, because incapable of reflecting

SERM. IV. reflecting upon them. God, say they, is *all Goodness*; and therefore they dare to be what he must *necessarily* hate, the very *Reverse* of Him — *all Wickedness*: Not considering, that *the Goodness of God* should lead them to *Repentance*. For God cannot love a Nature directly and habitually contrary to his; and cannot *but* love what is in some degree conformable to his Holiness and Purity. Now what he loves must be for ever happy; and what he hates for ever miserable. Let Men think or say, what they will, to the contrary; it is *Goodness* which ought to make every immoral Agent *afraid*, a determined, *impartial, universal* Goodness in a Being, who, *because* he is *infinitely Good*, will inflict every *deserved Evil*, which is productive of a *prepollent Good*; and will inflict *none, but* what is productive of such; who will consult the universal Interest, and not that of a *few incurable Members* of the whole stupendous *Body* of the Universe.

Such Men would do well to reflect, that Men even here in the natural Course of Things bring upon themselves such ill Habits of Body, and Miseries of all Kinds, that they can never extricate themselves from, as long as they live. The Course  
of



of Nature is so established, that Death alone SERM. IV. sometimes puts a Period to those Ills, which they have plunged themselves into by their Follies and Vices: If they were to live for ever, they would be probably miserable for ever, by the ill Consequences of their Sins, which take place in a *natural* Way. Now whatever comes to pass by the *settled Course* of Nature, is as much done by *him*, who appointed the Course of Things, and fore-saw every Consequence that would arise from every Manner of Acting; as if he had *immediately inflicted* the Punishment himself. And as the same God, who appointed the Nature of Things here, is the God of the other World as well as this; may not something like this come to pass in that other State? May not the Impenitent be for ever lamenting those Ills, which no Prudence can redress, no Patience make supportable, and no Time put a Period to?

I cannot conclude this Head, without wishing, that *all* of us may *believe* the Doctrine which I have here inculcated, to be true; and that this Belief, with the Concurrence of other Motives, may have that Effect, that *none* of us may *feel* it to be so.



# S E R M O N V.

The Nature, Possibility and Truth,  
of a particular Providence set forth.



PSALM CXIII. 5.

*Who is like unto the Lord our God, who hath  
his Dwelling so high; and yet humbleth  
himself to behold the Things that are in  
Heaven and Earth?*

**I**T is one great Recommendation of the SERM. V.  
Sacred Writings, that they have ex-  
pressed themselves with more Justness  
of Thought concerning the Nature of God,  
than any other Compositions whatever.  
What the Vanity of Science, falsely so called,  
has ascribed to *Nature*, or to *second Causes*,  
*exclusively* of the First, is by them resolved  
into the *immediate Will and Providence* of  
*God*. This is the truest Philosophy, as  
well as the best Divinity. For what is  
*Nature*? is it an *understanding Being*? or  
is it *not*? If it be *not*, how can an unde-  
K 2 *signing*

SERM. V. *signing* Being produce plain Notices of *Contrivance* and *Design*? If it be an *Understanding* Being, who acts throughout the Universe; then it is that great Being, whom we call God. For Nature, Necessity, and Chance, mere Phantoms, which have no Reason, Wisdom, or Power, cannot act, with the utmost Exactness of Wisdom, powerfully, incessantly, and every where: And here I would observe, that no Words are more *undetermined* in their Signification, than those, which pass current in *common* Conversation. We never question, but that we clearly *understand* Terms, which are daily in use, and *familiar* to us: Whereas those Words are often mere *Sounds*, without *Sense*, or any *settled* Signification. Thus few seem to know (though it is the only clear and determinate Meaning of it) that Nature in this Case means nothing, but the *constant* and *stated* Operation of God upon *Matter*.

We have no less Reason to *beg our daily Bread* of Almighty God, than the *Israelites* had to pray for their Sustenance, when they were fed with *Manna from Heaven*. For that a Handful of Corn should multiply to a prodigious Degree, and that the Fields  
should

should stand so thick with Corn, that they SERM. V. should laugh and sing, must be ascribed to God; as well as that the Food of Angels was given from above to the Israelites: Because a regular, constant and uniform Effect, in which there are evident Traces of Wisdom and Benevolence, stands as much in need of the Operation of a wise and benevolent Being, equal to the Effect, to produce it constantly at set Times and Seasons; as an occasional, infrequent and extraordinary Phænomenon does to produce it now and then, when an extraordinary Occasion offers.

The Generation of a human Body in the ordinary Way is no more to be accounted for by the Laws of Mechanism, than the Raising of a dead Body from the Grave: And the only assignable Motive, why we attribute the latter to the immediate Agency of God, and not the former; is that the latter is an unusual Operation of the Deity. If we saw Bodies commonly rise from the Grave, as we do Corn from Seed sown in the Earth; we should endeavour to explain this Effect, just as we do the other, from philosophical Causes exclusive of the First\*.

\* See Dr. Clarke's Reply to Leibnitz, Page 351.

No Beings, but what have *Life* and *Sense*, can, in Propriety of Speech, be termed Causes: All other Things, being *dead* and *unactive*, are only like Tools in the Hand of a Workman: And whatever we ascribe to *Matter* a *passive* Being, must be resolved into *his* Will, who useth *Matter* as an *Instrument*. Can Matter, which resists every Change of State, effect what it resists, not only move itself, but change its Motion from a straight to a circular one, and give itself a new Direction; as the Planets must do to describe their Orbits round the Sun?

But I need not insist upon this Point any longer. For to deny a Providence in general, is, in effect, to deny a God. If there be a God *invested* with the *Attributes* of infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness; Providence is nothing but the *Exercise* of those Attributes, *viz.* his Wisdom, Power and Goodness on the Creation in general. It cannot be supposed, that he will let those Attributes lie dormant in Him in a State of Inaction, without exerting them at all.

A *general* Providence then must be granted: But a *particular* Providence is clogged with some Difficulties. I shall therefore, to remove them, *Ist,*

Ist, State the Doctrine of a particular Providence. SERM. V.

IIdly, Shew the Possibility of it.

IIIdly, I shall prove the Certainty and Truth of it.

IVthly, Subjoin and conclude with some practical Reflections.

Ist, Then, I am to state the Doctrine of a particular Providence.

Ist, We must not expect, that God's particular *Providence* would interpose, where our *own Endeavours* are sufficient. For that would be to encourage Sloth and Idleness, instead of countenancing and supporting Virtue. Nor ought we to expect to be relieved from Difficulties and Distresses, into which our own Mismanagement and criminal Conduct have plunged us. But when without any Fault of ours our Affairs are so perplexed and intangled, that human Assistance will be of no Avail; then we must have Recourse to God, that he would give us *Wisdom* to conduct us through all the Labyrinths and Intricacies of Life, *Resolution* to grapple with Difficulties, and *Strength* to overcome them. In this Light

the Prayer, which *Josephus* puts into the Mouth of *Moses* just before his Passage through the Red Sea, is very just and beautiful. Unpassable Rocks barred his Escape one Way, the numerous Host of the *Egyptians* blocked up others: Before him stood the Red Sea. In this Situation *Moses*, just upon the Brink of Ruin, applies himself thus to God: “ Lord, thou knowest that no  
 “ Strength, Wisdom or Contrivance of  
 “ *ours* can here be of any Significancy. It  
 “ is in *thy Power alone* to find out a Way  
 “ for the Deliverance of this People, who  
 “ by thy Command and under thy Con-  
 “ duct have left *Egypt*. Despairing of all  
 “ *other Ways*, we flee to *thee* alone for  
 “ Succour; Lord, let it come speedily;  
 “ give us a full Proof of thy Almighty  
 “ Power and Veracity. We are in great  
 “ Straits, great and unfurmoutable by *us*;  
 “ but to *Thee* slight and inconsiderable.  
 “ The Sea is thine and it obstructs our  
 “ Progress: The Mountains that shut us  
 “ up, are thine too. Thou canst divide  
 “ this Sea, or turn its Waves into firm  
 “ Land, or make us find a safe Passage  
 “ through the Deep\*.”

\* *Josephs Opera*, Vol. 1. Pag. 90. *Hudson's Edit.*



Here was a *Knot* too hard for any but SERM. V. the Deity to untie: and therefore the Deity descended upon the Scene to unravel the perplexing Difficulty. But in common Cases the best Way is to rely upon Providence, as if all human Endeavours and Resources were useless, as indeed they are, without it; and yet to exert our Endeavours as vigorously, as if Providence would not interpose at all. For God will not prostitute his Power to supersede our Endeavours as to what we can do; He will only supply, what we cannot do.

2dly, We must not expect that Providence would so far consult our private Interest, as to counterwork that of the whole. Those general Laws, which are calculated for the Good of the Whole, may, in some Cases, be detrimental to some few Persons; but, in the main, are beneficial even to them. For if God should, upon no extraordinary Emergency, for no prepollent Good, deviate from his Laws; the utmost Reach and Compass of Thought would avail no more, than Childhood and Ignorance: All human Industry and Foresight would be at a Stand, which depend on Things going generally on in a stated Track. For there could be

SERM. V. no Room for *Counsel*, Deliberation and *Fore-*  
 cast, where there was no *orderly Constitution*, no *settled Course of Nature*. It would not signify to till the Ground, that we might reap the Fruits of the Earth in due Season: There would be no Dependance upon the ebbing and flowing of the Waters at set Times, and so in a thousand other Cases. It is for the Interest even of *that Man*, who is uneasy because the Settlement of Nature is not changed in compliance with his Wishes; that God *has given Things a Law, which shall not be broken* upon every frivolous Occasion. For if the Deity should depart from his uniform Manner of Acting upon *his Application* in any *material Point*; why should he not do so to gratify the Importunity of *other Persons*? The Consequence of which would be, we should live in an irregular disjointed World, where there would be no Harmony, no Order, no Law; but all would be Confusion and Anarchy. God can and does govern the *rational World*, without subverting and unhinging the Frame of the *natural*.


3dly, We are not to expect that Providence upon our repeated Requests would grant what we *imagine* a Blessing; there being

being several Things which we think to be Blessings, that are not so upon the *Whole*, or not so to *us*. And Providence is not like an over-indulgent Parent, who destroys the *future Happiness* of his Children, by complying with their importunate Petitions, and removing their *present Uneasiness*. SERM. V.

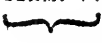
We must distinguish likewise between *natural* and *fantastic* Wants. Providence has generally made ample Provision for the *former*, but not for the *latter*. Besides those Desires, which are *inborn*, there are several, which are *inbred* in us, by early Custom and by a Neglect of Reason: Such are those of high and sumptuous Food, of Honours, and all the *Pride of Life*. Now every regular Inclination, every *Plant*, which our heavenly Father hath planted, he will take care, in concurrence with our own Endeavours, to feed and nourish. But we ourselves, if we will not part with them, must *maintain* those *spurious* and *illegitimate* Desires, which we have begot in ourselves. There would be as *exact* an *Adjustment* of the *Means of Subsistence* to the respective Wants of the *rational* Creation, as there is to those of the *animal* World; if Men unsatisfied with Necessaries and Conveniencies

SERM. V. *niencies had not made Life miserable by acquired Uneasinesses and Cravings. In short, we are got into a World, in some measure, as it were of our own Modelling, instead of having it, as it came originally from God: We have introduced much Misery and Disorder by Luxury, Pride, Ambition, and by unnatural Desires.*

Nor must we, *4thly*, hope, that Providence will prevent every Calamity, that may befall good Men. All, that the Assertors of a particular Providence contend for, is that, if he does not think fit to prevent it, he will either support them under it, or rescue them from it; or make all Things, at the last Winding up of the Drama, work together for Good to them who love him. To annex worldly Happiness *constantly* and *universally* to Virtue, and worldly Misery to Vice, would lay too great a Bias and Restraint upon our Inclinations; it would over-rule the Will, and necessitate it to be virtuous. This Life would be no State of Probation and Trial: There would be no Temptation to *Vice*, when all the Advantages lay on the Side of Virtue.

Idly, Having stated the Doctrine of a SERM. V. particular providence, I proceed to prove  the Possibility of it.

We must distinguish between the *grand* and *fundamental* Laws of Nature; and those of an *inferior* and *subordinate* Nature. The Oeconomy of Nature may be in a great measure *unalterable*, as to the grand and *fundamental* Laws, by which the Universe is steered: Such are those respecting the *Revolution* of the *heavenly* Bodies, the Succession of *Day* and *Night*, and the Round of the *Seasons*. But there are *subordinate* and *inferior* Laws, which God may alter without any *seeming* or *visible* Alteration. And to recede from them, under proper *Limitations*, *occasionally*, at the Instance of *particular Persons*, may be *no Detriment* to the *Universe*, and yet of great *Importance* to *them*. Such are the Laws relating to the Course of *infectious* and pestilential Vapours, the State of the *Atmosphere*, &c. Nay, with whatever decisive *Airs* Men may talk of God's Government by general Laws; yet, as to *some* of these Points, several Matters of Fact are not to be accounted for upon that Scheme. Thus  
for

SERM. V. for Instance, according to *general* Laws,  the greater Quantity of Rain *has fallen*, the greater Quantity should *still continue* to fall: because the more Water rested upon the Ground, and swelled the Rivers; the greater Quantity of Vapours must be attracted by the Sun, and descend again in Showers. And yet this is contrary to Experience. On the contrary, the longer any Drought has continued; the longer, without the Interposition of Providence, it should still continue: Because the Ground being parched, and the Rivers either dried up or much sunk; the Number of Vapours, which are exhaled from thence, must be very inconsiderable. All pretended Solutions of this Appearance do but *shift off* the Difficulty *one Remove*, without fully obviating it; except we call in the divine Providence, *which giveth the former and the latter Rain*, to our Aid.

God undoubtedly can abate or quicken the Force of Winds, Storms and Lightning; can retard and weaken, or increase and accelerate their Influence, without reversing the settled Course of Nature in a Manner perceptible to us; so as to bring about what he sees fit, and prevent what he does not think

think

think so. We ourselves very often, with-  
in the limited Sphere of our Activity, stop or  
hasten the Motion of Bodies, or change their  
Direction. And shall we deny the Exertion  
of that Power to the *great Creator*, which  
the *meanest of his Creatures* is invested with?  
May he not clog or quicken the Wheels,  
and direct the Springs of natural Causes, so  
that *Wind and Storm* may fulfil his Word?

The Deity must *proportion* his Care to  
the *intrinsic* Worth of the *Object*. Now  
*one* Being, who is ennobled with the di-  
stinguishing Perfections of *Reason and Li-*  
*berly*, is of more Value, than the *whole*  
Mass of *Matter*, how vast soever in Ex-  
tent. He will therefore have a greater  
Regard for rational Beings in proportion to  
the superior Excellency of their Nature.  
God *made the material* World intirely for  
the *spiritual*; and consequently will go-  
vern it with *Regard* to the latter: The  
material World being but the *mere Shell*,  
which was formed and beautified for the  
*Sake* of its *Inhabitants*. This would in-  
cline one to think, that God is not so *tied*  
*up* to general Laws, as to have *no Reserve*  
of *Power* left to himself, to provide for  
particular Exigencies.

But

But supposing he seldom or never swerves from his stated Method of Acting, yet the particular Occurrences of each Man's Life may be directed by a Power *delegated to Angels*, and that too, *consistently with the established Course of Nature*. This Supposition is confirmed by several Texts of Scripture. Thus we read in the second Book of *Chronicles* xvi. 9. *The Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself (it should be rendered themselves) strong in the Behalf of them, whose Heart is perfect towards him.* That by the *Eyes of the Lord* is here meant the *Angels of God*, is plain from *St. John*, who mentions *Revel. v. 6. the seven Eyes which are the seven Spirits or Angels of God sent forth into all the Earth.* The Psalmist expressly says, *The Angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

We see, that as the Scale of Beings descends *downwards* from Man to Brutes, from Brutes to Insects, from Insects to Plants; the *higher* Beings in each Link of the Chain have some kind of Dominion and visible Authority over their immediate *Inferiors*: Man for Instance over  
Animals,



Animals, and Animals over Plants. And, SERM. V.  
from that Harmony which runs through  
all God's Works, we may conclude that  
as the Scale ascends *upwards* from Man to  
Angels; *they* too have some Power and In-  
fluence over *us*; as we have over Brutes, and  
Brutes over those of a lower Species.

If it be asked, why in punishing the  
Wicked, in curbing and over-ruling their  
Actions, so that they shall not be able to  
go beyond the Will of God *to do less or  
more*; and in protecting, chastising or try-  
ing the Good, God does not always act  
immediately; it may be sufficient to an-  
swer, that as God does not exert a *super-  
natural* Power, where an *human* is suf-  
ficient; so He may never put forth his  
*Omnipotence*, where an *Angelical* Power  
is equal to the Effect to be produced; or  
in other Words, he may never use *more*  
Power or *greater* Means, than it was *requi-  
site*. *The Angels of God are ministering Spi-  
rits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall  
be Heirs of Salvation.*

Let us suppose that a Person, whom  
God designs to be the Instrument of pro-  
moting the Happiness of the World before  
he dies, has an Intention to go some Way,  
where Assassins lay in wait for him, or to

SERM. V. } pass by a Building, which is ruinous and ready to fall \*. It is not necessary, that God should absolutely destroy the Liberty of free Agents, or suspend the Force of Gravitation: He may, by the Ministry of Angels, lay several Impediments in his Way, give him a different Turn of Thinking, suggest several Reasons, why it may be proper to defer his intended Journey, or put him upon taking a different Road, or over-rule his Intentions. A thousand Impressions may be made upon him, in this or any other Case, when imminent Danger threatens him, to alter his Purpose. However *fixed* and *determined* some may suppose the *Laws*, by which the *material* World is governed, to be; the *Mind* of Man at least is *changeable* and *capable* of *new* Determinations: and God, in whose *Hand* the HEART of Man is, *as the Rivers of Water, and who turneth it, whithersoever he listeth*, may change it by secret Influences, and by making Things appear in another Light, than they did. Or he may render the *Hand* of the Russian *unperforming*, by striking a *Terror* into his *Heart*, at the *Instant*, that he meditates  
the

\* See *Wollaston's Religion of Nature*, Pages 99, and 106  
1<sup>st</sup> Edit.

the Blow. Or there may be several Ways SERM. V. above our Understanding, by which God may suit his Providence to *private* Cafes, where the Course of Things goes on in a regular Channel without overflowing.

This is certain, that though several Things may *seem accidental* to us, who are ignorant of their true Causes; yet *nothing* is *accidental* to the *Deity*, to whose View every Cause, how minute soever, that lies hid in the Depth of Futurity, is unlocked and exposed. And, what we *miscal Chance, Fate or Fortune* in our Language here below; they, who speak *another Language above*, more agreeable to the Truth and Reason of Things, call the wise *Dispensations* of an *all-directing Providence*. Fortune and Chance are but Words to signify our Ignorance: The *Scripture* teacheth us a more *just* Manner of expressing ourselves, as for Instance; *The Lot is cast into the Lap; but the whole Disposing thereof is of the Lord*. What appears a *Casualty* to us, is here referred to the *Disposal* of the supreme *Dispenser of Good and Evil*. And again, when the eleven Apostles were to chuse another into the Room of *Judas* by *Lot*, they ascribe the *Direction of the Af-*  
fair

SERM. V. *fair to God's unerring Providence, though it was managed by Casting of Lots: Thou, Lord, who knowest the Hearts of all Men, shew, whether of these two thou hast chosen.* Whatever is seemingly effected by the Ministry of second Causes, God so lays, directs and conducts the Train of Events, as to serve his own beneficial Purposes. The Scripture very fully and expressly asserts a particular Providence: *God holdeth our Souls in Life: He is a very present Help in Trouble: The very Hairs of our Head are all numbered: Not a Sparrow falls to the Ground without the Deity:* Nothing being so small and inconsiderable, as to *escape* his infinite Knowledge; Nothing so great or unweildy, as to *encumber* his Almighty Power.

Still this Objection may be advanced: We may suppose two Men equally Good, equally the Care of Providence, begging at the same Time, the one for an Eastern Wind, the other for a Western, as most commodious for his Voyage. How can God's Providence gratify Both, when their Requests are contrary? To which I answer, that, though God cannot gratify Both, by granting their particular Requests, which interfere,

interfere, because he cannot do what implies a Contradiction; yet he may consult the *Interest and Advantage of Both*: He may be equally gracious in what he *withholds from* the one, as in what he *vouchsafeth to* the other. He may make an Incident, however contrary to his Wishes, turn out upon the Whole to his Benefit, by an unexpected Train of Occurrences, by secret and unsuspected Methods. In the Case of *two contrary* and clashing *Petitions*, God will do what is for the Good of the *Whole*; but so, as that the *particular* Good of each Individual, who prays affectionately, means well and acts up to that Meaning, shall coincide with the general Plan. Nay if the stormy Wind, which he deprecates, should arise and sink him in the Deep; yet it may bring him to a far more valuable Haven, *the Haven where he would be*, the Land of everlasting Rest.

But can God, you will say, behold the Things that are in Heaven and in Earth, and with one comprehensive View command the whole Compass of the Universe? Yes. *He, that made the Eye, shall he not see; and He, that made the Ear, shall he not hear? Or he that teacheth Man Know-*

SERM. V. *ledge, shall he not know? Consider that He*  
 { invested you with the *Faculty of Knowing and Thinking*: And can you stupidly imagine, that what you know and think *by and from him*, can escape *his Thoughts and Knowledge*? Look upon that glorious Luminary the Sun: Its *Light* flies swift as *Thought* from one *Part of the Universe* to the other; it penetrates into every *Corner*, and *nothing is hid from the Heat thereof*. And can you think, that the *Knowledge of the Deity* does not extend much farther and penetrate deeper, than the *Light of that Body*, which is the *Work of his Hands*? It is as certain that *God seeth us and all our Actions*, as that he giveth us the *Power of seeing*. Fain would we imagine him *far from us*; though even spontaneous *Motion* be a *Proof of his immediate Presence*. The *Soul wills the Motion of the Hand and Foot*, and they immediately move obedient to its *Orders*. Yet the *Soul has no more a Power, independently of its Maker, to move its Limbs by a mere Thought*; than it has a *Power to move the Sun, Moon, and Stars by merely willing it*: And *He, who has made the former consequent upon our Volition, might have made the latter*

so too by his Almighty Power. The Jews, SERM. V. as we learn from *Maimonides*, waved their Sacrifice upwards and downwards, North and South, East and Westward, to intimate that the Being, to whom they consecrated their Sacrifice, was every where, a Being whom no Place could *confine*, and none *exclude* \*.

Let us then leave it to him, who alone is equal to the mighty Province, to adjust in such a Manner the various *interfering* Interests of Mankind in *general*, and to consult the *private* Cases of each *Individual*; that every Man, who makes it his Business to recommend himself to God, may find his Happiness over-balance his Misery.

But this brings me to my *III<sup>d</sup>* Head, *viz.* to prove the Truth and Certainty of a particular Providence.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, That the Deity should not grant every particular good Man, what is really for *his Good* upon the *Whole*, and no ways inconsistent with that of the *Public*; must either argue, that He is *unwilling*, or that he is *unable* to grant it. Infinite *Goodness* cannot but be *willing* to communicate *Happiness* to every Individual, who is not want-

\* See *Outram de Sacrificiis*, Page 162.

SERM. V. ing to himself; and infinite *Power* cannot  
 but be *able* to bring about, whatever his  
 Goodness wills.

Let us suppose a Man combating with some *uncommon* Distress, to which his *Strength* is greatly *unequal*; let us suppose, that this Man, who has *regarded* God during the main Tenor of his Life according to the *best* of his Abilities, now *implores him* with all the *Energy* of Devotion, as his *last*, his *only Refuge*. Can we imagine, that *the Father of Comforts and the God of Mercy* will stand *looking* upon his Trouble; without either vouchsafing to him any *outward* Assistance, which *he* can easily do in an unperceived Manner, to whom *all Nature* is *subservient*; or communicating to him any *inward* Consolation, though he knows each Avenue to the Soul? He may not think fit entirely to *remove* his Misfortune; but he will either *lessen* or *abate* it, so that he shall not be *tempted above what he is able*; or he will adjust his Succour to his Exigency.

2dly, God will *respect* and treat every Man *agreeably* to *what he is*; and therefore there can be *no irrelative* Course of Things. *Matter and Motion* are very *undistinguishing*:



*distinguishing: they make no Difference between him that serveth God, and Him that serveth him not: But God doth: For no good Man, I believe, ever prayed constantly and affectionately to his Maker, without having an Experience, that God has answered his Prayers at some nice and critical Conjunction. If all Things happen according to the Laws of Mechanism, by a fixed Chain of natural Causes, without any Act of a respective Providence, without any Superintendency and Direction of Events; then we live, to all Appearance, in a fatherless World, liable to a thousand Dangers, Casualties and Distresses, which no Foresight can prevent, no Skill elude, no Power fence off. It is an Impeachment of God's Goodness to suppose, that as soon as he has made any Man, he dismisses him immediately out of his Hands and abandons him, without a Design to answer his Prayers, or take any farther Notice of Him in his Passage through this World, or to accommodate the Dispensations of Providence to his Wants and Deportment.*

3dly, Instinct is a Proof, that Providence extends itself to every particular Brute; Instinct being the immediate Ener-

SERM. V. *gy* of the Deity acting upon each of the  
 Brute Creation. For it operates, as soon  
 as Animals are *born*: As soon as they  
 make their Entrance upon, this new Scene,  
 the World, they do *not* act as mere *Stran-*  
*gers*: They seem to be *acquainted* with the  
 Food that is beneficial to them, and to shun  
 what is dangerous. A defenceless Brood,  
 when Danger threatens, take Shelter under  
 the Wings of their Parent; while another  
 Brood, though hatched under the same Fowl,  
 runs to the Water, regardless of the affection-  
 ate Cries and tender Yearnings of their *Foster-*  
*Mother*, which would call them away from  
 an Element, which it thinks destructive to  
 them. Now, what we call Instinct, can-  
 not be the Result of *mere Matter and Mo-*  
*tion*: For undirected *Matter and Motion*  
 cannot *shun Danger*, and *pursue* what is  
*advantageous*. It cannot be the Effect of  
*Reason* in the Creatures *themselves*: For  
 Reason is an *Acquisition*, and Men ripen  
 into rational Beings by a *progressive Open-*  
*ing* and Unfolding of the Mind. Reason  
 is an *improveable* Faculty, in its *Nonage*  
 for several Years; and our *Souls*, as well as  
*Bodies*, come *naked* into the World and  
*unfurnished*. *Instinct* must be then, as I  
 said

said before, the *divine Energy* acting immediately upon the Animal Creation: It must be his Power, *who giveth Fodder to the Cattle, and feedeth the young Ravens that call upon him.* SERM. V.

Besides, every Species of Brutes observes a *peculiar Track*; They go on in a *Line* without deviating from it; Instinct does that by *one unvarying Method*, which Reason does by *several*: They observe the same Plan in the Structure of their Nests, even those, which had never seen one before: Whereas if they had Reason, they would *vary* as much in their Schemes, as *we* do; they would project *new Plans* and *improve old ones*. And whereas rational Creatures can correct the Reports of the Senses, and over-rule their Solicitations; Brutes are entirely governed by natural *Impulses*, and by the *Prompting* of the *sensitive Appetites*.

Now if Providence condescends to regard every *Individual* in the *Brute Creation* so far, as to act constantly in it and upon it; shall he not *much more* extend his Care to every *particular Person* in the *rational World*, and adapt his Dispensations to the Necessities of each single Person in it; *Consider*  
the

SERM. V. *the Fowls of the Air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them: Are ye not much better than They?* He, whose overflowing Bounty has supplied the Birds of the Air and the Beasts of the Field with whatever is suitable to *their* Natures, will provide for Mankind in a Way suited to the Condition of the *rational* Nature. *He openeth his Hand and filleth all things living with Plenteousness:* And shall he not answer the various Occasions and Circumstances of Man, the Master-piece of the visible Creation?

4<sup>thly</sup>, Those who admit a *general* Providence, but deny a *particular* one, seem to forget that *Generals* are nothing but a *Collection of Particulars*; they are nothing but the *Sum total* of Individuals. And consequently as *Generals include Particulars*; a *general* Providence must *imply* a *particular* one. If the *Whole* of worldly Affairs and Concerns be the *universal Chain* of Providence; then each Man's *private* Concerns are *one Link* of that Chain which is affixed to the Throne and directed by the unerring Hand of God. Whatever *other* Laws, by which the World is governed,  
there

there may be; the *supreme* Law, to which all the rest must give way, is the *Interest* of the *Whole*: And the Interest of the *Whole* cannot be promoted without a constant Regard to the *Parts*, of which the whole is composed. Now if a *fixed*, determined and *unchangeable* Course of Nature could be made to correspond to the *various* Interests and Exigencies of *free* and *mutable* Agents; there would be no Occasion for any Interposition of the Deity, who may have made Provision for particular Cases in his original Constitution of Things. But if this be, as perhaps it is, impossible, if many beneficial Events of the highest Importance may be brought about, and much *needless* Misery sometimes prevented by a particular *Direction* of Matter, which cannot, of itself, change its Line of Direction; it is derogatory, one would think, to God's Goodness to imagine, that He would, *merely* for the Sake of acting *simply* and *uniformly*, without any other End in View, make *Mankind* or any *Part* of Mankind undeservedly and *unnecessarily* unhappy: or that He, who can order Matters so, that his *Footsteps* shall *not be known*, should never go *out* of the *common Road* of his Providence to avert Evil

SERM. V. vil and produce some considerable Good, which could not *otherwise* be produced. There must be then an Adjustment of the State of the *natural* World to that of the *rational* and intelligent Creation. All the Arguments, which prove that God governs the World in *general* in a Manner which suits best with *Reason*, prove likewise that he takes care of *particular* Cases in the *same* Manner. For God can no more act *contrary* to *Reason* in any *particular* Case, than he can in *general* do so. The *Time*, the *Manner* and *Condition* of each Man's Existence must be determined by Him, upon whom each Man's *Existence* depends; which cannot be done without *descending* to *Particulars*.

5thly, The surprising Discoveries of Murder, the Fall of the Wicked into the Pit, which they made for others; the strange and judicial *Infatuation* of Men *wise* at all *other* Times, when some great Event was to be brought about, which can only be resolved into his Power, who maketh the *Knowledge of the Wise foolish*, and *turneth their Counsels backwards*; the *Indiscretion* of others succeeding, when well concerted Plots have failed; the *Disproportion*

portion of the visible Means to the Effect; SERM. V.  
these are so many Arguments to prove a  
particular Providence at the Helm, who has  
a perfect View of all Things, whether great  
or small, at all Times, and in all Places,  
with infinitely more Ease; than we can at-  
tend to one Thing at once.

There is great Reason to think, that  
God often breaks the fine spun Threads of  
human Policy, and brings the most unpromising  
Projects to bear. Were the Soul  
divested of the Body; she might find her-  
self as much mistaken about several Turns  
of Affairs; as the *Trojan* Hero was, who  
was enraged at the *Grecians*, whom he  
thought the *sole* Authors of his Country's  
Ruin: But when the *Mist* was removed  
which dimmed his mortal Sight, he saw  
the Destruction of the City, in which he  
thought *human* Agents were only concern-  
ed, was caused by Beings of a much *su-  
perior Nature*.

We have a pregnant Instance in Scrip-  
ture, that God vouchsafed to sit at the  
Helm of the Jewish State. For when all  
the Males three times a Year were obliged  
to go to the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and  
consequently left the Frontiers of their  
Country

SERM. V. Country unguarded; what could hinder  
 their Enemies, (and no Nation had more  
 Enemies,) who used to *defy the Armies  
 of the living God*, from making a Descent  
 upon a *naked and defenceless* Country?  
 What, but He, who in the Language of  
 Scripture *boweth the Hearts of a whole  
 Nation, as the Heart of ONE Man*? When  
 God has some great Design in View, He  
 giveth one *universal Bent* of Inclination to  
 a whole People with the same Ease, with  
 which a *Gust of Wind inclines all the Tops  
 of Corn in a waving Field the same Way*.

This, you will say, is only a Proof of  
 a national Providence; it facilitates, how-  
 ever, our Belief of a Providence extend-  
 ing to each Individual. What follows,  
 directly proves it, as to the *better* Part of  
 us, our *Souls*. God is every where pre-  
 sent; and to suppose that an infinitely good  
 Being can be invisibly present to the Soul,  
 without awakening in it pure and virtuous  
 Notices, and exciting it to the Pursuit of  
 Piety, not indeed by irresistible Force, but  
 by rational Motives, would be to entertain  
 a worse Notion of an *all-gracious God*, than  
 we do of a *pious Man*. For any good Man,  
 who is continually present with us, will be  
 suggesting



suggesting advantageous Rules for the Conduct of Life, if he hath our eternal Interest at Heart. The Philosophy now in vogue allows, that God continually acts upon Matter; and that whatever Motion there is in the great Bodies of the Universe, is owing to his immediate Operation. But if God acts continually and immediately upon *Matter*; it will be hard to assign any sufficient Reason, why he should not act upon, what is much *nobler* than Matter, the *spiritual* World.

There are very few, who have not, some time or other, just as they were upon the *Point* of perpetrating a *bad* Action, felt a *sudden Check* or *Restraint* upon them, which has rendered their Design abortive. Something, they knew not what, at that very *Crisis*, when, if they had gone a *Step* farther, it had been *too late* to retreat, hath *withheld* them from *sinning*. A chill Fearfulness and Trembling hath come upon them that were Strangers to Fear; and an unusual Damp hath overcast the Soul which had been inured to hardy Attempts. When any *good* Suggestion without any *antecedent* Train of Ideas ariseth in our Minds, we know not how or from what

SERM. V. Quarter, we ought to look upon it as a *Beam of Light* darting in upon our Minds from the great *Father of Lights*; and let us improve, cultivate and ripen it, till it breaks forth into correspondent Actions.

IVthly, I shall make two or three Reflections, and so conclude.

1st, Let us learn from hence to form the most august Ideas of the *divine Nature*, of which *ours* is capable.

Look how wide and spacious this *Earth* is, on which we live: Yet this Earth is as it were but one *petty Province* of God's *universal Empire*, one *little Wheel* of the *vast Machine*, the whole World. How astonishingly *great* then is that Being who sets each Wheel in Motion, and regulates the whole Circumference of the Creation; where *there are Diversities of Administrations*, but *the same God*, which worketh *All in All*? It is his *Power*, which yields *so many massy Bodies*, and bids the *Planets* go their *everlasting Round*; it is his *Wisdom*, which adjusts *such Variety* of Movements without the *least Confusion*; it is his *Goodness*, which has *enriched* the Universe with *such a Profusion of Good*, *beautified* it with

such *Order and Harmony*, and enobled it SERM. V.  
with such *Magnificence* and *Grandeur*.

Yet this Earth, all these Worlds, which move above us, far more, than the naked Eye, than Glasses, than the *Imagination* can reach, are but before him (in the Language of the Prophet *Isaiab*) as a *Drop of a Bucket*, and are counted as the *small Dust of the Balance*: *Behold he taketh up the Isles, as a very little Thing*: That is, the Isles and indeed the whole Universe are in his Hands, what a *light insignificant Weight* is in ours, which we *take up* and manage at our *Ease*, without being in the least encumbered by it. What is your Spirit amidst such a *Multitude of Spirits*, as probably inhabit these Worlds? No more, than a *Drop amidst the vast Collection and Assemblage of Waters*. — Yet you are as much the *Care of the great Author of all these Worlds*, and *Father of all these Spirits*, as if there were no Creature for him to protect and love but you. No Person howsoever little or insignificant, who regards him, can be *unregarded* by Him, who, with one *Glance of Thought* can know every Thing, without *Study and painful Researches*; and with one *Motion of his Will* can do e-

164 *The Nature, Possibility and Truth,*

SERM. V. *very* Thing, without Toil or laborious Efforts. He hath *preserved* your *Going out,* and your *Coming in,* comforting you in Troubles, directing you in Difficulties, saving you from several Dangers, which you know nothing of, and conducting you through this Maze of Life.

2dly, Instead of scaring yourself with melancholy Views, and letting your *Heart fail you for Fear,* and for looking after those Things, that are to come upon the *Earth,* when Wickedness and Irreligion prevail; let it be a Matter of Joy and Comfort to you, that amidst all the Confusion and Madness of the World, Men cannot faster *perplex* and *entangle Things,* than *God* can *unravel* them; or *embroil* the World, than he can bring *Order* out of Confusion; that the Wicked are under the secret Control of his Providence; that *the Lord is King,* be the People never so impatient; *he sitteth between the Cherubims,* be the *Earth* never so *unquiet*; that he can make the Machinations of wicked Men an *accidental* Occasion of *Good,* and serve his gracious Designs, in opposition to their *own.*

Lastly, let us never do any Thing to  
 5 throw

throw ourselves out of his Protection. Let SERM. V. us consider how *vain* all *Schemes* of *Happiness* are, out of which *He*, the *Fountain Head* of Happiness, is left, who can dash the Joys of Prosperity with such unpalatable Ingredients, as render them no Joys at all; and qualify the Bitterness of Poverty with such Infusions of Joy and Gladness, as shall make it easy and tolerable. And perhaps *He*, who *made* the Soul, can *alone* make it *thoroughly happy or miserable*: *He* can *pierce* it *through and through* with *Sorrow* and *Pain*, and make it, when *incorrigibly bad, irretrievably wretched*; or he can pervade it and *fill* the *whole Capacity* of it with *unconceivable Bliss*. Then, and not till then, we are intirely undone, when God has *cast out our Soul*, cast it from his Presence, from the Comforts of his Presence. For his Presence is every where: But it is to the Good and the Wicked, just what it was to the *Israelites and Egyptians* before the Red Sea: To the former a *Pillar of Light* to brighten up every Thing around them; to the latter a *Cloud* and *Darkness* to trouble and disquiet them. While we enjoy the Light of the divine Countenance, we need not be dejected at the Frowns of the

SERM. V. whole World. For *if God be* FOR us, it will in a short Time signify little or nothing, who was *against* us: But if He be *against* us, what will it signify, who was *for* us? Our Communication and *Intercourse* with our *nearest* and dearest *Relations* may be intercepted by our *Misfortunes*: But our *Intercourse* with the *nearest* Object of all, even *Him*, in whom we live, and move, and have our Being, cannot be intercepted but by our *Vices*. He who never *faileth* them that seek him, will never *for-sake* us, till we forsake *Him* and *Virtue*. He is, according to the expressive Description of St. *John*, *Light and Love*, pure unclouded Light, without any Mixture of Darknes and Ignorance; and pure unallayed Love, without any Tincture of Malice and Hatred: He knows whatever is really Good for us; and will do whatever in his unerring Judgment is most effectually conducive to our Good, making every disastrous Incident finally terminate in our Benefit.

# SERMON VI.

The intrinsic excellency of the Scriptures, a Proof of their divine Inspiration.

In Two SERMONS.




I PETER III. 15.

*Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you.*

**I**T is surprising to observe, what a close SERM.VI. Connexion and Alliance one material Truth has with another. Thus, for Instance, that there is a God, those manifest Traces of infinite Wisdom, which appear through the whole Oeconomy of Nature, sufficiently make out. The whole World is in this respect, as it were, one great Temple, where, as in the Jewish, the Shechinah or divine Presence shines

M 4. confest

SERM. VI.  confest in a visible Glory. The same Arguments, that prove our own Existence, demonstrate God's. How do we prove there is a vital Principle within any Person? Why, because he moves, he thinks and acts: And can we from these Operations conclude there subsists within us a Principle, which actuates and informs the Body: And shall we not from the stupendous Operations of the Universe conclude, there is a Being that actuates and invigorates all *Nature* \*? Matter cannot be a necessarily existent Being. Because that alone is *necessarily* existent, which exists *immutably*, and cannot *but* be what it is. Whereas, on the other hand, Matter does not persist in an *uniform* State of Being, but is liable to *Changes*, and admits of new Modifications.

\* Est, est profecto illa Vis: neque in his Corporibus, atque in hac inbecillitate inest quiddam, quod vigeat ac sentiat: et non inest in hoc tanto Naturæ tam præclaro motu; nisi forte idcirco esse non putant, quia non apparet. nec cernitur: proinde quasi nostram ipsam mentem, quâ sapimus, quâ providemus, quâ hæc ipsa agimus ac dicimus, videre, aut plane qualis, aut ubi sit, sentire possumus. *Cicero pro Milone.* Unde scis tibi inesse vitale Principium? Respondebis, quia loquor, quia ambulo, quia operor. Stulte, ex operibus corporis agnoscis viventem; ex operibus Creationis non agnoscis Creatorem? *S. Augustinus.*



fications. The infinite *Variety*, that there SERM. VI. is in the World, which shews a *manifest Wisdom*, is no more consistent with the Scheme of unintelligent *Necessity*; than *Regularity*, Uniformity and Design is with that of *Chance*.

And if there be a God, there must be some Religion; or, in other Words, some Homage must be due from an indigent and dependent Creature, to his great Creator, Preserver and Benefactor. And if some Religion be necessary, it must be one that is sufficient, or is sufficiently calculated for the Generality of Mankind. Now, that natural Religion, or that Religion, which the Light of Nature dictates, is not sufficiently calculated for the Generality of Mankind, is evident from hence; that to trace a considerable Number of Doctrines up to the Fountain-Head from which they flow, by the Strength of unassisted Reason, and to pursue them to their remotest Consequences, is a Task at least extremely *difficult* to Men of *Letters*, but I may venture to say *impracticable* to the *Ignorant*. Besides, pure natural Religion is a mere *Utopian* Scheme, which may perhaps have existed in the Minds of some few recluse contemplative

SERM. VI. *plative* Men, but was never in fact established in any one Nation from the Foundation of the World to the present Times. As certain as it is, that there is a God; so certainly must he will the Belief and Practice of *some* Religion: the Belief of some Religion, and a Practice conformable to that Belief, being *necessary* to the Good of Mankind. And as certainly as he wills the Belief and Practice of *some* Religion; he must will the Belief and Practice of the *best* Religion: And what Religion is there, that *equals* or rivals the *Christian* Revelation?

Such Reflections, as these, enable us, in some measure, to act in conformity to the Apostle's Advice; they make us *ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope*, or, as the Word here signifies, of the Faith, *that is in us*.

I should enter into too spacious a Field, if I attempted to do Justice to all the Proofs of Revelation: It shall therefore be my Business at present to dwell upon that Argument, which may be drawn from the intrinsic Excellency of revealed Religion.

In the Prosecution of which Design,

Ist, I shall consider the intrinsic Excellency of revealed Religion, as to the Manifestations of the divine Nature. SERM. VI.

II<sup>dly</sup>, As to the beautiful Plan of Morality which is laid down in Scripture, together with the Motives and Encouragements, by which it has supported and enforced that Plan.

III<sup>dly</sup>, I shall consider the Force of the Argument which may be drawn from these Particulars.

Ist, I shall consider the intrinsic Excellency of revealed Religion, as to the Manifestations of the divine Nature.

That God is *Love*, or an inexhaustible Fountain of Goodness: that *of Him* as the great Creator, *through Him* as the great Preserver, and *to Him* as the End and Center, *all Things are*; that he entitles himself I AM, the Being who exists absolutely and emphatically, in opposition to the fleeting and precarious Existence of his Creatures, which scarce deserves the Name, in comparison with his; that *a thousand Years are with him as one Day, and one Day as a thousand Years*: that he only said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*, that whatever he commands, is finished by his commanding

**SERM. VI.** manding it; are some of the noblest Ideas that we can conceive of the noblest Being that is. In these Expressions there is that *natural* and *unlaboured*, yet *great* and *noble Simplicity*, which *surpasseth* the *Refinements* of *Stile* and *ambitious Ornaments* of profane Writers: Just as there is a *native Beauty* in the *Lily*, which *our heavenly Father has clothed*; that exceeded the *artificial Pride* of *Dress*, in which *Solomon* appeared, *when arrayed in all his Glory*. Such Thoughts are enobled by themselves, and dignified by their own inward Merit, without any need of external Pomp to embellish them. At other Times the sacred Writers deliver themselves with all the Heightnings of Oratory, as particularly *Job*, when he is describing the infinite Power of God, and *St. Paul*, when he is setting forth the Love of the Deity manifested in the Redemption of Man: Not that they affected Eloquence; but when the Spirit of God came upon them, and impregnated their Minds with great Ideas; they naturally broke out into such lofty and corresponding Expressions, as might be a proper Clothing for their Thoughts: As when our Saviour was transfigured, and his Face shone as the Sun; his Raiment too became as white as Snow.

That

That *the Heavens declare the Glory of* SERM. VI.  
*God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-*  
*work, &c.*—That *he that made the Eye,*  
*shall he not see? He that planted the Ear,*  
*shall he not hear? &c.*—That *the Heaven,*  
*and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain*  
*God; much less the Temple built by So-*  
*lomon.* — That the Deity wields and go-  
 verns the whole Expanse of the *material*  
 Creation as a *very little Thing, as the Drop*  
*of a Bucket, or the Dust of the Balance;*  
 and that he can turn *the Hearts of the*  
 whole *intellectual World, as the Heart of*  
*one Man.*—These, with several others, are  
 Passages which would be highly admired  
 in a *Classic Writer;* but, *unhappily for them,*  
 they are read with Coldness and Indifference;  
 because they are in a *Book,* which it is too  
*fashionable to depreciate.* For though Men  
 pretend to think for themselves; yet not  
 one in a thousand does so; no not even  
 in judging of Books: They are governed  
 by no fixed Standard in the Judgments  
 which they form; but applaud or condemn  
 according to the prevailing Mode and  
 Fashion of the Age, in which they live.  
 Otherwise, *Moses, the Author of Job, Da-*  
*vid, Isaiab, and St. Paul* would have had

SERM. VI. as many Admirers as Readers; Authors, who seem to have imitated none before them; and whom none after them have been able to imitate, or reach their sublime Strains of Eloquence.

Those Authors in dead Languages, who are looked upon as the most *finished Models* of good Writing, would suffer so much by a *literal* Version, that we should not have the Patience to peruse them with Attention; yet the Scriptures have been rendered Word for Word with the most scrupulous Exactness: And if, notwithstanding this, they deservedly claim our highest Admiration; it is a Proof that they have in them that *Energy of Beauty*, which *no Dress*, howsoever disadvantageous, can intirely *conceal* or disfigure. They must have that *solid Sense* and *Substance*, which, like *true Gold*, can never be *lost* or evaporate, however *melted down* and *dissolved*; but still retains its *former Weight*. Some Writers may have painted Things *more finely* and *delicately* than they have done: But none have imaged them so *strongly* and *nervously*.

Observe, what a wide Difference there is between two Passages in the Psalms, and in *Plato* on the same Subject. That, which  
is

is in *Plato*, is as follows: “ Though you SERM. VI.  
 “ could sink into the deepest Caverns of  
 “ the Earth, though you had Wings and  
 “ could fly up to the Heights of Heaven ;  
 “ whether you continue in this World, or  
 “ remove to Hell, or to some Place more  
 “ terrible; the Divine Providence would  
 “ seize you every where\*.” Thus the  
 great *Plato*, who confessedly wrote with  
 the noblest Elevation of Thought on divine  
 Subjects: But how infinitely short doth  
 this fall of that Passage in the *Psalms* which  
 he seems to have had in View? *Whither  
 shall I go then from thy Spirit ; or whither  
 shall I go then from thy Presence? If I  
 climb up into Heaven, thou art there ; If I  
 go down to Hell, thou art there also : If I  
 take the Wings of the Morning, and remain  
 in the uttermost Parts of the Sea ; even there  
 also thy Hand shall lead me, and thy right  
 Hand shall hold me. If I say, peradventure  
 the Darknes shall cover me ; then shall my  
 Night be turned to Day : Yea, the Dark-  
 nes is no Darknes with thee ; but the Night  
 is as clear as the Day : The Darknes and  
 Light to thee are both alike.*

\* *Plato de Legibus. Lib. II.*

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If *Plato* imitated the Psalmist, his Copy is unequal to the Original: It is like a *secondary* Rainbow, the faint *Reflection* of the *first*; where, though the Colours be agreeable, yet they are not so lively, glowing and distinct, as they are at *first* Hand in *that*, which *compasseth the Heaven with a glorious Circle*, and which *the Hands of the Most High have bended*.

Pretenders to a fine Taste may extol that Passage in *Virgil*, where he says, \* *Night involved in its Shade Heaven and Earth and the Frauds of the Grecians*; who are not affected by a much nobler Beauty, though of the same kind in the Psalmist, viz. *God stilleth the raging of the Sea, and the Noise of his Waves, and the Madness of the People*? In both Places, there is an unforced and unaffected, yet a striking and surprizing Assemblage of Ideas. In the former, Heaven, Earth and the Frauds of the *Grecians*; in the latter, the Raging of the Sea and the Madness of the People, are naturally, yet unexpectedly put together. But the latter Passage, besides this Beauty, is recommended by the noble Sentiment, which

\* ——— Involvens umbrâ terramque, polumque,  
Myrmidonumque dolos. ——— *Virgilia Æneidos Lib. II.*



which it conveys. The wisest Statesmen, SERM. VI. when the Populace is in a Ferment; just as the ablest Pilots, when the Sea rageth, are at a Loss what to do; *they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken Man, and are at their Wit's End*: And he alone, who can say to the tempestuous Deep, *here shall thy proud Waves be stayed*, can alone still the Madness of an incensed People, and say, *Hitherto shall you come, and no further.*

Something should be added concerning that *affectionate Manner*, in which these Truths are conveyed. When the *Heart* does not dictate to the *Head*; whatever is said generally evaporates in empty *Speculation*; the Notions only hover in the Brain, without influencing the Will. But when an Author writes from the Heart, the Reader catches the Flame from the Writer, and feels his Breast glow with the same generous Ardor. Take one Instance of this, out of many, from *Isaiab*: *Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee.* It is thus, that God signifies his

{ SERM. VI. tender Love in the most endearing and expressive Terms, which Language can furnish. Observe how the Psalmist describes God, as that sovereign Good, on whom we ought to center our Affections, and repose our Confidence: *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire in Comparison of thee: My Flesh and my Heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my Heart and my Portion for ever:* Words forcible enough, one would almost think, to invigorate the Soul under all the Decays of the Body, and to suspend the Pains of the Dying. The Scriptures, unlike some Books which are written upon the Being of God, in a cold unaffecting Manner; at the same Time that they convey Light to the Understanding, powerfully inflame the Will, and touch the inmost Springs of the Soul.

Few or none have ever wrote worthily of that great Being, *who spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast;* but those, who have derived their Sentiments from the Fund of the Scriptures, and borrowed that *Fire from Heaven*, which animated their Writings: Which Consideration would incline one to think, that he who

is

is the *Subjeēt* of these elevated Thoughts SERM.VI.  
in the sacred Pages, is the *Author* of them  
too.

As to the Glories of God and of another World, I may venture to say, that the *utmost Stretch* of human *Thought* could never reach *so far*; and the *utmost Force* of *Expression* cannot reach *farther*, than the inspired Writers have done. And could one Book be produced before the Date of Christianity, where every Perfection of the *Deity* is displayed in such a *nervous Energy* of *Thought*; and every Branch of *Morality* is set forth in such a *plain Familiarity* of *Style*; where the Terms of our Salvation are so punctually ascertained, as they are in the Scripture: Then some Persons would have some Colour of Reason to disparage Revelation. But the Enemies of Christianity know this to be impossible: They know it contains *stronger* Motives to true Holiness, than *any* Religion before *had*; and *as strong* as *any other can* have: They know, that secure in its own genuine Charms, it fears no *Rival* to *eclipse*, and needs no *Foil* to *set off* its superior Beauties.

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our Creator may be demonstrated by numerous and incontestable Arguments from the *Creation*. But one may look long enough into the *Creation*, and consider it throughout, before one can deduce one Argument from thence to prove, what Mankind most wants to have proved, his *Mercy* to *repenting Criminals*. What signifieth it to prove God's *Goodness* to the *World* in general, without proving, that he will be good to *us Men*, to (what we all are) *miserable Sinners*? Arguments of God's *clear* and *unmixed Mercy* to penitent Offenders, there can be none from Matter of *Fact*, if we set the Scriptures aside; Arguments from *Metaphysics* are very inconclusive; but if they were not so, they are too abstracted to make any strong and durable Impression upon such Beings as we are: *One* express and *authentic Declaration* from *God* himself would be of more Weight, than a *thousand fine-spun Conjectures* without it. Accordingly the God of the Christians is not *merely* our *Creator* and *Preserver*, a Being of inexhaustible Power and unfathomable Wisdom; he is a *God* of *Mercy* and *Comfort*, *who is not willing that any*

any should perish, who pitieth us, as a Fa-<sup>SERM. VI.</sup>  
 ther pitieth his own Children, who healeth the  
 broken-hearted, who rescueth us from the  
 Bondage of Corruption by his Grace, and re-  
 deemeth us from the Punishment of it by his  
 Merits. Such a God we sinful Creatures  
 wanted; and such a God the Scriptures,  
 which are exactly adapted to our Necessities,  
 have represented him to us.

No Religion whatever hath given us a  
 clearer Insight into both the Dignity and  
 Meanness of our Nature. The same sacred  
 Writings, which inform us, that we were  
 made in the Image of our Creator, and that  
 we shall be hereafter *Hairs* with him, with  
 several other Considerations very proper to  
 beget in us an *Ambition* of acting up to the  
 Dignity of our Nature, and to *spirit up*  
 the most *low* and grovelling *Minds*; the same  
 sacred Writings teach us that we can do  
 nothing of ourselves without the Grace of  
 God co-operating with us, that nothing but  
 the Merits of our Saviour can entitle us to  
 any Rewards, with several other Reflections  
 proper to preserve in our Minds a Sense of  
 our Dependence, and to *humble* the most  
*haughty* and *insolent*. Thus the Christian  
 Religion, which giveth us the most amia-

SERM. VI. ble as well as august and awful Ideas of our  
 ~~~~~ Creator, displays at once the bright and  
 dark Side of human Nature, the one to *ani-*  
*mate* the *Endeavours* of the *Good*, and the  
 other to *damp* the *Presumptions* of the *Vain*.  
 But this brings me,

Idly, To consider the intrinsic Excellency of the Scripture as to the Plan of Morality, which is laid down there, together with the Motives and Encouragements by which it has supported and enforced that Plan.

The Scriptures have taken care to lay down such pregnant Truths, as are big with several others, and fruitful in their Consequences. Of this Nature is the Precept about *loving God with all our Strength*: Of this Nature likewise is that about *loving our Neighbours as ourselves*; or what is much the same, that we should do to others, what we should judge reasonable others should do to us, if we were in their Case. This last Precept is sufficient to determine all Cases of social Morality; it being the Foundation of Honesty, Equity, Mercy, and Charity. It is a Duty incumbent upon us to store our Understanding with such  
*lead-*

leading Truths; because such great Truths SERM. VI. come as it were *in State* to the Understanding, waited upon by a numerous *Retinue* of inferior dependent Truths: Like the Sun attended by a large Train of Planets, which are subordinate to him, and receive their Light from him.

The Scriptures have been very full in pointing out every *Duty* in general: Because corrupt human Nature is very *backward* in tracing out and discovering Duties. But they have not pointed out each *Limitation* of our Duty; Because corrupt Nature is very *ingenious*, and *not* at all *reluctant* to do that Office. It is rather apt to *make Limitations*, where there are *none*, than *not* to *find* them where they really are. It was not so much the Design of Revelation punctually and exactly to fix the *Theory* of Morality, as to engage our Hearts to the *Practice* of it by the most powerful and affecting Considerations. And that may be one Reason, why it often rests in *Generals*, without descending to *minute Particularities*. For if our *Hearts* be *not* engaged in favour of *Virtue*, it will be of no *Avail* to have each minute *Particularity* of Duty *adjusted*. We shall break through

SERM. VI. *it, however minutely and particularly it is laid before us. A general Knowledge of his Duty is sufficient to him, whose Heart is right; and all the particular Unfoldings of it will be of little Significancy to him, whose Heart is not so.*

God, who knew what was in Man, and has suited his Revelation to our Exigencies; has taken *most* care to *supply* us with that, which was *most wanted*: And therefore the Scriptures are *most full*, explicit, and particular, as to those Branches of Morality, to which our *Nature* was *most averse*. And though some complain that the Bible is *not clear* and *determinate enough* as to certain Points; yet, if I mistake not, the main Quarrel against it is, that it is *too clear* and *determinate* in enjoining *certain Duties*, and forbidding *certain Vices*; as to which they could have wished to have been left more at *large*. It cramps their Freedom of Action, and will not give certain importunate Passions their full Scope. It is there that the main Stress is laid upon those Virtues, in which the Heathen World were mostly or entirely defective, such as the Love of God with all our Heart, universal Benevolence, the Forgiveness of our Enemies, Meek-



Meekness, Long-suffering, the strictest Purity and Chastity. One distinguishing Excellency is, that it guards against the Hopes of compensating for the habitual Breach of one Commandment, by the Observance of others. For it informs us, that he, who habitually and deliberately *offends in one Point*, does not perform *any Duty* out of a sincere Regard to God, the only true Principle of Virtue; a very great Truth, but unknown to the Gentile Writers. There was no such Thing in the Pagan World, as a rational and determinate Scheme of worshipping God *in Spirit and in Truth*; and no such Duty enjoined, as Humility in its full Latitude. No such Precept occurs in Heathen Writers, as that we should *give Alms in secret*; that our *Father which seeth in secret*, may reward us openly. And yet this is the most substantial Test of genuine Virtue. For we ought to be jealous of those shining Qualities, which draw upon us the Admiration of the World, such as Generosity, Valour, &c. because we are often actuated to the Display of them by a Principle of Vain-Glory: But the Performance of good Actions in private, when the Stream of our Goodness runs under Ground,

SERM. VI. Ground, stands clear of all sinister Views, and can only be resolved into a Principle of pleasing our Maker.

Before the Appearance of Christianity, the World had narrowed their Notions of Love, and confined it to the Pale of their Friends, Relations, and Country. A moral Writer of the most extensive Views, even *Socrates* himself expresseth himself thus: “ When the *Grecians* and *Barbarians* fight one against the other, this is properly called Fighting: For they are Enemies by Nature. But if *Grecians*, that are Friends by Nature, quarrel with one another, this is an unnatural Dis-temper\*.” Thus *Socrates* recommended an Attachment to his own Country, exclusively of the rest of Mankind, against whom he makes a State of Enmity to be natural. But Christianity has enlarged the Sphere of our Affections, as well as opened a wider Field of Truth for the Understanding; and enjoined a Love, as extensive as the Light of the Sun, and as active as its Heat. Then our Affections are prejudicial, when like the Sun-Beams, collected in a burning Glass, they centre in one Point; when

\* *Plato de Repub. Lib. V.*

when they are widely *diffused*, they cheer SERM. VI. and refresh all Nature. Christianity has taught us to love every one, but to dread no Man whatever: At the same Time, that it cherisheth every manly, noble, and exalted Principle, of which human Nature is capable; it shuts out every little, servile, and illiberal Passion. A Love so extensive was fit to be enjoined by that Being, who is Love itself and has in him the Fulness of every amiable Perfection.

Whereas other Writers took Things in too high a Key, and were proud to soar above the Level of common Apprehensions; the inspired Writers stoop to the lowest Capacities, at the same Time, that they enlighten the highest. Of which the Parables of the *uncompassionate* Servant, of the *Samaritan*, of the *prodigal* Son, of the poor Man's *Exce Lamb*, of the Vineyard in *Isaiab*, of the barren Tree *which cumbered the Ground*; are so many beautiful Instances. We view moral Truths through the Veil of Allegories and Parables; like so many Pictures through a transparent Glass, which covers, but does not hide them. Some of the most important spiritual Sentiments, as particularly in  
the

SERM. VI. the elegant Parables of the Tares, are made  
 easy to us by the most familiar sensible Images.  
 Thus does *Truth*, like the great *Author* of  
 it, stand confessed in a visible Shape, receive,  
 as it were, a *Body*, and become, if I may  
 use the Expression, *incarnate*.

From these few Strictures on the Plan  
 of Morality contained in the Scripture, I  
 proceed to what was the principal Inten-  
 tion of the sacred Writers, the Enforce-  
 ment of Morality by proper Sanctions and  
 Encouragements.

The inspired Penmen have placed Vir-  
 tue on its *true Foundation*, not upon any  
*present Complacency*, not upon any *low*  
*temporal Motives of Conveniency*; but upon  
*heavenly Views*, upon the Will of *God* as  
 our *Judge* and *Rewarder*. To follow Vir-  
 tue *disinterestedly*, without any Regard to  
 our *Happiness here or hereafter*, is to pur-  
 sue it as an *empty Idea*, and not as a *sub-*  
*stantial Good*. To love it for the Sake of  
*present Pleasure and Happiness*, will never  
 induce an effectual Obligation; because  
 Virtue and Pleasure do not always coincide;  
 and because that reflex Act of the Mind, by  
 which it applauds itself, when it has en-  
 tertained a generous Sentiment, or done a  
 noble

noble Action, is easily over-ruled and disabled by the urgent Solicitation of any boisterous and craving Passion, and by any uncommon Distress and Anguish. Fine uninteresting Ideas of Virtue, even in a *Soil susceptible* of them, which some Soils are *not, flourish as a Flower of the Field*: Which, however delicate and beautiful the Leaves may be, *as soon as the Wind* (any strong tempestuous Wind) *goeth over it, is gone, and the Place thereof, for a Time, knoweth it no more.* Besides, whether of the two acts upon nobler Principles, the Man, who cultivates Virtue for the *reflex Approbation* of his own Mind, or he who practiseth it for the *unerring Approbation* of his Maker? The Man, who loves Goodness for a much *lower*, because *present*, Consideration, *viz.* the Pleasure *immediately* consequent to a good Action; or he, who commands a more *spacious Prospect*, has more open and *extended Views*, and looks *beyond* this transient Scene of Things, to that *Fulness of Joy, which is at God's right Hand for evermore?*

Be that as it will, an *exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory* will turn the Scales,

SERM. VI. Scales, and preponderate in all Cases in  
 Favour of Morality: But weigh a cold  
 unaffecting Thought about abstract Fit-  
 nesses, and the Loveliness of Order, against  
 the strong Pressure of incumbent Misery;  
 and it will be *found wanting, lighter than*  
*Vanity, and nothing* in Comparison. God  
 designed the *World in general* should be  
 governed by Morality, and not only a *few*  
*national* Men, fond of Refinements, who  
 may be so enamoured of Virtue, as to  
 think it needs no Reward, but itself; nor  
 Vice any Punishment, but its own natural  
 ill Consequences. And what God designed  
 for the Gross of the Species, that he has  
 enforced by such *substantial* Rewards and  
 Punishments, as may *interest* all the Powers  
 of a Soul deeply *immersed in Matter*;  
 and not by such *airy visionary* Notions, as  
 seem to be calculated for quite *another Or-*  
*der of Beings*. And this is one great Proof  
 of the Excellency of Christianity, that it  
 can appeal to the common Sense of Man-  
 kind: “*Handle me and see*; the refined  
 “ Schemes, which are set up in opposition  
 “ to me, have not that Substance and Soli-  
 “ dity, *which ye see me have.*” Those fine-  
 spun Notions may afford Entertainment to  
*speculative*

*speculative Men in their Closets*; but the Christian Doctrine of a future State, is the only one that can be of any Use in common Life, conveying to us the strongest Ideas of that Misery, to which the Bad will be consigned; and of that Happiness, to which the Good will be admitted. SERM. VI.


*Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath entered into the Heart of Man to conceive the Things that God hath prepared for them, that love him.* In which Words there is, as a great Writer \* observeth, a very beautiful Gradation of Thought. Great, splendid, and numerous are the Objects, which the Eye hath seen: Yet the Ear may hear far more than one Man's Eye hath seen, by an enlarged Conversation with those who have read and travelled: But though a greater Variety of Objects may gain Admittance to the Mind through *this* Entrance, than through that of the Eye; yet still it enters into the Heart of Man to conceive or imagine far more glorious Things, than even the Ear has heard. A sprightly, adventurous, and inventive Imagination paints Objects larger than the Original, and forms what visionary

\* See Dr. Clarke's posthumous Sermons, Vol. II.

SERM. VI. fionary Scenes it pleases within. But still  
 those Things, which God has prepared for them that love him, as much exceed the Heightnings of a pregnant Fancy, and the romantick Prospects of Blifs, which it can enter into the Heart of Man to conceive; as the Conceptions of the Heart, and the Powers of a luxuriant Imagination surpass the Seeing of the Eye, and the Hearing of the Ear.

Again St. *John* tells us, *we shall be like God: For we shall see him, as he is.* That is, the seeing of God as he is in his own Nature, the direct Knowledge of the Sovereign Good, and the Emanations of Happiness from him immediately, (for to see God as he is, does not signify merely to contemplate his Nature) will so entirely fill the Compass of the Soul, and engross all her Powers, that having no Room to entertain ignobler Objects, which might tempt her to Vice, she must become, in some degree, unalterably like her Creator in Goodness by a moral Necessity. *Pleasure* and *Virtue*, which here often draw different Ways, will hereafter unite their Forces, and act in friendly Concert. This Thought is the Thought of an unlettered  
 Writer;



Writer; yet it is a Thought so rational, SERM. VI. as well as elevated; that it would be a  vain Attempt to strive to equal it from Writers before him of the most distinguished Abilities and closest Application.

Let us scan over the brightest Authors of Antiquity, let us point out the Master-Strokes of those Authors when they are inculcating Benevolence: Yet where can we find so bright a Description of Benevolence or Charity, as there is in St. Paul's xiiiith Chapter of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*; or so noble an Incitement to it, as there is in these Words, *Charity never faileth?* i. e. The same Principle of universal Love to Mankind, which repeated Acts of Goodness beget in us here, will beautify, enlarge, and ennoble the Soul to all Eternity.

Not all the Writings of Philosophers can give a dying Man, just upon the Threshold of another World, half that well-grounded Comfort and rational Assurance of being happy, as may be derived from four or five Lines of St. *John*, viz. *That he saw in Heaven a great Multitude, not to be numbered, of all Nations, Tribes, and People, and Tongues, standing before*

SIRM.VI. *the Throne and before the Lamb, clothed in*  
 { *white Robes, with Palms* (the Ensigns of  
 Victory) *in their Hands, and the Praises*  
*of God and the Lamb in their Mouths.*  
 For from hence we may learn, what Reason could never prove, that not only the *superior Few*, Men of the most advanced Virtue, Saints and Apostles; but an innumerable Multitude, the *undistinguished Many*, undistinguished by any extraordinary Degree of Holiness, shall be Partakers of those pure and unmixed Joys, which are suitable to glorified Souls acting in glorified Bodies, which will enlarge our Faculties, satisfy our Desires, and transcend our Expectations.

And indeed we may observe, that, whenever the Scriptures *draw back the Veil*, and display to our View any thing concerning another World; they do not do it to *swell* and puff up the Soul with *lifeless Speculations*, with unconcerning, though ingenious and curious Notions; but to *fill* the Mind with true *substantial* Knowledge, that may make *us wise unto Salvation*: Which makes them, though not the most fine-spun, yet the most useful, and consequently the best Scheme of Metaphysics that ever was advanced.

Thus

Thus when the sacred Writings describe the *thousands, thousands that stand before God, and the ten thousand times ten thousand that minister unto him*; could a Man of the largest Compass of Thought have found a nobler Employment for those Beings, as well as more instructive to us, than to represent them as taking a generous and disinterested Complacency in the Redemption and Happiness of their Fellow-Creatures; *praising God, and saying, Glory be to God in the highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men?* And in another Place, not like us, valuing themselves, and despising others; not dazzled with the Lustre of their own Excellencies, but ascribing all Glory, and Honour, and Power to him alone who is the Source of whatever is lovely, great, and glorious, *casting down their Crowns before the Throne of God, giving Glory and Honour and Power to Him alone?* Rev. iv. 10, 11. *Great and marvellous are thy Works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy Ways, thou King of Saints!* They shew us, that to Creatures admitted to a constant and *immediate Attendance* on God, every Thing must appear *little*, but God himself; that

SERM. VI. the *Lustre* of the *greatest* created Being  
 must vanish and be lost in the Presence of  
 Him, from whom it *borrow*s its Lustre.

Contemplative Persons may value some Branches of Knowledge, just as several Men do some kinds of *Food*, merely because they are *rare* and *uncommon*, not because they are *substantial*, *nourishing*, and *wholesome*. Their Difficulty and Obscurity, not their Serviceableness to the World, stamps a Value upon them. And their Heads may resemble those Cabinets, which are stored with *useless Rarities*, and *curious Trifles*, fit for *Shew* and *Ostentation*, but not for any *valuable Purposes* of Life. But the Scriptures, though they open and enlarge the Mind, and give it the most comprehensive Views; yet seldom say any Thing to inform the Head, which has not a Tendency to awaken and penetrate the Heart: They seldom gratify our *mere Curiosity*, or make us *wiser* and more *knowing*, but in order to make us *better*, which is indeed the only *true Wisdom*.


No well meaning Person even in low Life ever applied himself to the reading of the Scriptures with the same Diligence, Care, and Attention, which he bestowed  
 upon

upon Things of less Consequence; but SERM. VI. he gathered from thence as much salutary and *practical* Knowledge, as would conduct him safely in the Way to everlasting Life. Though the studious and the thoughtful may by an unwearied Application discover several *speculative* Truths which are *not* there; yet those Truths are only like those *Stars*, which are descried by the Help of *Telescopes*: They have no more *useful* Light to *guide their Feet*, and direct their Steps in their Journey through this World, than those, who have made no such Discoveries.

There is no material Defect in a State of *Nature*, when Men had only the Light of unassisted Reason, but what is supplied to a Tittle by a State of Grace, by the Christian Dispensation. Were Men, for Instance, at a loss to ascertain from unenlightened Reason the Acceptableness of their Repentance, and a Fulness of Pardon thereupon; Christianity has fully set before us the Terms of our Salvation: We have there a Mediator, who hath borne our Sins, the properest Person to adjust the Difference between the jarring


SERM. VI. Claims of Justice and Goodness. Did we want a distinct Account of Rewards and Punishments; of their Degree and Duration? It gives us awakening Notices of another World, and whatever was proper to instruct our Reason, as well as to engage our Hopes and alarm our Fears. Did we want some fixed and determinate Rule of Worship to prevent the endless Sallies of human Fancy? There we are taught each Particular of a manly and rational Worship; we are invited by the Promises of divine Assistance, and emboldened by the Intercession of a divine Mediator to have Access to the Throne of Grace.

It is well worth our while, as it will give us the greater Value for Christianity, to observe, that in these, as well as other Instances, wherever the Light of *Reason*, as having no sure *Principles* to carry it farther, was forced to *leave a Blank*, the Light of the *Gospel* has been very exact in *filling up the void Space*. Where human Sagacity might indeed begin to build, but was not able to finish after the utmost Expenditure of Thought, there Revelation has supplied it with Materials to complete the Structure. Thus do our Wants in a State  
of

of Nature, and our Supplies in a State of SERM. VI. Revelation, exactly tally and correspond.  And from hence we may infer, that, whoever is a *sincere natural* Religionist, cannot be *far from the Kingdom of Heaven*, is *almost* a Christian already; and will be soon, if he continues unprejudiced, *altogether* so. For he, who is *sincerely desirous* to know and do the Will of God, must heartily wish he had better Helps, than natural Religion affords, to compass this End. He must think, that God's infinite Goodness would, at some peculiar Crisis of Time, when he saw the Advantages arising from it would overbalance the Inconveniencies, grant Mankind, by a Notification of his Will, some *full and express* Assurances of what *belongs to their Peace*, of Things of *infinite* Concernment. And when he examines all the different Pretensions to Revelation, he will find none, that can come into *Competition* with the *Christian*; which alone contains *whatever* is *excellent* in *natural* Religion, and has besides *grafted* upon it several rich and salutary Fruits of its *own Growth*, which Reason must ever thankfully adopt. For natural Religion neither proves the Sincerity or unallayed Nature of Happiness

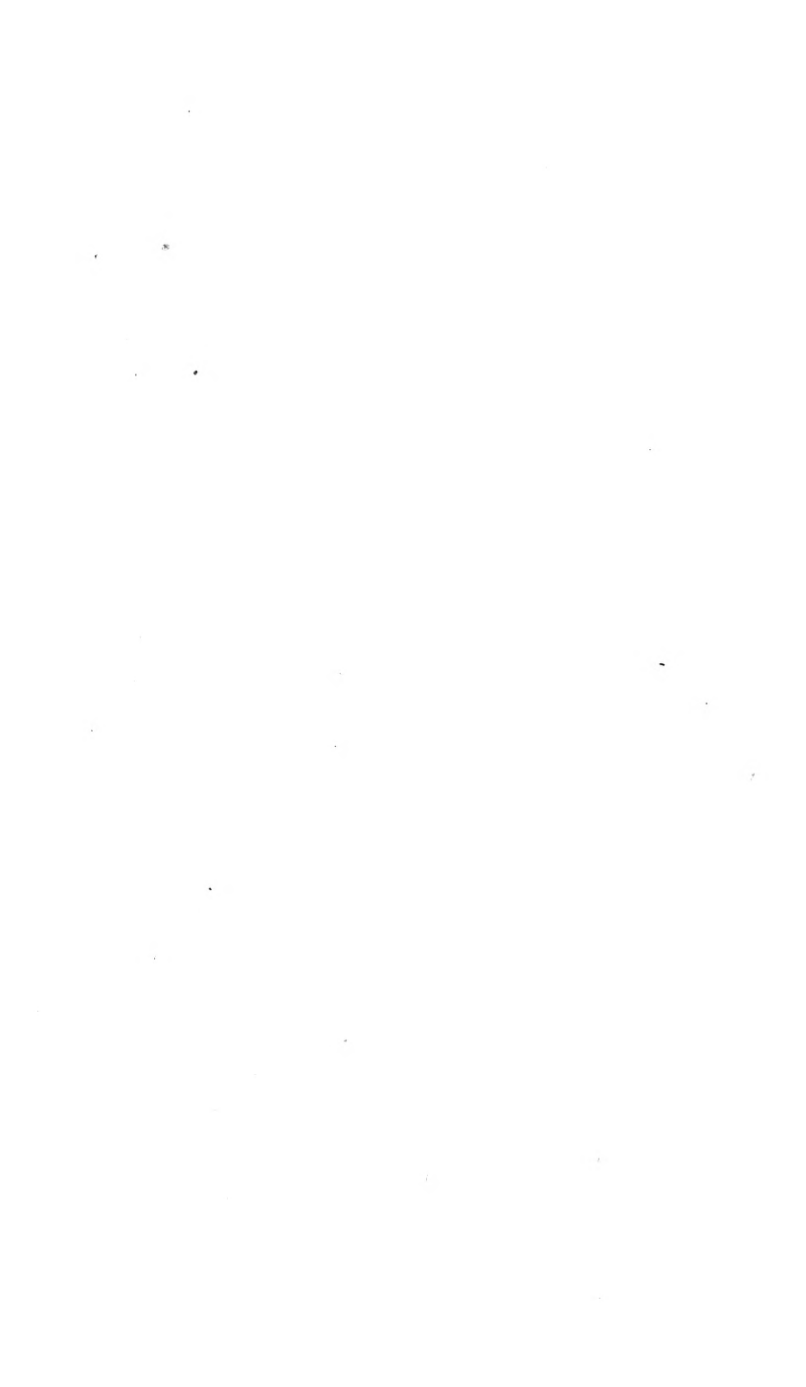
SERM. VI. hereafter, nor the Degree nor the Duration of it: Nor can it be determined by Reason, whether our future Happiness or Misery would be finally decided by an irrevocable Sentence, according to our Deportment here; or whether, after the Close of this Life we might not pass through several intermediate States of Probation, before a decisive and irreverfible Judgment was passed upon us. But Revelation assures us, that the Condition of our Existence here, however inconfiderable it may seem *in itself abstractedly* from a future State, is infinitely confiderable in its *Consequences* — that he, that lives and dies *righteous*, will be *righteous still*; and He, that dies *filthy*, will be *filthy still*, Rev. xxii. 11, 12. Death setting as it were a kind of Seal upon the State of the Soul — that the Wicked must be finally severed from the Good — that in Heaven there is no Possibility of falling away from Goodness, and in Hell no Room for Amendment. For then God's Grace will be withheld, and Virtue, when every Spark of it is extinct, is only, like the Vestal Fire, to be rekindled by a Beam from Heaven.



So far was Christianity from narrowing SERM. VI.  
our Views, that it alone has *raised* them,   
as *high*—as *Heaven*; and extended them  
as *far*—as *Eternity*. A Man may look  
into his Bible, and see plainly there what  
will become of him, when the present  
Scene is shifted, as to his *most important*, I  
had almost said, his only Concern, a fu-  
ture State; who, if he were left to him-  
self, the more he considered the Point on  
every Side, the more he would find himself  
bewildered in Doubts, without coming to  
any Determination.

Happy are we, if we know our Hap-  
piness, who have a Revelation, like its great  
Author, *full of Grace and Truth*.





# SERMON VII.


The intrinsic excellency of the Scriptures, a Proof of their Inspiration.



I PETER III. 15.

*Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you.*

**T**O affirm, as some have done, that SER. VII. unenlightened Reason is absolutely sufficient, and that a Revelation is needless, is neither better nor worse; than to say, that Men either are, or may be, *so* wise of *themselves*, that it is not in the Power of God himself to make them *wiser*; that their *natural* Abilities are so very considerable, as to supersede the Use of any *supernatural* Notices, even from the *Father of Lights*: A Position

SER. VII.  fition fo shocking, that if it be not downright Blasphemy; it certainly maketh very near Approaches to it \*.

But, you will say, where was God's impartial Goodness in with-holding from others those Advantages, which he has afforded us? If a Revelation were wanted, why was not that, which was equally wanted by all, made equally known to all, at all Times?


If we trace this Objection to its Original, we shall find it stands on a wrong Foundation: It supposes the Deity to be determined by the *Wants* of Men, *exclusively* of all *other* Regards: Whereas what may be very fit, the Wants of Men singly  
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\* I would not be thought to depreciate Reason in general, which rightly understood, as taking in all Helps and Evidences, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, is the only Faculty we have to discern Truth from Falshood. It is no more a Disparagement to Reason to assert, it can do little in religious Affairs without the Help of *Revelation*; than to maintain, it would make a slender Figure without the Assistance of *Education*: For what is Revelation but Assurances and Instructions from *Heaven*; as Education is Instruction communicated to us from our *Fellow-Creatures*? Deduct those religious Truths that were discovered *to* us, and only place those down, that were discovered *by* us; and the remaining Sum of our Knowledge, at the Foot of the Account, will not be very considerable.

considered ; may be unfit upon the Whole, all Circumstances and Considerations being laid together. Thus consider the Necessities of a poor Man *separately*, and you may think it proper he should be relieved : But if you know he will abuse your Charity in Drunkenness, or do himself or others some Prejudice, the Fitness ceaseth. Here then the Fallacy lieth. We form our Judgment of what God ought to do upon one single View of the Necessities of Men ; where several other Particulars ought to be taken into the Account to make our Reasoning just and exact. We know not, for Instance, whether an Attempt to remedy the Disadvantages of those, who want a Revelation, might not be attended with greater Disadvantages to them : Whether they might not inflame their Account by rejecting it, if offered ; or abusing it, if received. He alone, who sees through the whole Plan of the Creation, who knows before-hand the different Tempers and Dispositions of all Mankind, in all Ages and Nations, and the various Consequences that would arise from every possible Manner of acting at every Period of Time ; knew alone, at what Period of Time,

SER. VII. Time, to what Ages and Nations it was  
 } proper to give a Revelation. God then  
 might be equally willing at all Times to  
 make a fuller Manifestation of his Will;  
 (for some Traces and Remains of a Reve-  
 lation Men still had :) But Men might not  
 at all Times be equally disposed and quali-  
 fied to receive it.

I answer farther, that it might as well  
 be objected, why has not God given to all  
 Men equal *inward* Abilities to discover the  
 Truth; as why he has not given to all  
 Men equal *external* Evidences? The An-  
 swer is the same to both Objections, *viz.*  
 that God is not obliged to deal *equally* with  
 all his Creatures in the Dispensation of his  
 Favours, having a Right to do what he  
 will with his own: It is enough to vindi-  
 cate his moral Character, that he will deal  
*equitably* with them according to the Im-  
 provement of their respective Talents,  
 compensating for some People's Want of  
 Knowledge, whether natural or revealed,  
 by making favourable *Allowances* to them,  
 and balancing the superior Advantages of  
 others, by making larger *Demands* from  
 them, and requiring no more of *any* Person  
 than he has given him sufficient *Means* to  
 know,

*know*, and *Ability to perform*. Let us balance the Account. — To the Christians greater Knowledge — greater Duty — greater Difficulty — greater Reward, if they do well — greater Punishments, if ill. To the Heathens less Light — less Duty — less Reward if they do well — less Punishment if ill. SER. VII. 

Thus all seeming Inequalities are adjusted. Where the Difficulty of the Conquest is the greatest, there the Triumph ought to be the most glorious, and the Prize most valuable. If those, who have the most clear and distinct Notices of their Duty, will be more severely punished for their Crimes than others; it is but equitable, that they should be entitled to superior Rewards, when their Practice in some measure keeps Pace with their Knowledge: Otherwise, Knowledge would be a great Misfortune, and Darkeness better than Light.

That Reason therefore is so far sufficient, as to enable Men to procure as much Happiness here and hereafter, as God, according to the Variety of his Dispensations to Creatures, whether of the same or a different Order, has, in his comprehensive Wisdom,

SER. VII. Wisdom, thought fit; and that none will  
 be accountable for invincible Ignorance; this we readily grant: But that Reason is so unlimitedly sufficient, as to discover without the Assistance of God all those beneficial and spiritual Truths, which are revealed; and to procure, without the Merits of Christ, all that Happiness which is promised to Christians; this we deny.

God may diversify his Creation, as he pleases, his manifold Wisdom may bring upon the Theatre of Nature, Variety of Creatures, under unequal Circumstances, consistently with his Goodness; provided he has put it in every one's Power to make his Happiness prepollent and superior to his Misery in the Whole of his Existence. But this God may have done, without having Recourse to levelling Principles, without being obliged to put Heathens and Christians, any more than he has put Men and Angels, on the same Foot.

The main Strefs of the Question then lies here. Whether, notwithstanding the distinguishing Advantages of some Creatures above others, it be not enough to vindicate God's Goodness, that he has formed no Creature whatever, whether Angel or Man,  
 Christian



Christian or Heathen, but what has sufficient Means to make the Sum of his Happiness exceed that of his Misery, either here or hereafter? If they say, this is not sufficient; they are not Deists but something worse; they set aside that Principle, which seems to account for that Disproportion of Happiness in the World, so visible in the Scale of Beings rising one above another, from the meanest Insect to the highest Archangel. If they say, it is sufficient; the same Reason, which justifieth God in giving Angels greater Degrees of Knowledge and Bliss, than Men; will justify him too in giving Christians a larger Allotment of both than Heathens. For there is the same Principle to vindicate God in both Cases, *viz.* every one's Enjoyments will, if it be not their own Fault, over-balance their Unhappiness: Therefore the Conclusion ought to be the same, *viz.* God is equally justified in both Cases. When once his Goodness has designed every Creature, who is not wanting to himself, a *Preponderancy* of Bliss; his unerring Wisdom may dispose of the *Surplus*, that remains beyond this, as he thinks fit. Whereas, according to the Supposition of the Deists, there

SER. VII. must have been a dull undistinguished  
 Sameness in every Oeconomy of Providence, without any Regard to the different Dispositions of Mankind, at different Periods of Time: Every Procedure of God must have been, from Eternity to Eternity, only a different Edition of the same unvaried Design without any new Additions.

I have already, in a former Discourse, shewn the superior Advantages and intrinsic Excellency of revealed Religion and the Scriptures, *Ist*, as to the Manifestation of the divine Nature; and *IIdly*, as to the beautiful Plan of Morality contained in them, together with those Motives and Encouragements, by which they have supported and enforced that Plan.

It was not improper to remove the Objection, which I have been considering; before I entered upon my *III<sup>d</sup>* Head, to which I now proceed, *viz.* to consider the Force of the Argument, which may be drawn from the intrinsic Excellency of the Scriptures in favour of their divine Inspiration.

To whom was it owing, that the *Jewish* Writers should have such lovely and great Ideas of God, and such just Notions of  
 the

the Worship due to him, far above any SER. VII.  
Thing which we meet with in the Writings of the greatest Lights of the Heathen World; every one of which either patronized Idolatry, or fell into Errors of worse Consequence? Can it be accounted for by the Force of *natural* or *human* Assistances? No, the eminent Philosophers of *Athens* and *Rome* equalled them, it is certain, in *natural* Abilities; and *exceeded* them confessedly in the Superstructures of *acquired* Knowledge, and all the Advantages of a refined *Education*. It must be therefore owing to some *supernatural* or *divine* Helps; and none but He, in whom are contained *all the Treasures of Wisdom*, could have enriched their Minds to such a Degree, and furnished such a vast Expence of Thought. If *Judea* was enobled by these exalted Notions, of which other Nations, who were sunk into the Dregs of Polytheism and Idolatry, were destitute; if the kindly Dew of Heaven descended on this Fleece only, while all the Earth around betrayed a Want of refreshing Moisture; this was *the Lord's doing*, and ought to be *marvellous in our Eyes*.

SER. VII.

Had God revealed himself to the *Greeks*, or some other Nation famed for their curious Researches into every Branch of Literature, and for the Depths of Wisdom and Policy; those Truths, which were so many Emanations from the great Fountain of Light, would have been looked upon as the Result of their Penetration, and their own Discoveries: But by communicating his Will to a People of no inventive and enterprizing Genius, of no enlarged Reach and Compass of Thought; such Suspicions are avoided, and the Proofs of a Revelation more conspicuous and illustrious. And this may be one Reason among others, why at a Time, when the rest of the World were biggotted to Superstition, Idolatry, and a false Religion, God singled out this Nation, in that Point not so corrupt as others, to be the Guardian and Depositary of the true.

If nothing recommended the Scripture but this single Consideration, that all those collected Beams of spiritual Light center in it alone, which were widely diffused amidst a Variety of Treatises, and lost amidst a Crowd of palpable Absurdities; even this would be no improbable Argument of

its

its Divinity: But this is not all: Let us, SER. VII.  
in order to compile an adequate unerring  
Standard of religious Truths, take in all the  
Assistances we can get from all the Philoso-  
phers in *Greece*, from *Tully* at *Rome*, nay  
even from *Confucius* as far as *China*; and  
yet, after all, the Scheme will be defective  
in, what the Scriptures have recommended,  
a pure rational Worship of God only in  
Spirit and in Truth, a Fulness of Pardon  
for every Sin upon Repentance, and the  
Nobleness of the Rewards hereafter. The  
Love of God will not be required in so  
high a Degree, as it is in the Scriptures;  
nor enforced by so strong a Motive, as our  
Saviour's dying for Mankind has done; nor  
our Charity and Love to the Distressed re-  
commended by so powerful an Incentive, as  
that our Redeemer has made them his Re-  
presentatives, and will place to his own  
Account, whatever was done for his Sake to  
them.

One may challenge any Man to produce  
before Christianity, among the Heathen  
World, such a complete System of Mora-  
lity, reaching all the Duties of Life, with-  
out any Defect; and *full* without *overflow-*  
*ing*, or any Redundancy, as the Scriptures

SER. VII. contain. Very remarkable are the Words  
 of Mr. *Locke* \*. “ It is true, *says he*,  
 “ there is a Law of Nature: But who is  
 “ there, that ever did or undertook to  
 “ give it us all entire as a Law; no more,  
 “ nor no less than what was contained in  
 “ and had the Obligation of that Law?  
 “ Who ever made out all the Parts of it,  
 “ put them together, and shewed the World  
 “ their Obligation? Where was there any  
 “ such Code, that Mankind might have  
 “ Recourse to as their unerring Rule, be-  
 “ fore our Saviour’s Time? Such a Law  
 “ of Morality Jesus Christ hath given us  
 “ in the new Testament. —— And such a  
 “ one out of the new Testament, I think  
 “ the World never had, nor can any one  
 “ say is elsewhere to be found.” And  
 again, “ If you sent Men to the Sayings of  
 “ the Wise, and the Declarations of the  
 “ Philosophers, you sent them into a wild  
 “ Wood of Uncertainty, to an endless  
 “ Maze, from which they should never  
 “ get out; if to the Religions of the World,  
 “ yet worse: And if to their own Reason,  
 “ you refer them to that which had some  
 “ Light and Certainty, but yet had hi-  
 “ therto

\* See *Locke’s Reasonableness of Christianity*.

“ therto failed all Mankind in a perfect SER. VII.  
 “ Rule, and resolved not the Doubts that }  
 “ had risen among the studious and think-  
 “ ing Philosophers; nor had yet been able  
 “ to convince the civilized Part of Man-  
 “ kind, that they had not given, nor could  
 “ without a Crime, take away the Lives of  
 “ their Children, by exposing them.”

It is needless to tell any Man of plain Sense, that there must be always a *Proportion* between the *Cause* and the *Effect*. Now, if we *exclude* the *divine* Power, *what Proportion* can we find between the *Causes* of Christianity, and *Christianity* itself? Christianity is a *Religion*, which has *disabused* the World, and rescued it from those many vicious Practices, such as the exposing of Infants, Polygamy, &c. which were universally defended among the Pagans, and from human Sacrifices, and from innumerable abominable and brutal Rites; a Religion so perfective of *human* Nature, and so expressive of the *divine*; that we *want Ideas* to carry us to a *Conception* of any Thing *beyond* it. And *who* were the *Authors* or *Causes* of this Religion? Why, a Set of Men bred up in *low* Life to *mean* Employments, which *cramp* the *native*

P 4

Powers

SER. VII. Powers of the *Mind*. And can we seriously think that a Set of *unlettered, unenterprising* Men could open several rich Mines of Truth, which had escaped the laborious *Resarches* of the profoundest *Scholars*, and the happy *Sagacity* of the most penetrating *Wits*?

Since therefore every *Effect* must have a *competent* and *proportionable Cause*; and since the supposed *natural Causes* and *Authors* of Christianity, considered as *mere Men* exclusive of divine Inspiration, were plainly *unequal* to the Task, nor could ever have brought to Light such *Doctrines*, as exceeded whatever the *Philosophers* before had done; though, laying aside their *Dregs*, we should draw off the very *Flower* and *Spirit* of their *Writings*: It is evident, we must have Recourse to some *supernatural* and *adequate Cause*, which interested itself in this *Affair*. And to whom, but to the *Father of Light*, in whom there is *no Darkness at all*, can we be indebted; that now *Persons* of the *slenderest Capacities* may view those elevated and beneficial *Truths* in the strongest *Point of Light*, which the *finest Spirits* of the *Gentile World* could not before fully ascertain; that our  
*meanest*



meanest Mechanics, with a moderate Share SER. VII. of Application, may have juster and fuller Notions of God's Attributes, of eternal Happiness, of every Duty respecting their Maker, Mankind, and themselves; than the most distinguished Scholars among the Heathens could attain to, after a Life laid out in painful Researches?

Christianity has been a *Light to lighten* the Deists; as well as *the Glory, Happiness, and Salvation* of every good Christian. Even they who decry Revelation, are greatly indebted to it, for much clearer and more enlarged Views of Things, than they could have had, if bred up in Countries altogether unenlightened by it. Even they, enjoy the Benefits and gather the *Fruits* of Christianity, at the same Time, that they are striving to *damage* and wound the *Tree* which bears them.

The Maintainers of the Sufficiency of human Reason are, as to this Point, very much distressed: Strange! that *Reason without Revelation* should be a *sufficient* Guide, when they cannot prove, that it has conducted any *one* Man in any one *Age* or *Nation*, no not even *Socrates* himself, to a *full* unerring *Standard* of *Duty*. How  
happened

SER. VII. happened it then, that the Authors of the Scriptures should *alone*, of all Mankind, have *Sense* enough to form an *adequate* Scheme of *Duty*, *Courage* enough to set on foot the *Propagation* of it, and *Perseverance* enough to bring it to *bear*, notwithstanding all the Engines of worldly Power were played against them? How comes it, that all succeeding Writers have not been able to discover one important religious Truth, but what is either expressly contained in the Bible, or is implied in it, and may be fairly deduced from it? All that succeeding Writers have done, has been only to state and limit the Doctrines, to collect, adjust, and range, in an exact Chain of Reasoning, those religious and moral Observations, which lie scattered in the Scripture with a noble Profusion. Just as the utmost Skill of Mankind cannot form *one new Plant*: They may indeed *cultivate*, and place in a regular *Symmetry* and *Order*, those Trees, as well as those Flowers, which are sown in a beautiful Disorder by the Author of Nature. These Things are only thus to be accounted for, *viz.* That God who does nothing in vain, but is not wanting in what

is necessary, imprinted on their Minds these SER. VII. comprehensive Truths, but left it to them to express them in what Language and Order they thought proper. It was not necessary, that God should *beautify* the sacred Writings with all the *Elegancies* of Language and Method; it was enough that he has *enriched* them with an inexhaustible Fund of *useful Truths*. They needed not the *Spectacles* of Books, whose Eyes God himself opened, to discern and reveal these wondrous Things.

*Unlettered Men*, in attempting to reveal *the Deep Things of God*, must have fallen into palpable Absurdities, unless they had been directed by that Spirit, which *searcheth all Things; yea the deep Things of God*. For even *lettered Men*, speculative Adventurers of the strongest and brightest Parts, whenever they have, without the Help of Revelation, made Excursions into the World of Spirits, have discovered nothing but their Ignorance, and Liableness to gross Mistakes, Men, who *were not* under the Power of an ungoverned Imagination, would scarce have sallied out into Subjects, where our Faculties can find no sure Footing; and Men, who *were*, could never have worked  
out

} SFR. VII. out such a plausible and consistent Scheme, as our Faculties cannot confute. How comes it then, that the sacred Writers, in setting before us the Nature and Offices of good and bad Angels, the Joys of Heaven, &c. have kept clear of all flagrant Errors, for any thing that we can make out to the contrary? How comes it that all Inquirers after them, have been unable to prove any Thing relating to these Points, which they have *not said*; and to disprove any Thing, which they *have said*? How comes it, if they were uninspired, that though they have delivered several Doctrines, which Reason cannot ascertain; yet they *say* nothing which Reason can *gainsay*, upon Subjects to which our Faculties are disproportioned, and as to which we are therefore more subject to Absurdities?

Add to this, that we have a vital Sense of the Goodness of Christianity. No Body that heartily believed in our Saviour, and acted agreeably to his Precepts, ever repented that he had done so: Thousands have felt a Remorse and Compunction of Soul, that they have not been *altogether* Christians. The more a Man has been a sincere and sound Christian; the more Peace and  
Sunshine


Sunshine of Mind he has felt in himself, SER. VII.  
and the more Confidence he has expressed  
towards God. For this sensible Experience  
of the Goodness and Truth of Christianity  
we have the united Suffrages of Men of  
distinguished Piety, from the first Birth of  
Christianity, down to the present Times.  
Several of them enjoyed as much Peace as  
this World can give; and all of them that  
Peace, which it cannot give. He certainly  
acts most agreeably to the Will of the Dei-  
ty, and to (what is inseparably connected  
with his Will) the Truth of Things, who  
embraces and adheres to that Religion,  
which will make him the meekest, hum-  
blest, the most benevolent, pious, and, in  
all Respects, the best Man; which gives  
him the most astonishing, yet the most  
amiable Views of the Divinity, and the  
most rational and interesting Account of  
Heaven and Hell, which contains, what-  
ever God, through a diffusive Goodness,  
has done for Mankind; and what Man-  
kind have yet to do for themselves, to *work  
out their Salvation.*

The intrinsic Excellency of Christianity,  
I am afraid, has given many the greatest  
Distaste for it. For I never could assign  
any

SER. VII. any Reason, why *Mabometans* and *Papists* (great Numbers of Them) seem to be very much *in earnest* about their Religions; but *We* (too many of us) very *remiss* and indifferent to Ours, but this very bad one, *viz.* that those Religions chiefly consist in, and lay too great Stress upon, *outward* Acts and *little* Observances: Whereas true Christianity descends deep into the *Heart*, *converting the Soul*, and indispensably enjoins an unreserved Obedience to God, and an *inward* Relish of Goodness *rooted in our Minds*, and influencing our Practice throughout. Now Men would rather undergo innumerable *bodily* Austerities, and observe all the *Outside* of Piety; than cultivate an universal and *unsullied Purity of Heart*. A *Self-Indulgence* as to that Sin which most easily besets us, be it Vanity, spiritual Pride, Lust, or any other Vice, gives us so great Pleasure, that *no Self-Denials*, as to other Points, can countervail it, if they can be *called* Self-Denials. For then we *effectually* deny ourselves, when we refrain from those darling, but unlawful Pleasures, whether of Body or Mind, to which we have the strongest Bias. A pure undefiled Religion coming from God, the great

Searcher of Hearts, requires this Sacrifice of the Heart, without which no other Sacrifices, no external Performances, however seemingly difficult, will be of any Avail. A Religion commanding us to be as strict and *regular* in our Lives, as the *Pharisee* in our Saviour's beautiful Parable, and yet as humble and *unpretending* as the *Publican*, was worthy of God; but we, by raising idle Cavils against it, make ourselves unworthy of it.

A complete System of moral and religious Truths, comprehending every Thing that has a Tendency to purify a rational Mind, and to qualify it for everlasting Bliss, seems to be a Work beyond the Powers of any *unenlightened Man*, the Excellency of whose Writings, whatever considerable and important Truths they might contain, to shew he was a *bright* and *able* Man; would be adulterated with impure Mixtures, and debased by coarse Alloys of Errors, perhaps of a dangerous Nature, (not to mention many Omissions,) to prove he was a *mere* Man: Much more was such a Scheme above the Abilities of *uneducated* Men. There seems to be something in *Man's Nature*, which disqualifies him from forming

SER. VII.  ing a Religion *for himself*, without taking in any Assistances from *Heaven*. And whoever has set about it, has either *curtailed* and maimed it, *leaving out* some important Duties, which is the Case of *Deism*; or he has blended it with *spurious* and superstitious *Additions*, which is the Case of Popery. Those who want to have the modelling of Religion in their own Hands, are like the Countryman in the Fable, who requested the Management of the Weather as he pleased: They had much better leave that Affair to his Direction, who alone can order all Things for the best. Take a Survey of all confessedly *human* Inventions; and you will find, that when compared with *Christianity*, they *have no Glory by Reason of the Glory, that excelleth*.

Difficulties indeed and Obscurities there are in Scripture, as well as *other ancient Books*: But then we must distinguish between Difficulties which affect the *main Design* of a Revelation; and those of a *slighter* and *less momentous* Nature. Notwithstanding the Charge of Difficulties and Obscurities; the Scripture, though *deep*, is *clear* in every Doctrine, that tends to the Glory of God, the Good of Mankind,

and



and the Benefit of our own Souls. *So far* SER. VII.  
God has gone; and farther than this he needed not go, to answer the End of a Revelation. Whatever Things there are in it *hard to be understood*; which a moderate Application cannot clear up; they may exercise the Abilities of the *Curious*, but are not necessary to edify the *Bulk of Mankind*. Any Man, who *diligently* and *impartially searches the Scriptures*, comparing Place with Place, interpreting the *darker Passages* by the *clearer*, and attending to the *Scope and Design* of the Author; may furnish himself with an intelligible, *consistent* and *determinate Rule of Faith and Practice*, may derive from thence Hopes *full of a blessed Immortality*; and find there that beautiful *Assemblage* of moral Truths, *clear* and *unmixed*; which lye scattered through the Writings of *all* the Philosophers, and are *blended*, in them, with pernicious Errors. Whatever Precept is briefly and in general Terms delivered in one Place, is more clearly and distinctly unfolded in another: And no *important* Doctrine is founded only on *one* Text; it is inculcated in *several*, and placed before us in various *Views* and *Reviews*; like some

SER. VII. beautiful and masterly Statue placed in a Garden, in which several Openings terminate, and conspire to let us see it in Variety of Lights. Which Consideration makes it impossible for any one, who has a *wrong Hypothesis* to *serve*, to *endeavour*, if he be not *lost* to all Sense of *Shame*, to obtrude *such* a Translation upon the Public, as shall not contain a sufficient *Antidote* for any fundamental Error.

Disputes, it is true, there will always be about Scripture, a Gift not designed for such an Use, as there have been about *every* Thing *else*. And is it a Wonder, Men should dispute about *Religion*, which is almost the *only* Thing, about which it is *worth while* to dispute at all? If Religion were set aside, would all *Disputes* immediately cease? No, there would be *many more*, which a serious Sense of it upon our Minds prevents, about Things of *less* Importance, about every Thing on which Men had misplaced their Esteem. It is a Mistake to imagine, that the *Obscurity* of *Scripture* has given Birth to different *Opinions* in *material* Points; Mens preconceived *Opinions* have made them endeavour to *obscure* and darken the *Scripture*, though  
never

never so plain. However, supposing the Translation to be just and faithful in the main, which it is allowed by all competent Judges to be; the Unlearned may distinguish between *torturing* the Words of inspired Writers, pressing them into their Service, and *compelling them to come in*, in favour of some darling Notion; and on the other hand, giving them an *easy, unforced, and natural* Interpretation. They may easily perceive, who *impose* a Sense upon the Bible making it speak *their own*; and who are content to *take* one from it.

*Little Minds* may be affected with little *Trifles*, with some minute Particularity in Scripture, with some Text that seems unaccountable: They may examine the Bible (to use the Allusion of a great Genius) as it were with a Microscope, which confines them to a *single Part*; but does not enable them to take in the *Consistency* of the *Whole*, or to perceive the *Relation* which *each Part* has to *another*. A Mind truly *large* and comprehensive will grasp the *whole Compass and Substance* of Christianity, and consider, how happily it has supplied the Defects, rectified the Mistakes, and enforced the Discoveries of human Reason; carrying

SER. VII. Religion to such a just Degree of Perfection, that whatever falls *short* of it, is jejune and *defective*; and whatever *attempts* to go *beyond* it, is visionary and *romantic*. The more a Man studies the Scriptures with these extensive Views, the more he will admire them: For they are like those Persons, whom an intimate *Acquaintance* *endears* more and more, whatever Prejudices we might, at *first Sight*, have conceived against them. He will find, that they afford *as much* Light, as our *Condition* *needs*; and *much more*, than our *unassisted Faculties* could attain to.

Here is a Book which takes in a *vast* Compass: It begins *from* Eternity, with the Creation of the World, and the Formation of Man; and ends *in* Eternity, with the last Judgment, and the Consummation of all Things. And yet, throughout, there is one Chain and regular Series of well-connected Events, from the Fall to the Redemption; and from the Redemption to the last grand Revolution, when *all Things* shall be put under our Saviour's *Feet*. Amidst this great *Variety*, there is, just as in the Works of Nature, an *Uniformity*; every Thing is *diversified*, and yet

yet every Thing *regular*. From the *first* SER. VII.  
Institution of *Sacrifices* immediately after  
the Fall, through several intermediate  
Steps, to the grand *universal* Sacrifice,  
which they prefigured, of our Saviour, one  
uniform Design is carried on, *viz.* the Pre-  
servation of true Religion in the World,  
and the discountenancing of Vice and Ido-  
latry. Now in a Book comprehending  
such a Train of Dispensations, and such a  
vast Extent of Time, written in several *Ages*,  
by several *Hands*, and on several *Subjects*;  
it is *not* at all *surprizing*, that there should  
be *many* Things puzzling and unaccount-  
able to us short-sighted Creatures, (for such  
there are in the Works of the Creation;)  
but *it is amazing*, supposing the Authors  
of it were not under the immediate Gui-  
dance of God, that, notwithstanding the  
*strictest* Scrutiny has been made, notwith-  
standing *every particular* Passage has been  
*sifted*, no one *material Flaw* has been dis-  
covered, that has *endangered* the whole  
*Fabric*. Nay those very Things, which  
were *thought insuperable* Objections against  
it; have, upon a closer Examination, been  
found illustrious *Confirmations* of the Truth  
of it. Do you think that the *Mabometan*,

SER. VII. *the Pagan*, or any other false Religion, could have stood their Ground, if Reason had had as fair Play against *them*, as it has had against *Christianity*; if the whole *Artillery* of *reasoning Malice*, resolved to leave no Stone unturned, and to find or make Objections at any rate, had been, for many Ages, discharged against them? *Falshood* cannot long bear the Shock of an unrestrained, determined, and powerful *Opposition*; and *Truth* itself must greatly suffer, by having all the Weapons of Ridicule and Sophistry employed against it, in the Opinion of (a considerable Number) the half-thinking, injudicious, and inattentive. And if all the Load of Objections and Difficulties industriously raised, like so many Weights tied about a Body, cannot sink *Christianity*; it must be upheld and supported by that Energy of *Truth*, which is stronger than all Things, and will prevail.

If there were *one decisive unanswerable Argument against Christianity*, which wounded it in its Vitals; it would be unaccountable, why disinterested Men, of distinguished Penetration, great Masters of Reason,

Reason, who had thoroughly weighed and understood the Nature of Evidence, should have inviolably adhered to it, and professed their Belief of it to *the last*, and *more at last* than ever. But it is not at all unaccountable, why some few inquisitive Men, notwithstanding the decisive Arguments for it should have disbelieved it, or at least endeavoured to disbelieve it. Because Men of very good Understandings may have criminal, and over-violent Attachments, to the Things of this World: And very slender and precarious Reasonings will go a great Way, when Men have a strong Interest, and therefore a strong Inclination, to be Disbelievers: But the Things concerning Religion relate chiefly to another World, are distant, and out of Sight: And Men have seldom, if ever, so strong a Bias that Way, as not to allow Reason a fair Hearing.

*Many are the Devices of a Man's Heart, but the Counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. Many have been the Devices of Men's Hearts and Heads against Christianity; From its Youth up have they fought against it: But it is the Counsel of the Lord, and*

SER. VII. therefore *has* hitherto stood, and *will* maintain its Ground.

But to what, you will say, is the Growth of Infidelity owing? Is it not to this, that the Age is *more inquisitive* and *discerning*, and consequently *less* credulous? Alas! The *Spring* of Credulity is not *dried up*; it only flows in *another Channel*. Witness *many Impositions* upon the Public: Witness *those Schemes*, which, within our Memories, have impoverished, if not ruined, several Families. Those, who will not consult the immortal Welfare of their *Souls*, who will not be Adventurers for another better World, upon the sure Bottom of the *Word of God*, how strongly soever attested; yet will trust their *Persons* in the Hands of an *illiterate Pretender to Physic*. If Men be *more scrupulous* of Assent in *religious Matters*, *too liable to Fraud and Imposition in others*; the Reason, I suppose, may, without much Difficulty, be assigned: It is not that we are *less credulous*; we are only *more vicious*. Credulity is still the same: The *Objects*, on which it is placed, are only *changed* and diversified. And though *implicit Belief* might be the Fault of former Ages, when Popery prevailed;  
*implicit*



*implicit Disbelief* is the reigning Folly of SER. VII. the present. There is the same Quantity of Folly still, just as there is of Matter; and, like Matter, it admits of different Modifications, and appears in Variety of Forms. There is no surer Way of judging, of the *Sense* and Discernment of an *Age*, than by observing the public *Entertainments*, which are most in *Vogue*. And, if so, then let it be observed, that Christianity *decayed*, in an Age and Nation when and where *Taste* and *Sense* were at the *lowest Ebb*; where every rational Entertainment was discouraged; and low fantastic Performances, without the least Tincture of just-Thinking, Morality, and Wit, usurped the Room of them.

The Cause of Infidelity is obvious: It is *Luxury*, which, wherever it got Footing, never failed to erase all religious Impressions. Thus it was in *Greece*; thus in *Rome* of old, when the *senseless* System of *Epicurus* was patronized by Men of much *greater* and more eminent *Abilities*, than Any, that now espouse *Infidelity*. Thus it was even in *Judea* itself, when the Sect of the *Saducees* prevailed. It may be thought, that the great Number of bad and poisonous Books,

SER. VII.

Books, has occasioned the great Looseness and Depravation of the Age: But the Truth is, the Looseness and Depravation of the Age, to which bad Writers will always accommodate themselves to give a *current* Value to those Works, which want an *intrinsic* one, has occasioned the Number of poisonous Writings: Not to mention, that they are generally very despicable Authors, almost all, except one, whom one is sorry to see in such bad Company; one who, whatever fine Talents he had, was never remarkable for close and solid Reasoning. Those are the most determined Enemies to Christianity and indeed to all Religion, whose Thoughts run in one black Channel, *soberly bad*. The Generality of Unbelievers are Men, who have too enlarged a Conversation, too much Vivacity and Quickness to rest in *Generals*; and too little Leisure, Capacity and Application to enter fully into *Particulars*, and examine Things thoroughly. *Hypocrisy* seems to be *transferred* from *revealed* Religion to *natural*, from *Piety* to *Morality*. *Morality* and *Benevolence* make a fine and splendid Appearance in the Writings and Conversation of the Deists, but seem to have little or no Influence upon

on their Lives; like that Luminary which towards its decline looks the largest, when its Lustre and Influence are the weakest. And it is visible, that Charity, and even common Honesty have decayed together with Christianity, their firmest Support.

A long uninterrupted Flow of Ease and Tranquillity has lulled us into a fatal Indolence and Insensibility to all religious Notions: Some *signal Judgment*; some *extraordinary* Indication of the divine Displeasure, seems almost necessary to purge the Nation of its *Dross*, to *rouse* it into a serious *Sense of Religion*, and make us discern and value those Things, *that belong to our Peace, before they be bidden from our Eyes*: Just as when the Sky is full of noxious and pestilential Vapours; some violent Hurricane, some dreadful Bursts of Thunder are necessary to disperse them, to clear the infected Air, and restore it to its former Serenity.



# Eight SERMONS

On the Evidences of Christianity, the  
Corruption of our Nature, the  
Redemption, and the TRINITY.

Preached at the Lady *Moyer's* Lecture, in  
the Cathedral of *St. Paul, London*, in the  
Years 1732 and 1733.



## S E R M O N I.

On the Truth of Christianity.

JOHN III. 2.

*Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher,  
come from God: For no Man can do these  
Miracles, that thou doest, except God be  
with him.*

**T**HE Proposition contained in the <sup>SERM. I.</sup> Text is, that some Miracles are so circumstanced, as to be direct Evidences of a divine Power. By a Miracle,

SERM. I. cle, is meant an Effect evident to the

⎵ Senses, contrary to the fixed and established Course of Nature. Strange! that *Man* should disbelieve an Operation *different* from the *present Course* of Nature; when *Man* himself, the *first* Man, from whom all the rest descended, could not have been brought into Being, but by an Act of Power *different* from the *Course* of *Nature*, as it is now *established*. For some *first* Man there must be: And, whoever he was, he must be brought upon the Theatre of Nature *without Parents*, without any *second* Causes, by the *immediate* Power and Will of the *first*, or, in other Words, by an Operation, which, if it were not, strictly speaking, a Miracle; was, at least, equivalent to one.

Nor is it at all improbable, that He, who called Man into *Being*, by a *particular* Display of Power, distinct from those *general* Laws, which obtain at *present*; would exert some *unusual* and uncommon Acts of Power for (what was of greater Importance than his mere Being) his *Well-Being*, his *eternal Well-Being*.

In the Prosecution of this Subject,

*If*, I shall attempt to shew, that several Miracles are decisive Proofs of a divine Power. SERM. I.

*II**dly*, That we have sufficient Evidence, that such Miracles were wrought for the Confirmation of Religion.

*If*, I shall attempt to shew, that several Miracles are decisive Proofs of a divine Power.

What Powers evil Spirits may have, and what is the utmost Extent of *their* Abilities; it is beyond the Extent of *ours*, in all Cases, to determine: But that God would suffer them to exert those Powers in working superior and uncontroled Miracles; this I cannot admit: Because God is too good to permit such a *Snare* to be laid for the Bulk of Mankind, who will be always governed more by what affects their Senses, than by those Arguments, which address themselves coldly to their Understandings. *Striking* and *pompous* Miracles, though they enforced a Doctrine seemingly absurd, would dazzle and overpower the Soul, and force an Admittance for it into the Mind: Whereas dry and  
I  
abstracted

SERM. I. abstracted Reasonings operate but slowly and languidly in Comparison. He, who could raise the Dead, and suspend the Laws of Nature, would convince the Generality of Men much sooner, than if he brought several Demonstrations to support what he advanced.

I cannot then believe, that God would permit evil Beings to work considerable Miracles, without asserting the Superiority of his Power; because this would unavoidably mislead the Gross of the Species into Error. I cannot likewise believe it, for another Reason, because it would invalidate and weaken the strongest Proofs of his Providence.

For either we must say, that *no finite Effects* whatever bear the Impress of the *Deity*, and prove an infinite Being at the Helm, (which is to discard all the Arguments *a posteriori*;) or such *astonishing Notices of Power*, as our *Saviour* and *Moses*, and others gave, bid as fair for the Proof of it, as any *Phænomena*.

For why may we not as well believe, that finite Beings are empowered to make the Sun, or other Planets, *revolve* in their *Orbit*, and go their everlasting Round; as  
that



that they are empowered to *arrest* the SERM. I.  
Course of the Sun (or the Earth,) make  
it go *backwards*, or eclipse it, when the  
Moon is at the full? Let us consider the  
Case of *Joshua* stopping the Sun. If the  
Laws, by which the material World is go-  
verned, be nothing, as is generally agreed,  
but God's *standing* and *uniform* Operation  
upon Matter; I ask, did God suspend his  
Action upon the Sun, when it was stopped;  
or did he not? If he did, then he wrought  
the Miracle; for the Miracle was nothing  
but the Suspension of the Laws of Nature:  
but if he did not, if he still continued his  
regular Action; then it seems, there was  
another Being concerned, who over-ruled  
his Power, or at least kept it at Bay; and  
thus Polytheism will be unavoidable.

The same kind of Reasoning may be  
applied to other miraculous Facts. I could  
as soon believe, that evil Spirits might *call*  
me *into* Being, and set the *Springs* of Na-  
ture a *going at first*; as that they can raise  
me when dead, *re-animate* a Lump of  
senseless Matter, and remand my Soul,  
when it is in the Hand of God, to its for-  
mer Lodging refitted up. No Creature  
can come into, or be restored to Being,

SERM. I. but by him, who is the Fountain of all  
 Beings.

He that had Power to create *Bread* two several Times, to satisfy some thousands, might have Power to create the *whole World*; there being no more Impossibility in the one, than in the other. Either then creative and providential Powers are no divine Powers; or else these Effects likewise bear the Stamp of the Deity.

If the Sick may be healed, and the Deaf made to hear by an inferior Being; can *the Maimed be made whole*; (*Matthew xv. 31.*) or a lost Limb restored? He, who produced and preserves that infinitely complicated Engine, the human *Body*, can alone form or restore any *Member* of it. For in *each* Member of it there is a curious Interweaving of endless Fibres, there are continual Streams running to and from each Part of it, through an Infinity of Canals, to convey Nutrition throughout: Each Member maintains a constant Correspondence with the Head and the Heart; it is the Instrument or Occasion of exciting certain Sensations in the Soul, and is enabled, by an incredible Activity, to execute her Orders, as soon as she issues them out, and  
 wills

wills the Motion of the Hand or Foot, or any other Part: A Power to be derived *only* from Him, who *commands*, and it is immediately done. SERM. I.

It may be of some Importance to inquire, whether it be consistent with God's Wisdom to intrust any Beings, much less evil ones, with such ample Powers, as to reserve to himself no distinctive Characters of his own Power; whether this be not to give up the most valuable Branches of his Prerogative, and in effect to unking himself: Whether this would not be the Case, if evil Spirits might perform all the Miracles recorded from *Genesis* to the *Apocalypse*. For if no such *supernatural* Notices, no such undeniable *Change* of Nature, carry evident Marks and Impressions of the Deity; then the *consistent uniform* Workings of God, according to established Laws, cannot prove the Deity; and if they cannot prove it, then we are left, to all Appearance, in a *fatherless* and forlorn World. We may then be as sure that such Miracles could be wrought by none but God, as we are, that the World is governed by God.

SERM. I. But farther, the Argument for the Unity of God is this, that *one* Being is *sufficient* to produce all the *Phænomena* in Nature, and therefore we have no Occasion to suppose any *more* than one: Which Argument is enforced by the *similis Ratio*, Analogy, and Harmony, which runs throughout Nature, as far as the Sphere of our Observation extends. But if another Being can give as glaring Indications of Power, in a supernatural Manner, as are shewn in the ordinary Course of Nature, if he can break through that *similis Ratio* and Harmony; then this Argument must be dismissed as inconclusive. For the Manifestation of two distinct equal Powers must lead us to the Acknowledgment of two distinct equal Beings.

The standing Miracle of the *Sabbatical* or seventh Year, well deserves our Consideration; when the Land lying uncultivated, the Produce of the Earth in one Year (the sixth,) according to *Moses's* Promise, *Lev. xxv. 21.* was to be thrice as much as usual, or Provision for three Years. Now either this Miracle was performed, or not. If not, then the whole Body of the *Jews* must have a flagrant Proof, that their

their Lawgiver was an Impostor, and con-SERM. I.sequently, must have been so far from believing him, that they would have been a Nation of Infidels. Nay, they could not actually have observed the *Sabbatical Year*, according to his Directions, upon a Failure of his Promise. But if this Miracle was performed, then it must be the Lord's doing: For God would never suffer any evil Spirit, for such a long Tract of Time, for several Centuries, by an oft-repeated Exemplification of his Power to do thrice as much in a supernatural Manner; as he himself did in one Year, in the ordinary Course of his Providence. It is as certain then, that no such Miracles could be wrought by any evil Spirit; as that there are not two distinct independent Beings at the Helm. Where there is an infinite Disproportion of Power between two Beings, there must be some sufficient Marks of Distinction, to ascertain, which of them acts. It cannot therefore be impossible to hit the dividing Point, between the little puny Feats of evil Spirits, and the august Display of divine Power. But if such an uninterrupted Series of unparalleled Miracles as our Saviour did, do not point out to us


SERM. I. the appropriate Ensigns of the Deity; what  
 others can we single out as sufficiently and  
 peculiarly expressive of his Majesty? The  
 most astonishing Idea we can conceive of  
 the most astonishing Being that is, is, that  
 he brings about Things, by the mere Act  
 and *Fiat* of his Will, without any tedious,  
 slow, gradual Process; that it is as easy  
 for him to *effect* whatever he wills, as it is  
 to *will* any Effect. But behold another, if  
 he were another, usurps his sovereign Stile:  
*I will, be thou clean. Lazarus come forth:*  
 It is spoke, it is done: Nature hears his  
 Voice, and, confessing her Author, instantly  
 obeys the dread Command.

Those settled and established Rules, by  
 which God governs the material World,  
 being for the general Good of the Whole,  
 God will never act by particular Wills, and  
 Miracles in numerous, open, uncontested  
 Instances; nor will he suffer others to act  
 by them, but for some superior and pre-  
 pollent Good, which cannot be attained but  
 by a Deviation from the settled Course of  
 Nature. Either then the Miracles were  
 wrought for some superior Good; or they  
 were not. If they were, then there is no  
 absolute Necessity to suppose other Beings  
 concerned:

concerned: It was not beneath the Deity SERM. I. to interpose; it was no Prostitution of his Power and Dignity, but an Act of Condescension and Goodness worthy of himself. If they were not for some prepollent Good; then he would not suffer them to be wrought at all: Since if evil Beings might, for no prepollent Good, interrupt the Course of Nature, and turn Things into another Channel, all human Affairs must stand still, all our Industry must stagnate, and all our Prudence be superseded. For where every Thing in the Course of Nature was precarious, where there was no regular Conduct or Providence; no regular and well concerted Means could be of any Service, to procure any desirable End, or avert any Evil. Wisdom, and Folly, Carefulness, and Idleness, would be upon a Level; if Beings of a superior Nature were left at large, to disconcert, unsettle, and embroil every Thing. I can easily see, that God may sacrifice the Uniformity and Harmony of his Providence, upon some uncommon Exigency; the Love of the *Happiness* of his Creatures being superior to his Love of *Order*: But that he should suffer a Set of evil Spirits to break through that magnifi-

SERM. I. cent Simplicity, and regular Variety, which constitute Beauty; that he should suffer an Impostor to go on in a continued Series of unrivalled Miracles, to raise the Dead, and himself, to confer the same Powers on his Followers, and to enable them to speak all Languages; and all this with a Design to deceive a Set of Creatures, who may be, and are, every Day deceived, without the Expence of one Miracle; is a Supposition highly injurious to the Wisdom of the Deity, which has given Things a Law, which shall not be broken upon every slight Occasion. 'Tis in *Nature*, as in a *Poem*: The great Author of it may break through set *formal Rules*, when a greater Beauty may be compassed by *swerving* from them, than by *scrupulously adhering* to them. But then he will never permit others to break through his regular Adjustment of Things, and blend their own Performances promiscuously with his. I grant that evil invisible Beings may be the Ministers of God's Vengeance, as well as visible Beings are; nay, they are much properer Instruments, as their Intellects are clearer, their Reason more extensive, and their Powers more enlarged. But all this may be done consistently with  
the



the Laws of Nature; at least without any SERM. I. notorious uncontrolled Breach of them. 

To these Miracles of *Power* we may add Prophecies, which are Miracles of *Knowledge*. Now, how God himself should certainly foresee uncertain Events, is unconceivable by us; but it is absolutely impossible, that any such Degree of Knowledge should be lodged in finite Beings. Yet there are several such Prophecies as suppose infallible Knowledge of contingent Events; and, consequently, must be ascribed to God alone. Such is the Prophecy about *Cyrus* by Name, and what he would do, above an hundred Years before he was born, *Isaiab's* Prophecy concerning our Saviour's Sufferings, a Prophecy so very punctual, that, if we were not certain of the contrary, one would suspect that the Author had lived after our Saviour, and had nothing to do but to adjust the pretended Prophecy to the Event. Such is our Saviour's Prediction concerning the unexampled Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the Dispersion of the *Jews*, till the *Fulness of the Gentiles should come in*.

There then is no question, but, if the Miracles were wrought, they were wrought by God himself: Which brings me to the

SERM. I. *IId.* Point, which was to prove, we have  
 sufficient Evidence the Miracles were actually wrought.

And in order to this, I need not prove, that the Apostles could not be deceived themselves, since they were Eye-Witnesses of our Saviour's Miracles ; much less could they be deceived, as to the Miracles they themselves performed, particularly as to that of the Gift of Tongues. For they must have had as much an *internal Consciousness*, that they could on a sudden understand and speak a Variety of Languages, which they never learned ; as they had an internal Consciousness of their own Existence. They must have an intimate Feeling of what passed within them.

My Business shall be to shew,

1<sup>st</sup>, That the Apostles had no Interest to deceive others : and

2<sup>dly</sup>, That they could not have deceived Mankind if they would.

1<sup>st</sup>, Then I am to prove, That the Apostles had no Interest to deceive others.

If Christianity was an Imposture, it WAS SERM. I.  
a strange Imposture indeed; an Imposture  
beneficial to the World, but destructive to  
the Authors, in the Nature and Tendency  
of the Thing itself: beneficial I say to the  
World, since it forbad every Vice, and  
enjoined every Virtue, that could make a  
Man more happy in himself, more service-  
able to the World, and more acceptable to  
God. But as visibly, in its genuine Con-  
sequences, destructive to the Authors; since  
they could not expect to impeach the Justice  
of the Jewish Government, by charging  
the Crime of Murder, the Murder of the  
*Prince of Life* upon the Rulers, to disturb  
publick Settlements, and unhinge national  
Religions with Impunity; since they knew  
from the Indignities their Master met with,  
that they were to promote it at the Expence  
of whatever was dear and valuable to them  
in this Life; since the Pagan Priests would  
every where work up the Dregs of the Po-  
pulance into a Ferment, against the Pro-  
pagators of a Religion, which could not  
take place but at the Expence of their  
Interest.

It may be said, the Apostles were actu-  
ated by Ambition: They were impatient  
to

SERM. I. to set themselves above the *undistinguished*  
 } *Many*, and to shew the Superiority of their  
 Parts by dissenting from the Common  
 Herd.

It is granted, that Ambition is sometimes as predominant in the Vulgar, as it is in Men of Letters, or Heroes: But then it operates in a quite different Manner, and flows in another Channel.

For instance, an ignorant Peasant, who has had a narrow and confined Education, may be desirous to be the Oracle of the Village, in which he lives, and to get and maintain an Ascendant over it. This would probably be the Height of his Ambition: It could never enter into his Head, if he were in his Senses, without the Advantages of a refined Conversation, or the Knowledge of Books, to erect himself into a Teacher of many Nations. The Philosopher indeed might be tempted to enlarge the Scene of Action, and to spread his Fame and Knowledge throughout the World: But a Desire of Distinction in poor unlettered Men of common Sense, is confined within a narrower Sphere, it never prompts them to take the *World* for their *Theatre*, and *Mankind* for their *Audience*.

If

If then the Apostles were Men of common Sense, which is plain from that excellent System of Morality, which they have left us, explained in the clearest Precepts, enforced by the strongest Motives, and exemplified by the brightest Pattern; they could not, were their Passion for Glory never so strong, merely upon the Strength of that Motive, have formed a wild romantic Project of propagating a new Religion among the polite, as well as barbarous Nations, without either Riches or Power to *obtrude* their Sentiments upon the World, or Art and Address to *insinuate* them.

No, if they had not been swayed by a Principle of Obedience to their Creator, and a well-grounded Belief in him, that he would prosper their Endeavour; that Attempt, *viz.* for a few defenceless ignorant Men to change the Religions of all the Earth, by introducing a rational Devotion, and a pure Morality, had been a kind of *religious Knight Errantry*, which some frantic *Entkusiasts* might have set on foot; but was inconsistent with their Character, who spoke the Words of Soberness and Truth. These then were the true Springs of their Actions, a settled Conviction

SERM. I. tion of the Truth of the Resurrection, a  
 } firm Confidence that they reposed in  
 their Maker and Saviour, and a certain  
 Expectation of Heavenly Rewards in Re-  
 version. Had they not believed the Truth  
 of the Resurrection, and that God would  
 give a Sanction to it by Miracles; Vain-  
 Glory, it is certain, could not prompt  
 them to embark in an Attempt which, they  
 could not but foresee, must terminate in  
 their Disgrace and Defeat; they being in  
 themselves very incompetent Instruments,  
 to occasion so great a Revolution in Reli-  
 gion.

Besides, it is plain Ambition could never  
 have been their Motive: Had they indeed  
 pretended to preach and write from their  
*own Fund* of Sense, and to strike out an  
 intirely *new* Track of Thought, without  
 treading servilely in the Steps of another;  
 then there had been some Colour for tax-  
 ing them with Vain-Glory: But, instead  
 of this, they disclaim the Vanity of being  
 thought *Originals*: They refer all the  
 Glory of being the *first Author* of these be-  
 neficial Truths to their Lord and Master:  
 He was the *Master Builder* who laid the  
 Plan; they desire only to be considered as  
 Under-

*Under-Agents* and Workmen ; a Character, SERM. I.  
to which ambitious Men are not willing to stoop : They every where make our Saviour the immediate *Fountain-Head* of that Knowledge which watered and enriched the World ; they only pretend to be the *Channels*, through which it was conveyed.

There are few or no other public Actions, but what a witty Malice may put some sinister Interpretation upon ; and the best Deeds in Appearance *may*, and often, no question, *do*, proceed from a Principle of Vanity : But the Actions of the Apostles will stand the Test of the severest Scrutiny. For they could not act upon any indirect and interested Views of worldly Honour, Ambition, or Gain ; they must have been supported by a determined Resolution of Mind, to bear the utmost Pressures of Misery and Torment, in the Cause of Truth, founded upon a Prospect of future Happiness. So far are they from consulting the Dignity of human Nature who deny the Truth of Christianity, that they do, what in them lies, to rob us of the most incontestable Examples of human Virtue, and consequently, to depreciate our Nature.

SERM. I.

It is objected indeed, whereas the primitive Witnesses sealed their Testimony with their Blood; that Consideration does not weigh much, since several Criminals have persisted to the last in the Denial of known Facts.

To this I answer, that these Wretches generally do it with the Prospect of a Pardon or a Reprieve. But pray, which of these hardened Creatures would persevere to attest, what he knew to be false; provided a Pardon was offered, if he would confess the Truth? Yet this was the Case of the Apostles: They might at any Time have preserved their Lives, by laying open the Cheat, if it had been one: Nay, in the first Council, that of the *Jews*, before which they were convened, all that was desired of them was, that they should preach no more in the Name of *Jesus*.

He that can produce one Instance of a *Man* that would rather part with his Life, than retract, what he knew to be false, when he might save his Life by retracting; must find some History as yet unknown to the learned World. Much less can a *Number* of such Men be produced, who all, with an inflexible Stubbornness, with an *unconquerable*



*querable* Spirit, were consistent from first SERM. I. to last, till Death closed the Scene, without one of them throwing off the Mask. I have often heard that Terrors and Torments have made a Man *abjure* what he knew to be *true*; but I never heard, that they had something so inviting in them, as to make a Man, much less a Number of Men, maintain what they were conscious was a *Falshood*, a *Falshood unprofitable* to them, when they might have been rescued from Death by recanting. There is then this material Difference: Criminals either, in the first place, falsify with an Intention to save themselves from the Stroke of Justice: whereas the Apostles brought their Lives, knowingly and wilfully, into imminent Danger; nay, actually lost them, for nothing but persevering to attest the Truth, unawed by any Terrors, unallured by Hopes of Pardon: Or secondly, Malefactors have died, as they lived, under an Insensibility of each good and virtuous Impression. Gross and heavy Minds, that think of nothing *in* this World but what strikes their Senses, may think of nothing *beyond* this World: But the Apostles must have lived an exemplary Life, and in an

SERM. I. uninterrupted Tenour of Virtue. For a profligate and immoral Life would have blasted their Credit as much, as the Detection of a notorious Falshood. And it is not to be supposed, that Men of exemplary Lives, who in their Writings inculcate the justest and therefore the noblest Sentiments of the Deity, and a strict Regard to Truth, would die with a Falshood in their Mouths.

I own that Enthusiasm will put Men upon desperate Attempts. But then the Apostles could *not* have been *Enthusiasts*. For they must have had an absolute Certainty, whether our Saviour was risen, after such oft-repeated, lasting, sensible Evidence of his being alive, after having seen, handled, and felt him: They must be intimately conscious (the highest Degree of Certainty) whether they could speak all Languages, agreeably to his Promise after his rising from the Dead, *viz.* that they should be *endued with Power from on High*. If they then asserted these Things without any Foundation, they *know* what they asserted to be false. Now he is *not* an *Enthusiast*, who asserts what he *knows* to be false; he is something *worse*.

That Charge being dismissed, the only tolerable

tolerable Motive that can be assigned, is SERM. I. that of Vain-Glory, which I have already disproved. For it is plain to the Force of a Demonstration, that they were not influenced by other worldly Views; when they knew, that renouncing Ease and Pleasure, their Country and Friends, they were to face Poverty, Bonds, and Death, under their most forbidding and frightful Appearances. *I think, says St. Paul, that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to Death: For we are made a Spectacle to the World and unto Angels and Men.—Even unto this present Hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain Dwelling-Place, and labour working with our own Hands; we are reviled, persecuted and defamed; we are made as the Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring of all Things. 1 Cor. iv. 9, &c.*

Hear what *Clemens Romanus*, Contemporary with the Apostles, says, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, the most valuable Monument of Christian Antiquity, next to the inspired Writings. “It was of  
“ unjust Envy, that *Peter* suffered, not  
“ one or two, but several Pains; and hav-

SERM. I. “ ing undergone Martyrdom, is gone into  
 “ the Place of Glory, which was due to  
 “ him. It is out of Envy (continues the  
 “ same Author) that *Paul* got the Prize  
 “ of Patience, having been put seven  
 “ Times in Irons, stoned, and scourged;  
 “ being the Herald of the Gospel in the  
 “ *East* and *West*, he made his Faith fa-  
 “ mous. Having taught the *whole World*  
 “ Justice, and being come to the *Extre-*  
 “ *mity of the West*, when he had suffered  
 “ Martyrdom before the Chief of the  
 “ State, he went out of the World\*.”  
 These are the Words of an Author, who  
 had no Temptations to falsify, and living  
 in the same Age with the Apostles, could  
 not want an Opportunity to inform himself  
 of the Truth of what he delivers. Since  
 then the Apostles were not swayed by Vain-  
 Glory, or other worldly Considerations;  
 they must have been either acted by a dis-  
 interested Love of Pain and Misery, con-  
 trary to the known Workings of human  
 Nature, contrary to the first Principle, that  
 of Self-Preservation, and an invincible De-  
 sire of Happiness: Or they must have been  
 swayed by a settled Conviction of the  
 Truth

\* Cotelerii Patres Apostolici. *Vol. I. Pag. 150, 151.*

Truth of the Resurrection, and animated SERM. I. by the Hopes of an everlasting Weight of Glory. These are the only assignable Springs of Action.

Disbelievers would be thought to be great Patrons of social Morality: But one cannot well conceive how Society, and consequently social Morality, can subsist upon their Principles, which are fruitful of Distrust and Jealousy. They, who can impiously believe the *Apostles* to have been Deceivers and Knaves, must, if consistent with themselves, believe *every one* else to be so too, as far as he has Capacity and Opportunity. They who can entertain a Doubt of the *Apostles* Honesty, after the *strongest* Proofs of their Integrity, that *they* could possibly give, or *Mankind* require, must entertain a *general undistinguishing* Suspicion of every Person about them.

Add to this, that a Vein of Simplicity runs throughout their whole Composure, and Nature, void of Art, speaks in every Line. And whatever critical Skill and Accuracy in *Languages* they might want; they every where seem to speak, what is more estimable than all the *Languages* besides, the Language of the *Heart*: They never cast

SERM. I. in Shades, what might appear too bold, glaring, and incredible at the first transient View: They never smoothe the Way and prepare the Reader, for what might seem offensive: They every where leave the *Actions* to *speak*, and their *Readers* to *judge*, for *themselves*. Plain honest *Truth* wants *no artificial Colourings*; and *Falshood* is apt to *betray itself*, by laying them on *too thick*. Truth shines with *unborrowed Beauties*, and *has no need* of foreign Ornaments: But on Falshood, which has *no Comeliness* in itself, Men *bestow the more abundant Comeliness*. Here they lavish out all their Art, prodigal of Decorations, to divert the Eye from attending to its genuine Deformity.

The Evidence still rises higher, if we consider that the Truth of the miraculous Facts in Scripture-History, is proved by Events subsequent to them; which Events, *viz.* the Propagation and Establishment of Christianity, could never have taken place, unless the miraculous Facts had been true: For it was as impossible, that the twelve Apostles should propagate Christianity, against the united Forces of *Jews and Gentiles*, Magistrates and Philosophers; as that twelve unarmed Men should defeat the  
whole

whole *Roman Army*. The Relation there-  
fore, which the Scripture gives us, of Mi-  
racles, must be true: Because, without a  
Supposition of Miracles actually performed,  
we cannot rationally account for that great  
Turn in religious Affairs, which not very  
long after followed, *viz.* the Subversion  
of Pagan Idolatry in Part, and the Intro-  
duction of the Worship of God in Spirit  
and in Truth.

But this Argument for the Truth of  
Christianity falls under my next Head, and  
must be reserved for another Discourse.







# SERMON II.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Evidences of Christianity.



JOHN III. 2.

*Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher, come from God: For no Man can do these Miracles, that thou doest, except God be with him.*

**I** Have already proved in a former Discourse, that Miracles may be so circumstanced, as to be direct and decisive Evidences of a divine Power and Commission. — That it was *absolutely* impossible the Apostles should be deceived themselves, as Witnesses of our Saviour's Miracles and their own. — That it was *morally* impossible

SERM. II.



fible

SERM. II. fible they should attempt to deceive others.

— The Subject of my present Discourse is to prove, that the Apostles could not have deceived Mankind, if they would; nor have imposed a false Religion upon the World, by virtue of a pretended Commission from Heaven.

If the Christian Religion, containing Doctrines *unpalatable* to Flesh and Blood, void of *every Advantage*, besides its own internal Excellency, to recommend it, and clogged with a great many *Incumbrances*, could carry Conviction with it *from East to West*, by such *incompetent* Instruments, in so *short* a Time, in spite of the *most resolved Opposition*: If this Plant, from a *slender* Appearance at first, grew, and waxed a *great Tree*, when no *kindly Sunshine* of worldly Power yet smiled upon it; nay, when the *Inclemency* of the Season beat hard against it; the Growth of it was undoubtedly marvellous.

It is granted, that in Matters of pure *Speculation*, the Bulk of Mankind may be, and often are, deceived; because they have not Leisure or Capacity, to unravel studied Sophistry, and nicely to distinguish between what is plausible, and what is solid and substantial:

substantial: But the Case is different as to <sup>SERM. II.</sup> Miracles, which are *Matters of Fact*, that fall under the Cognizance of our *Senses*. Here the Vulgar and the Learned are equally competent Judges, and you can persuade neither of them to believe he sees a glaring Fact, which he does not actually behold. Either then the Apostles wrought such Matters of Fact; or they did not. If they did, then they were invested with a Power from God: For evil Spirits would not, if they could, empower them to beat down Idolatry: If they did not, then it is unaccountable, how a Set of Fishermen, despised for their Poverty, and odious upon the account of their Nation, should propagate through many Nations, not to say the whole known World, such an unlikely Story as this, *viz.* That one, who was crucified as a common Malefactor in *Judæa*, was to be adored as a God; and that too at such a Juncture of Time, when their numerous Converts in several Parts of the World, some of whom were Men of known Distinction and Opulency, (such as *Dionysius of the Areopagus*, *Joseph of the Jewish Sanhedrim*, *Sergius Paulus a Proconsul*, *Flavius Clemens a Roman Consul*, &c.)

SERM. II. &c.) who had, very probably, enjoyed one  
 continued Sunshine of Prosperity; must bid  
 adieu to all the Blandishments of Life, un-  
 dergo, whatever is distasteful to human Na-  
 ture, and either suffer, or be in danger of  
 suffering Martyrdom.

I would gladly have the Deists try the  
 Experiment: Let them send the ablest they  
 can single out of their numerous Fraternity  
 to broach such a like Story: For Instance,  
 that one, who suffered in *England* for a  
 Malefactor, is risen from the Dead, and is  
 to be worshipped as the Saviour of Man-  
 kind: Let them send them to *Portugal* or  
*Spain*, where the Inquisition reigns, and  
 where as exquisite Tortures will be applied  
 to them, as were to the primitive Martyrs.  
 It is easy to see the Consequence: They  
 themselves would meet with a very *warm*  
 Reception; but their Doctrine with a very  
*cold* one: Both would be involved in the  
 same Doom, both perish and come to  
 nought. If then the Apostles had not a  
 Power of working genuine Miracles, and  
 displaying the amplest Credentials of divine  
 Power; it will be the greatest Miracle of  
 all, that without either Riches to bribe,  
 Authority to awe, or acquired Knowledge  
 and

and Dexterity to over-reach Men into a SERM. II. Compliance with their Notions, they should  
pave the Way to so general and great a  
Turn in religious Affairs; when these  
boasted Masters of Reason, the Deists,  
these Men of large Views, who by an un-  
common Superiority of Soul have disen-  
gaged themselves from the Prejudices of  
Education, would not be able to bring over  
a Majority of Men, nay, perhaps, not one  
Man of common Sense in any one Nation;  
if they should set on foot such another un-  
promising Project.

Let us suppose, that a Person in our  
Days should embark in a Design of can-  
celling all the old Religions, and building  
a new one upon their Ruins; that, to com-  
pass this Design, he pretended to raise the  
Dead, make the Blind see, the Lame walk,  
the Deaf hear, &c. that not long after his  
Death, his Followers publish a punctual  
circumstantial Relation of all these Things,  
mentioning the *Places where*, the *Persons*  
*upon whom*, the *Witnesses before whom*,  
these Miracles were said to be wrought:  
Let us put the Case, that they too pretended  
to have the same miraculous Powers vested  
in them, and that their Doctrine gained  
Footing

SERM. II. Footing every where, not only in *England*,  
 but in foreign Countries: Would the Magistracy, and those whose Interest was at stake, remain unactive in such a critical Juncture, and suffer the People to be seduced by such over-bearing Pretensions? No, certainly: They would send, which might be easily done, to the *Places where*, the *Persons upon whom*, and the *Witnesses before whom*, those astonishing Notices of divine Power were said to be displayed: They would take down the Depositions of creditable and substantial Witnesses in *every Place*, that the Dead were *not* raised, nor the Sick cured *there*, nor thousands fed in a miraculous Manner, &c. They would circulate and disperse these Attestations, and send the Antidote, wherever the Infection was spread.

Now I ask, Did the *Jewish* and *Pagan* Magistracy and Priesthood, upon the first Publication of the Facts, when the Gospel began to spread, take these *easy* Measures, which *Common Sense* suggested, to suppress Christianity, and confront its Evidence? If they did, then Christianity must have been stifled and overlaid in its Infancy, by the Weight of several Thousands of disinterested

terested Witnesses, giving it under their SERM. II.  
Hands, that no such glaring Actions were  
publickly done. This, I say, must have  
been the Consequence, if the Facts had  
been false; especially when all the Engines  
of worldly Power were applied against it.  
If they did *not* take this easy Method;  
they *virtually* and *implicitly* owned the  
Truth of the Facts: They confessed the  
World was *not deceived*; because, if it had  
been so, they neither wanted Power nor  
Inclination to *undeceive* it.

But it is objected, that such Accounts  
were published, which the Christians, when  
they got the Power into their Hands, wise-  
ly took care to suppress. To which I an-  
swer; When did the Christians get the  
Power into their Hands? Why, after Chri-  
stianity had stood the Shock, and outlived  
the Rage, of ten long Persecutions. But  
this does not at all invalidate what I said,  
*viz.* That Christianity must have been over-  
laid in its *Infancy*, by the Weight of au-  
thentic Accounts, well-attested against its  
Truth: Whereas then it was too late; it  
had taken the deeper Root, by weathering  
out the Storm. Besides this is *gratis dic-  
tum*; there are no Traces left of any Books,  
that

SERM. II. that ever denied the Facts; no Mention of them occurs any where. We have indeed some Remains of *Celsus*, *Hierocles*, *Porphyry*, and *Julian*, declared Enemies to Christianity. But what they alledge does not amount to a Denial of the Facts: So far are they from that, that they ascribe the Miracles of our Saviour to Magic, and the *Jews* in the *Talmud*, just as their Forefathers do in the New Testament, to a Correspondence or Intercourse with the Devil.

To account for the Rise and Propagation of Christianity, our Adversaries have recourse to *false* Miracles, which they say are very common among Christians. By Christians here they mean the *Papists*: But if Popish Priests chuse to act their pretended Miracles in *By-Places*, in Cloysters, or at least only before Men of their *own Persuasion*, where they have the *Power* in their Hands, to *fence* off an impartial *Enquiry* into them; and yet their pious Frauds have been generally detected: If, notwithstanding their confessed *Depth* of *Art* and *Finesse* to execute a well-concerted Project, they have never attempted to do a Wonder in the Eye of a *Protestant Nation*, before  
a great



a great Concourse of *Hereticks*, as they call us; then I desire to know, how a Set of *unpolished Men*, *unpractised in studied Wiles and mysterious Frauds*, should audaciously and successfully carry on a flagrant Cheat, in the Eye of Thousands of its most inveterate Foes, the Priests and Rulers of the *Jewish Nation*, and indeed the Rulers and Priests of every other Nation, who wanted neither *Discernment* enough to *unmask* and expose it, if it had been such, nor *Power* to *crush* and stifle it. This, I say, was impossible, if their Miracles had been *Impostures*, and therefore they were not so. And since the Discovery of *Impostures* has *staggered* the Faith of some *weak Men*, and made them look upon Christianity in the same *disadvantageous Light*; I will venture to say, that the more *numerous* the *Impostures* are, which are *discovered*; the more *Christianity* is *confirmed* thereby: Because it proves, that *no Imposture* can stand the Test of a *severe Examination*, when Men of *Power* and *Policy* vigorously *interest* themselves in the *Detection* of it, and are resolved to go to the *Bottom* of it. *Impostures* need only to be *held up to the Light*, to be *seen through*; But *Christianity*, the

SERM. II. *more thoroughly it was canvassed, and the more vigorously it was opposed, the more it gained Footing in the World. There is then this Difference between an Imposture and a genuine Miracle. The former loves Obscurity; the latter is desirous to be set in the strongest Point of View, and challenges the nearest Inspection, of the most penetrating Judge.*

Besides, *Tacitus*, an Heathen Historian, assures us, that in *Nero's* Reign, but thirty Years after our Saviour's Resurrection, there was (*ingens Multitudo*) a prodigious Multitude of Christians at *Rome*, above two thousand Miles from *Jerusalem*; that *Nero* inflicted upon them the most *exquisite* Punishments; and particularly, that they were burnt to give Light in the Streets, when Day-light failed.

What shall we say, as to that prodigious Multitude, who, in *Nero's* Reign, were *faithful unto Death*, unwearied by Toils, unshaken by Misery, and undismayed by Terrors, even by Death the *King of Terrors*? *They could not be mistaken*; since they who conversed with the Apostles, *must know*, whether they made good their Pretensions to a miraculous Power, or not;

or,

or, in other Words, whether they were SERM. II. Impostors, or Persons commissioned by God. Did they then wilfully *conspire to impose upon others*? Upon what Motives? That of Vain-Glory? No, certainly. The great *Leaders* of Parties may sometimes expect to be transmitted down to *Posterity*, with Marks of *Honour*, and to leave behind them a *bright and lasting Track of Glory*. But their numerous *Retinue* of *Followers* must expect to die *unnoticed*, as they lived unknown: Each of Them will be lost in the Crowd, like so many *Cyphers*, undistinguished, and of *no Consideration* or *Moment*, any farther than they contribute to make the *principal Figure*, which was placed at the *Head* of them, more *considerable*. Now that Men should give up the most *weighty* and *valuable* Considerations of *this* Life; nay *Life* itself, for *invaluable* Rewards in Heaven, and for an *exceeding Weight of Glory*; that they should *suspend* all Desire of *Applause*, till they received the *inestimable* Applause of their *Creator* — This is easily accounted for. But that Men should give up their *All* here, for *Nothing* in *Reversion*; that they should resign *Life* itself, without even expecting

SERM. II. that *imaginary* Life, a great Name after  
 Death, merely to attest and support an *unprofitable Falshood*—This is highly incredible, absurd, and impossible.

I grant, that several may die Martyrs for an *Opinion* that is false; because, *though* it be false, they may be *persuaded* it is *true*. But Miracles, upon which Christianity is founded, are Matters of *Fact*, of which the early Followers of the Apostles must have been Eye-witnesses. And no body ever died to assert an Untruth in Matters of *Fact*, as to which he could *not* be *deceived*, supposing the *Truth* of his *Senses*: Though several have died, rather than renounce *Opinions*, the Falsity of which they had not Judgment enough to discover. Much less can it be imagined, that, under the early Persecutions of *Nero* and *Domitian*, many *Thousands* of Christians would go on in an *uninterrupted Track* of *falsifying* wilfully, at the Expence of their Lives; without *one* of them, even in the Article of *Death*, *deviating* into *Truth*.

The numerous Converts to Christianity in the first Century, could *not* have *believed* it to be *true*, if it had been *false*. For they must have had an inward Conscioufness,

ness, whether they had received those mi-SERM. II.raculous Gifts or not, for the Abuse and Mis-application of which St. *Paul* in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians* censures and reproves them. They must have had an *absolute Certainty*, supposing no extraordinary Gifts were communicated to them, that he, from whom they received their Religion, and whose Epistles, as appears from St. *Peter* and others, were universally read as of divine Authority, was a *shameless Impostor*. And yet they could not have *professed* the Belief of it, *knowing* it to be an *Imposture*, at a Time, when Christians were of *all Men most miserable*, without any Prospect of worldly Honour and Advantage, but with a certain Expectation of exquisite Torments; except upon a Supposition that they loved Misery and hated Happiness, *as such*.

*Pliny*, a Person of unsuspected Veracity, in the Reign of *Trajan*, not seventy Years after the Resurrection, in a Letter to the Emperor, informs him that, where he was Governor in *Bitbynia*, a Place above twelve hundred Miles from *Jerusalem* the nearest Way; to arrive at which you must travel through several Nations, of *different Lan-*

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SERM. II. *guages, Syrians, Pamphylians, Carians,*  
 { *Lycians, &c.* Christianity had so far prevailed, that *the Temples of the Gods were almost desolated, their sacred Rites a long Time intermitted, and there were very few that would buy any Sacrifices; notwithstanding great Severities were inflicted upon Christians of every Rank, Sex, and Age.*

*Justin Martyr*, who lived in the same Century, informs us, in his Dialogue with *Trypho the Jew*, that there was no Nation in the known World, where some did not pray to God in the Name of *Jesus Christ*. What shall we say then? that the Apostles travelled from one End of the Earth to the other, without *understanding* the Languages of several Nations? Then it would have been impossible to have made any Converts, by speaking to them in an *unknown* Tongue. Or shall we say, that Men bred up in *low* Employments had a vast *Variety* of Languages at Command? That would have been almost impossible, if they had made it the *whole* Business of their *Lives*. In short there is no other Way of accounting for it, but by *Inspiration*: They could not *acquire* them; they must be the *Gift* of God. And when I consider, that they enlightened as many Nations

Nations with a rational Devotion, and found SERM. II.  
 Morality, as *Alexander* ravaged by the Force  
 of Arms; that they did more in *one Century*  
 to disabuse the World, and rescue it from  
 human Sacrifices, and to propagate benefi-  
 cial Truth, than the *Philosophers* had done  
 for *many Ages*: I think, what was a mere  
 Compliment, when applied to a certain  
 great Hero, is but strict Justice done to  
 them, *viz.* that they were the Instruments  
*in tantis Rebus gerendis, quantas audere vix*  
*hominis; perficere nullius nisi Dei,* “ in  
 “ bringing those Things to bear, which  
 “ merely to attempt was more than human;  
 “ but to perform was certainly God-like and  
 “ divine.” That the Apostles, though *low*,  
 should overcome the *Great*; and though  
*ignorant*, should teach the *Wise*; can only  
 be ascribed to him, who has chosen *the*  
*weak Things of this World to confound the*  
*Mighty.*

Besides, supposing the Apostles had as-  
 serted *without any Foundation*, that at the  
 Death of our Saviour, when the Moon  
 was at the Full, and consequently, there  
 could be no *natural* Eclipse, yet there was  
 a *supernatural* one, and a Darkness of three  
 Hours Continuance; that in the *Metropolis*

SERM. II. of the Nation, the Partition of the Temple  
 was rent from the Top to the Bottom; that the Graves were opened, and the Dead appeared in the Heart of the Nation; that fifty Days after, at the Solemnity of *Pentecost*, to celebrate which People resorted from different Parts of the World, there was a Descent of fiery Tongues upon them, by virtue of which several, who, it could be proved, knew no Tongue but their native one, were empowered to converse publicly with Men of different Nations, in their own Language: Suppose, I say, they should have asserted these Things without any Foundation; could they have persuaded one Man to have swallowed such crude glaring Falshoods in Matters of Fact, and make him believe he saw what he never did, a supernatural Eclipse, and heard what he did not, the Miracle of Tongues? If they could, I should not know which most to wonder at, their *Modesty* in *asserting* such notorious Untruths: or his *Understanding* in *believing* them. Thus their Story would have been an empty Bubble, which must have sunk and vanished, almost as soon as it rose. That single Fact of the miraculous Eclipse, if false, must have proved



proved a *Milstone* about the Neck of it, and *sunk* it *irretrievably*. It put it in the Power of Man, Woman, and Child, to disprove their Relation: Every one would tell them, such a Thing must be notorious and visible to the whole World: which yet had escaped *their* Notice, and that of *every one* else they knew. They *could not* then have *imposed* upon the *Age* in which they *lived*. SERM. II.

The only Thing, that can be supposed is, that the Story might be put upon *after Ages*, at some *distant* Period of Time.

Place then the Date and Rise of Christianity, at *what* Period of Time you *please*; could the Propagators of it persuade any People, to believe such a Story of *public notorious* Facts, which they never *heard* of *before*, *without Foundation* or Evidence? No certainly, if they should tell us, that, to perpetuate the Memory of these Actions, the History of them had been written by *Eye-Witnesses*, public *Sacraments* appointed, *weekly* and *annual Festivals* celebrated from *that* Time to *this*, and a *Church* founded, against which *the Gates of Hell* never could *prevail*. For then the Story would carry its own *Confutation* along with it, and they might have as well attempted to make  
People

SERM. II. *People believe they heard ignorant Men speak all Manner of Languages, or saw our Saviour raise the Dead; as that there was then in Being a Church, against which the Gates of Hell never had prevailed; in which these Festivals had been always observed, and these Sacraments always kept up. The Cry would have been; what is become of your Church, which was to be impregnable as a Rock, and lasting as the Sun? Is it become an invisible Church indeed? Out of your own Mouths will we condemn you: What need we farther Witnesses? Now would any Nation, discarding the Religion which they had been bred up in, admit a NEW one in its Stead, upon the account of such a groundless self-contradictory Story? What, would they say, could such glaring and notorious Facts, which must have alarmed the whole World, like the Sailing of a Ship, leave no Traces behind them of their Existence in History? In short such an unsupported and overgrown Falshood must have fallen to the Ground by its own unwieldly Bulk, without any one to overturn it.*

To apply this to *Christianity in general.*  
 If the marvellous Facts were not true, the  
 Books,

Books, which contain them, could never have been received; nor the Festivals and Observances, which commemorate them, have taken place in *that* Age, in which they were said *to be done*: Because it was *then* in every Body's Power to *disprove* them. They could not, in any *after* Ages, have been imposed upon Mankind: Because though Absurdities may be grafted upon an *old* Religion, yet no Nation ever did, or will, voluntarily embrace a Religion entirely *new*, without any Evidence. And it is certain, they *were* not thus imposed upon Mankind *long after*; because it appears by *uncontradicted written* Tradition, that these Actions, august Ceremonies, and Festivals, did commence at the *Period assigned*, and have flowed down from their first *Fountain-Head* to the present Age, in *one uninterrupted Stream*.

To apply this to the Truth of the *Resurrection* in particular. The *Apostolical* Age could not be deceived by a sham Story of a Resurrection, because our Saviour's *Resurrection* was as public and notorious, as his *Death* and *Crucifixion*, though not in *itself*, yet in its *immediate Consequences*, I mean those *Miracles wrought* before Thou-  
sands,

SERM. II. sands, by Eye-Witnesses, to *confirm* the *Truth* of it. Was it then set on foot in some *after Age*? No; because both the *weekly* and *yearly* Memorials of it are of as old a Date as *Christianity* itself, and, from the first Propagation of it, have been successively handed down to us. That *Sunday* was the *weekly* Memorial of it, even in the *Apostolical Age*, is plain from St. *John*, who says, that *he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*, or the Day then set apart to commemorate the Lord's Resurrection. And that there was an *annual* Memorial of it, instituted by the Apostles, and continued down to us, is plain from the early Disputes about the *precise* Time, on which it was to be observed; though the Observation of *Easter* as an Apostolical Institution, was never controverted. In short, the History of the Gospel has *all* the Testimony, that *any* ancient Matter of Fact ever had; and it has, *besides*, several *material Evidences*, which other ancient Matters of Fact have *not*. For are there any other ancient Matters of Fact, which were attested, by Eye-Witnesses, who expected *nothing* in this Life but *Miseries* and *Hardships* for their Attestations; who were ready to lay  
down

down their Lives for the Truth of what they said ; who could not be deceived themselves, had no Interest to deceive others, nor could have deceived them if they would? Are there *standing Monuments* and *sensible Observations*, appointed to keep up the Memory of *other* ancient Matters of Fact, commencing from the *Time* in which the *Actions* were done, and from thence, as from the *first* Link, descending to Posterity in one *continual Chain*? Did any Religion besides *conquer* by *suffering*, and by having its Thousands, and ten Thousands slain? Or did any besides, though its Instruments were vastly unequal to the Task, bear down *all Opposition*, and triumph over the *Rage* of the *Jews*, the *Learning* of the *Philosophers*, the *Power* of *Emperors*, and the *Prejudices* and *Passions* of *all Mankind*?

If Christianity was an Imposture ; it was an Imposture *sui Generis*, a pure *Original*, *imitating no* Imposture, that ever was heard of *before*, and which *no* Imposture, I dare say, will ever *after* venture to *imitate* : An Imposture, in which there could be no *Priestcraft*. For the Priests, by professing and propagating it, exposed themselves to *superior Tortures* : They stood in the *Front*

of

SERM. II. of the Battle, and were sure to fall the *first*,  
 and the *Bishop* generally ended in the *Martyr*. An Imposture in which there could be *no State-craft*: For *all the States* of the World for *three hundred Years* were *combined against* it.


So strong, in short, if we take the Arguments from Prophecy, the internal Excellency of Christianity, and the Necessity of a Revelation into the Account, is the Evidence for Christianity; that it is the last Thing I should believe, that an *inquisitive unprejudiced* Man, of a sound Head, and an upright Heart, could be a *determined* Infidel. Nothing ought to be admitted in bar to such pregnant Proofs, but some *absolute Impossibility* in the Nature of the Thing: Mere *Difficulties* weigh Nothing: For at that rate we must disbelieve *every* Thing in Nature; every Thing in Nature being attended with *great*, nay *insuperable* Difficulties.

Could we suppose a Being in some other Part of the wide Creation, of the same Size of Understanding with ourselves, but an intire Stranger to the natural History of the World; should any one inform him of the amazing Properties of the Loadstone,  
 the

the *Phænomena* of Light and Colours, the SERM. II.  
*Circulation* of the Blood contrary to all the  
known Laws of Motion, the Revolutions  
of the Planets, the *Cohesion* of Matter,  
the *infinite* Divisibility of *finite* Matter,  
nay, of the *least* Grain of that finite Mat-  
ter, the surprizing Effects of Chemistry;  
he would think the *History* of *Nature* far  
more unaccountable, than any Deist can  
the Book of Grace, and the History of the  
*Bible*.

Poor short-sighted Creatures! the *least*  
*Grain* of Sand is able to baffle the *finest*  
Understanding: And yet we would pretend  
to sound the *Depths* of the *divine* Nature  
and Counsels; never considering, what has  
been often observed, that, “if what was re-  
“vealed concerning *God*, were always adapted  
“to our *Comprehension*; how could it with  
“any Fitness represent *that* Nature, which  
“we allow to be *incomprehensible*?” We  
need not to ransack the *Scriptures* for Diffi-  
culties: *Every* Thing *about* us and *within*  
us, *above* us and *beneath* us, convinces us,  
that we are very ignorant; and, if once we  
come to a Resolution to quit what is *clear*  
(such are the Proofs for Christianity) upon  
the account of what is *obscure*; we shall

run

SERM. II.  run into universal Scepticism. We will not believe, that the Deity does or discovers *any thing* marvellous and unaccountable in an *unusual* and *supernatural* Manner, though *every Thing*, that he does in the *common Road* of Providence, be marvellous and unaccountable to us.

Though Men may disagree about Matters of pure *abstract Reasoning*; yet every reasonable Man is determined by the *Evidences* for Matters of *Fact*, when they amount to a *moral Certainty*; unless it be in Cases, where the *Passions* interest themselves, and indispose the Mind for the Reception of Truth. Every *intelligent Person*, after Examination, must *judge alike* in *these* Matters; except his Judgment be *overruled*, and his Assent *obstructed* by some *wrong Affection*, by some strong *Bias*, and some insuperable *Prejudice*, perhaps unsuspected by himself: Otherwise a Man might seriously dispute, whether *Julius Cæsar* made a Descent upon *England*, conquered *Pompey*, and was stabbed in the Senate-house; which *no Man* in *his Senses* ever did, or ever will do. Either then it must be maintained, contrary to what I have already proved, that the Evidences of  
Christianity



Christianity do not amount to a moral Cer-<sup>SERM. II.</sup>  
tainty, — or, if they do, it will be difficult to assign a Reason, why clear, strong, and indubitable Proofs should not have as much Force and Weight in the Affair of *Religion*, as they have in all *others*; unless we may suppose there is something *amiss within*, some latent *Disingenuity* of Temper, which *here*, though not in other Cases, shuts up all the Avenues, by which Light can find an Entrance.

Though we have not a *scientifically infallible* Certainty of the *Truth* of Christianity; yet we have an *infallible* Certainty, that we *ought* to be *determined* by *such* Evidences, as *Christianity* is surrounded with: Because either we must act upon *such* Evidence in the *daily* Course of Life, or remain in a State of utter *Inaction*. He, that will not admit moral Certainty to be a sufficient Principle of Action; if his Practice be conformable to his Persuasion, must neither eat nor drink, till he has a *mathematical* Demonstration, that what he eats and drinks will prove *wholesome*; he will be sure of *nothing* in this World, but that he must, by acting up to such a Notion, depart speedily *out* of it. If we have a *moral*

SERM. II. Certainty of the Truth of Christianity; if every *unprejudiced* Mind is *determined* by moral Certainty, we may argue thus. — It is demonstrably certain, that there is a Being of infinite Goodness, Truth and Veracity. — It is demonstrably certain, that a Being of infinite *Goodness*, Truth, and *Veracity* will not mislead his Creatures into *unavoidable* Errors, nor suffer an Imposture to pass upon the World, in his Name, in a Matter of the last Importance, with such manifest Tokens of Credibility, and moral Certainty, as must, and do in every *other* Case, *determine* an *unprejudiced* Mind: — therefore it is demonstrably certain, that Christianity is no Imposture. Thus the Christian Faith, in the last Resort, resolves itself into, and terminates in, the divine Veracity: It is as sure as that *God cannot lie*, that he who has laid his Creatures under an *Obligation* to *act* upon *moral* Evidence, would not have done so, if such strong Evidence could ever *inevitably* deceive them in an Affair of *infinite* Concernment.

# SERMON III.

Preached at the


Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Genuineness and Inspiration  
of the Sacred Writers.



I THESS. II. 13.

*When ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us; ye received it not as the Word of Men, but (as it is in Truth) the Word of God.*

**W**HEN St. Paul preached the SERM. III: Gospel of *Christ* to the *Thes-*   
*salonians*, they embraced it gladly, and believed it to be, what it really is, of divine Authority and Inspiration.

That we may do so too, it will be necessary to prove,

SERM. III. *Ist*, The Genuineness of those Books,  
 which contain the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*.  
 And,  
*Idly*, Their divine Inspiration.

*Ist*, I am to prove the Genuineness of those Books, which contain the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*.

Those Authors are confessedly genuine, who have received the Sanction of their Contemporaries, or immediate Successors, followed by an uninterrupted Series of Vouchers.

Thus *St. Paul* quotes the Gospel of *St. Luke*, whose Praise is in the Gospel throughout all the Churches, as of equal Authority with the Writings of *Moses*. For the Scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the Ox that treadeth out the Corn, and, the Labourer is worthy of his Reward, 1 Tim. v. 18. which last Passage occurs no where but in *St. Luke* x. ver. 7. as the former is to be met with *Deut.* xxv. ver. 4. —

Thus *St. John*, as *Eusebius* \* informs us, stamped his Authority, at the Instance  
 of

\* Eusebii Hist. Eccl. Lib. 3. cap. 24.


of his Friends, upon the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, and then added his own as a Supplement to them. SERM. III.

Much the same Account we have from the ancient Author of the Martyrdom of *Timothy*, with this additional Circumstance, that before St. *John* reviewed them, they had already been translated into several Languages †. Nor is it at all unlikely, that the same Zeal, which prompted St. *John* to expose one Fraud, as we shall prove by and by; would likewise determine him to authorize the genuine Records of Christianity. This is what the World might expect from a Person so venerable, for his Wisdom and Authority, as well as for his great Age: And this is, what common Sense would suggest to one; who lived after Forgeries had begun to creep abroad.

Though *Clemens Romanus*, *Barnabas*, *Hermas*, *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, Writers who had been conversant with the Apostles, seldom ascribe any of the Books of the New Testament to their respective Authors; yet they *virtually* own them all to be genuine, by shewing the most distinguished Regard

U 3

to

SERM. III.  to them, by often quoting them and oftener alluding to them: An Honour they do no other Writings except those of the Old Testament. They transcribe numerous Precepts from the Scriptures, of which their own Lives were indeed the most beautiful Transcript. That they have not expressly named the Authors, from whom they borrow, is easily accounted for: They wrote chiefly, if not entirely, for the Benefit of their Contemporaries, and it was needless to point out to those, who lived so near the Fountain Head, from what Source they drew that living Water, which they had so thoroughly imbibed, and so plentifully transfused into their own Compositions.

What a religious Veneration these early Writers paid to the Scriptures, the following Passage of *Ignatius* † will clearly shew. “ Your Prayer to God, *says he*, shall make  
 “ me perfect, that I may attain to that  
 “ Portion, which his Mercy has assigned  
 “ me; having Recourse to the Gospel, as  
 “ to the Flesh of *Jesus Christ*; and to the  
 “ Apostles, as to the Presbytery of the  
 “ Church.

† Ignatii Epist. ad Philadelph. Sect. 5. Cotelerii Patres Apostol. Tom. 2. Vide Notas Johannis Clerici in locum.

“ Church. Let us also love the Pro-<sup>SERM. III.</sup>  
 “ phets, because even they preached the  
 “ Gospel, believed in *Christ*, and hoped  
 “ for him\*.”

The Meaning of these remarkable Words is plainly this. That he as firmly believed the Gospel, as if he had heard *Jesus Christ* himself alive, and in the Flesh, delivering to

\* Quod a Nemine, quod quidem sciam, hoc usque observatum fuit, monuit nos olim clarissimus *Grubius*, *Ignatium* utriusque hujus Canonis mentionem fecisse, in Epistola ad *Philadelphicos*. Περιφυσῶν τῷ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΩ ὡς Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, καὶ τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις ὡς πρεσβυτερίῳ Ἐκκλησίας· καὶ τὰς ΠΡΟΦΗΤΑΣ δὲ ἀναπῶμεν, &c. Nempe per Εὐαγγέλιον, Codicem Evangelicum, per Ἀποστόλους, Codicem Epistolicum, per Προφῆτας, Canonem Vet. Testamenti συνεκδικηκῶς intelligendum existimat. Id quod nobis postea persuasissimum erat, etiam ex aliis *Ignatii* Locis. Nonnunquam enim Evangelii vocem strictius sumere videtur pro Codice Evangelico; (ut cum Evangelicum ἐξαίρετως esse ait, ἐν ᾧ τὸ παθὸν ἡμῶν διεδηλώαι, καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τελεθῆναι. Epist. ad Smyrn. §. 7. & in Ep. ad *Philadelph.* Ἐξείριστον ἔχει τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον, τὴν ἀνάστασιν &c. §. 8.) tum vero alias laxiori significato Evangelium apud Eum pro Canone integro N. T. acceptum videmus; ubi simul memorat Legem *Mosis*, Prophetias, & Evangelium; (ὅς ἐκ ἔπεισαν αἱ περιφρηταί, εἰδ' ὁ νόμος Μωσῆος ἀλλ' εἰδὲ μέχρι νῦν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον. Ep. ad Smyrn. §. 5.) Quod si vero res ita se habebat, Canon Epistolicus mediocri Temporis intervallo præcesserit necesse est Epistolas *Ignatianas*; ideoque & prodierit sub annum forte æτρε *Vulgaris* CX. sive etiam aliquanto ante. *Mullii Prolegom.* pag. 24.

SERM. III. to him the Precepts therein recorded; that he betook himself to the Writings of the Apostles, with no less Assurance, than if that venerable Presbytery were then acting, immediately under the great Bishop and Shepherd of their Souls, *Jesus Christ*; that, after these, the next Regard was to be paid to the Writings of the Prophets, because they had foretold our Saviour's Advent, his Death and Passion.

From hence we may gather, that the Canon of the New Testament was then settled and put upon a Foot of Equality with the Old. When he says, *Let us love the Prophets*, who could be known to him no otherwise than by their Writings, he undoubtedly means their Compositions, and the Books of the old Testament: And when he says, *he has Recourse to the Gospel, and the Apostles*, he no less plainly means the main Body of the New Testament, as divided into the four Gospels, and the Epistles of the Apostles.

In his Epistle to the Inhabitants of *Smyrna*, Section the 7th, he writes thus: "It becomes us to attend to the Prophets, but especially the Gospel, in which the Passion has been shewn to us, and the Resurrection perfected."

And



And again, Section 5th, in the same SERM.III. Epistle, “whom neither the Prophecies, “nor the Law of *Moses*, nor even the “Gospel, to this very Day could per- “suade.”

From *Ignatius*, who, as *St. Chrysofom* says, conversed familiarly with the Apostles, and was intimately acquainted with their Doctrine; let us pass on to *Polycarp*, who was not only instructed by the Apostles, but by them constituted Bishop of the Church of *Smyrna* †.

From him we learn, that in that early Age, the Books of the New Testament were generally studied, and dignified with the Name of Holy Writings. “For, I “trust, *says he*, that ye are well versed in “the Holy Scriptures, and that Nothing “(of this kind) has escaped you.—And “in these it is said, *Be ye angry and sin “not. And, let not the Sun go down upon “your Wrath*\*.”

And in another very short Paragraph †, where he has quoted the Sacred Writings no less than four Times, he styles those  
Writings,

† *Irenæus*, Lib. 3. cap. 3.

\* *Polycarpi Ep. ad Philippenfes*. Sect. 12.

† *Ibidem*. Sect. 7th.

SERM. III. Writings, which he quotes, “ the Oracles  
 “ of the Lord.” The Church of *Smyrna*,  
 over which he presided, in their Account  
 of his Martyrdom, written immediately af-  
 ter his Death, appeals to the Scriptures, as  
 of decisive Authority. “ We do not com-  
 “ mend, *say they*, those who offer them-  
 “ selves [to Martyrdom] since the Gospel  
 “ teaches no such Thing †.”

If, as it plainly appears from *Ignatius*  
 and *Polycarp*, the Writings of the New  
 Testament were put upon a Level with  
 those of the Old; then it will follow, that  
 they were read at that Time in private Fa-  
 milies and public Congregations; since the  
*Jewish* Scriptures confessedly had that dis-  
 tinguishing Mark of Respect paid to them:  
 And it is plain, they received the same  
 Scriptures which we do: Since their Quo-  
 tations every where agree in *Sense* and *Sub-  
 stance* with the Books which we now re-  
 ceive, though they do not confine them-  
 selves always *precisely* to the same *Words*:  
 For it was the Custom of that Age to quote  
*memoriter*.

That *St. Paul's* Epistles were thus pub-  
 licly read, we have earlier Evidence. He  
 himself

† *Cotelerii Patres Apostol.* Page 196.

himself orders one of them (if not two) SERM. III. to be read in the Churches of the *Laodiceans* and *Colossians* \*; and we may fairly gather from St. *Peter's* Words †, that the rest of his Epistles had the same just Honour done them.

*Papias*, who was Contemporary with these Writers, and conversant with the immediate Disciples of the Apostles, expressly ascribes ‡ the Gospels of St. *Matthew* and *Mark* to their respective Authors, and establishes the Genuineness of the first Epistle of *Peter*, and the first of *John*.

The Sum of the Evidence from the Apostolical Writers is this: That the Writings of the New Testament were then gathered into one Volume, publicly read in Churches, and universally received; since they are quoted by *Clemens* at *Rome*, by *Barnabas* at *Cyprus*, by *Ignatius* in *Syria*, by *Polycarp* at *Smyrna*, and by *Papias* at *Hierapolis* in *Phrygia*.

When *Justin Martyr*, in the Year 140, in his second Apology mentions, (and mentions

\* Colossians iv. 16.

† 2 Pet. iii. 16.

‡ Eusebii Eccles. Hist. Lib. 3. cap. 39.

SERM. III. tions it, not as something new,) that every  
 Sunday the *Prophetical Writings*, and the  
*Memoirs of the Apostles* were read publickly  
 in the *Christian Congregations*; can it be  
 doubted but he meant those very Writings  
 of the Apostles, whom he so frequently  
 cites in his own? Add to this, that the  
*Syriac Version*, which several learned Men  
 have, I think, proved to be made in or  
 near the Times of the Apostles, but is un-  
 doubtedly of great Antiquity, agrees exact-  
 ly (some Differences not material except-  
 ed,) with our present Canon. If the pre-  
 sent Scriptures then were Forgeries; either  
 they were published in the *Apostolical Age*,  
 or not. If they were, then the Apostles,  
 who made it their Business to propagate sin-  
 cere and unmixed Truth, would not see  
 their pious Labours defeated, but would  
 take care to unmask the Imposture. Of  
 this we have a pregnant Instance in St.  
*John*. No sooner were the Acts of *Paul*  
 and *Thecla* forged, than he took care to  
 detect, convict, and degrade the Author of  
 them, who was a Presbyter, and gave No-  
 tice of it to the *Asiatic Churches*; as we  
 learn from *Tertullian* †.

But

† De Baptismo, cap. 17.

But if they were published *after* the SERM. III. Apostolical Age; then it will be impossible to account how they came to be received every where, in so short a Time with an universal Agreement, in Countries some hundreds of Miles distant from one another, without any *Opposition*, by Persons who were rigidly *tenacious* of whatever was *Apostolical*, as appears by the early Controversy about *Easter*, by Persons who *sacrificed* their Lives for the Truths contained in those Books. *Tertullian* appealing to the Apostolical Churches, giveth us to understand, that in his Time \*, *ipsæ authenticæ Literæ eorum recitantur*. “ the very  
 “ authentic Letters of the Apostles were  
 “ read there;” where, by *authentic*, he must mean *Autographa*, the Apostles Hand Writing; otherwise why should he *single* out and specify the Churches planted by the *Apostles*? The genuine Copies of their Writings in *Greek*, if that was all he meant, were certainly read in *other* Churches, *besides* those which were planted by the *Apostles*.

Great Noise I know has been made about the many *spurious* Pieces: But the Question, in short, is this, *1st*, Whether those

\* *Tertull. de Præscript. Cap. 36.*

SERM. III. those spurious Pieces were generally received in the *early* Ages? If they can prove this, they will say something to the Purpose to invalidate the present Canon: If they cannot, then those Forgeries cannot be put upon an equal Foot with the present Scripture. For the Argument for the present Scripture is this, that it is incredible, such a Number of good and learned Men, without any interested Views, in the most distant Countries, should combine together in a Cheat, or be imposed upon by one. It is much easier to suppose a false Statute-Book put upon a whole Nation, than a spurious Bible put upon the whole Christian World, wheresoever dispersed, without a Discovery.

2dly, Can any one Martyr be produced for the supposititious Pieces? No, on the contrary, those who disagreed with the Apostolical Churches, and introduced wild and absurd Notions, held it unnecessary to suffer Martyrdom. *Justin Martyr* (Apol. 2d.) makes it the distinguishing Character of all the Heretics in his Age, that they were so far from suffering, that they never were persecuted for their Religion. *Tertullian* (*Scorpiacon*) calls them *Martyriorum Refragatores*,

*fragatores*, Decliners of Martyrdom. They SERM. III. were too wise to part with their Lives for such chimerical and romantic Inventions. Whereas several thousands expired leisurely in studied Torments, attesting the Truth of the Gospels, when they might be easily satisfied of their Genuineness by the concurring Testimony of the Christian World, as well as by Tradition, from the Churches planted by the Apostles.

3dly, Whoever will give himself the Trouble to read over the Fragments of these Forgeries, preserved by the Ancients, and collected by the Moderns, may easily see they carry their own Confutation along with them; they carry evident Marks of Spuriousness. And when he compares them with the genuine Productions of the inspired Writers, he will find that Passage of *Cicero* applicable, *Opinionum commenta delet Dies, Naturæ judicia confirmat*. The former were like mishapen Monsters, which are very short-lived; the latter, like the genuine Productions of Nature, that have strong *Stamina*, gradually increased in Strength. They weathered out the Storm, and outlived the Rage of ten Persecutions. It need not, I think, stagger the Faith of any,


SERM. III. any, that the *Gnosticks*, who patronized  
 abominable Impurities; that the *Manichæans* and *Encratites*, who held two independent Principles, and *Basilides* with his Followers, who maintained the Lawfulness of unnatural Lust, should reject the Scriptures, and forge new ones. They were against the Gospels for this very good Reason, because the Gospels were against them. They assigned no Reasons why they rejected some Parts of Scripture, and admitted others; but were acted by Caprice and arbitrary Humour; unless this may pass for a Reason, that they pretended to be wiser than the Apostles, and able to correct them. See *Irenæus*, Lib. 3.

Dismissing therefore these Heretics, it will be material to observe, that the Scriptures visibly bear that Stamp of Antiquity, which they pretend to; that they are conformable to the Genius of that Age and Nation, in which they were said to be penned; that there are in them no Anachronisms, no Mistakes about the Tenets, religious Rites, and Variety of Sects among the *Jews*, at that particular Juncture; no Blunders about those several eminent Personages, which then acted in a public Capacity



capacity: Their Speech and Idiom never bewraying them, to be of a different Country, but every where adapted to that Dialect and Manner of Expression, which was peculiar to the *Jews*. If the Scriptures were not of that Antiquity, which they lay Claim to; then it would have been morally impossible, for a Writer of a later Date, to hit *critically* the Air of *Antiquity*, to hit the *distinguishing* Marks, and *appropriate Characteristicks* of the Time and Nation, in which they were pretended to be composed, and to be consistent, and all of a Piece, from first to last, throughout several Performances of a considerable Length, without being ever off his Guard, without once dropping the Mask, without once giving way to Phrases, that were in Vogue, when he himself lived, Phrases, that would be ever uppermost in his Mind, and pressing for a Vent; without any Allusions to Customs, that were not then in being; without any Mistakes in Chronology, Geography, and the History of those Times.

It is thus, that all Forgeries have been laid open, and none of them have been able to stand the Test of Criticism; Something there was in their Stile or Matter;

SERM. III.  Something in the *Nature* and *Texture* of the Books, that *betrayed* them. And it is easier for a Person of Learning, Sagacity, and Judgment, to discover the Age of an *Author*, than it is for a *Connoisseur* to discover that of a *Medal*, *Coin*, *Picture*, or *Statue*. It remains then, that the Scriptures are as ancient, as they pretend to be.

And if so, then they must be true; otherwise they could not have been received: For as they contain a punctual circumstantial Relation of public Facts, with the *Time when*, the *Places where*, and the *Persons* before whom they were performed, the Authors of them could not have put upon the World such a continued Series of marvellous unparalleled Actions, said to be done in the Eye of the World, when they must be fresh in their Memories, without being detected.

It is certain, that St. *Paul's* Epistles (all except that to the *Hebrews*) ever were looked upon as genuine, by *uncontroverted* written Tradition, from the Time in which they were published in a continued Train of Vouchers, down to the present Age; the very *judaising* Christians, who would not be determined by his Authority, as an Enemy

my to those *Jewish* Ceremonies, which they would have incorporated with Christianity, never denying him to be the real Author. *St. Peter* 2 Epistle iii. 16. first of all gives a full Sanction to all his Epistles, giving us to understand, that they were read publickly, as other Scriptures, and that many made a bad Use of them. *Clemens Romanus* his Fellow-Labourer, whose Name is in the Book of Life, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, desires them to read again *St. Paul's* first Epistle to them, where he bids them shun Divisions, while one said, *I am of Paul*, another *I am of Apollos*, another of *Cephas*. *Ignatius*, in his first Epistle to the *Ephesians*, makes mention of *St. Paul's* to them. *Polycarp*, writing to the *Philippians*, very warmly recommends *St. Paul's* Epistle to them, with high Commendations, both of the Author and his Composition. And these three last mentioned Writers in the Apostolical Age, beautify their own Performances with Quotations from his. If then *St. Paul's* Epistles, for which we have uncontradicted decisive Evidence, be genuine, Christianity will stand its Ground: For they contain all the essential and vital Articles, all the main *Stamina* of the Christian Doctrine.

of *Painting*, that cannot discover *St. Paul's* Letters to be *Originals*\*: His very *Soul* speaks in all his Writings. There is that undiffembled Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Mankind; that Courage, that beautiful Disregard to his own Interest, when it interferred with higher Views; that Boldness of Expression, that Life and Spirit, which is hard to be counterfeited. The same Force and Energy, which animated all his *Actions*, and empowered him to spread the Gospel from East to West, ennobles all his *Compositions*; and it would be almost as impossible for an Impostor to *write*, as *St. Paul* did; as it would be to *act*, as he did. It is very difficult to *personate a warm, affectionate, interesting* Writer. We may trace the same Features, and an exact Resemblance in his *Speeches* in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, and in his *Epistles*, which proves them both to be the Offspring of the same Parent. In both there is the same Greatness of Spirit, the same glowing Language, and elevated Thoughts, warm from the Heart. In both he either speaks or writes with too animated  
a *Zeal*

\* *Temple's Essays*, 2d Vol. Page 59.

a Zeal to be a cold *Deceiver*, with too much SERM. III. *Sense*, Solidity, and Consistency to be an *Enthusiast*.

Let us review the Ground, which we have already gained. Those Authors, according to the celebrated Maxim of *Huetius*, are genuine, that are quoted as such by Writers, in or next to the Times they were said to write, and so downwards, by succeeding Ages, in an uninterrupted Series, If this Axiom be not granted, all Historical Evidence must fall to the Ground: We may reject all ancient Historians; for it is the only Evidence we have of their being authentic. But, besides this Evidence, which the Scriptures have in common with ancient Writers, they have an *additional* Enforcement, which other Writers have not, *viz.* the Impossibility that a Forgery, in a Matter of such vast Consequence, should gain Footing throughout the Christian World, and be received with the profoundest Veneration, in all their religious Assemblies, when living near the Fountain-head, they could not want Opportunity and Power to detect it, if it had been such; and being exposed continually to Martyrdom, they could have no Interest to adhere to it, in Contradicti-

SERM. III. on to their own Sentiments. The less Interest they had to receive the Books, as genuine, the more Evidence they would require.

The Scriptures have *travelled* to us with the *Passport* of all former Ages, from their *first setting out* into the World, down to the present Times. While the Apostles, and their immediate Successors, were living, it was *too early* to obtrude any forged Books upon the World with Success; because they both could, and undoubtedly would, have detected them. But after the Apostles, and their immediate Successors, were dead, it was *too late* to impose upon the World any spurious Compositions; because then the genuine Works were every where received; which could not in a *Trice* be *spirited* away, and others, as it were by *Inchantment*, substituted in their Room, without any Notice taken.

In short, if Books which have all the unexceptionable Credentials, internal and external, of being genuine, that any ancient Record can have, be, after all, mere Forgeries; then we have nothing to do, but to commit to the Flames all past Records, and to believe Nothing but what we see.

But

But if this be impossible; then the Scrip-  
tures, the Book of Grace; and the World, SERM. III  
the Book of Nature; both composed by  
the same Hand, both having impressed up-  
on them the most lively Traces of divine  
Goodness and Benevolence, will *only perish*  
*together*: And the Scriptures, the Ground-  
work and *Pillar of our Faith*, will last,  
till *Faith* be lost in *Intuition*.

Having proved the Genuineness of the  
Books of the New Testament; I now  
proceed,

*Idly*, To prove the Authors were di-  
vinely inspired.

By Inspiration I mean the Action of God  
upon Men's Minds, conveying Truths to  
them, and impressing Sentiments upon them,  
in an extraordinary Manner.

The Possibility of this admits of no Dis-  
pute. The Power of God, which enables  
us to communicate our Thoughts to one  
another, can also undoubtedly communicate  
his Thoughts to us; and make us as inti-  
mately conscious, that those Impressions are  
made by *him solely*, as that *any* Impressions  
are made upon us at all. It will be more

SERM. III. material to state the Case, because there  
 has been some Confusion on this Head.

We must distinguish between an Assistance of *Direction*, from the Holy Spirit; and an Assistance of *immediate Suggestion*. In relating Matters of Fact, of which the Apostles were Eye-witnesses, or in pointing out Things, whereof they had a previous and competent Knowledge; there the Assistance of *Direction* from the Holy Spirit was only wanting, to guard them from any Error, at least any material Error; that they should not insert any Falshood, or leave out any momentous Truth. But in Cases, which were plainly above their Reach, such as clearly explaining, and strongly enforcing, a complete unerring System of religious and moral Truths, as discovering those Sanctions, which *Eye had not seen, nor Ear heard, nor had it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive*; in revealing Mysteries, and declaring Things to come; an immediate *Suggestion* of the Holy Spirit was requisite to imprint these Truths upon their Minds, and to enable them to convey them to us: Their natural Abilities being unequal to the Task.

We



We do not maintain, that every Word SERM. III. or Sentence in the Holy Scriptures, was *dictated* immediately by God: St. Paul might salute the Brethren, and write for what he wanted from *Troas* without any *supernatural* Assistance: For what Men know without any immediate Impulse from God; that they may certainly *write*, without any immediate Impulse from him. Nay, we may make a larger Concession, and allow, without any great Disadvantage to the Christian Cause, that there may be in Scripture some few Inaccuracies, as to the Point of Language, and other unconcerning Niceties. For this will only prove, that, where there was *no extraordinary Occasion* to interpose, God *did not* think fit to interpose in an *extraordinary* Manner. All, that we contend for, is this; that in the doctrinal and prophetical Parts of Scripture, and whatever else was necessary to be revealed; the Apostles wrote from the *immediate Suggestion* of the Holy Spirit: And as to all other Things, that sacred Person *so far superintended* and directed them, as to *secure* them from *Error*: It not being consistent with the Honour of God to suffer those, who by Miracles proved a Mis-

sion

tion from him, to stamp a Credit upon Falshood, by virtue of that Mission.

Having thus far cleared the Way, I shall proceed to prove the Matter of Fact, that the Apostles were actually inspired.

Now it is certain, that the Apostles were inspired, in propagating and *preaching* the Gospel: Men of their Education could never acquire such a prodigious Variety of Languages, as enabled them to speak to the several Nations, where they travelled, in their own native Tongues, and to spread the Gospel from East to West, to the uttermost Parts of the known World. This Command of several Tongues, by which they were empowered to make Converts in the remotest Countries, cannot be accounted for in a *natural* Way; it must be the Effect of *Inspiration*.

Now if God inspired them in the Affair of *Preaching*; it would follow much more strongly, that he inspired them in committing, what they preached, to *Writing*: Since their *Preaching* was confined within a *narrower* Circle, and operated but upon Few in *Comparison*. But their Writings took in a *wider* Sphere, were of a more *diffusive* Influence, and were intended to reach

reach to all *Ages*, as well as extend to all Nations. SERM. III.

I have already proved, in a former Discourse, that the Miracles recorded in Scripture were wrought by God; and that we have sufficient Evidence, that such Miracles were actually wrought.—If then such Miracles were performed; such an uninterrupted Profusion of unrivalled wondrous Works was given by him, who doth nothing in vain, for some *important End*.—No other important End can be assigned, but the rescuing Mankind from Error, and discovering to them necessary Truth.—Where God designs the End, he must design the Means requisite to that End.—The Means requisite to that End are to preserve his Instruments, in revealing his Will, from every material Mistake.—Consequently, we may implicitly acquiesce in the Belief of the Scriptures. For, if there are no material Mistakes, it can do us no Harm to believe, what will no way affect us.—But if there are material Errors, which may affect our Happiness; then God's Design, in which he embarked, proved abortive; and that mighty *Apparatus*, that Waste of Miracles, answered no

3

rational

## 316 *The Genuineness and Inspiration*

SER.M.III. rational End at all, if it did not compass  
 } this End, *viz.* to guide Mankind to beneficial Truth, and to rescue them from Falshood.

Divine Credentials (such are Miracles) prove a divine Mission.—He who has a divine Mission, thus attested, speaks with Authority from God.—He who speaks with Authority from God, must speak several *important* Truths, and can speak Nothing, *but* the Truth. It is certain, that the Apostles pretended to divine Inspiration; and it is as certain, that, if they had been uninspired, that Being, who *cannot lie*, would never have declared himself in Favour of Persons guilty of a solemn and deliberate Lie, and *borne them Witness with Signs and Wonders*. When therefore we are asked, whether the Apostles, who were *but* Men, could be infallible? we answer, that in the *common* Scenes, and *ordinary* Occurrences of Life, they were fallible, like other Men; but when they acted in their *extraordinary* Capacity, as *Ambassadors of God*, as Prophets and Apostles; there they must be considered as infallible. Had they grossly mistaken, or wilfully misrepresented the divine Will; God would  
 have

have *revoked* the Commission, which they SERM. III. had *abused*, for the same Reason that he *authorized* them at first; and would have invested some other Persons with superior Powers to confront them, and to disabuse the World from any Error, that might be imposed upon it in his sacred Name. How weak, when considered in this Light, is the Objection against Inspiration, from the Disagreement of St. Peter and St. Paul, when the latter at *Antioch* withstood the former to the Face? For, supposing that St. Peter had differed from St. Paul, in a Point of *Doctrine* and Principle, and not, as he only did in a Point of *Behaviour*; yet what would be the mighty formidable Consequence, that could be drawn from thence? Nothing would follow but this, *viz.* that when any Person sent by God should attempt to deceive others; the Deity would raise up some other Man, who should be effectually enabled to withstand him, to undeceive Mankind, and to prevent that Mischief, which his Falling-off from the Truth might otherwise occasion.

That at a Time, when *the Word of God* was made of none Effect by the Traditions of the

SERM. III. *the Pharisees*, when the *Jews* were devoted to external Observances to the Neglect of inward Piety, when they were prepossessed with an Opinion, that they were to continue God's peculiar People without the Admission of the Gentiles; some of the lowest Rank and Education should enlarge their Minds from national Prejudices, and inveterate Errors, and should publish the *only* Religion, which is fit to be the Religion of *all Mankind*, free from the Superstitions of the *Pagan* World, and the numerous Ceremonies of the *Jewish*; is a Matter of Fact, which wants to be accounted for, and cannot be accounted for, but by Inspiration. Where shall we find among the Philosophers such a compleat Body of moral and religious Duties founded upon such Promises and Threatnings, as the Gospel contains?

“ That if you put Virtue into one Scale  
 “ and the whole World into the other, the  
 “ former will infinitely outweigh the lat-  
 “ ter \*;” is a very exalted Notion, and would have been a just one, if the Author had taken into the Account a future State, which only can give such a Weight to Virtue.

\* Audebo virtutis amplitudinem quasi in altera libræ lance ponere. Terram, mihi crede, ea lanx et maria deprimet. *Cicero de Finibus*. Page 435. *Ed. Davis*.

tue. How much more rationally noble and beautiful is this parallel Thought of our blessed Saviour! *What is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* Matt. xvi. 26. SERM. III.

Besides these Arguments for Inspiration, from Miracles in general, from the Gift of Tongues in particular, and from the internal Excellency of the Scriptures; another arises from the Prophecies; such as those of *Daniel*, concerning *Alexander's* Conquest over the *Persians*, the amazing Rapidity with which he subdued *Persia*, *Asia*, and *India* intimated in this Expression, *he touched not the Ground*, that is, he rather flew than went, he reduced them in a less Compass of Time, than a Traveller could have taken an accurate Survey of them. He goes on, in his eighth Chapter, to foretel that, after *Alexander's* Death, his Kingdom should be divided into four Parts, which accordingly came to pass; that out of one of them should arise a King, (*Antiochus Epiphanes*) who should harass and persecute the *Jews*, and profane the Temple. These Predictions are so clear and punctual, that *Porphyry* could not evade the

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SERM. III. the Force of them, but by supposing, without any Grounds, that the Book was forged after the Events. To disprove this unsupported Supposition it is enough to observe, that the whole *Jewish Nation* could not be consenting to, or imposed upon, by a Fraud of this Nature, so as to receive a Forgery into the Sacred Canon, at a Time when it was divided into several religious Sects and Parties, which kept a watchful Eye over one another; at a Time, when the Zeal of the *Jews* for their sacred Writings was so great, that they refused to deliver them up to *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and were resolved to sacrifice their Lives, rather than part with them.

But supposing these Prophecies forged after the Events; what shall we say as to those, which we know to be verified at this Day? *viz.* *Egypt shall be the BASEST of Kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself ANY MORE above the Nations. For I will diminish them, that they shall NO MORE rule over the Nations, Ezek. xxix. 14, 15.* And again, *Babylon shall be no more inhabited for EVER, neither shall it be dwelt in from Generation to Generation, Jer. l. 39.* And again, *Ye (the Jews) shall be scattered among all Nations, from one End of the Earth*




*Earth to the other, and shall become an* SERM. III.  
*Astonishment, a Proverb, and a By-word* }  
*among all Nations.*

Our Saviour foretels, that *not one Stone* of the *Jewish Temple should be left upon another* : And, when *Julian* the Emperor endeavoured to rebuild it, “ dreadful Balls  
 “ of Fire breaking from the Founda-  
 “ tion, made the Place inaccessible. The  
 “ Workmen, as oft as they repeated their  
 “ Efforts, were at several Times destroyed ;  
 “ and, the Element repelling them so of-  
 “ ten, as if it were designedly, the En-  
 “ terprize was baffled.” These last are the Words of *Ammianus Marcellinus*, an Heathen Historian, who was an Officer under *Julian*. Thus this Emperor, by endeavouring to invalidate our Saviour’s Prediction, concerning the Destruction of the *Jewish Church and State, till the Fullness of the Gentiles should come in*, only confirmed it the more.

These Prophecies, and many others, to which the Events exactly corresponded, give an incontestable Proof, that the Scriptures are the Word of God ; since none but God can discover future Events, which depend upon the Determination of free Agents.

A *partial* Inspiration, is to all Intentions and Purposes the same as *no* Inspiration at all. For Mankind would be as much *embarrassed*, to know *what* was *inspired*, and what was *not*; as they could be to *collect* a Religion for *themselves*: The Consequence of which would be, that we are left, just where we were before; and that God put himself to a great Expence of Miracles to effect nothing at all: A Consequence highly derogatory and injurious to his Honour. It is much more consistent with God's Honour to suppose, that, when he thought fit to interpose himself, he took care to display Truth in its genuine and native Simplicity, without any baser Alloys; that he made his Revelation all of a Piece, and, like himself *pure unmixed Light*, in which *there is no Darkness*, no Error, no Falseness; than to fancy he did his Work by *halves*, let others adulterate his Suggestions with their own impure Mixtures, and, in a motley Piece, blend, what ought always to be kept distinct, the Doctrines of God, and the Inventions of Men. Had any *one Point* of Doctrine been false or erroneous, God would not have authorised their Doctrines *in the gross* by Miracles. For God  
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can no more authorise Falsehood in *part*, SERM. III. than he can what is *wholly* and entirely so.  He wrought with them, and confirmed the Word with Signs following, Mark xvi. 20. He did not impress the Sanction of his Authority upon *this* or *that* Proposition exclusively of others, but confirmed the *Whole* of what they delivered without distinction; and therefore we must receive the *Whole* without distinction, and not think ourselves at liberty to single out some Points as obligatory, and reject others.

It is no Argument against universal Inspiration; that St. Paul declares, *to the rest speak I, not the Lord.* For the Meaning is not, that he was destitute of Inspiration; but that the Lord (our Saviour) had not, during his Life, spoken and determined concerning the Point in Debate, concerning unequal Marriages, of a Believer, for Instance, with an Infidel. That this is the Sense appears from what goes before: *To the Married speak not I, but the Lord.* That is, though our Saviour had left the Point of unequal Marriages undetermined, yet he had decided the Case of Divorces. St. Paul does not declare he was uninspired; but that our Lord had not pronounced a definitive Sentence on certain

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Points.

SER.M.III. Points. As little can be gathered from these  
 Words, *I think, I have the Spirit of the Lord*: For they are an Irony, in answer to those, who called in question the Truth of his Mission, as much as to say, “What-  
 “ ever you may imagine, who oppose my  
 “ Mission; yet I, who should know best,  
 “ with humble Deference to your Judg-  
 “ ment, suppose, I have the Spirit of the  
 “ Lord.”

Whatever Disputes may be raised about the *Degree* of Inspiration; it is an obvious Conclusion of Reason; that when God designed to notify his Will to Mankind, he would take care that the Persons commissioned by him, for that Purpose, should publish what was his *Will*: and Nothing *contradictory* or *disagreeable* thereto. Take this Key in your Hand, and you unlock all the Difficulties, that have been raised formerly, and revived of late, against Inspiration. For the Bible must be allowed to contain an infallible Rule of Faith and Practice; unless it can be proved, which has not yet been done, that the Authors of it have omitted some Truth essentially necessary to Salvation, or advanced something flagrantly absurd, and manifestly repugnant to the Will of God. No other Objections are of  
 any

any Force or Significancy: Because NO SER. II. III. other Objections can set aside the positive Evidence for such an Assistance of the Spirit, as was sufficient to preserve them from Error and guide them to all necessary Truths.


Now, as to the Charge of Inconsistencies, Absurdities, and Contradictions; whatever has been urged on this Head, has been satisfactorily answered by several able Writers. But, supposing all Objections of this kind could not be solved; it is much more reasonable to suppose, that they *may* admit of a *rational Solution*, though we at this Distance of Time, who want an adequate Knowledge of the Customs, Peculiarities, and Genius of the Eastern Nations, cannot hit upon it; than that a Religion attested by *Miracles*, confirmed by *Prophecies*, and recommended by its own *internal Excellency*, should be *false*. God would not have suffered an Imposture to come recommended to us with such strong and commanding Evidences, as have deceived (if they were deceived) as *rational, inquisitive* and *disinterested* Men as ever lived in the World; Evidences so strong, that no Instance can be given of *any Thing else*, that was ever *suspected* to be false, which had so

SERM. III. many and so bright Indications and Marks  
 of Truth, as Christianity has.

We ought to pass the same Judgment upon God's Word, which we do upon his Works. In the latter there appear plain Signatures of Goodness and Wisdom throughout the whole Frame of Nature. But if among the Works of the Creation, which are *generally* excellent, there are some *particular* Exceptions, some Creatures, for Instance, which, far from answering any wise End which we can discern, are really noxious and baneful to the Rest: What do we infer from thence? That the Creation is not the Work of a wise and good God? Or even, that these Creatures were not formed by him? No, no such Thing: We conclude nothing, but that these Subjects lie too deep for us, and that our Views are too narrow to account for every Thing. Just so, the Characters of *Goodness* and *Wisdom* are generally impressed upon the Bible: And if in a Book *generally* so good and excellent there are some *particular* Things *hard to be understood*, nay, seemingly absurd; we ought to resolve it into our Want of Penetration and Discernment: And we might as well argue, "several  
 3 " Things

“ Things in the Creation appear to us pro-<sup>SERM. III.</sup>  
 “ ductive of evil, and hurtful ; and there-  
 “ fore, because they are not of a Piece with  
 “ the rest of God’s Works, they cannot be  
 “ his Productions ;” as pretend to reason  
 thus : “ Such Texts seem unaccountable to  
 “ us, and therefore we will not allow them  
 “ to be written under the Direction of an  
 “ All-wise Being.” Instead of such a pre-  
 cipitate Judgment, it would be much wiser  
 to express ourselves as St. *Austin* did : “ *What*  
 “ *I understand* in Scripture, is excellent ;  
 “ and I do not question, but what I do *not*  
 “ understand is so too.” We should re-  
 member, that a Book, which speaks of  
 Things remote from common Apprehen-  
 sion, which lays before us *the deep Things*  
*of God*, must in the Nature of the Thing  
 be more puzzling, than any Composition,  
 which contains the shallow Devices of an  
 Understanding like our own.

Men may retire into their Closets, and  
 there imagine with themselves, how easy  
 and plain a Book should be, which is of  
 a divine Original, without any amazing  
 Facts, without any dark and unintelligible  
 Passages ; and when they find that the Re-  
 velation which we have, does not tally with

SERM. III.  their vain Imaginations, may presume to reject it. And, should they, instead of looking abroad, and seeing what the Administration of the Universe is in *fact*, sit down and form *imaginary* Schemes, how God should govern the World; the Course of *Nature*, as it is in reality, would no more correspond with their preconceived Hypothesis, than the *Scriptures* do. They would never imagine *à priori*, that a considerable Part of the rational World should be cut off, before they came to the Use of their Reason, and should just make their Entrance upon the Theatre of Nature, to go out again, without seeming to answer one valuable End or Purpose: They would never conceive, without seeing how Things really are, that there should be so much Evil, natural and moral, in the World; that several Nations should *sit in Darkness, and the Shadow of Death*.

One plain Argument, that God *has* made such a Revelation as we have, should outweigh *athousand plausible Conjectures* brought against it, to shew, that it can be no Revelation from God; and that if it had, it must have been made in *such* a Manner, and *no other*. The Reason is as follows: We can



can *easily judge* of the Strength of those Arguments, which prove that God has, in *fact*, published his Will to Mankind; for they are *clear, full, and obvious*: But we are intirely *incompetent Judges*; how, in *what Manner*, with *what Degree* of Clearness in every Point, God, whose *Thoughts are not as our Thoughts*, should publish his Will, *how much Light* it was proper he should communicate, and what *Intricacies* he might suffer, on purpose to be the Tests of humble well-disposed Minds, and to be a *Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offence*, to the Perverse and Disingenuous. We may conclude from the Uniformity of God's Proceedings, that *his revealed Will* must bear some Analogy and Correspondence to the *Constitution of Nature*, as settled by him. And when every Thing can be *accounted for*, and is easy to be understood, in the Conduct of *his Providence*; then, and not till then, we ought to expect, that *every Thing* should be so too in a *divine Revelation*.

SERM. III.



# SERMON IV.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Corruption of Human  
Nature.



JOB XIV. 3, 4.

*Dost thou open thine Eyes upon such an one?  
and bringest me into Judgment with thee?  
Who can bring a clean Thing out of an Un-  
clean? Not one.*

**T**HESE Words contain *Job's* EX-<sup>SERM.IV.</sup> postulation with his Maker, and the Sense of them, to use the Words of a great Writer, who clearly proves, that they have a plain Reference to the Introduction of Corruption, by the Sin  
of

SERM. IV. of the Woman, is as follows, “ Why art  
 “ thou extreme to mark all my Errors?  
 “ Is it reasonable to expect Purity in a  
 “ Man born of a Woman, who is by the  
 “ very Condition of his Birth unclean \* ?”  
 The Disobedience of our first Parents in-  
 volved their Posterity, and entailed a De-  
 pravity of Nature upon their Descendants :  
 Which Depravity, though it is not a Sin  
 in *us*, till the Will closes with it, and deli-  
 berately consents to it ; yet is certainly  
 sinful in *itself*, and therefore is stiled Ori-  
 ginal Sin. For if it were not so, if the  
 first Rise of evil Thoughts, and every Ten-  
 dency and Bias to Vice were not criminal  
 in *itself* ; the Consent of the Will to it  
 could never *make* it *so*. For the Consent  
 of the Will cannot alter the *Nature* of  
 Things.

St. Paul, Col. iii. 9, 10. says, *Ye have  
 put off the old Man with his Deeds, and  
 have put on the new Man, which is renewed  
 in Knowledge AFTER THE IMAGE of  
 Him, that created him ; or, as it is in ano-  
 ther Place, Ephes. iv. 24. which after God  
 is created in Righteousness and true Holi-  
 ness.*

\* Bishop Stock's Second Dissertation, Pag. 255.

*ness.* Now *to be renewed* after the Image SERM. IV. of our Creator, signifies in the Original, to receive again, what we had once lost. Man therefore once had (in his primitive State) that Image, to which he is to be restored by the Grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. This is the Sense which *Irenæus*, a Father of the second Century, puts upon these Words. For he says, “What we lost in *Adam*, *viz.* the divine Image and Likeness, we receive again in *Christ Jesus* \*.”

*Adam* was formed in the Image of God; and what that Image was, we learn from the foregoing Words of *St. Paul*, that ye put on the new Man, which, after God (after the Image of God) is created in Righteousness and true Holiness. It is plain, that we who are shapen in Wickedness, who are born with strong Propensions to Vice, are not created in Righteousness and true Holiness: It is plain therefore, that we are fallen from our original and primitive State of Innocence.

Far be it from me to vilify human Nature, as if it were *totally* bad, without any Remains and Traces of its primitive Greatness. I own, that any Man may, through  
the

\* *Irenæus*, Lib. 3. cap. 20.

SERM. IV. the Grace of God and his own Endeavours, stand clear of all *presumptuous* Sins, and much more of all evil *Habits*. I own that our Passions are innocent in themselves, though they are often wrong in their *Degree*, being not very seldom disproportioned to the real Value of Things; very violent and exorbitant, where they ought to be moderate, and very moderate and remiss, where there is no imminent Danger of Excess. I grant, that, though our Nature is *degenerated*, yet it is not entirely *inverted*, so as to have no Relish for Goodness; that we are not only capable of Virtue; but also of great Attainments therein; we may not only be virtuous, but even *excel in Virtue*.

Notwithstanding, there are plain Proofs that we are fallen Creatures, from the Perverseness of our Will, and the Weakness of our Understanding.


For no Creature could come *originally* from God's Hand, but what was *perfect* in its *kind*: No *rational* Creature can be *perfect* in his kind, in whom there is a strong Propension to *Vice*, that is, to what is *unreasonable*, and a great *Irregularity* of the Appetites and Affections. Had Man continued such as he was at first formed; the

the *Balance* certainly must have been, at SERM.IV. least, *even*, between the sensitive and intellectual Part in our Composition, between our Passion and our Reason: But that it is *not* so, is plain from this; that it is not the Province of Wisdom to run into the Arms of a Temptation, and boldly to grapple with it; which when we do, we seldom fail of being foiled in the Conflict. But our Victory over Temptations is to decline a Combat with them; and a considerable Part of the Innocency, which is in the World, may be owing to the Want of Opportunities to commit Vice. There is a Stock of Corruption in us, though sometimes unsuspected by us, which often discovers itself, as soon as there are suitable Objects to call it forth. Hence it is, that few or none are to be trusted with absolute Power; because an unlimited Extent of Power gives those vicious Inclinations their full Play, which before were cramped and confined within narrow Bounds. We do not distrust ourselves; because we know not what is in ourselves. Many, who would have said in a private Capacity, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do these Things?* have done the very Things in a public

SERM. IV. public Sphere, which they heartily condemned before. So much Reason is there for that Prayer, *Lord, deliver me from myself. He, that thinketh he standeth, let him take heed, lest he fall:* then most especially, when he *thinketh* he standeth. For Security is our Ruin : And the Minute we are off our Guard, we may be surprized into Vice by a *powerful Tempter*, who knows each Avenue to the Soul, or by our own *Passions*, the *most powerful* Tempters of All. And he, who is now virtuous, is no more secure of continuing so, without much Circumspection, and the Grace of God ; than he, who is in perfect Health, is safe against every Attack of Infection.

We see the wisest of Men, in their unguarded Hours, betrayed into unaccountable Follies ; we startle at it, and cry out, *Lord, what is Man!* Why, a Being, who, without God's *upholding Power*, would the next Moment sink into *Nothing* ; and, without the Assistances of his *Spirit*, would be a Sinner, that is, *worse than Nothing* ; then always betraying his *Weakness*, when he depends presumptuously upon his own *Strength* ; a *Child* ever in this Respect, that, if left to himself, *without* the Guidance



dance and *Support* of his heavenly *Parent*, SERM. IV.  
 he would *fall* and *injure* himself. 

A Philosopher, in his *Closet*, makes many admirable *Reflexions*, and lays down excellent *Rules* for the *Conduct* of *Life*, under any *Affliction* or *Provocation*; yet, among his *many* fine *Reflexions*, he forgets *this One*, as true as any of them, *viz.* that all these *Thoughts* are the *Result* of a *Mind at Ease*; and therefore will certainly vanish and disappear, as soon as it is *not so*: Like the *Children of Ephraim*, who *being harnessed, carrying Bows*, and making a goodly *Appearance*, *turned themselves back in the Day of Battle*.

It is certain, that *Reason* was originally given us to govern the *Passions* in all *Cases*: It is certain, that it does not now regulate and govern them in all *Cases*; it is certain therefore, that we are in a fallen disordered *State*. To give some *Instances*; Are there many of us, who when any great, immediate, and unforeseen *Danger* threatens, have so much *Command* of themselves, as to have that just *Degree* of *Fear*, which is necessary to alarm their *Caution*, and to prevent any *Rashness*; but is not so immoderate, as to overset the *Spirits*, and betray

SERM. IV. the Succours of Reason? If they have, they are more indebted for it to an *inborn Vigour* of Spirit, and a Familiarity with Danger, than to all the *Reasonings*, which Philosophy ever suggested. For that Courage, which depends upon Reason, is very precarious: It is like that Health, which is supported by constant Medicines: A native Strength of Constitution and constant Exercise are of infinitely more Service.

Take another Instance, how unequal the Conflict is between Reason and Passion. Suppose a Man over-whelmed with Sorrow; and produce your strong Reasons, why he ought not to grieve; and what will they avail? Length of Time shall abate and wear away that Sorrow, which Reason could not conquer: Nay, a trifling Diversion, suited to the Capacity of a Child, shall have greater Influence than all the Consolations of *Seneca* and *Epietetus*. To put a Man upon Thinking is not the most effectual Way of getting the better of immoderate Grief: The best Expedient is to divert his Thoughts. We confess ourselves to be *miserable Sinners*; and we are therefore *most miserable* under any Distress, *because* we are *Sinners*: And Sin, which is the  
Sting

Sting of *Death*, is likewise that of *Sorrows*. SERM. IV.  
 Were all right within their own Breasts,  
 Men in Affliction might retreat within  
 themselves, with as much Satisfaction, as  
 they retire home, when the Storm beats  
 hard upon them abroad. But the Reason,  
 why they shun *themselves*, much more than  
 the *World* does *them*, when unfortunate,  
 is; that, whatever Self-Complacency a  
 Fulness of Spirits, the natural Result of un-  
 interrupted Prosperity, might inspire; Ad-  
 versity lowers their Thoughts as well as  
 Spirits, and shews them to themselves in a  
 Glass, which gives their real, not a flatter-  
 ing Likeness.

The Passions are certain *Willings* and  
*Nillings* in the Soul, attended with a *Com-  
 motion* of the *Blood* and *Spirits*. From  
 hence an Argument may be drawn, that  
 we are not in a primitive State of Order  
 and Rectitude: For if we were, the Soul  
 must be vested with a Power of *curbing* and  
 controlling; or *quickenning* and exciting the  
 Animal Spirits, according as *Reason* directs.  
 But that the Soul is not invested with this  
 Prerogative, we need not look far for In-  
 stances. For Example, Men of a cold  
 phlegmatic Temper, have *Sensè* enough to

SERM. IV. see their Duty, but not *Spirit* enough to act up to it *resolutely* in all Cases; a melancholy Chilness damps their Endeavours; and they bring no *Fruit* to Perfection, for want of a kindly *Warmth* to ripen it. *Forbearances* indeed of Action are always in their Power; and therefore they need not be *positively bad*, or commit any presumptuous Sin; but it is not in their Power, without the extraordinary Grace of God, to reach the *utmost Heights* and Attainments in *Virtue*. For Reason, abstractedly from strong Passions, is a sedentary Principle; it is like the *Genius* of *Socrates*, which rather checked and restrained him when he was going to do wrong, than put him upon vigorously pursuing what was right.

On the other hand, the Men, in whose Composition Fire and Spirit is the predominant Ingredient, have an irregular Greatness of Soul, and strange Inequalities in their Conduct: The Great and the Extravagant bordering so near, that the Transition is easy from the one to the other. A generous Ardour of Soul is not many Removes distant from Enthusiasm and chimerical Designs: They *despise* and disdain *little* and *low* Sins, as what would make them

them cheap; but they do not, it may be, *detest* and abhor *great Vices*. Whereas there is a certain *Point* in Virtue and Vice, a certain *determined Proportion*, of Goodness and Wickedness, beyond which Men of *cool* and languid Affections dare not venture to proceed; they, on the contrary, have always been *eminently good*, or *exceeding sinful*, or both at different Times. One would think, their good Sense should govern their enterprizing Spirit and Ambition: Alas! too often, unless they have got a Habit of Recollection, their Ambition and fiery Spirit get the better of their good Sense.

If Men proceed to Action while their Passions are warm, they do not see Things justly, and therefore are apt to act too hastily: If they stay till their Passions are cool; they are apt not to act at all; their Resolutions, like Fruit, that rots by hanging too long on the Tree, come to Nothing.

But to shew more effectually, that we are a Set of lapsed and distempered Creatures let it be observed, that we do not love or hate, rejoice or grieve, hope or fear, *so far*, as is consistent with *Reason*, and *no farther*. We love the Things of this World, *beyond* the Proportion of Good

SERM. IV. which is in them: The Love of Virtue and heavenly Happiness does not *keep pace* with the *Worth* of the Objects beloved. The least Glance of Reflexion will shew, how often we have been *disquieted* with *little* Things, and *pleas'd* with *as little*. Strange! that we should not make one Reflexion more, *viz.* how *little* we *ourselves* must be, who can be thus pleas'd and disquieted above measure. The fear of Evils to come, is often more tormenting than the Evils themselves: There is *only one* Thing we cannot dread too much, and that is God's Displeasure. *For even thereafter as a Man feareth*, sayeth the Psalmist, *so is his Displeasure*: That is, let a Man's Fears be rais'd to never so high a Pitch; God's Displeasure is an Evil fully proportioned to them: Yet fearing every other Ill too much, we have not just Apprehensions of his Vengeance. Is there a Man who does not feel the Force of *Isaiab's* significant Expostulation? *Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a Man that shall die, and of the Son of Man, that shall be made as Grass? And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who stretched out the Heavens, and laid the Foundation of the Earth?* Yet this Being, awfully just, the almost

almost only Object, *that ought to be feared*, SERM. IV.  
 is the almost only Object, which we do not sufficiently fear. And he can be regardless of the Wrath of an *Almighty God*, who is intimidated by a *Shadow*, an *Insect*, a *Worm*, and the *Son of Man*, who is a *Worm*: How many virtuous Actions are owing to natural Constitution, and to a Regard for our Reputation? How little Virtue is there any where practised through a Sense of Religion? Men do not revere *themselves* in secret, because they do not sufficiently revere *that Being*, who *seeth in secret*, and will reward or punish them *openly*: But they reverence the *World* and dread its Censures. What a Contradiction is Man! this Minute perhaps indulging *serious Reflexions*, the next, the *Sport of idle Passions*. If we raise our Thoughts to the Author of our Being; the least Trifle, the least striking Object upon Earth, shall be able to divert our Attention, and to call off our Mind, which was on the Wing, from Heaven. The Truth is, ever since the Fall, the Body clogs the native Energy of the Soul, and pins it down to this low ignoble Sphere; though it has an inborn Consciousness of being intended for a much higher and no-

SERM. IV. **bler Scene of Action.** The Soul is like a King dethroned, who, though confined and imprisoned in a *Dungeon*, is conscious, that he was *born* to and designed for a *Throne*. We feel a *Law in our Members*, warring against the *Law of our Mind*, and bringing us into *Captivity*. And to have all our Thoughts laid open to the View of the World, to be *naked*, yet *not ashamed*, might do well enough in a State of Innocence, but does not suit our lapsed Condition.

A Being of infinite *Holiness and Purity*, who *hates Sin*, could not produce a Being into the World without any Contagion derived in a natural Way from our first Parents, who should labour under a *moral Impossibility* of avoiding *all Sin*, at all Times. Now that Man labours under a moral Impossibility of avoiding *all Sin*, at all Times, is evident from hence, *viz.* that, what *no mere Man* ever *did* do, it is morally impossible, any Man ever *should* do. Now no mere Man, from the first Stage of his Existence to the last Period of it, ever discharged all the Duties of Life, without any Omission, and abstained from the Commission of every Vice. It is evident therefore, to the Force of a Demonstration, that  
 Man



Man is a fallen Creature, and not such as SERM. IV. he came, originally, out of the Hands of an infinitely pure and holy Being. *Who can say, I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from my Sin?* Prov. xx. 9. IN MANY Things we offend all.

Into what can this *universal Depravation*, which prevails every where, more or less, among the Sons of Men, be resolved, but into an *universal Cause*, the inborn Corruption of Nature, and an original Taint, derived from our first Parents? Can it be resolved into Education? Many Parents, after all the Care which they have laid out, in educating their Children virtuously, have Reason to expostulate, as God, the common Parent of us all, does in *Isaiab*, *What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked, that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes?* The only Way to educate Children rightly, is to teach them early to deny themselves the Gratification of those irregular Appetites, which Nature has implanted \*. Self-will, Stubborn-

\* Vidi ego, & expertus sum Zelantem parvulum. Nondum loquebatur, & intuebatur pallidus amaro Aspectu col-lactaneum suum. Sancti Augustini Confess. Lib. 1. cap. 7.

SERM. IV.

Stubbornness, and an Inclination to Things forbidden, merely because they are forbidden, discover themselves even in our Infancy: Vice is the natural Product of the Soil; the more uncultivated the Mind is, the more it is overrun with it: But Virtue is the slow laborious Result of repeated Self-Denials, Hardships, and Difficulties.

If Mankind were in a State of Integrity, and primitive Uprightness; there could scarce be, one would think, so much Evil in the World, as there really is. A great Part of Mankind seems to resemble the *Dæmoniac* in the Gospel, who *had been often bound with Fetters and Chains; and the Chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the Fetters broken in Pieces, and no Man could tame him.* They are curbed and restrained by divine and human Laws, by temporal Penalties, and the Dread of eternal Misery; and yet one impetuous Passion breaks through all these strong Fences, just as a Thread of Tow is snapped asunder, when it toucheth the Fire. It argues a strange Ignorance of the World, to expect that Men should be swayed by *calm rational* Motives only, and by the Charms of Virtue. The very Necessity of Govern-  
ment

ment is founded chiefly upon this, that SERM. IV.  
Men are not fit to be trusted with the Government of themselves, without any Check or Control upon them. And if any Man should attempt to govern a single Family only, by pure Reason, without exerting any Act of Authority; Experience would soon convince him, that he had been forming a visionary Scheme. How comes it, unless we are in a State of Degeneracy, that Reason, which was originally designed to be the governing Principle, is so feeble; and the Passions, which should be subject to it, so headstrong?

Man was originally formed for the Knowledge of God, and Worship of him only: Yet, in all Countries unenlightened by Revelation, Men were so far from knowing and adoring the true God, that they were universally immersed in Idolatry and Superstition. All the Nations even now, as well as of old, where Revelation hath not got Footing, bear Testimony to the Weakness of human Understanding. The Worship of God in Spirit and in Truth, was not discovered by us, it was revealed to us. And what Mankind did not ascertain for so many Ages, till the Propagation of Christianity;

SERM. IV. Christianity; they probably would never have discovered, to the End of the World, if left to themselves, without any Assurances from Heaven. But these, you will say, were the Errors of the Grois of the Species: The Philosophers knew undoubtedly and taught better Things. So far from that, that they admitted as great Absurdities, only of another Kind: Some of them asserting God to be the Soul of the World, of which our Souls are so many Parts, and into which they were to be resolved, after the Dissolution of the Body; others of them maintaining, that the *Æther*, or empty Space, was God; others, the whole World; and some few only contending, that he was an infinite Mind, which great Truth, however, they blended with very erroneous Notions.

Again, Man was formed for *loving his Neighbour as himself*. Yet the World is generally inclined to the ill-natured Side, slow to believe what is advantageous to a Man's Character, but ready to credit any blackening Reports. Are Men *grateful* in proportion as they are *resentful*? Their Hearts burn within them with Resentment for an Injury received; nay, sometimes

times for a Favour refused: But do they SERM. IV. feel as lively a Glow of Gratitude, when some Kindness is done them?

Observe the Man, who makes Pretensions to an exalted and disinterested Benevolence: Perhaps, after all his Pretensions, an *agreeable* enchanting *Form* shall make its Way irresistibly to his Heart, and, at a heat, *in a Moment*, stamp upon his Mind *more tender* and endearing Sentiments, and recommend the Person, who is the Owner of it, *more powerfully* to his *Affection*, than *long tried* and approved *Worth*, and an uninterrupted *Inter-course* of *friendly Offices*, can another, who is *destitute* of that Advantage. There is nothing so insignificant, *by* which we differ from one another, but *about* which we may differ likewise: Inasmuch, that the Word *Difference*, which originally signifies, that Things are not the same, is made use of to express Discord and Animosity. It is as well our Duty in point of Benevolence, though it be not so, much in Fashion, to encourage Merit and Ingenuity, as it is to relieve Distress. Yet, though *Men of Merit* are often preferred, how few in comparison have been preferred *merely as Men of Merit*, without any other

Con-

SERM. IV. Consideration? Nay perhaps it would be  
 for the Advantage of those, who are possessed of uncommon Worth, to do, as *Moses* did, when his Face shone with heavenly Glory, so that *the Israelites could not stedfastly behold it; viz. to draw a Veil* over it, and to moderate that Lustre, which is painful to most Eyes, and insupportable to distempered ones. The Bulk of Mankind regard a Man in proportion to what he is worth, the *only* Worth, that some seem to have any Notion of.

Again, we were designed for an exact Knowledge of ourselves. Yet, seeing *every Thing else through a Glass darkly*, we see *ourselves* through a *flattering* Glass, in the fairest and *brightest* Light. But could we, several of us, view ourselves just as we are, without those false Colours, and gilded Lustre, which Self-Love sheds around its Votaries; it might be a greater Misery to us, than any we ever felt. For, in all other Cases, an imaginary Worth affords a fantastic Pleasure, which buoys up our Spirits, and is a kind of Counterpoise to those Sufferings, which we undergo, however solid and real: But in this Case, Misery, genuine Misery, would have its  
 full

full Effect without any Consideration to break the Force of it. Many of us must, in some measure, *deceive ourselves* to be tolerably *happy*: To disabuse the Mind of its *ill-grounded Esteem*, and strip it of every *agreeable* but wrong Idea, would sink several of us into a Set of joyless, dull, spiritless Creatures. It would be to turn us out of a *Fool's Paradise*, where the Mind was delightfully lost and bewildered, among *gay Delusions* and fine *visionary Scenes*, into a *dreary Heath* and barren *Wilderness*, where there was little or *nothing goodly, fair, and amiable.*

Lastly, we were formed for the Attainment of beneficial Truths. Yet there are not many certain Truths, demonstrable from *intrinsic* Evidences, from the abstract Nature of the Thing; though Reason can prove several, by the Help of *external* Evidences. Setting Revelation aside, Mankind would have Reason to wish that they did not know so *much* as they do; or that they knew a *great deal more.* At present they have just Knowledge enough to disquiet and perplex them, but not enough, without the Scriptures, to make them easy. In a total Darkness they would view No-  
thing


SERM. IV. thing at all, and in a full Day-Light they would view Objects clearly and justly: But in a Twilight of Knowledge they imagine they see Things, that are *not*; and see Things, that *are*, *otherwise* than they really are. Youth, sanguine Youth, may be positive and peremptory, and fancy it knows every Thing, because as yet it knows Nothing fully. But Men, who have read, and studied, and thought much; towards the Close of Life retain scarce one Sentiment unaltered and unimproved, which they had at their first Entrance upon their Studies: Just as that famed Vessel, which had been in several Voyages, and first sailed round the Globe, had scarce one Plank the same, upon its last Arrival in Port, with which it was first launched. There are several considerable Truths, which, like the great Author of Truth, *dwell in Light which no Man can approach to*: Whatever Evidences they may be surrounded with, they are *inaccessible to us*.

I might proceed, to demonstrate the Truth of the Fall from those plain Monuments of it, those Miseries which, in Consequence of it, were introduced into the World. Can it be proved, that natural



Good and natural Evil are so closely connected, that there could not be such a SERM. IV.  
 Quantity of natural Good, except there was just such a Quantity of natural Evil too? That, for Instance, the World could not be so happy; except there were so many acute and painful Diseases, so many noxious Insects, Famines, Eruptions from burning Mountains, &c? Are these, what God, upon a Review of the Creation, pronounced *very good*? No, there is no accounting for so much *natural* Evil; except it was sent as a standing Indication of God's Displeasure against those *moral* Disorders, which prevailed in the World, consequent to the Fall.

People may, I know, start many Difficulties upon this Head. But it is, I think, not so reasonable to suppose, that God created Man *originally bad*; as that, when Man *bad* corrupted his Nature, he let that Corruption descend upon his Posterity, in a *natural* Way. Just as it would be more irreconcilable to the Sentiments which we have of the Deity, to imagine he would *immediately* form a Creature *disordered* in his Senses; than that, when a Parent had brought this Distem-

SERM. IV.  per upon himself by Debauchery, he permitted the Madness to *devolve* upon his *Children*.

It is one Thing to say, that *God* was, or could be the *Author of Evil*; and another to say, that, when Evil was *introduced* by *Man*, he did not work a *Miracle*, to prevent the *natural* Consequences of it; but *suffered* it for the sake of bringing a *greater Good* out of it; and that by the *Redemption*, he has advanced *Man* to much *superior* Happiness, than he could have had any Title to, if he had *continued* in a State of *Innocence*. This is the scriptural Solution of the Difficulty. *Where Sin abounded Grace did much more abound. As in Adam all die; so in Christ shall all be made alive. As by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin; so the Grace of God hath abounded unto all Men, through Jesus Christ.* This was the *Labour of Love* (if any Thing to *Love* can be a *Labour*) to countervail the ill Effects of the Fall, by an universal Remedy.

However great a Mystery the Transmission of Sin may be, which yet is not a greater Difficulty, than the Transmission  
of

of Madneſs, or any other Diſeaſe, from SERM. IV. Father to Son: yet *Man*, without this Clue to unravel the Intricacies of his Nature, is a *greater Myſtery to himſelf*, than the *Transmission* of Sin can be to *him*. Original Sin cannot be ſo inconceivable by him, as he is by himſelf without it. For, pray obſerve: It cannot enter into the Head of Man to conceive greater Inconſiſtencies, Abſurdities, and Contrarieties; than he may find, if he looks honeſtly and fairly into it, in his own Heart. How many pious Reſolutions he forms, which, perhaps, dye in Embryo, before they ripen into Birth; and yet how many fooliſh and vain Projects: His Thoughts now aſpiring to, and grasping after, heavenly Happineſs, and anon ſinking into the Dregs of Corruption! He is a ſtrange Compound of Excellency and Baſeneſs; of the Angel and the Brute; a motly Mixture of Knowledge and Ignorance, of Virtue and Vice, of Happineſs and Miſery; the Fleſh warring againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh; two ſuch mortal Enemies, that they are continually jarring and oppoſing each other; and yet two ſuch dear Friends, that they dread a Separation from each other.

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never so great; yet there is no getting rid of them, but at the Expence of an Absurdity, the greatest of Absurdities, *viz.* that Creatures so corrupt as we are, could be *immediately* formed by an *infinitely perfect* God, (who cannot behold Iniquity and Corruption with Pleasure) *without* any *Contagion derived* from, and transmitted to us by, our first Parents. Let a Man look within himself, and he will find, he will feel, a Demonstration of one Part of the Scriptures, the Truth of the Fall: Or, if he cannot see it there, he will prove by his very Blindness the Truth which he denies. But if he admits this Part of the Scriptures to be true, I cannot perceive, why he should demur as to the rest. For there is no Part of them which is attended with greater Difficulties. “ I appeal (*says a lively Writer*) to yourself, in your own Degree of Goodness, if you could create your own Children, whether you would not create them in a better State, and with less of Evil, than that in which you was born yourself. Therefore, only supposing God to have your Degree of Goodness, he could not have created  
 “ the

“ the first Man, from whom your Nature  
 “ is derived, in the State that you are ;  
 “ and therefore, supposing him only to be  
 “ good, you have sufficient Proof; but  
 “ supposing him to be, what he undoubt-  
 “ edly is, infinitely good, you have a full  
 “ Demonstration, that you are a fallen  
 “ Creature, or not in that State in which  
 “ God created you.”

What remains, but that we strive to re-  
 cover that Happiness by *thinking soberly*,  
 which our first Parents forfeited by *ambi-  
 tious and aspiring* Thoughts. Humility is  
 the Valley, in which Benevolence (and  
 every other Virtue) delights to grow. For  
 whatever Professions of Benevolence proud  
 Men may make; Pride and Benevolence are  
 utterly inconsistent. He, who is big with  
 the Sentiments of his Dignity, must have  
 an Aversion to those, who do not seem to  
 have as exalted an Opinion of him, as he  
 has of himself. Now, as none can think as  
 extravagantly of a proud Man, as he thinks  
 of himself; the Consequence is, that he  
 must hate all Mankind, except a few Flat-  
 terers. He must be angry with those, who  
 do not proportion their Regard to his *ima-  
 ginary Deserts*, which it is impossible to do,

SERM. IV. For though it be no difficult Matter to discern how much Merit another Man *really has*; it is not quite so easy to determine, how much he may *imagine* himself to have. Therefore no *proud* Person can be a benevolent and *moral* Man; and no *bumble* Person brought up in the Christian and Protestant Religion, one would be apt to think, can be a *mere moral* Man. For he, who is humble, will not trust in his own Righteousness, or make any proud Pretensions to exalted Worth. The Consideration and Sense of his Unworthiness, will dispose him to accept the Offers of Salvation by Jesus Christ, and make him endeavour to fulfil the Terms of it. He, who has no high Notions of his own Merits, will be glad to be accepted by those of his blessed Saviour.

# SERMON V.

On the REDEMPTION.

In TWO SERMONS.

Preached in part, at the Lady Moyer's  
Lecture, in the Year 1733; and, since  
That Time, considerably altered.



I PETER III. 18.


*Christ also hath once suffered for Sins, the Just  
for the Unjust, that he might bring us unto  
God.*

**W**HAT is said of the great Duties <sup>SERM. V.</sup>  
of Morality, and the Difference  
between Virtue and Vice, *viz.*

*Ask your own Heart, and Nothing is so  
plain: It is to mistake them costs the Pain  
and Time; may, with a little Variation, be  
applied to the fundamental Doctrines of*

SERM. V. Christianity, viz. the Trinity and Satisfaction: *Search the Scriptures*, and Nothing can be plainer, or more *easy* to find there: *Not* to find them there, or, to speak more properly to *explain* them *away* when found, requires a great deal of Labour, Subtlety, and uncommon Dexterity. The natural Import of the Words of my Text is this, that Christ died, not merely for our Benefit, as an Example of Patience, and to confirm the Truth of his Doctrine, by his Blood; but, as a propitiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind, that we might, by virtue of his meritorious Sufferings, be redeemed from the Punishment due to them. The Words of St. Paul, *Romans* v. 7, 8. confirm the Sense of this Text, *Scarcely for a Righteous Man will one die: For per-adventure, for a good Man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his Love towards us, in that, while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us.* Our Saviour died for us, in the same Sense, that one Man would dare to die for another, whom he greatly loved, by substituting himself in the room of us Sinners. So *David* says, *Would to God, I had died for thee*, or instead of Thee, O *Absalom, my Son.* God  
*hath*



*hath made him, who knew no Sin, to be Sin,* SERM. V.  
or an Offering for Sin, *for us.* Accordingly   
*Isaiab said: Thou shalt make his Soul an Of-*  
*fering for Sin.*

Again; our Saviour is said to *bear our Iniquities.* The obvious Sense of which Passages will appear, by comparing it with another: *The Son shall not bear the Iniquities of the Father,* i. e. the Son shall not suffer instead of, or for the Sins of, the Father.

In a word, the Scripture Proofs of the Redemption are so many, that it would be endless to quote them All; and so well known, that it is almost needless to quote any: And we must either look upon a Doctrine, which is inculcated in such a Variety of Expressions, and upon which such an uncommon Stress is laid, to be of the very Essence of Christianity; or we must look upon the Scriptures, as a Book not designed to teach and inform, but to confound, puzzle, and mislead Mankind.

And since our Adversaries pretend, they have recourse to a figurative Sense; because the literal one, in their Opinion, is big with Absurdities; I shall therefore endeavour,

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*Ist*, To disprove and confute those Schemes, which they have advanced, in opposition to the true Scripture Doctrine of our Salvation by Jesus Christ.

*Ildly*, I shall make it my Business to rescue the Method of our Salvation, as laid down in Sacred Writ, from the Charge of Absurdities, with which they load it.

*Ist* then, I shall endeavour to disprove and confute those Schemes, which they have advanced, in opposition to the true Scripture Doctrine of our Salvation by Jesus Christ.

The first Scheme which I shall consider is, That our own intrinsic Worth, or right Behaviour, must be the Foundation of our Acceptance with God; and not what another has done for us; which can never render us personally pleasing to, or approved by God.

The second Hypothesis, which will fall under Consideration, is, That God is obliged to accept of Repentance, in lieu of perfect Obedience, without any Atonement.

As

As to the first,

It is alledged, that God does not approve, or disapprove, from capricious Humour or arbitrary Pleasure, but from the real Valuableness or Unworthiness of such the Object of his Approbation or Dislike: And that therefore, Nothing but Mens right Behaviour could make them the Objects of God's Favour.

To unravel which Fallacy,

In the first place, we must carefully distinguish between the *Approbation*, and the *Good-will*, or *Benevolence*, of the Deity. For the Deity just so far approves of Beings, as they are really *good*, and his Approbation is always proportioned to the several Degrees of Goodness in them. But his *Benevolence* needs not keep exact *Pace* with, and be *determined* solely, and wholly, by his Approbation and their Goodness. The *Approbation* of an unerring Being must, in the Nature of the Thing, be founded on something *intrinsic*, and *in* the Beings *approved*: But his *Benevolence* often *does*, and in some Cases must, proceed from Motives *extrinsic* to the Beings themselves: Of which, among many others, the Communication of *greater* Degrees of Happiness to *some* Beings

SERM. V. Beings than *others*, antecedently to, and therefore without any Regard to, their *Merits* at the Creation, is a pregnant Instance. And he who made some Beings *Angels* and not *Men*, for no other Reason than his own *WILL*; may, certainly, advance us from *Men* into *Angels* of Bliss, at the *Instance* and *Intercession* of our blessed Saviour. It may be granted, that the Deity cannot love any Being farther, than it is lovely in itself, with a Love of *Esteem*, *Complacency*, or *Good-liking*. And yet there may be a considerable Degree of *Benevolence* and *Good-will* in the Deity, towards Beings, for whom he has but a slender Share of *Esteem* and *Approbation*. The Reason is very plain: The *Benevolence* of the Deity is *infinite*; but his *Approbation* is *finite*, and *adjusted* to the intrinsic Worth of each Creature, be it less or more. Our personal *Valuableness* therefore, or our right Behaviour, may be the only Ground of the divine *Approbation*; but God forbid, that it should be the only Ground of his *Favour* and *Acceptance*. Supposing the Deity to be infinitely Good, and to take a *Delight* in communicating *Happiness* to his Creatures, there will always be a strong Reason

Reason *for* his Beneficence, or the Communication of Good to us, when there lies no Reason *against* it. The only Reasons, that could lie against it, were—either that we are Subjects intirely indisposed for, and incapable of, Happiness, through our *evil* and inveterate *Habits*—or that it is not consistent with God's Wisdom, Justice, and his Regard for the Whole, to admit us to a State of an exceeding and everlasting Weight of Glory. The first Impediment we *ourselves*, by the Grace of God, must remove, by correcting each habitually bad Disposition and Bent of Inclination. The second our blessed Saviour removed, by the Sacrifice of himself, made it consistent with the Good of the Whole, to bestow Happiness upon us, and gave the divine Benevolence full Scope to exert itself.

Though nothing that another Person does, can make us more personally *valuable*, yet the common Course of Things every Day proves, that, what another Person does, may avert *Misery* from us, or procure *Happiness* to us. If there is any Thing wrong in such a Procedure, then the whole Course of Nature is manifestly so: It being necessary in the ordinary Course  
of

SERM. V. of Nature, which is no less God's Appointment than his supernatural and extraordinary Dispensations; that one Man should be rescued from Ruin, or advanced to Happiness, by the Interposition of another\*.

And the Arguments, which are brought to disprove *the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, conclude with equal Strength (that is, with no Strength at all) against the Charity of our Fellow-creatures. The Laws of Nature, as well as the Oeconomy of our Redemption, point out to us, that, though no Man can with Justice be *esteemed* for what another Agent does; yet One may be made *more happy*, or less miserable, by the means of Another.

The Author of the Book of *Job* seems to have had no Notion of founding the Favour of God to us, merely upon his Approbation of us, when he says, *God chargeth his Angels with Folly: The Stars are not pure in his Sight: How much less Man that is a Worm, and the Son of Man that is a Worm?*

Created beings, that are perfect in their kind, God must absolutely approve; Beings, that

\* See Bishop Butler's Analogy. Page 211.

that are absolutely bad, he must absolutely disapprove. But between Perfection, and absolute Depravity, there are so many intermediate Degrees of Goodness, and its opposite Quality; of Amiability and Unamiability; and these often so complicated and blended together in the same Subject; that no one can be assured, how the Scale would preponderate, or where the Over-balance would be, in the Judgment of that Being, *who sees not as Man sees*. Nay, the more amiable any Man was in the Sight of God, the more liable he would be, upon this Scheme, to Despondency, not to say, Despair. For certainly, if any Thing can make such Beings as we are, amiable in the Sight of God; it must be a modest Opinion of ourselves, and a just Sense of our own Unworthiness. But the more modest Opinion a Man entertains of himself; the more diffident he will be of his own Righteousness, and the Divine Approbation.

So true it is, that whoever has deviated from Scripture, has left us, at the Foot of the Account, in a worse State than he found us.

For

SERM. V. For what is this intrinsic Valuableness,   
 on which some lay so great Strefs? Are we not like those Things, which, to be greatly admired, must not be thoroughly understood? It is *Ignorance*, which is the *Mother of Admiration* of our *Fellow-creatures*: *Truc Knowledge* is the *Mother of sound and substantial Devotion*. For the more we know of *Men*, the *less* we shall be apt to *admire* them: But our *Admiration of God* rises higher, in *proportion* to the *Knowledge* we have gained of his *Nature and Works*: And our *Devotion* to him, who only is *wonderful*, and only doeth *wondrous Things*, must be heightened in the same Measure, as our *Admiration* is; unless our *Reason* was given us, as one expresseth it, “to wonder at our *Maker*, but not to serve “him.” There are few, but who would rather depart out of the *World*, than have their foolish, vain, and wicked *Thoughts*, and whatever was transacted behind the *Scene*, within our own *Breasts*, disclosed, without *Reserve* to the *View* of the whole *World*. *Nature* is very often rebelling against *Principle*, and sometimes getting the better of it. The *Passions* hasty and impetuous, unless we have an habitual *Guard* upon



upon ourselves, hurry us into Action, and plunge us into Folly; before Reason, a slow sedentary Principle, puts in its Remonstrances. And what is the Consequence? That very Reason, which either continued in a State of Inaction, or poorly and abjectly complied with their Demands, acts the Part of an *after-wise* Friend, who, though he does not restrain us from doing wrong, yet, as soon as the Action is done, upbraids us with pungent Reflexions, and tells us (*sad Truth!*) *that we are Fools.*

When we consider the Number, Malignity, and particular Aggravations of our Sins, a *modest* ingenuous Man will be sensible he *wants* a Redeemer; and the *Presumptuous* betrays his Want of one, even by his *being so*. We have Vanities enow, and too many; but let us not *add* to the Catalogue of them this *one* Vanity, more gross and flagrant than all the rest, *viz.* to imagine, that our *finite imperfect* Services can, of themselves, insure to us, what is of *infinite* Value, *perfect, endless, and unalterable Happiness.*

He, who *thinks* he has Worth enough to secure a Title to absolute Pardon and a Fulness of Blis, *proves* by the very *Thought*

SERM. V. that he has too *little*. For we then give  
 the best Proofs of our Worthiness when we  
 have a deep Sense, and make an humble  
 Confession of our own Unworthiness. Hu-  
 man Nature, conscious of its numerous  
 Frailties, shrinks back at the Thoughts of  
 an Interview with its Creator; and No-  
 thing can disarm Death of its Terrors, but  
 that Religion, which has made us the most  
 gracious Overtures; and in which the aw-  
 ful *Majesty* of the *Judge* is qualified by the  
 lovely *Mercies* of the *Saviour*. None of  
 us can merit: And after All we can do,  
 (though none of us do all we can) we are  
 but *unprofitable Servants*: But he makes  
 the *nearest* Approaches to *Merit*, who,  
 after his sincere Endeavours to please his  
 Maker, humbly *disclaims* all *Merit*, but  
 —the all-sufficient *Merits* of his blessed  
*Saviour*.

If any Doubt remain with any one  
 whether the divine Approbation, and the  
 divine Favour, are equivalent and synony-  
 mous Terms; let him, to put the Matter  
 past Dispute, reflect, what a Difference  
 there is between these two Petitions: God  
*approve* of me, a Sinner: And, God be  
*favourable* or *merciful* to me, a Sinner.  
 The

The former is highly ridiculous and absurd. SERM. V.  
 For it is impossible, that God should *ap-*  
*prove* Sinners, as such; and the best of  
 us are but *penitent* Sinners: But it is not  
 impossible, that he may be *merciful* and  
*benevolent* to Those, whom he cannot ap-  
 prove, as far as they are Sinners: (For  
 otherwise, he would never have command-  
 ed us to hate and disapprove the Sin, but  
 yet to regard the Sinner with a Love of  
*Benevolence*.) Which Benevolence of the  
 Deity may exert itself in Acts of solid and  
 substantial Favour, when our Saviour's Sa-  
 tisfaction hath made it no ways interfere  
 with the Ends of his Government, and the  
 general Good.

In short, we must *so far*, or in such a  
 low Degree, approve ourselves to God, as  
 to be deemed by him Subjects not inca-  
 pable of, or disqualified for, everlasting Hap-  
 piness. But when that is done; it is through  
 Christ alone, that the Weakness of our En-  
 deavours must be *pardoned*, and the *Sincer-*  
*ity* of them *accepted*.

Which brings me, secondly, to distin-  
 guish between a *Capacity* for a Thing, and  
 a *Title* to a Thing. Nothing, but what  
*internally* alters the Sinner, can make him a

SERM. V. Subject *capable* of God's Favour hereafter. A *Capacity* for everlasting Happiness, must be partly founded on our own *good Habits* and Dispositions; since heavenly Pleasures cannot suit a Soul, that is deeply and habitually immersed in Vice. But the *Title* to Happiness must be founded on something *extrinsic*. We are told, that we shall be *ισόγλωσσοι*, *equal to the Angels* hereafter. Now, though Man had *never sinned*, he had no more *Ground to expect*, that he should be *as the Angels of God* hereafter; than he has *Reason to complain*, that he is not an Angel at *present*: Much less, when Man *had sinned*, when he was become an obnoxious Creature, could Reason support such extravagant Pretensions.

Though therefore our Saviour's Sufferings, as not internally altering the Sinner, could not give him a *Capacity* or *Relish* for Happiness; yet, they might give him what he wanted, when a Subject *capable*, a *Title* to eternal Bliss. Repentance must remove the *disqualifying* Circumstances, those Circumstances, that are a Bar to endless Felicity. But, *when* the disqualifying Circumstances are removed, then *eternal*

Life is the Gift of God, through Jesus Christ. SERM. V.  
Repentance in itself, considered *intrinsically*, cannot be so acceptable to God as *unfinning* Obedience: And therefore it wanted something *extrinsic* to make it so: Our Saviour performed an *unfinning* Obedience, and it was placed to our Account.

But this brings me to the second Scheme, which I promised to confute, the Efficacy of mere Repentance, without any Atonement.

And here a great many Questions may be asked, which the Light of Nature cannot determine, *viz.* Whether Repentance, if it can atone for any, will atone only for *less* Crimes; or also for notorious Sins, long persisted in? If for the latter, Whether it will be so far available as to procure a *total* Exemption from Punishment; or only to *soften* the Rigour of the Penalty? If it avails so far, as to procure a total Exemption, which can never be proved; Whether it could likewise entitle to any *Happiness*? And what that Happiness would be? Whether an *unmixed eternal* Happiness; or only a Happiness of a *short* Duration?

It were to be wished, that those who are so restless in their Endeavours to destroy

SERM. V. Christianity, would let it alone, till they could propose, in lieu of it, some satisfactory Scheme for a wise Man to live and die by; some tolerable Hypothesis to support us under the Calamities of Life, and the Pangs of Death, so well calculated for our Comfort in this World, and our Happiness in the next. But the Misfortune is, they *forsake the Fountain of living Waters, and hew out broken Cisterns, which will hold no Water.* An authentic Promise of eternal Life, from him *who keepeth his Promise for ever*, is of infinitely more Value; than all the dry and jejune Speculations of Reason, abstractedly from Revelation.

Will Repentance alone recover that Happiness, which Mankind had forfeited; and rescue them from that Misery, to which they were become obnoxious? Do we not find, in the ordinary Course of Nature, which is God's Appointment, that Punishments, which no After-Conduct, no subsequent Reformation, can entirely remove, often attend upon Guilt\*? A Man, for Instance, shall feel the ill Effects, of Debauchery,

\* See Bishop *Butler's* Analogy, Page 200.

bauchery, and a profligate Course of Life, long after he has repented and been reclaimed. Now, if we thus suffer for our Sins, notwithstanding our Repentance in the daily Course of God's natural Providence, and his stated and uniform Methods of acting towards his Creatures *here*; What Grounds have we to imagine, that Repentance alone, without the Merits of our Saviour, will free us from all the ill Consequences of Sin, in God's religious and moral Settlement of Things hereafter, in his final Adjustment of Rewards and Punishments?

It appears from the Custom of Sacrificing, which prevailed every where; that, whoever maintains, that Repentance will expiate Guilt without any propitiatory Sacrifice, cannot set up his Reason in opposition to *Revelation*, without setting it up in opposition to the *Common Sense* and Reason of Mankind in all Ages and Nations. Some material Truths there were undoubtedly in the Pagan Religion; though they were adulterated with considerable and palpable Errors: Some Fire there was; though it was so involved in Smoke, that it could not yield a sufficient Light. Whereas Truth shines forth in the Scriptures without any

Alloy of Falsehood in its native Simplicity and genuine Brightness. It is there we have an authentic Account, that while all other Beings are indeed the Object of God's *Bounty*, Man is distinguished from the rest by being made the Object of his *Mercy*: Man alone is admitted to the glorious Privilege of being pardoned upon Repentance through the Merits of him, who took away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself.

That God will put the *repenting* Sinner upon a better Foot, than the *veteran unrelenting* Criminal, is indeed an evident Conclusion of *Reason*: But then it is as evident an one, that he will not put him upon the *same* Foot with the *Angels*, that *need no Repentance*.

For to put *Offenders*, without any Atonement, upon a Foot of *Equality* with the *Guiltless* and unoffending, would be to make no Distinction, where there was a very material Difference.

Here there are three Sorts of Beings in the Creation. — Beings, that *need no Repentance* — *Penitent* Sinners. — *Impenitent* Sinners. It will be allowed, that God may consign the *last* to a State of *pure Misery*, and the *first* to a State of *pure Happiness*; and



and all the Difficulty will be, what God SERM. V. will do with the MIDDLE Set of Creatures, *viz.* *penitent* Sinners. To make them *as happy* as the *first*, would be as inconsistent with our Notions of Justice, as to make them *as miserable* as the *last*. Here Reason seems to be either intirely at a stand; or, if it can prove any Thing, only to prove this; that Beings in whom there is a *Mixture* of *moral* Good and Evil, shall be consigned to some State, in which there shall be a proportionable *Mixture* of *natural* Good and Evil.

Some late Authors, however, have been hardy enough to assert the Efficacy of mere Repentance; and to support their Assertions, have argued after the following Manner, *viz.* Men, by a thorough Reformation, cease to be personally displeasing, and become personally pleasing to God, and, consequently, do not need any Thing that is personally pleasing in another to make them so.

The Author seems to be describing some visionary ideal Beings, which may exist, perhaps, in his Imagination; but are in fact no where to be found in this World. For what is this Reformation, which removes whatever is displeasing? Why an abso-

SERM. V. absolutely perfect Repentance, which can  
 have no Place in such imperfect Beings as we are. It is a mere *Notion*, not a *Reality*. Is our Repentance a Return to an *intire uninterrupted* Obedience, without any Alloy or Tincture of Vice? Or is it only to *such* an Obedience, as is attended with several *Relapses*; but by which, by degrees, and in the main, we gain *Ground* over our Vices: And, though far, very far, from being perfect, yet are in a progressive State towards Perfection?

But granting, there could be such an absolutely perfect Reformation; granting farther, what can never be proved, that such a Reformation would remove God's Displeasure: Yet does the Deity punish as frail and passionate Men do, merely because he is *displeas'd* with, or disapproves of, the Agent, without answering any beneficial and salutary Ends whatever? All *Displeasure apart*, Governors, who consult the Good of the Whole, may, and often do, inflict Punishments, to discountenance Vice, and support the Cause of Virtue and Goodness. And he alone, who sees past, present, and future, in one united Point of View, whose Foreknowledge looks through  
 every

every possible Consequence, that can result SERM. V.  
from every Manner of acting towards penitent Sinners; can himself alone know, and reveal to us how he will deal with penitent Sinners, so as not to *counter-act* the *universal Good*.

It is farther urged, that the Deity must consider us as Beings, not only liable, but also likely, to commit Sin; born with strong Propensions to Vice, and surrounded with numerous Temptations. And when we have done all that can be reasonably expected from such frail Creatures as we are, (that is, when we have done our best) then we are the proper Objects of God's Favour, without any Need of an Atonement, or propitiatory Sacrifice.

Here again, as usual, the Authors consider Mankind in Theory, and not in Fact: They consider them, as what they *should* and *ought* to be, serving God, to the utmost *Stretch* of their limited Powers, with the collected and united Force of every Faculty; and not as what they *really are*, often wilfully doing, what they ought not; and oftner omitting what they ought to do.

Whatever Allowances we may suppose a gracious God will make, for the Frailties  
of

SERM. V. of our Nature; yet the *original* Weaknesses which we bring with us into the World, are, in Process of Time, so blended with our *acquired* Follies; that it being impossible to distinguish, in all Cases, the one from the other, we cannot draw much solid Comfort from thence. Whatever we *are* at *present*, no Body can tell, what we *might have been*; if from first to last we had taken all possible Care, to weed out each rising Folly, and to cherish the Growth of every Virtue: Even in those Sins, which are called Sins of *Frailty*, and are, in some measure, such; there is generally such a Degree of *Wilfulness*, that, in some Cases, it is no easy Matter to ascertain, which is the predominant Ingredient in the Composition. A *superficial* Inquirer may, no doubt, be highly pleased with himself. But the more *thoroughly* any Man examines himself, the more a Man considers how seldom, if ever, he fully acts up to those Principles which he entertains, generally falling short of them, and sometimes acting contrary to them; the more he would be dissatisfied with himself.

Is there a Man, who can lay his Hand upon his Heart, after having faithfully  
ex-

examined it, and declare, that whatever Frailties he may have, yet he has strove to the best of his Power, in every Stage of Life, to subdue each inordinate Passion, to discharge every Duty, and to cultivate each virtuous Habit? Let him stand forth at the last decisive Day, and put in his Claim, (for an equitable Claim he perhaps may have) to such a *Degree* of Happiness, as will preponderate, or be superior to any *short-lived Misery*, which he may have endured here, and be proportioned to his Deserts. But *even he* could have no well-grounded Reason to expect, unless the Merits of our Saviour had ensured it to him, a Happiness *unallayed* in its Nature, exceeding in its *Degree* whatever he could have imagined, and everlasting in its *Duration*.

After all, such a Being, as is described before, is, I am afraid, merely visionary: Men of the most distinguished Piety having Reason to pray, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, O Lord: For in thy Sight shall no Man living be justified.*

Several indeed are too apt, in the Pride and *Bloom* of Life, to flatter themselves into groundless *Presumptions*, and a *sanguine*

SERM. V. Confidence. But when they come, just upon the Verge of another World, *coolly*, and calmly to adjust Accounts between their Maker and themselves ; I doubt those Sins, which, like *Shadows*, looked so *little* at the *Noon* of Life, will greatly *lengthen* with their *setting* Sun. Be that as it will ; it is certain, that the Observation, *viz.* 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 : None ever exerted their Abilities as far as they were able to carry them, to the utmost Extent of their Capacity in the Pursuit and Practice of Virtue.

And yet *natural* Religion may require not only the *Being*, and *Reality* of each Virtue ; but the utmost *Degree* of Virtue in our Power under the Penalty of future Punishment. Because every Thing which we *have*, being derived *from* God ; every Thing which we can *do*, is but our bounden Tribute *to* Him. Christianity, on the other hand, requires indeed the Being and *Reality* of Virtue, under the Penalty of *Damnation*. But it requires the *utmost Degree*, and the highest Attainments, in Virtue, only under the Penalty of an *Abatement*

*ment* or *Discount* of Happiness. He that SERM. V.  
*has sowed sparingly*; according to that gra-  
cious Dispensation, shall reap proportionably,  
though in a less Degree; than he, that has  
sowed bountifully. He, that has cultivated  
virtuous Habits, though in a lower Mea-  
sure, shall be happy, though not equally  
with him, who has made much nearer Ap-  
proaches to the Standard of Perfection.

So much Reason have we to be thank-  
ful to him, who has rescued us from the  
*Punishment*; provided we strive to rescue  
ourselves from the *Dominion* of Sin; in  
Confidence of whose all-sufficient Merits,  
we may securely launch out into the *Depths*  
of Eternity, as *St. Peter* ventured to *walk*  
*upon the Sea*, while we have a *Saviour*  
to lend an helping Hand, and to *support*  
*us*, as he did *him*, from sinking into the  
deep Abyss below.





# SERMON VI.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the REDEMPTION.



I PETER III. 18.

*Christ hath also once suffered for Sins, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us unto God.*

**H**AVING, in a former Discourse, SERM. VI.  
shewn the Weakness and Insufficiency of those Schemes, which have been set up in opposition to Scripture; I now proceed to my

II<sup>d</sup> general Head, to establish and confirm the true Scripture Doctrine of the Satisfaction. After which

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I shall

SERM. VI. I shall in the last Place, consider the  
 { Extent of the Redemption.

1<sup>st</sup>. I shall endeavour to establish and confirm the true Scripture Doctrine of the Satisfaction.

And this I shall do,—by enquiring what Necessity there was for a Satisfaction — by shewing—that our Saviour was the only proper Person to satisfy for our Sins, as he only could merit Forgiveness for them — that his Merits might be imputed to us — and our *Iniquities borne by him*; —and by removing Objections.

That there was a Necessity for a Satisfaction; appears very strongly from Scripture Evidence, the only Evidence, which perhaps we are capable of, in Matters of so high a Nature. For unless there had been an absolute Necessity, unless there had been a Knot too hard for any but the Deity to untie; a God indeed, *who was the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person*, would not have descended upon the Scene of this World, to unravel the perplexing Difficulty. Certainly a Being of infinite Benevolence, would not have exposed his  
 only

only Son, *in whom he was well pleased*, to SERM. VI. needfuls, as well as undeserved Misery. 

Again: It is said, it is *not possible that the Blood of Bulls and Goats*, which have no inherent Worth and Efficacy, should take away Sins, or the Penalty of Sin, *Heb. x. 4.* Therefore it was necessary, that a Person of inconceivable Dignity, and superior Excellency, should satisfy the Demands of Justice, and procure for us the Endearments of divine Mercy. *Him hath God set forth to be a Propitiation for Sin, to declare his Righteousness*, or to display his Justice, for the Remission of Sins that are past; that he might be just, and the Justifier of them, that believe in Jesus Christ.

To reject a Satisfaction thus strongly proved from Scripture, merely because we do not perceive the absolute Fitness and Necessity of it, by any Evidence from the Nature of the Thing; is intirely to set aside the *Divine Authority*. For a Regard to the divine Authority, can only be shewn by assenting to Propositions *inevident in themselves*, as having his Sanction, or being revealed by him. To Propositions *evident in themselves* we should have assented, whether revealed by him or not; nay, if they

SERM. VI. had been discovered to us by the most *abandoned Sinner*, or notorious Liar. It is astonishing therefore to find Persons asserting, in express Words, that it is not the *Declaration of God*, but the *Fitness of the Thing declared*, which is the proper Ground of our Assent, i. e. they will not believe the *Deity affirming* a Proposition, unless they have such a clear and distinct *Perception* of the Fitness of the Thing affirmed; as must induce their Belief, whether the *Deity had affirmed* it, or *no*. *Modest Men* will be inclined to think, that all the Declarations of an infinitely wise Being imply a Fitness; a Fitness in the Nature of the Thing, but unperceived by us, whose Ideas do not reach the whole Compass and Extent of Fitnesses and Unfitnesses. A Man of *superior Sense* may discover a Fitness, that escaped the Observation of one of *less Penetration*: An *Angel* may discern a Fitness, which escapes a *Man* of the highest Reach of Thought: And the *Deity* must perceive an *Infinity* of Fitnesses, which are undiscoverable by the most exalted *Archangel*. And here I would observe, once for All, that most of the Objections, which I have met with against Scripture,

Scripture,

Scripture, proceed from hence; that Men SERM. VI. set up for *Free-Thinkers*, in Cases where they can be but *Half-Thinkers*, or even less than *that*. Particularly in this Case, we, who see but some scattered Links of the universal Chain, some disjointed Parts of the whole united System, cannot perceive, what is best and most fitting for the Good of the Whole; and therefore ought to acquiesce in *his* Declaration, who certainly *does*. Our Conclusion is but the Sum total of our Reasoning; and as a Sum can never be justly cast up, when any one Particular is omitted: So neither can the Sum total of our Reasoning be just and exact, when any one intermediate Idea, which ought to be taken into the Account, is dropped or wanting. What may seem to us to have no Fitness, who view only some detached Branches of God's universal Kingdom; might appear very reasonable, could we see through the whole Contexture of Things. Just as some loose disjointed Passages from Scripture, appear odd and unpromising by themselves; and yet are very beautiful, and pertinent; the Thread, Connexion, and Dependency of one Thing on another, being considered.

SERM. VI. Nothing can match the Ignorance and *In-*  
 sufficiency of those Persons, except it be  
 their great *Self-Sufficiency*, who vainly  
 imagine, they have Compass of Thought  
 enough, to grasp all that is necessary to a  
 clear and determinate Resolution of the  
 Point in Debate. I have often thought, in  
 how a ridiculous a Light we must appear, to  
 intelligent Beings of a superior Rank, while  
 we are thus meddling with Matters that  
 are too high for us. A Set of Children,  
 who should form Schemes to govern *Eu-*  
*rope*, to adjust the interfering Interests of  
 contending Princes, and to direct their So-  
 vereign in complicated Cases, upon the most  
 critical Emergencies; could not appear  
 more absurd to the ablest Statesmen; than  
 we must do to them, when we sit in Judg-  
 ment upon God's Dispensations, scan the  
 whole Plan of his Providence, and deter-  
 mine, what his infinite Wisdom ought to  
 do. No, Let Angels and Archangels de-  
 sire to *look into*, and *contemplate*, the *Na-*  
*ture* of our Redemption: Let Man be  
 humbly content to *enjoy* the *Benefits* of it.  
 When God shall unfold the whole Scheme  
 of his Administration; when he shall lay,  
 before the whole System of intelligent Be-  
 ings,

ings, the Harmony, Uniformity, and Consistency of his Providence, from first to last; then we may expect greater Light into these Affairs. In the mean Time, it is enough for us to know; that *Scripture proves*, and Reason cannot *disprove*, the Necessity of a Satisfaction. SERM. VI.

2dly, Our Saviour was the only proper Person to satisfy for our Sins, as he alone could merit the Forgiveness of them. —


Now *no created* Being could merit. Because the higher Excellencies any Creature is ennobled with, the more he is indebted to the Giver of them; and his Services must be disproportioned to the Favours he has received. For such a Being to think, that any Thing *he* could do, could merit Forgiveness, and everlasting Happiness, for a World of Sinners, must have been the highest Presumption, if God had *not* appointed him: But, if God *had* appointed him, it was so far from *Merit*, that it was his Bounden *Duty*, in Return for the many unmerited Graces, which he had received.

———Our Saviour, who was *God* as well as *Man*, might merit. He could, out of his own *Fund*, discharge our *Debts*, or buy

SERM. VI. *US* with a Price. — He had something of his *own* to merit withal, which *no mere* Creature could have. He had *Power to take up his Life, and he had Power to lay it down.*

And though his Sufferings were the Sufferings of the *Man*; yet the *offering up* of his human Nature, was the Offering of the *God*, of the second Person in the blessed Trinity. For as it is said, *We are redeemed, not with corruptible Things, but with the precious Blood of Christ*: So it is said, that he *by the eternal Spirit*; or, as it might be rendered, by his eternal Spirit, *offered himself up without Spot to God*. And in several other Passages, the Merit of his Sufferings is resolved into the Dignity of that Nature, which stamped a Value upon them: *Who being the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person, and upholding all Things by the Word of his Power, purged, or expiated, our Sins. In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins: Who is the Image of the invisible God, &c. Feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood.* And, though the God-head was impassive; yet the Person, who



who was God as well as Man, might suffer: SERM. VI.  
Just as, though the Soul is unperishable;   
yet Man, who is compounded of Soul and  
Body, is mortal.

Now, for the second Person of the Trinity to offer up, what was *his own* independently, what was closely allied and *endeared* to him, by a *personal Union*, what derived a distinguished Lustre from him; to offer it up *unconstrained*, must either constitute Merit, or we do not know what does.

As one Being enriched with Knowledge, and ennobled with Virtue, is far more valuable, than the whole Mass of dead and insensate Matter: Thus one perfect Model of Virtue, without any Alloy of Vice, thus offered up by *God blessed for ever*, was of more Worth, than the whole World of sinful Beings. And, whatever was deficient in the human Sacrifice, considered abstractedly, and merely as human, might be supplied by the Merits, of the infinite Offerer superadded to it, and placed to our Account. What those Merits particularly were we need not curiously inquire. A Man may know the Matter of Fact, that he is ransomed from Captivity and Slavery  
by

SERM. VI. by a gracious Sovereign, without understanding *particularly, explicitly, and fully*, the *Kind, Manner, and Value* of the Ransom, that was laid down, and the Price, with which he was purchased.

It is enough we are informed, that a *Divine Person* interested himself in the Affair: And when a God interposed, what he, an *infinite Person*, has done for us, cannot, in the Nature of Things, be *wholly, and adequately comprehended* by us: But what *we* have to do, in consequence of his Transactions, for ourselves, must be *clear and level* to our Capacities. Thus *God was in Christ, reconciling the World to himself.*

Having shewn, that there was a Necessity some Being should merit for us, and that our Saviour was the only Being that could merit; I now proceed to shew, in what Sense his Merits could be imputed to us, and our Iniquities laid upon him.

And it must be owned, that our Saviour's *good Actions* cannot be properly and strictly *ours* nor *our bad Actions* his: And in this Sense, personal Merit and Demerit cannot be transferred. But the *Reward* of his good Actions, (I shall consider the *Punishment* of

of our Sins by and by) may, notwithstanding, be made over to us, or conferred upon us. To exemplify this by a familiar Instance: A Person does his Country some eminent and signal Service, for which the most advantageous Posts, and distinguishing Marks of Honour, are offered him: He declines them, as to his own Person; but desires they may be bestowed upon such as have been faithful to him, and are qualified for them; and he shall look upon it as if done to himself.

Is there any Thing absurd or ridiculous in such a Conduct? Why might not then our blessed Saviour confer the Rewards of his meritorious Sufferings and Actions, as we may dispense our Favours, on whom he thought proper? Why might he not do, what he would with his own, and place them to our Account: provided he did not *misplace* them, upon unsuitable Objects, or prostitute them to Beings habitually immoral?


Whatever Privileges our Saviour acquired, by that inimitable Original of Love and voluntary Condescension, were his: And what were *his*, he might *dispose of* as his. For to *dispose of* them as his, was only

SERM. VI. *only to use them as his. Father, I will*  
 that those whom thou hast given me, may be  
 with me; that they may behold my Glory.  
 Here we must attend to the Distinction  
 between Approbation and Kindness. The  
*Approbation* of an Action cannot be trans-  
 ferred, with Justice, from the Agent to  
 another Person; yet the *Kindness* conse-  
 quent to that Approbation, may, and often  
 is, with the Consent of the meritorious  
 Person, thus transferred; because in being  
 kind to *others* at his Instance and Request,  
 we are, in the last Resort, kind to *himself*;  
 We reward *him in others*.

Thus by the Obedience of one many be-  
 came Righteous. And he, who knew no  
 Sin, was made Sin, or an Expiation for  
 Sin, that we might be the Righteousness of  
 God in him. Thus he was the Lord, our  
 Righteousness. And we became the Heirs  
 of God, for his Sake, and upon his Ac-  
 count, who had no Pretensions to such ex-  
 alted Privileges upon our own.

So much may serve to prove, in what  
 Sense our Saviour's Merits were imputed to  
 us. I now proceed to shew in what Sense  
 he could be said to bear our Iniquities.  
 And here it must be granted, that *personal*  
 Guilt

Guilt cannot be transferred; but the *legal* SERM.VI. Guilt may, that is, the Obligation to Punishment, which results from the Violation of the Law. For God does not punish merely for punishing's Sake: He does not inflict *useless* Misery upon his Creatures: He does not punish *merely* because he *disapproves* of, or is displeased with, Guilt; but because of the *ill Consequences* which would follow, if he suffered Guilt to go unpunished: Because it is necessary to vindicate the Honour of his Government, to support his Authority as supreme Lawgiver, and to secure the Respect due to his Laws. Now if the Reverence due to God's Laws could be maintained, and all the wise and good Ends of Punishment answered by the Substitution of another Person (equal to the mighty Province) in the room of the Offender; then the Deity might accept of a Commutation, remit the Punishment to the Offender, and transfer it upon his Substitute. For when the *Reasons* of inflicting a Penalty are taken off, there the *Penalty* itself undoubtedly may be taken off. The only Thing then that remains, is to prove, that our Saviour's Sufferings were sufficient to secure the Honour

SERM. VI.  nour and Respect due to God's Laws. Now, whatever has a Tendency to impress upon our Mind, a most awful Sense of God's Aversion to Sin, has a Tendency to preserve a Reverence for God's Laws. And nothing could have imprinted upon our Minds, a more awful Sense of God's Aversion to Sin, than that he would not forgive it, notwithstanding our Repentance, upon less difficult Terms, than the Son of God's giving himself a Ransom for this World: That he would not pardon the Breach of his Laws, without our Saviour's offering up what he had as great a Value for, as he had a Hatred and Detestation of the Offences committed against his Law.

We know not how far the State of this World might affect other intelligent Beings, in some other Part of the Creation, how far it might countenance a Rebellion and give them disadvantageous Ideas of their supreme Lawgiver; if a whole World of penitent Offenders, how long, how often, or how greatly soever, they have sinned, might be admitted to everlasting Glory, without any Sufferings personal or vicarious. They might imagine, that, what could be so easily pardoned, was not  
 very

very offensive to their Creator, nor would be destructive to themselves. To obviate these ill Impressions, the Deity shewed he so hated Sin, *that he gave his only begotten Son, rather than not condemn Sin in the Flesh*: He shewed, that when Man had sinned, nothing that mere Man could do, was of Worth and Efficacy enough, to reinstate him in his Favour. He laid a Plan of the Redemption so amazing, that Creatures of a Nature not so frail as ours, could have no Grounds to expect the like Favour, in case they revolted from their Allegiance to him; and so sufficient, as to leave no Room, for material Exceptions against it, to those enlightened Beings, who may see farther, than the mere Shell and Surface of it.

From what has been laid down, the Weakness of the following Objection discovers itself, *viz. that Sin cannot be punished abstractedly from the Sinner*: Because *Sin abstractedly from the Sinner, is a mere abstract Notion*. For the supreme Legislator does not punish the Sinner for his Sins merely as such, *abstractedly from the ill Consequences which would arise from the Impunity of Sin*. The formal Reason  
of

SERM. VI. of Punishment is, the *evil Tendency* which Sin must have, if unpunished. For, *all evil Tendency apart*, to punish would be to make the Being punished miserable, without a sufficient Cause: Now, though *Sin*, as something personal, *cannot* be removed from the Sinner; yet the *ill Consequences* of Sin unpunished *may be removed*, by a valuable Consideration, fitted to obtain every End which could be proposed from his personal Punishment, and offered and accepted in lieu of it. When there is *no Reason for* putting a Creature to Pain, when no desirable End or Advantage can be compassed by it; there is always a Reason *against* doing it, *viz.* that it is a Pain, *unnecessary* Pain. Some Writers, however, have asserted, that, notwithstanding all the Ends of Government could be answered, and the general Happiness secured, by the Interposition of another Person; yet such a Procedure would be contrary to the *Truth and Right of the Case*. But what Truth would be violated? Not certainly *moral* Truth. For a Truth, which has *no Reference to Happiness*, must be a Matter of *Indifference*; it must be a *speculative* unconcerning Truth, and *therefore*



fore not a *moral* Truth. If an Action, SERM. VI. which was neither designed for, nor is productive of, *Benefit* or *Harm*, be, as it undoubtedly is, an *indifferent* Action; an Action which, in the Whole of its Effects, increases Happiness and lessens Misery, (supposing a right Intention in the Agent,) must be *morally good*, in Proportion to the Moment of Good, which it produces; and therefore such a Procedure, as was calculated for the general Good, without any Injury done, as I shall prove immediately, to the mediating Party, must be morally good.

It may be objected, that in the Subject, in which the Fault is, in that same Subject should the Punishment be; and that it is a flagrant Injustice, to punish an innocent Person instead of the Guilty.

And, it is granted, that it is Injustice to punish a Person, merely *because* he is innocent: But it is not so, *notwithstanding* he is innocent, when he deliberately *chuses* to undergo the Punishment; when he has an uncontested *Right* to dispose of himself, and when *great* and important *Ends* are answered by it. There can be *no Injustice*, where there is no *Invasion* of any *Property*;

SERM. VI. and there could be no *Invasion* of any *Property*; when our Saviour, by a *free, generous, unconstrained* Act resigned, what he had an undisputed Right to lay down, his own Life. Nor is it any Impeachment of God's Goodness to let an Evil of *Suffering* take place, an Evil, which was productive of an *universal prepollent* Good. It could be no Injury to our Saviour, for another Reason, *viz.* that he received an ample Recompence for the Hardships, which he sustained in his human Nature, by distinguished Rewards, and an Accession of Glory to it. The Arguments, which are brought to prove, that he, who was no Sinner, ought not to have been a Sufferer *for us*, prove as strongly, at least, that he ought to have been *no Sufferer at all*. For he no more deserved those Sufferings on *his own* Account, than he did on *ours*. And yet we see innocent Persons; Children, for Instance, who are capable of no actual Guilt, suffer daily. And if they may suffer for *no* assignable *End*, which we can comprehend; Why might not our Saviour suffer for so *valuable an End*, as to avert Misery from, and procure an endless Felicity for, all penitent Sinners? Nor is it any

more an Absurdity, that God should per-SERM. VI.mit a guiltless Person, to part with that, which he has a Right to dispose of, to save a whole World from Ruin; than that he should command an innocent Person, to give away some Part of his Possessions and Property, to rescue a Family, that has involved itself, from Ruin. In both Cases the *Innocent* suffer for the *Guilty*; and part with what is dear and valuable to them, to promote, what is more dear and valuable; the Good of their Fellow-creatures. Had Men as full a Power lodged in them, to dispose of their Lives, as they have, confessedly, of their Money, for the Benefit of Mankind; such Acts would indeed be Injustice, when *imposed* upon them: But, when they proceeded from their own *Choice* and free Consent, they would be Instances of heroic Goodness.

It has been represented as a strange Expedient, to deter Beings from Sin, or to shew Displeasure against it; that an innocent Person should suffer instead of the Sinner: To insist upon this, we are told, is *obstinately to persist in Error, without the least Face of an Argument*. To which I answer: That there is an Obstinacy in

SERM. VI. Error some where or other : But where it  
 lies, will appear, by and by, by laying open the Chicanery of this Objection : Which is as follows. The Objectors consider our Saviour *abstractedly*, as to his own Nature ; without considering him in his *relative* Capacity, as to the Office he undertook. Whatever Right he had to be treated as an innocent Person, *antecedently* to his offering himself as a Ransom ; yet, *when* he had offered himself as a Substitute, he voluntarily waved and relinquished that Right : And therefore might be treated, not according to that Right which he had foregone, or made a Cession of ; but according to the Capacity which he had assumed. Now to apply what is here laid down, in order to unravel this Piece of Sophistry : They very artfully drop the *Idea* of *Substitute*, retaining only that of an *innocent* Person : They take into the Account his *Nature*, omitting his *Office* : And thus, suppressing a *material Part* of the Truth, they confound unattentive Readers, (which the Bulk of Readers ever will be) with this specious Fallacy, *viz.* To punish an innocent Person, as our Saviour was, instead of the Guilty, is so far from being a Testimony

mony of Displeasure against Sin; that it SERM. VI is the Reverse. And it would be so, to punish him *merely as such*, in that *single abstract* View, without any *Relation* to the *Character* which he sustained: But to punish him as one who gave up his Right to be treated as innocent; who voluntarily offered himself, as a Substitute for an offending World, is certainly an Indication of the divine Displeasure against Sin: Because, *unless* God had been so far displeas'd at Sin, as not to readmit even penitent Sinners, *merely as such*, to Favour; he had required *no Substitute*, no vicarious Punishment at all. God's Aversion to Sin, upon the account of its Malignity and prejudicial Nature, is shewn, in proportion to the Difficulty of pardoning it; and the Difficulty of pardoning it, in proportion to the Dignity of the Person, who suffered.

It is objected, that such a Satisfaction must be inconsistent with God's free Grace: Because, if it was a just and reasonable Satisfaction; God could not have refused it: But if not just and reasonable; then he ought not to have accepted it.

To which I answer, that this is a gross and palpable Fallacy: It *supposes* the very  
 D d 3 Thing,

SERM. VI. Thing, which ought to have been proved,  
 or rather admits of *no Proof*.

It supposes, that a Satisfaction may be just and reasonable, *antecedently* to the Will of the Legislator: Whereas, in all vicarious Punishments, the Legislator's Consent must be *presupposed*, as absolutely necessary to make them just and reasonable: Which Consent he may withhold; and insist, that, the Crime being ours, the Punishment should be so too.

Besides, when it is said, that the *Satisfaction* was *reasonable*, it may be asked, Reasonable, as *to what*? It was reasonable in *this* Respect, that it was an Expedient to secure the Honour of God's Laws, and to prevent the ill Consequences of the Indemnity of Sin, though repented of: But it might have been *as* reasonable, at least, and would have answered the same End, if Sinners had suffered in *Person*. Therefore this Objection proceeds, *a dicto secundum quid, ad dictum simpliciter*, from what is reasonable in *one* View, to what is so *intirely*, and in *all* Views, without any possible Alternative, which might be *as* reasonable.

If it be objected; that the second Person in the Trinity could not satisfy the first;

first: because they are of one undivided SERM. VI.  
Essence.

I reply, That the whole Force of this Objection, rests upon our Notions of the Divine Unity, which are too inadequate to reason solidly upon. Those, who advance this Objection, should prove, either that the Union must be too close to admit of distinct Actions and Offices; or too wide to make the three Persons one God. The Manner of the divine Unity is as unsearchable, as his Essence; and our Ideas of it too indeterminate and indistinct, to beget any full and determinate Knowledge, which must always keep Pace with our Ideas. The three Persons are one Being, because *undivided*: But it does not follow, that because they are undivided; that therefore they are *indistinct*: To be undivided, and to be indistinct, being not the same Idea. *Whither shall I go, says the Psalmist, from thy Presence? If I go up into Heaven, thou art there? If I go down to Hell, thou art there also: If I take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost Parts of the Sea; even there also shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me.* Now Being in Heaven, Being in Hell,

D d 4

Being

SERM. VI. Being in the Sea, may be one Being, because undivided; but not, because indistinct: For certainly Being in Heaven is distinct from Being in Hell. The Unity then of the three Persons, as to their Nature, results from their Indivisibility.—— Indivisibility is no Bar to Distinction.—— What is no Bar to Distinction, can be none to distinct Actions or Offices. —— Consequently, Son and Father, though indivisible, and therefore one Being, might act distinctly, in giving and receiving Satisfaction.

Still it may be urged; that this does not intirely remove the Difficulty: That, however distinct, they are one and the same Lawgiver: And consequently, the same Lawgiver satisfied the same Lawgiver: Which is an Absurdity.

To take off the Force of this Objection, it is sufficient to observe: That to be sovereign Lawgiver is no *essential* Perfection of the Deity. If it were, he could never have been without it: He must have been Lawgiver *ab æterno*; i. e. He must have been Lawgiver, before there were any Beings to give Laws to. It is plain then, to be Lawgiver is only a *relative* Property. Our Saviour consequently might be truly



God, *i. e.* ennobled with all the *essential* SERM. VI. Perfections of God; at the same Time that he divested himself of the *relative* Capacity of sovereign Lawgiver, during the Time, that he was transacting the gracious Scheme of our Redemption. It is true, it is necessary, that God should be Lawgiver to us, *stante rerum Hypothesi*: But then, upon the Supposition of more Persons in the divine Nature, it is no more necessary, that the Son should be always supreme *Lawgiver*; than that the Father should be *Judge* at the last Day. The same Attributes are *inherently* vested in both: But the *Exertion* of those Attributes, in *this* or *that* Province, in this or that *particular* Scheme of Action, is free and voluntary.

There is a *Point* in Knowledge, where *Usefulness* ends, and *unconcerning Speculation* begins. *As far* as any Thing is *useful* and important to our Happiness, so far, by the Help of Revelation, all is generally clear and plain; *beyond* that, all is dark and inaccessible to us in a great measure. The Reason is, God has drawn a Veil over this Part of Knowledge, lest by attending to Things *remote* from *Use*, and Matters of mere *Curiosity*, the Mind should be diverted

ed

SERM. VI. ed from useful and *practical* Inquiries.

The Circle of our Knowledge, as far as it conduces to Happiness, though not very large, is, by the Help of Scripture, exact and full. To exemplify this, in the Point of the Redemption, some Persons complain of a Darkness spread over the Face of this Dispensation. But as to *what*? As far as it is a Doctrine of *Use* and *Importance*, so far it is clearly and distinctly revealed. We are expressly told, what our Saviour has purchased for us, and what we have to do, to qualify ourselves for the Happiness which he has purchased. It is discovered to us, that God, through his Merits, will confer upon every penitent Offender that exceeding and eternal Weight of Bliss, which even the Unoffending could have had no Title to. *So far* it is a Doctrine of solid Use and Importance.

But we want, perhaps, more fully to understand the *internal Manner*, and *particular* Efficacy of his Merits and Intercession, and the *Whole* of the Transaction between the Father and the Son, in the stupendous Work of our Salvation. Here *mere Curiosity* commences; and therefore no Wonder, our *Knowledge* should in a great

great measure *end*. These are the Things SERM. VI. which Angels desire to look into; and we, *till* we are Angels, should not expect a full and comprehensive Satisfaction about.

Let us compare Creation and Redemption. From the former we derive our *Being*, from the latter our *eternal* Well-being. *Both* Truths are involved in great *Difficulties*: Both are either, *for* that Reason, to be rejected; or (which is the much better Conclusion,) both, *notwithstanding* that Reason, to be admitted.

I shall now, in the last Place, consider the Extent of the Redemption.

Our Saviour laid down his Life for the Sins of the whole World. He came, that *as in Adam all die, so in Christ should all be made alive*. *As by one Man's Disobedience many (the Many, or Mankind in general) were made Sinners, treated as such, and made subject to Death, the Wages of Sin; so, by the Obedience of one, shall many be made righteous*. Clemens Romanus, an Apostolical Father, expressly declares, that *the Blood of Jesus was so precious in God's Sight, as to obtain the Privilege of Repentance for all the World, in all past Ages;*

SERM. VI. *Ages; and that the Ninevites repenting,*  
 upon the Preaching of Jonas, were saved  
 by it, though Aliens from God\*.

From hence we may conclude, that, though those, who have performed the Conditions of the Gospel-Covenant, Faith and penitential Obedience, shall shine out with distinguished Glory: yet the Benefits of his Passion shall be applied, in some measure, even to those, who never heard of his Name. The Sphere of his Beneficence extended backwards to the Foundation of the World, and reaches forward to the last Conflagration; so that Nothing, which is capable of being saved, is *hid from the Heat thereof*. He became the Saviour of all Ages, from the first Birth of Time to its last Period; the Father of Mankind, from the Rising up of the Sun, to the Going down of the same. The Blessings of his Coming into the World, are as extensive as the World, and as lasting as Eternity.

View leisurely the stupendous Scheme—  
 a whole World *redeemed from Misery*—  
 a whole World made *happy*, if their own  
 Impenitence doth not prevent it———made

EVER-

\* Clemens Romanus, Epist. 1. cap. 7.

everlastingly happy: — and tell me, what Sentiments it ought to inspire you with—  
Why, Sentiments of Gratitude too *big* to be uttered, too *fervent* to be concealed.

SERM. VI.

We think no Language too harsh, no Usage too severe, to those, who can be guilty of a base Ingratitude, to a generous *Friend, Parent, or Father* of his Country. But what are the most distinguishing Benefits, which a Father of his Country, a Parent, a Friend, can heap upon us, in comparison of what our *Saviour* has done for us? Lighter than Vanity, and Nothing, when weighed in the Balance with an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, the greatest Blessing that *Man* could receive, or even *God* bestow.

Behold, with the Eye of Faith, a Spectacle worthy to be beheld by God with Pleasure, and by Angels with Wonder and Astonishment: a Spectacle ridiculous in the Eyes of those, who are too *dull* to discern the *Saviour* through the *Sufferer*; but in the Eye of those *ennobled* Beings, who see Things as they are in themselves, and not as they are set off by *Pomp*, a Spectacle more august and awfully glorious, than ever before

SERM. VI. fore appeared on the Theatre of Nature.

Behold the Son of God pouring forth his Blood, as well as Prayers, even for those, that shed it: Behold him at once bearing the Insults, expiating the Sins, and procuring the Happiness of Mankind; till at last he bows his sacred Head, and shuts up the solemn Scene with these short but comprehensive Words, **IT IS FINISHED:** The great, the stupendous Work is done, the universal Sacrifice, which shall take in all Mankind, and which all Mankind shall contemplate throughout Eternity with awful Joy and Gratitude, is completed.

And can we receive these astonishing Endearments, this prodigious Expence of Goodness, which, like the blessed Effects that we are to receive from it, is such as *Eye had not seen before, nor Ear heard, nor had it entred into the Heart of Man, to conceive;* Can we receive it, I say, with a dull Insensibility, and a stupid Indifference?

If we find ourselves affected with endearing Sentiments of Love, towards virtuous Characters, which we read of in ancient History: If, when their Story is

represented on the Stage, we feel our SERM. VI. Hearts interested in their Favour: If we honour and esteem them, from whom we reap no Advantage: How much more ought we to love, esteem, and honour him, the Benefit of whose Actions and Sufferings reaches to all Ages, all Nations, all Mankind? What are they (the great Heroes of Antiquity) to us, or we to them; who might be an Honour to the Age in which they lived, but are of no Service to us; like Stars at an immense Distance, the Light of which may fill their own Sphere, but reaches not down to this lower World? But our Saviour was a Person born for the whole World, for which he died, a Blessing to all Mankind from the *Beginning of Time*, and whom all Mankind will have Reason to bless, when *Time shall be no more.*

But let us remember, that there were two Ends of our Saviour's Coming into the World; the one to be a complete *Pattern of Goodness* in his Life; and the other to be a full *Satisfaction* for *Sin* by his Death. In vain we expect to be saved by his *Death*, as a full Satisfaction for Sin; unless

**SERM. VI.** less we endeavour to copy after his *Life*, as a complete Pattern of Goodness. He came, not to make our Repentance needless, but to make it valid and effectual. *Ye are not your own*, says St. Paul; *for ye are bought with a Price. Therefore glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's.*





# SERMON VII.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Doctrin of the TRINITY.



MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

*Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations,  
baptizing them in the Name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

**T**HE Text set before us the solemn Commission, which our Saviour gave to the Apostles, by which they were to baptize all Nations into the Belief and Worship of the Holy Trinity. SER. VII.

Though some have treated this Doctrin as a mere notional barren Thing; yet, that our *Saviour* is God, and the *Holy Ghost*

SER. VII. God, is no more a *speculative* Point; than  
 this Proposition, viz. *there is a God*, is so.  
 Both Propositions are the Foundations of  
 several Duties, which are the necessary Parts  
 of a good Life. The Worship of our Sa-  
 viour as God, our Gratitude and religious  
 Homage to him, as such, are practical  
 Points, as much as any Offices of Morality  
 whatever. The Knowledge of our Duty  
 equally obliges us to the Performance of  
 it; through whatever Channel it is convey-  
 ed, whether by the Light of Nature, or  
 that of Revelation. And from the Time,  
 that the Scriptures had discovered to us the  
 Nature and respective Offices of our Re-  
 deemer and Sanctifier; we were as much  
 obliged to adore Them, as to adore the  
 Father. And if a wilful Neglect of behav-  
 ing suitably to those Relations, which we  
 bear to the Father and our Fellow-creatures,  
 makes us the proper Objects of Punish-  
 ment; then a flagrant Neglect of acting  
 suitably to those Relations, which we bear  
 to the Son and Holy Ghost, must likewise  
 expose us to the divine Displeasure\*. In  
 short

\* See this Point set in a beautiful Light by one of the  
 finest Thinkers of the Age in his *Analogy of natural and  
 revealed Religion*. Page 151, &c.

short we do not live a good Life, unless SER. VII. we treat Beings, as what they are in themselves, and according to what they have done for us. The Man, who does not, as far as in him lies, consider the Dignity of the Person of his Benefactor, nor the Greatness of the Benefits received from Him, is an immoral Man. *His Life is wrong, and therefore his Faith cannot be right.*

To return to my Text, from which I have digressed, “ Whatever Persons ” (as a considerable Writer expresseth it) “ are named in conjunction with God the Father in such an authoritative Manner, as to give a Commission, upon the Execution of which the Remission of Sins and eternal Salvation depends, or in such a Manner, as supposes Men to be consecrated and dedicated to those Persons; they all must be God.” I shall, therefore,

*Ist*, Endeavour to prove from *Scripture*, that there are more Persons than One in the divine Nature.

*IIdly*, I shall answer the Objections against this Doctrine from the *Nature* of the Thing.

SER. VII. *Ist*, I shall endeavour to prove from *Scripture*, that there are more Persons than One in the divine Nature.

I shall lay the main Strefs upon the Divinity of our *Saviour*: because, if *that* is made good, there can be no reasonable Objection against the Divinity of the *Holy Ghost*; especially since he is said to *search all Things, yea the deep Things of God*, and to *know the Things of God*, (which no mere Creature can do,) as intimately as *the Spirit of a Man knoweth his own Thoughts*.  
 I *Cor.* ii. 10, 11.

In the *1st* Place, the Scripture every where asserts, that God alone is to be worshipped; the same Scripture declares, that our Blessed Saviour is to be worshipped: The obvious Consequence of which is, our Saviour is God. Thus St. *Stephen* adores him with direct Worship: *Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit*: A Petition of the same Force and Energy with that, which our Saviour offered up to the Father on the Cross: *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit*. And again: to him is *ascribed Glory and Praise and Dominion* (after his Mediatorial Kingdom, which some have made

made the Foundation of his Worship, shall cease) even *for ever and ever*. All the Subtleties, by which the *Arians* would evade the Force of these Texts, only prove, that a Man of *plain* Understanding, but of an honest Heart, is less liable to err; than a Philosopher of much deeper Penetration, who has an *Attachment* to some favourite *Scheme*. For the Former, who does *not lean to his own Understanding*, rests in the most *obvious* and *natural* Construction of the Words of Scripture. Whereas the Latter is fond of *Refinements*, and will invent a thousand Devices to confute (what will ever be too hard for Him) *common Sense*. SER. VII.

The *Heart*, when it is biased to any Darling Notion, will always get the better of the *Head*, how *good soever* it be. Therefore the first Rule should be even in the Search of saving *Knowledge*: *Keep your Heart with all Diligence*.

Thus the *Arians* own, that the Son is to be worshipped; but assert, that the Worship ought to terminate in the last Resort in the Father. To which I answer, that this Worship, which is paid to Christ, but, according to their Scheme, ought to terminate in the Father, is (to use their own

SER. VII. Distinction, a Distinction which no where occurs in Scripture,) either supreme or inferior Worship. If the Former, then it ought not to be paid at all to the Son, provided he is an inferior Being. For supreme Worship is a Tribute due only to the supreme God: It would be Sacrilege to give the highest Honour to any, who is not the highest in the Scale of Beings: But if the Worship offered to Christ is only an inferior Worship, then it is unworthy of the supreme Object, and consequently ought not to terminate in him, who would be dishonoured thereby. Besides: How can inferior Worship terminate in Him, who has forbidden all Creature Worship? It is a flagrant Crime to serve the *Creature besides the Creator*, and to worship *Those who by Nature are no Gods*. Either then our Saviour is God by Nature; or he is not to be worshipped. St. *John* Rev. v. 13. tells us expressly, that he *heard* in a prophetic Vision *every Creature in Heaven, and Earth, and under the Earth, saying, Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever*. You see here the same Honour and Adoration is jointly paid to both Father and

and

and Son without any Distinction or Disproportion of Respect, which the Father would not have suffered, if there had been an infinite Disproportion between them; the one being the supreme God, the other a Creature. SER. VII.

But farther: Whatever unscriptural Distinctions some may make of supreme and subordinate Worship; yet he, who at the same Time that he dwelleth in Heaven, to make Intercession for us, can be present upon Earth, to know the Variety of Petitions, mental as well as vocal, private as well as public, which are put up by several Millions of People in different and widely distant Parts of the Earth in one and the same Moment of Time, and can be able to redress their Grievances, must be God in the *highest* Sense of the Word. For 'tis the Deity alone, that can command such an unbounded Prospect, and take in the whole Compass of Nature. Either then all Prayer must be directed to a Being who *seeth in Secret*, who hath a free and unrestrained Admittance to the hidden Resources of the Heart, who is God *absolutely* — Or we may be obliged to address ourselves in Prayer to a Person, who is not intimately

SER. VII. present to whatever is transacted within the  
 Breast, who cannot discern the internal and affectionate Application of the Mind to him, in short, too ignorant to know, too impotent to relieve our Wants. But as this is highly absurd; it follows, that to whomsoever we are obliged to prefer our Petitions, he must be the *Searcher of Hearts*, consequently our Saviour is so, and therefore God. Can a Creature, *where two or three throughout the World, are gathered together in his Name, be in the midst of them?* *Matth. xviii. 20.* Can a Creature be a kind of universal Soul to the whole Christian World, and *if any Man love him, come together with the Father, and make his Abode with him?* *John xiv. 23.*

2dly, It is said, that *he, that built all Things, is God*: But it is affirmed, that *all Things were made by the Word*, viz. our Saviour, *and without him was not any Thing made, that was made*, *St. John i. 3.* From hence we may infer, that Christ, as Creator, is God, rejecting the senseless Notion of a *Creature-Creator*. In answer to this, the *Arians* mutter something very dark and obscure about the Prepositions *By* and *Through* (*By or Through whom God made*  
*the*



*the World*) intimating, what they care not SER. VII. to speak out, that our Saviour was a mere Instrument in the Work of the Creation, but forgetting, that the very same Preposition is likewise applied to the Father, *Through whom are all Things*; forgetting likewise, that not only all Things were created BY him, but also FOR him; and by him they do consist. Coloss. i. 16, 17. And Things are not made for the sake of the Instrument by him, *who made all Things for Himself*. Prov. xvi. 4. And again, *Thou, Lord, (not another, through him) Thou, Lord, hast laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Work of thy Hand. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure. They all shall wax old, as doth a Garment; but thou art the same, and thy Years shall not fail*. Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. He is expressly stiled *the Beginning and the End*. Rev. xxii. 13. *The Beginning*, that is, the efficient Cause, from which all Things proceed; and *the End*, that is, the final Cause, to which all Things are referred: and nothing higher can be said of God the Father.


Add to this, that he is called *God over all blessed for ever*. Romans ix. 5. *The first*

SER. VII. *first and last, Alpha and Omega, which was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty. Rev. i. 8, 17, 18. The mighty, the true, the great God: King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; in whom all the Fulness of the Godhead dwelleth substantially: All Things are naked and open to him: Upholding all Things by the Word of his Power.*

If it be said that the Word, God, is a *relative* Term, and that our Saviour is stiled God in respect of his *Office* and the *Relation* he bears to us, but not in respect of his *Nature*; I answer; he is stiled God, before any Thing was made by him. *In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All Things were made by him, &c. St. John i. 1, 3.* Now, as he could have *no Relation* to his Creatures *before* they were made, nor any *Office* or *Authority* over them, he must be God *absolutely*, not *relatively*, God by *Nature*, and not by virtue of his *Office* or *Authority*. But, supposing the Word God to be *relative*; the Term *Jehovah*, which is often applied to the Son, is of *absolute* Signification, and implies unchangeable, necessary, independent Existence, the incommunicable Property of the supreme Deity,

Deity, whose Name only is Jehovah. Thus <sup>SER. VII.</sup> St. John saith xix. 37. *Another Scripture saith, they shall look on him, whom they have pierced.* The Scripture is Zechariah xii. 10. where God is introduced speaking: *They shall look on me, viz. Jehovah, as appears from what goes before, whom they have pierced.* And again, *These Things said Isaiab when he saw our Saviour's Glory, and spake of him.* St. John xii. 41. Turn to *Isaiab*, and you find it: *I saw the Lord (Jehovah) sitting upon his Throne. — Above it stood the Seraphims—and one cried unto another and said: Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts. The whole Earth is full of his Glory.* *Isaiab* vi. 1, 2, 3. It would be endless to cite all the Passages, in which the Name of Jehovah is given to our blessed Saviour.

The Man, who is obstinate in the Disbelief of his Saviour's Godhead, must be, one would think, strongly tempted to reject the Scriptures, as a Book big with *Blasphemy*; since every Idea *distinctive* of God from his Creatures is there ascribed to him; unless *Paternity*, a mere Relation of Order, be the *distinctive* Idea of God: which is so far from implying any *Inferiority*, that  
it

SER. VII.  it proves the very *Reverse*. For unless *only Son*, and *only begotten*, signify the *only created*, (the Consequence of which would be, that our Saviour is the *only Creature* in the World;) it must follow, that he is *uncreated*, and therefore of the *same Nature* with his Father.

To say, that when creative and providential Powers are ascribed to the Son, these are the Attributes and Powers of the Father communicated *to*, exercised *in*, and manifested *by* the Son, is to get rid of a Difficulty at the Expence of an Absurdity.

For how can there be a Communication of the essential Properties of the Deity without a Communication of the divine Essence?

Whatever Attributes are communicated, must be proportioned to the Capacity of the Receiver. And if the Son be not infinite; what is finite, cannot be susceptible of infinite Attributes.

There is one material Flaw in the *Arian* Scheme, which must endanger the whole Fabrick, *viz.* that they have made two Gods, a God supreme, and a God inferior, in direct Opposition to the first Commandment, *Thou shalt have no other Gods, but me;*

no other *Elohim*, a Word, as the Learned SER. VII.  
know, expressive not only of supreme, but  
also of inferior Gods: The plain Sense of  
the Commandment therefore is this: *Thou*  
*shalt have no other Gods*, whether supreme  
or inferior, but the one *Jehovah*. That  
can never be true and genuine Christianity,  
upon the Principles of which it is impos-  
sible to confute any rational unprejudiced  
*Jew*: But upon the Principles of *Arianism*  
it is impossible to convince any rational  
*Jew*. For the obvious Reply would be,  
that Religion must be false, which expressly  
contradicts the first Commandment: The  
*Arian* Scheme does so by setting up two  
Gods, the one Supreme, the other Inferi-  
or: And therefore must be false. If the  
*Arians* should reply, that they have no other  
adorable God but him, *whom the supreme*  
*God*, as they express it, *hath appointed to be*  
*worshipped*; a *Jew* would reply, that God  
hath made the Commandment *unalterable*  
and irreversibile. No Credentials, no *Mi-*  
*racles* can prove, that the supreme Being  
hath *appointed* any *inferior* God to be *wor-*  
*shipped*: because he hath entred his Caveat  
against admitting *Miracles* to be a *Proof*  
of his allowing any inferior to God to be a-  
dored

SER. VII. dored. He expressly saith, *If there arise among you a Prophet or a Dreamer of Dreams, and give thee a Sign or Wonder, and the Sign or Wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto Thee, saying, LET US GO AFTER OTHER GODS, which thou hast not known AND SERVE THEM; Thou shalt not hearken, &c.* Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3.

I shall beg leave to propose some Queries to those who are of a different Way of Thinking, which are as follow :

Whether in those Points, which have an immediate Connexion with Practice, and which relate to the great and fundamental Article of the Object of Worship, the Christian Religion, being intended for the Use of Mankind in *general*, must not be suited to that *common Sense* and Reason, which Mankind in *general* have, as *distinct* from *superior, exalted* and *refined Sense*, the distinguishing Perfection of a *few* only?

Whether, supposing *Arianism* to be true, *common Sense*, as distinct from *metaphysical* Subtleties, would enable the Generality of Mankind to distinguish between a Person, such as our Saviour is, *by whom all Things were created, and who upholdeth all Things by the Word of his Power*; and a Person


Person who is properly and *essentially* God? SER. VII.

Whether it would enable them to point out any Difference between a Person, *by whom all Things*, to which he must be present, *consist*, as they are said to do by our blessed Saviour; and a Person *strictly Omnipresent*? Whether they would not be apt to imagine, that he, whom *St. Paul* styles *over All, God blessed for ever*, is the supreme God?

Whether, supposing, according to the *Arian* Hypothesis, two adorable Gods, one of which must infinitely transcend the other; the Bulk of Mankind could with a metaphysical Accuracy adjust their Homage to the Dignity of each Being, to whom it was paid, never offering sovereign and absolute Adoration where relative was only due; but lowering and heightening their Intentions, in an exact Proportion, so as never to exceed, nor to fall short in their religious Addresses?

Whether *that* Sense of numberless Passages in Scripture relating to the Trinity, which occurs first to a Man of *natural Sagacity* and *Honesty*, who reads the Bible without any View to confirm a darling *Hypothesis*, is not generally the *true* one?

Whereas

SER. VII.  Whereas the Interpretation, which depends upon refined Subtleties, artificial Turns of Wit and Criticism, and surprizing labour'd Glosses, is greatly to be suspected.

Whether a *Polytheist* might not explain away all the scriptural Proofs for the *Unity* of the divine Nature by the same Subterfuges and evasive Arts, which an *Antitrinitarian* makes use of to elude the Arguments from Scripture to prove a *Trinity* of *Persons*?

Whether those Texts, which seem to imply the Son to be inferior to the Father, may not be reconciled with those, which ascribed to him all the essential Attributes of God, by understanding them either of his *human* Nature, as distinct from the divine, or of the *ministerial Office*, which he undertook in the Oeconomy of the Redemption, or of such a *Subordination* only, *viz.* that of a Son to a Father, a mere Relation of *Order*, which is not inconsistent with a strict *Equality* of *Nature*?

Whether the exclusive Term of the *only true God*, when applied to the Father, need be so rigorously interpreted, as to exclude not only *Creatures* and *other Gods*,  
which



which are *separate* from him; but even the Son and Holy Ghost, who are so united, as to be *One*, and inseparably *included* with him? But if it must be thus rigorously interpreted, whether it will not follow from *Isaiab* and *St. Paul* compared together, that the Son likewise is the only God? *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the Ends of the Earth: For I am God, and there is none else: I have sworn by myself, the Word is gone out of my Mouth in Righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every Knee shall bow, every Tongue shall swear.* *Isaiab* xlv. 22, 23. Compare the New Testament. *We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every Knee shall bow to me, and every Tongue shall confess to God,* *Romans* xiv. 10, 11. And again, *At the Name of Jesus every Knee shall bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth, and Things under the Earth,* *Phil.* ii. 10. The Application of the Text in *Isaiab* to Christ is manifest from these two Passages: It is as manifest that the Person spoken of in *Isaiab* is the only God, *I am God, and there is none else*: Therefore Scripture treating of the Unity of God

SER. VII. places it in another Person, besides the Father.

Whether common Christians, without understanding *technical* Terms, such as *Mode, Person, Substance, numerical, and specific*, may not understand, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, though *really* distinct from one another, may be so far one, as to have an *inseparable Union* of Presence, Will, and all Perfections; so far one, that they can no more *exist* or *act asunder*, than they can *not exist at all*?

Whether such a Faith, which requires no great Abstraction of Thought, may not answer several beneficial Ends; and incline them, from the Fulness of an ever-grateful Heart, to pay the Tribute of undisssembled Love and Adoration to the Father, whose unfathomable Wisdom laid and concerted the stupendous Plan of our Redemption, to the Son, whose unbounded Love undertook the Execution of it, and to the Holy Spirit, whose never-failing Grace enables them to fulfil the Conditions of it?

Whether common Christians may not have correcter Notions of the three divine Persons by resting in the *general Truth* of the

the

the Doctrine; than speculative Refiners, who want to have *explicit* and *determinate* Ideas of Things incomprehensible, who are for descending into minute Particularities, the Knowledge of which, because they are Matters of *useless* Speculation and mere Amusement, is therefore unattainable by us?

The Objections against the mysterious Doctrines of the Gospel conclude as strongly *for Atheism*, as they do *against Christianity*. A Person, who is an *Half-thinker*, may stop at Half-way: But he, who will be at any Expence of Thought, must see, that for the very same Reason, for which he rejects the *three Persons*, viz. because the Doctrine is incomprehensible; he must, if consistent with himself, disbelieve even *one* divine Person. There is such a mutual Harmony and Correspondence in the *Compages* of Truths, that, *if one Member suffers, all the Members suffer with it; and if one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoice with it*. That something has existed from all Eternity, is a Truth, which *forces* itself upon the Mind, and *extorts* the Assent of every thinking Man, of every Christian, Deist, and even Atheist. And yet I do not know any thing so hard of


SER. VII. Digestion in the Doctrine of the *Trinity*,  
 as there is in the Notion of *Eternity*, viz.  
 that, whatever has existed without any Beginning, must have existed *no longer* at this *present* Moment of Time, than it had existed *Millions of Ages ago*. For the present Moment of Time is in the Center or Middle between two Eternities, that which is past, and that which is come: the Moment of Time, that was present some Millions of Ages ago, was then the Center or Middle; and the Moment to come, some Millions of Ages hence, will be then the Center.

Christianity does not require us to puzzle ourselves or others with *metaphysical* Disquisitions; *how* or in what *particular* Manner three are so inseparably united as to be one; no more than natural Religion enjoins us to embarrass our Minds with Inquiries, *how* Fore-Knowledge in God is reconcileable with Free-Will in Man; *how* our Father, *which is in Heaven*, can be *about our Path*, and *about our Bed*; *how*, if he is *extended*, the *Consciousness* of Being in *Heaven* (though locally *distinct* and immensely *distant*) can be *one* and the same with the *Consciousness* of Being on *Earth*; or, *how*, if he is *unextended*,

tended, he can act every where, without SER. VII. being *substantially* present; or *how* any Thing can be made out of Nothing. In all these Points we understand the *Terms* of the Propositions, and the *Proofs* of them from Reason or Revelation, without being able to penetrate into the *Minutiae* of them, and every curious Nicety relating to them.

Men may pretend to understand what they *do* not, and be ambitious of understanding, what they *cannot*; grasping at Things, to which their Capacities are not suited. The Man, who, without ever considering these Points as to their *Modus*, should immediately declare he knows nothing of the Matter, has made as great Advances in Knowledge in a Moment; as the Person who has impaired his Health, and exhausted his Spirits in such unconcerning Researches. Such are several Points in natural Philosophy, as well as Theology. The only Use they are of, is to check our Presumption, and to make us *know* (a very useful Part of Knowledge, but of which some seem incapable,) that there are many Things, which we *cannot know*; that we had much better lay out our Time in knowing ourselves as to our *moral* Character;

SER. VII. *the only* Subject perhaps, as to which the *more minute*, particular and full our Search is, without letting any Thing, however small, escape our Notice; the more *useful* it will be: Yet this is a Subject, which we generally decline, as to any punctual and thorough Examination. As far as our Ideas extend, our Faith, which must keep pace with our Ideas, reaches; and no farther. Thus we believe nothing concerning the precise and particular *Modus*, of the divine Unity, of the Reconcilableness of Fore-Knowledge with Free-Will, of Creation, &c. because we understand nothing about it. Only we think it highly unreasonable not to believe a Doctrine, *as far* as we understand it; because there is something in it which we do *not* understand. As well might we reject the whole Theory of Vision, merely because we cannot conceive, how our Ideas, which have *no Dimensions*, can represent Columns, Statues, Buildings, which *have*. We have no very adequate Notions of the *Manner* of Unity even as to *material* Beings: For each material Being, however *one* in *some* Respect, in *another* is an *Infinity* of Beings, as it is infinitely divisible: How much more must we be

at a loss to ascertain the Manner of the di-SER. VII.  
vine Unity? 

Let us then consider, how far our Point of View extends, what falls within the Reach of every well-constituted Eye, and what is *far above out of our Sight*. Let us not venture upon an immense Ocean in a little feeble Bark, which will be *carried away with every Wind*, and soon overset. We cannot perceive the *internal* Constitution and real Nature of *material* Things, as they are in *themselves*; we only perceive them, as they are *relative* to, and affect us. Just so neither Reason nor Revelation were given us to attain to a Knowledge of the *intimate* Essence of the Deity, or, as some affect to call it, his *abstract metaphysical Substance*, what real Distinctions it may admit of, and how they are consistent with its Unity. Revelation was designed to let us know what the three Persons in the Divine Nature have done *for us*, and what *relative* Duties we owe to *them*. So far Knowledge is useful; and where Usefulness ends, Darkness and Ignorance generally commences. There are in every Branch of Science, as well as in Divinity, *the weightier Matters*, which may be understood with a proper Degree

SER. VII. of Application; and there are also several *Minutenesses*, little *Punctilios*, and *sine-spun* *curious* Notions: and those Subjects are intelligible enough in the *gross* and in *general*; which, when branched out *too minutely* into all their *little Circumstantials* and *Appendages*, are extremely perplexed and intangled. Just as Matter lies open to the View in its *Bulk* and in its *massy* and more *substantial* Parts: whereas the *intimate* Configuration and Texture of its *finer* and *minuter* Particles will be ever indiscernible.

It is morally impossible we should err in judging *Christianity* to be true; because the Proofs for it are strong, decisive, and lie *level* to our Capacities; but we may very probably err in fancying that to be absurd, which relates to the Nature and *Essence* of the Deity, where there is an infinite *Disproportion* between the Faculty and the Object. If there be any *Criterion* of Truth, if we are not necessarily liable to be deceived; we may safely conclude, that, what has all the *distinctive* Characters of *Truth*, that any ancient Record can have, cannot be a Forgery or Imposture: But we cannot be sure, but that in Matters of so *high* and *elevated* a Nature, what we *con-*  
*ceive,*



ceive, (without clearly *perceiving* any thing) SER. VII.  
 to border upon an Absurdity, may be not so  
 in itself, but merely owing to our Want of  
 more extensive Views. *One Proof* from a  
 Matter of *Fact* should weigh more to *confirm*  
 a *mysterious* Doctrine, than all the *ideal* and  
*metaphysical* Arguments, which fall short of  
 Demonstration, to *disprove* it. Because we  
 are very competent *Judges* of Matter of *Fact*;  
 but all our Ideas about the *intrinsic Nature* of  
 God are short and *indistinēt*: and where our  
 Ideas are *indistinēt*, our Knowledge, which  
 is founded upon them, must be so too. One  
 intermediate Idea, which is wanting, might,  
 if taken into the Account, make our Con-  
 clusion quite different: And one foreign  
 Idea, which has intruded where it has no-  
 thing to do, will, like a little Leaven, spread  
 and diffuse itself, and give a Tincture to the  
 whole Mass of our Reasoning.

This is only a *general* Answer to the Dif-  
 ficulties with which this Doctrine is attend-  
 ed. Under my *second* Head, which must  
 be reserved for another Discourse, I shall  
 remove *particular* Objections.



# SERMON VIII.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Doctrine of the TRINITY.



MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

*Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations,  
baptizing them in the Name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

**T**HE Deity is to human Minds, SER. VIII.  
what the main Ocean is to nar-  
row Vessels: They may take in  
as much Knowledge of his Nature, as their  
scanty Dimensions will admit; and yet  
there will remain an infinite Surplus still,  
which we want Capacities to receive \*;  
wishing, that human Nature was raised to an

\* See *Cudworth's Intellectual System.*

**SER. VIII.** an higher Perfection, that the divine Nature may be better understood, more perfectly loved, and more worthily praised.

The Chain of Beings ascends upwards, from Brutes to Men—from Men, in a beautiful and regular Gradation, to Angels, Archangels, and all those *thousand thousands, that stand before God, and the ten thousand times ten thousand, that minister unto him.* The Transitions in this Poem of Nature, from one Kind to another, are so extremely fine and delicate; that we scarce can distinguish, where one ends, and the other begins. Yet the Dignity of the noblest of these Beings, bears no more Proportion to his, who dwelleth in unapproachable Glory; than a gilded Cloud, on which the Evening Sun has impressed its Beams, and enriched with beautiful Stains of Light, does to that great Abyss of Light, from which it derives its reflected Beauty. He can still make Beings, which shall as much surpass an Archangel of the highest Class; as an Archangel of the highest Class surpasses the most groveling Insect. For every finite Creature, how great soever; must be infinitely beneath an all-perfect Being. This, however, is the  
Being,

Being, whose Nature we would measure SER. VIII.  
by our own, and make God after our Like-  
ness, instead of humbly endeavouring to  
be as like him, as we can. The most ad-  
vanced Notion, which we can form of him,  
as distinct from all his Creatures, is merely  
*negative*, excepting the Idea of necessary  
Existence, which may imply something  
positive. For Existence, Power, Good-  
ness, Wisdom, &c. are not his *peculiar*  
and *incommunicable* Properties. When they  
are ascribed to him *without Bounds*, then  
they are Ideas *distinctive* of him, though  
Ideas purely *negative*, as implying only a  
*Negation of Limits*. We cannot extend  
even our Conjectures concerning the divine  
Nature, beyond those Ideas, which are de-  
rived from Sensation and Reflection: Yet,  
with these sorry Materials of Knowledge,  
some attempt to dethrone their Saviour and  
the Holy Ghost, and to degrade them into  
the Rank of Creatures.

I have already proved, from Scripture,  
that there are more Persons than one in the  
divine Essence.

I now proceed to clear this Doctrine from  
the principal Objections against it, from the  
Reason of the Thing.

SER. VIII.

All the Objections against the Trinity proceed from hence, that Men discourse about an *infinite Being*, as they would about a *finite* one, without considering the Difference of the Subject they are upon, and what an immense Disproportion there is. But this, certainly, is not to treat him as what he is: “It is not to treat him, as  
 “ a Being infinitely more remote, in the  
 “ real Excellency of his Nature, from the  
 “ highest and perfectest of all created Be-  
 “ ings; than the greatest Man, nay, the  
 “ purest Seraphim, is from the most con-  
 “ temptible Part of Matter\* :” It is not to treat him, as a Being infinitely exceeding, what our narrow Understandings can conceive of him. We ought to distinguish carefully between *Contradictions* arising from a plain *Perception* of the Disagreement of Ideas; and mere *Difficulties* arising from the *Defect*, and *Imperfection* of our Ideas. And certainly our Ideas must be very imperfect and defective, when the awful and tremendous Essence of the Deity is the Subject of our Enquiry. What Arrogance is it for us, whose Knowledge reaches no farther than the mere *Shell* and *Surface* of *natural*

\* *Locke's Essay of Understanding*, Folio. Page 203.

*tural Things, to pretend to search the Al-* SER. VIII.  
*mighty to Perfection, to penetrate into the*  
*intrinsic Nature of God, and to pronounce*  
*with a decisive Air of Self-sufficiency; he*  
*must exist in this particular Manner, and*  
*no other?*

The poor groveling Creature, that would audaciously sound the unfathomable Depths of an *uncreated Essence*, yet is a *Mystery* to himself, his *little despicable Self*; and can no more account for the Union of Soul and Body, two Substances yet one Person; than he can comprehend the awful *Mystery* of three Persons, yet one indivisible Substance, in a Subject infinitely removed beyond the narrow Ken of an human Understanding.

We believe the Trinity, because we have clear, full and express Proofs of it from Scripture: They, who disbelieve it, reject it, because of Objections brought against it from the *Nature* of the Thing, which is confessedly unsearchable, dark and mysterious. Therefore *clear* Proofs are the Foundation of our *Belief*: But something *dark* and *obscure* is the Foundation of their *Disbelief*. We have clear Reasons to found our Faith upon; but they have nothing clear,

ser. VIII. clear, and level to their Understanding to  
 found their Want of Faith upon.

The first and grand Objection against the Divinity of our Saviour, and the Holy Spirit is this: That either the three Persons must be three *Substances*, which is *Tritheism*; or they must be three *Modes*, which is *Sabellianism*.

It is thus, Man, weak Man, most *assured* of what he is most *ignorant*, and most *ignorant* of what he should know *best*, viz. *himself*, argues against well-supported Truths, from loose Conjectures and visionary Notions, dressed up in the *Form* of strict Reasoning, without the *Power* thereof, and then dignifies his crude and indigested Notions with the pompous Name of *Demonstration*, where the *only* Demonstration is, that the Subject admits of *none*.

For in the first place, though in *finite* Beings there is no Distinction but that of Modes and Substances; we cannot hence infer, that the *unsearchable* Nature of God may not admit of some other *real* but incomprehensible Distinction; a Distinction *greater* than that of three *Modes*, yet less than that of three *Substances*.



Though an human Soul is a Spirit as well SER. VIII. as God; yet Spirit, or immaterial Being, does not point out, as Body does, one *determinate* Kind of Being, but *every Sort* of Beings, that are not corporeal\*. It is a negative Idea, a mere Denial of Matter. As my Soul is of a quite different Effence from the Table on which I write, though they are both Substance: So God transcends my Soul, though they are both Spirit, infinitely more, than my Soul can the Table. To argue then from our Nature to the divine; to say that because the one admits of no Distinction, but that of Modes and Substances, the other may not: What is this, but to argue *a pari*, where there is an infinite *Disparity*, a boundless Disproportion?

2dly, Those, who object that we must, either with the *Sabellians*, maintain the Persons to be three *Modes* only; or with the *Tritheists*, three *Substances*, must first demonstrate, that Substance and Substance, however *close* and *inviolable* the *Union* may be, must necessarily make Substances; or that Being and Being cannot be *so united*

\* See Dr. Clarke on the Omnipresence, in the first Volume of his Posthumous Sermons.

SER. VIII. as to be *one*. For if they cannot demonstrate this, there will be this plain Medium between *Sabellianism* and *Tritheism*, that the three Persons will be more than three Modes, each being Substance; and yet not three Substances, because *indissoluble Union* of Substance *with* Substance may constitute *Unity*; or whatever is *essentially* and *necessarily united*, may be *essentially* and *necessarily one*. Thus our Saviour's Words, *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*, will give the best Solution of the Difficulty.

I may observe farther, that either Being and Being in Union does *not* make *Beings*; or there is no such Thing as *one* Being in *Nature*, upon *their Hypothesis*, who maintain, as the most able Defender of *Arianism* does maintain, that spiritual, as well as corporeal Beings, are *extended*. For each *extended* Being, it is well known, is nothing but *Being* and *Being in Union*; and only one, because of the *Continuity* of the *Parts*. He (that great Master of Reason) supposed the Deity to be *infinitely expanded*. It was likewise his Opinion, that there is no Medium between a Being and *Nothing*, and that *Person* is an *intelligent Being*. Well:  
The

The Deity, according to his Scheme, must <sup>SER. VIII.</sup> consist of an *Infinity of Parts* — Each of those Parts must be either a Being, or *No-thing*. — Each of these Parts must be likewise an *intelligent* Being. For an *intelligent Whole* cannot be made up of *unintelligent* Parts. — And if *each* of these Parts be an *intelligent* Being; — then *each* must be a *Person*; — The Consequence of which is, that according to his *Hypothesis*, there must be *as many Persons* in an *infinitely expanded Substance*, as there are *Parts*. Thus this great Philosopher (for a great Philosopher he certainly was) at the same Time that he opposed the *Catholic* Scheme of *three* Persons, in the same undivided Substance; must, if consistent with himself, maintain *many more* than three Persons, even an *Infinity* of Persons in the same Substance.

Such is the Frailty of human Nature, even in great Men. They can see the least *Mote* of a Difficulty in another's Scheme; they cannot behold the *Beam*, that is in their own.

Nor was he singular in that Opinion: Several able Philosophers, both at home and abroad, have embraced the Scheme of *Extension*. Now the same Principle, *viz.* that

SER. VIII. Being and Being *in Union*, does not make  
 a *Plurality* of Beings, which acquits them  
 from the Charge of *Polytheism*, clears the  
*Orthodox* likewise from the Imputation of  
*Tritheism*. If this Principle does not hold  
 true, they must consequentially maintain an  
*Infinity* of Gods; if it *does*, we cannot be  
 said to maintain a *Trinity* of Gods.

It is not material to examine, whether  
 the *Hypothesis* of Extension is true or false;  
 the *Principle*, upon which alone the Pa-  
 trons of it can be vindicated from the  
 Charge of asserting a *Multitude* of Deities,  
 will stand its Ground.

Let us try the whole Force of *Me-  
 taphysics*; let us think as much as possible  
 upon the Stretch; yet, after the utmost  
 Expende of Thought, the only Concep-  
 tions we can frame of the divine Unity are  
 Indivisibility and Simplicity; the one a-  
 mounting to no more than a Negation of  
 Division, and the other of any foreign or  
*heterogeneous* Mixtures. He who from  
 these two *negative* Ideas would *positively* in-  
 fer, that there must be only one Person in  
 the divine Nature, must form a Demonstration,  
 where he has not sufficient *Data* to  
 build upon. It is hard to fix a positive  
 Principle


Principle of *Individuation*, from whence SER.VIII. we may clearly argue, even in *finite* Beings. I know some make *Consciousness* the *Ground of Unity*: But then what is the *Ground of Consciousness*? Nothing can be the *Ground*, Reason, or Principle of any Thing, which is, in the Order of our Ideas and of Nature, *subsequent* to the Thing, of which it is supposed to be the *Ground*. But *Consciousness* is *subsequent* to the *Unity*; and therefore *not* the *Ground* of it. *Consciousness* is that *reflex* Act, by which I *know* what I am: Now, if I must *be* what I am, (one or more) before I *know* what I am; then *Consciousness* must be *subsequent* to the *Unity*. The *being* what I am, must be the *Foundation* of my *knowing* what I am, and not *vice versa*. *Consciousness*, a personal Act, does not *constitute* but *presuppose*, the *Personality*, from which the personal Act results. It may be added, that, if we are only one because conscious; then we put off *Unity*, like our *Cloaths*, when we lye down and fall asleep; and resume it again when we awake. This Scheme bears a near Resemblance to his, who made *Necessity* a mere *Mode of Existence*, in the Order of our Ideas, antec-

SER. VIII. dent to, and the Ground of, the Substance, whose Mode and Attribute it is: Just so, this *Hypothesis* supposes Consciousness to be the *Ground* of an *Identity*, which must be *prior* to the Consciousness. We cannot justly argue, that we are *conscious* we are one—*therefore* we are one: The Process of the Argument should be thus: We *are* one—*therefore* we are *conscious* we are one: The Truth of our conscious Knowledge depending upon the Nature of Things; and not the Nature of Things upon our conscious Knowledge.

Dismissing therefore Consciousness as the Ground of Unity, we can advance no farther, than that Maxim of the Schools, *Unum est indivisum in se*. The Persons then are each *Being* — because they exist, invested with *distinct Offices* and peculiar *Relations*: but not *Beings*, because they do not exist *separately*.

And this puts me in mind, secondly, of another Objection; that if Union of Substance with Substance, constitutes one Substance; then Union of Persons with each other must constitute one Person.

But to this I answer, that the Objection supposes Unity of Person and Substance to be

be the same, which wants to be proved. SER. VIII.  
We use the Word Plurality of *Persons* to  express that the Substance, however united, is yet *distinguished* by *appropriate* Relations, as that of a Son to a Father, and by distinct Offices: Whereas Plurality of *Substances* implies, the Substance to be *divided* or *divisible*. So many *separable* Persons are so many *Substances*; but Persons, *incapable* of any *Disunion* or Division, are *one Substance*. Observing that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are every where, in Scripture, dignified with the same infinite Perfections of Power, Knowledge, &c. and invested with the same essential Attributes; we conclude, they have all the same Essence; the Essence being nothing but an Assemblage of all the essential Attributes: But finding, that they have likewise personal Properties, distinct Offices and Relations, we conclude they are distinct Persons.

It may be objected, that the Son is not self-existent: And if not self-existent, then not necessarily existent. But I reply, the Ideas are distinct: The former implying, *whence* a Being is; the latter, *what* he is: Self-existent, that the Being is of *none*; necessarily-existent, that the Being *immu-*

SER. VIII. *tably* exists: The one is a mere *negative* Idea, being only a Negation of any Cause of Existence; the latter implies something *positive*, viz. Permanency, Stability, and an infinite Ability to exist. The Son, though he is of the Father, and therefore not self-existent; yet is necessarily-existent, being the *Jehovah*, the  $\tau\omicron\delta\ \delta\upsilon$ , and is co-eternal with the Father: Just as Thought, however subsequent in the Order of our Ideas, is co-eval with an eternal thinking Mind. Nor is there any more Difficulty, in the Notion of an eternal Reference of the Son to the Father, than there is in the Notion of Eternity itself. It is ridiculous to object that God is a *self-existent Person, of all possible Perfections*. For if the Objectors can prove, that Self-Existence and necessary Existence are *synonymous Terms*, then the *Logos* must be self-existent, because he is necessarily existent: and indeed the *Nature* is self-existent, though the *Personality* proceeds from the Father by such a *necessary and eternal Act*, as those, whereby he *loves, enjoys and contemplates himself*. But if necessary Existence be distinct from Self-Existence; Self-Existence, as *distinct* from necessary Existence, does not imply  
any



any *positive* Perfection: and therefore the SER. VIII. Son, notwithstanding he be not a self-existent *Person*, may be vested with all the positive Attributes of the Deity.

After our Adversaries have darkened this Subject, by *metaphysical* Objections, and speculative Niceties concerning Modes and Substances, Person and Essence, self-existent and necessarily-existent; which, if we do not reply to, they tell us, *all that we can say will be to no Purpose*; it is very unfair, thirdly, to object that this Doctrine is too obscure to be made an Article of Faith; the common People having not Capacities to apprehend it.

To this I answer, that the common People may understand the *Doctrine* of the Trinity; and yet not be competent Masters of the *Controversy* about the Trinity. They may survey the plain Scripture *Ground* upon which it stands, without being able to comprehend the elaborate *Entrenchments* and *Fortifications*, which are raised to repel the vigorous Attacks of its Enemies. Secondly, the Doctrine is very clear as to the *Proofs*; and as to the *Manner*, not more obscure than Eternity, Self-Existence, and Omnipresence, which every Body must  
3 believe.

SER. VIII. believe. A Man of plain Sense may believe, and have general Ideas, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so far really distinct as not to be one the other, may yet be so inseparably united as to be one, in as strict a Sense as any Thing he can frame a Notion of here, is one; and that though three Persons multiply and divide the *human* Nature; it does not follow, that they must divide or multiply the *divine*, which transcends ours, infinitely more than our Nature does that of insensate Matter. “ The  
 “ Persons are *distinct* and real, as any *other*  
 “ Persons are; but so united withal, as *no*  
 “ *other* Persons are or can be: And there-  
 “ fore they are not (like *other* Persons) as  
 “ *many Beings*, as *Persons*, but *one Being*  
 “ *only.*” Just so a Man may have a *general* Idea of Eternity: He may *understand*, (without being able to *imagine* any Thing about it) that there must be a Being, who had no Beginning of Existence: But when he would endeavour to obtain a more *explicit*, *distinct*, and *determinate* Idea, the Mind is quite overwhelmed, by an Object too big, unwieldy, and disproportioned to be grasped and managed by it. In vain our Mind widens, to take in the vast Idea of

an Eternity; in vain it adds Thousands to SER. VIII. Thousands, and Millions to Millions; our Thoughts are quite lost and swallowed up in Infinity. So far is it from being true, that, as one expresses it, *Religion ends, where Mystery begins*; that Religion begins with a Mystery, the greatest Mystery of all, the Self-Existence and Eternity of God. Let a Man acquaint us, how an Eternity can be *past*, unless it was *once present*; and how that could be *once present*, which had *never a Beginning*. If you believe a God, you must believe Mysteries, it having been fully proved by a very great Writer \*, that, whatever has existed from Eternity, exists in a Manner, of which we can frame no Notion, but what is big with *seeming Absurdities*. *Seeming Absurdities* I say, not *real*. For they, like those, with which the Divisibility of Matter and Infinites of all Sorts in Mathematics are encumbered; are only Indications of the Defectiveness of our Ideas. But if you deny a God, then nothing will be, properly speaking, *mysterious* to you: For Mysteries have their *bright*, as well as dark Side: Every Thing will be *thoroughly*

\* See the 8th Volume of the Spectators. N<sup>o</sup> 590.

SER. VIII. *thoroughly dark and absolutely unintelligible.*

For we can account for nothing in Nature, without supposing an Author of it.

The *Generality* walk on in the plain high Road of common Sense: They see the Doctrine of the Trinity is edifying, and not more unintelligible, than that a Being *which is in Heaven*, should be *about our Path, and about our Bed*: They are your *metaphysical* Adventurers, that lose themselves, and others, in studied Intricacies. *Time, Place and Motion*, are what every Body knows in the *Gross*; and yet let them pass through the Hands of a *Metaphysician*, and they become too fine and subtle for each *grosser* View. The most illiterate Persons have a superficial and obvious Notion of them, such as answers all the *Purposes* of Life; though they cannot form accurate and *Philosophical* Ideas of them, nor answer all the Difficulties, which the Author of the historical Dictionary has started against one of them in the Article of *Zeno*. It is thus as to the Trinity: The Doctrine, as to the main Substance, “ is clear enough “ to be looked upon; though too deep to “ be seen through\*.” We may take a *general*

\* See Dr. Waterland's *Importance of the Trinity*, pag. 20.

ral View of it, as that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost may be distinct, without being divided; united but not confounded: We then bewilder ourselves, when we would too nicely scan the *minute* Circumstances, and would fix a *particular* and *determinate Mode*.

Indeed, in most metaphysical Disputes, we are like Men upon *marshy* Ground; We may skim lightly over the *Surface*, and take a *general* Survey of the Nature of the Soil: But if we dwell too long upon any *particular* Spot; if we must *critically* and *minutely* examine into the Ground on which we tread, we *sink* of course; and the more we struggle to get free; the more, except we have uncommon Strength, we are *gravelled* irretrievably.

The Truth of the Case is this: Our Prospect is bounded by a very narrow Horizon; our Faculties limited within a very narrow Sphere of Activity. *Within* that Sphere lie the Proofs of God's Attributes, and of Matter of Fact, upon which Revelation depends: And *within* that Sphere Things, in the main, are *easy* and *obvious* to us. *Beyond* it, all, except some few negative indeterminate Ideas, is an immense Blank

SER. VIII. Blank to us : And *beyond* it, if any Thing, the *Manner* of the Divine Existence, and the *Nature* of the *Unity* and *Distinction* in the tremendous Deity, are *infinitely* removed.

I may observe farther, that the *Antitritarians* first introduced *Metaphysics* into this Question, on purpose to perplex it with laboured Abstractions, and studied Refinements ; and then the *Catholics* were obliged, though reluctant, to follow them through all their Mazes and Windings, to shew that the Doctrine would abide the Test of *Metaphysics*. For if some Mens Understandings, like the Earth *under the Curse*, will be fruitful of little else, but *Thorns and Thistles* to entangle and perplex ; it is a Duty incumbent upon the Labourers in the Vineyard, to *weed* the Soil, and not let the Doctrine be *over-run* and *choaked* by them.

Whoever has examined all the wild Paradoxes, and particular Tenets, of the Philosophers, ancient and modern ; must be sensible, that *Stupidity* has not misled the *Unbinking* into more palpable *Absurdities* ; than an *Affectation* of thinking *out* of the *common Road*, has betrayed some of the *finest Geniuses* and *ablest* Scholars.

Nor

Nor is Reason oftener in some Men the <sup>SER. VIII.</sup> Dupe of the *Passions*; than it is in others of the *Imagination*, of an inventive, adventurous *Imagination*, launching out into those *Depths*, where it can find no sure *Footing*.

The grand Inlet of Error has been to argue *a priori*, from antecedent philosophical Notions; and then to *pervert* the Scripture to countenance those Notions, to press it into the Service, and compel it to come in; which has been the Source of *Heresy*: Or else to *reject* it; which has been the Source of *Infidelity*.

And what is this, but to push our Enquiries beyond our Capacities? Matter of Fact (a Revelation supported by well-attested Matters of Fact) is here *all in all*: But to argue from the *abstract Nature* of the Thing, of which we know little or nothing, is what we may *miscall* human Reason; but is in reality *human Conjecture*, not to say, human *Folly* and *Pride*. It is to pretend to *Wisdom*, without having, what is the *Beginning* of *Wisdom*, a reverential Fear of God before our Eyes. There is a *metaphysical Knight-Errantry*, a *speculative Fool-Hardiness*, in some very  
3 great

SER. VIII.

great but too enterprizing Men, which tempts them to *grapple* with Objects, to which every judicious Stander-by sees their Strength to be vastly unequal.

And *whatever Absurdities* some People may alledge, without being able to prove, against the Trinity; *the greatest Absurdity* of all is, that weak ignorant Creatures should *pretend* to fathom an *infinite* Subject with a very *scanty Line*. Want of Humility in Points of so high a Nature, is always, in some degree, Want of Sense. There may be a bright and sparkling Imagination, without Humility; but there can be no such thing as a well-poised Judgment, and sound sober Sense. For good Sense teaches us to be diffident of our own Sense, where the Subject is placed beyond the Boundaries of clear and distinct Perception. *Those Repugnancies to Reason* which some People *imagine* they have discovered in this Point, are like the Retrogradations of the Planets and the *Irregularities* of their Motions; They are only *seeming*, not *real*, and are owing to the *Height* of the Objects, their *Distance* from us, and the *Incommodiousness* of our Situation for a just Discernment of these Things: Could

we



we see from a *proper Point of View*, we SER. VIII. should find, that what *appeared to us* irregular, was *in itself* equal and uniform.

Let us then proceed, in our Researches after Truth, with all due Humility and Modesty. It is better to be in the Wrong in some few Points, with Modesty and Humility; than to be in the Right, (which is not often the Case) with those proud and presumptuous Reasoners, who stand upon Terms with their Maker, and lose the *humble* and meek *Christian*, in the vain *Disputer* of *this World*. For however valuable a clear Discernment, and an uncommon Reach of Thought may be; yet Humility, which does *not exercise itself in Matters which are too high*, is undoubtedly far more amiable in the Sight of that Being, who though he *inhabiteth Eternity*, yet *dwells with the Lowly and Contrite*. It is better *having one Eye*, though we do not see so clearly, *to enter into Life*; than *having two Eyes*, with all our Quick-Sightedness, and enlarged Views, *to be cast into Hell*: Which may be the Case, if Misbelief in an important practical Point, is occasioned, not by any Defect of Understanding, but by the Perverseness of the Will.

SER. VIII. To withhold our Assent, till *all* Difficulties are cleared up, and *all* Intricacies unravelled, is very unreasonable. For *All* cannot be cleared up, unless we, who *hardly guess aright at Things before us*, could comprehend, whatever He, whose *Glory is above the Heavens, is* in himself, and whatever he does for us. We then give the best Proofs of the Strength of our Reason, when we own the *Weakness* of it, in the *deep Things of God*; humbly content to *see him through a Glass darkly*; till we can see him *as he is, Face to Face*: To whom, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c.

F I N I S.





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