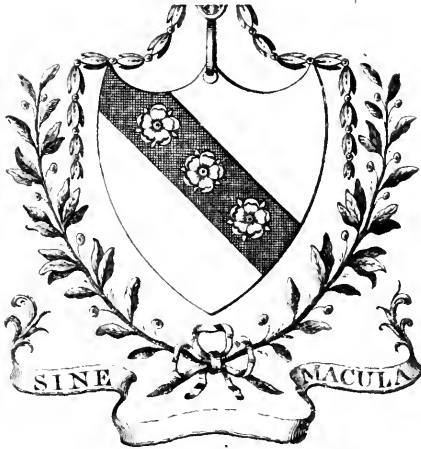


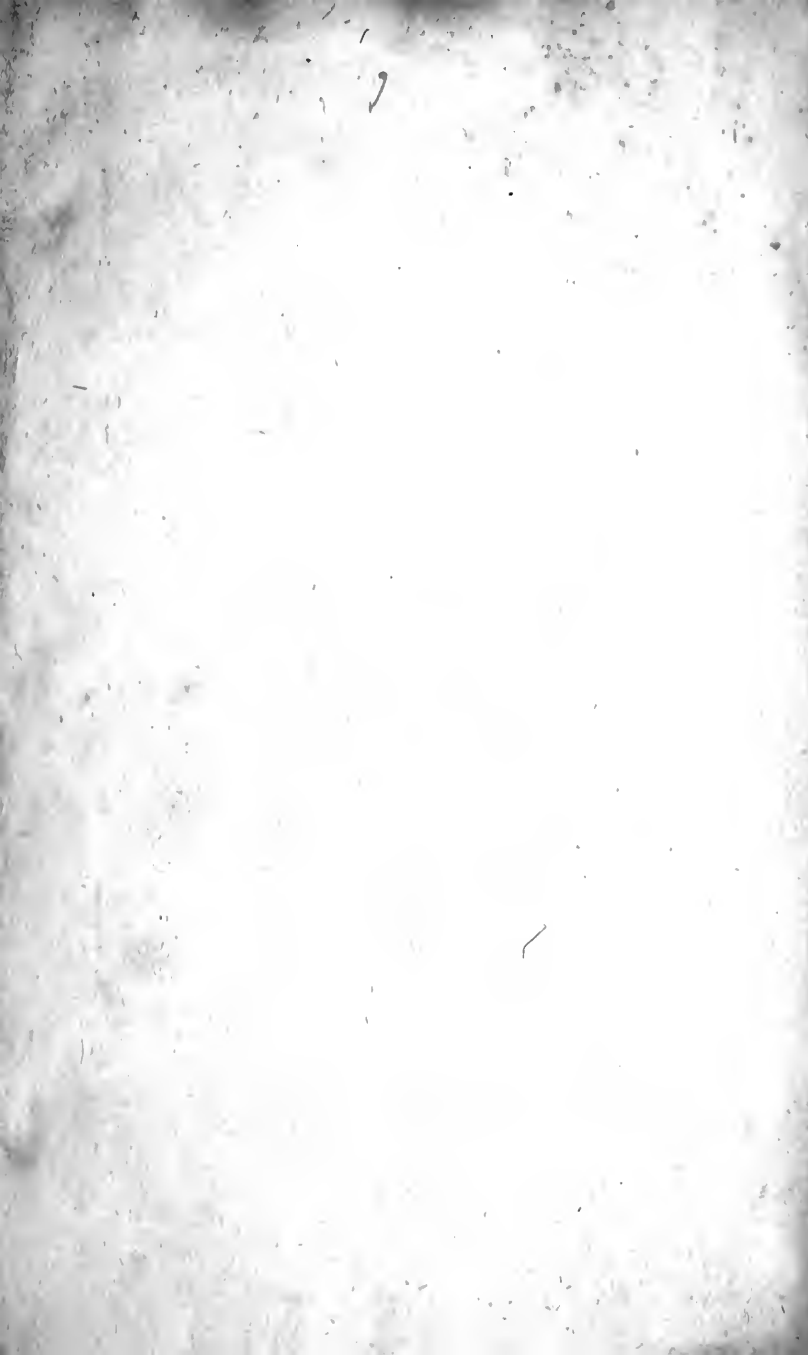


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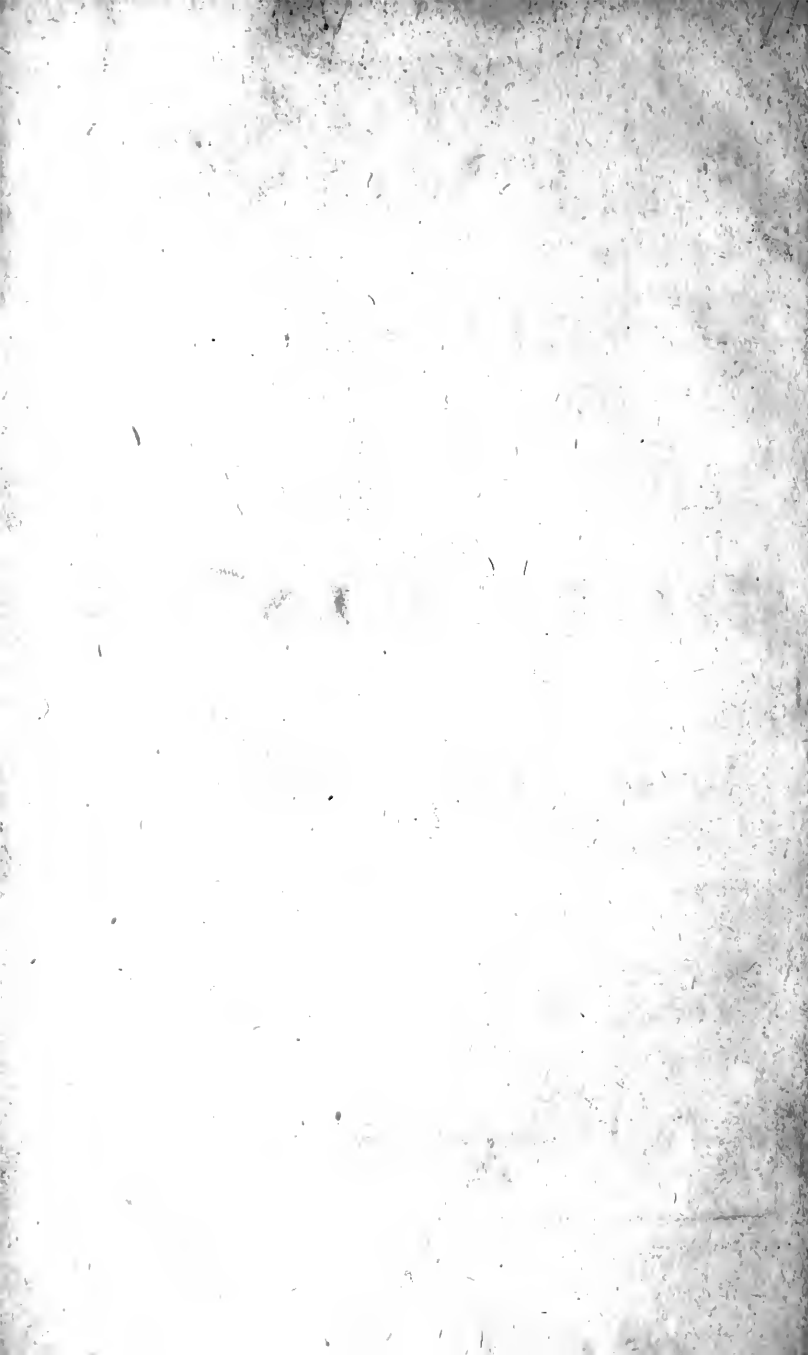


Peter & Martin Carey.





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FOURTEEN
SERMONS

PREACH'D ON
Several Occasions.

Together with

A Large Vindication

OF THE

DOCTRINE

Contain'd in

The Sermon preach'd at the
Funeral of M^r THOMAS
BENNET.

By FRANCIS ATTERBURY, D. D.
Dean of *Carlisle*, Preacher at the *Rolls*, and
Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

L O N D O N :

Printed by E. P. for *Jonah Bowyer*, at the *Rose*
in *Ludgate-street* near *St. Paul's Church*. 1708.

~~SECRET~~
SERMONS

Right Rev. Father

JONATHAN

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Might please

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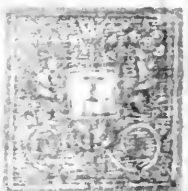
the

of the

Man who

indebted to

of the



TO THE

Right Rev^d Father in God

JONATHAN

By Divine Permission

Lord Bp. of *Winchester*, and
Prelate of the most No-
ble Order of the *Garter*.

May it please your Lordship



O accept this Pub-
lick Testimony of
Gratitude from a
Man, who stands
indebted to YOUR LORDSHIP

A 2 for

The Dedication.

for many Favours ; great in themselves, but made much greater by Your free and generous manner of conferring them. For they were not the Effects of Importunity, or the just Rewards of Domestick Service; they sprang not from Dependance, or Acquaintance; being bestow'd on One, who was (at the first) little known to Your Lordship, otherwise than by his honest Endeavours to retrieve those Synodical Rights of the Clergy, whereof You, my LORD, have been all along, to Your great Honour, the avow'd Patron and Defender. I

The Dedication.

I mention not this Instance of YOUR LORDSHIP'S Goodness to Me, with any View of Distinguishing myself from Others: for You have done nothing in My case, but what You have frequently practis'd, since the time that Divine Providence, for the good of this Church, rais'd You to the Episcopal Dignity; Nothing, but what hath been successively acknowledged by all Those who have prefix'd Your Right Reverend Name to their Labours, from the Learned and Venerable D^r Pocock, down to the mean Author of

The Dedication.

the following Sermons. And, while YOUR LORDSHIP continues to repeat the same Acts of Generosity, You must be contented to receive the very same Acknowledgments; since We, who share the Obligations, can scarce find a better way of expressing our Thanks, and doing justice to Your Character, than by informing the World, Why, and How they were deriv'd to us.

The Secrecy, with which Wise Statesmen conduct their Designs for the Publick Good, so, as that the Execution alone shall make the
the

The Dedication.

the Discovery, hath by Your Lordship been as carefully observ'd in Your Private Schemes of Beneficence; which have seldom appear'd, till they took Effect, and surpris'd even Those, who were most nearly interested in the Success of them. By this means, You have, after the best manner, forbidden all Applications, by rendring them, not only unnecessary, but impracticable; and have enjoy'd to the utmost, both the Honour, and the Pleasure of well-doing.

Indeed, there is scarce any Virtue, which either dispo-

The Dedication.

ses the Mind to deserve well of others, or adds Comeliness and Grace to deserving Actions, that doth not manifestly appear, and shine in Your Lordship: and by these Recommending Circumstances You engage the very Hearts of Those You Oblige, and double the Value of every Kindness You do them.

To give, *hoping* (and looking) *for nothing again*, is the Gospel-Rule of Beneficence; and Your Lordship hath strictly observ'd it. For none of Your Gifts have been clogg'd with Conditions;
You

The Dedication.

|| You have expected no Returns, but what every one, who hath a thankful Mind, and a just sense of his Duty, would even choose, and delight to pay : You have aim'd only at doing as became You in Your high Station; and when Those whom You advanc'd, did likewise as became them in *Their* Stations, Your Desires were answer'd, and You had Your Reward.

It is well known, with what Courtesy and Ease You have always treated Those whom You have once oblig'd; on that very account they

The Dedication.

they were sure of having a nearer and freer Access to Your Lordship, instead of being kept to the Usual Terms of distance and dependance. You have been so far from ever putting any Man in mind of what You have done for him, that You would never bear to be put in mind of it Your self; and have not been more careful to prevent Solicitations, than to avoid Acknowledgments. You had the Thanks of Your Own Conscience, and You neither needed, nor desir'd any Other. nor ~~is~~ it is the peculiar Happiness

The Dedication.

ness of those Persons, on whom Your Favours are plac'd, that they receive them from an Hand, eminent for its great and lasting Services to our Church and Constitution. For there are, I think, no Enemies whatsoever, either of her Doctrine, Discipline, or Worship, (either within doors, or without) but what Your Lordship hath, in the Course of Your Episcopal Government, withstood, and baffled.

You were one of those *Seven Prelates* (worthy of honourable remembrance) who gave the most effectual

al

The Dedication.

al Check to the Attempts
of *Popery* in a late Reign,
and preserv'd the pure Pro-
fession of Christianity among
us by the same Suffering
Methods by which it was
at first propagated. It can
never be forgotten, with
what a true Christian Spirit
(such as animated the chief
Pastors of the Church, in
those Days, when Episco-
pacy was a certain Step to
Martyrdom) You stood
forth, and offer'd Your self
willingly to witness a good
Confession; how Solicitous
You were, lest the *Tower-
Gates* should have been shut
upon

The Dedication.

upon those Excellent Persons, ere Your Distance would permit You to accompany them in their glorious Confinement; to partake of which, You made as much haste, as some Men afterwards did, to draw the Advantages of it to themselves, under a new Turn of Affairs.

When That happen'd, New Occasions also of serving the Church, offer'd themselves to Your Lordship, which You as readily embrac'd. The Fatherly Vigilance, and Exemplary Firmness, you then show'd
in

The Dedication

in frustrating the Methods made use of to perpetuate *Schism*, by unauthoriz'd Schools and Seminaries, were observ'd with Pleasure, and own'd with Thanks, by All that wish'd well to our Establishment. Nor could They, who wish'd ill to it, justly blame an Endeavour of securing to the Ordinary that Power, which he always enjoy'd, and of which he is not yet divested; and of confining a Legal Indulgence within the Bounds prescrib'd by that Law which gave Birth to it.

Shall I take notice here
of

The Dedication.

of the Seasonable and Liberal Encouragements You reach'd out to a worthy *Presbyter* of this Church, who repress'd the bold Attempts of *Sectaries* by his Learned and Accurate Writings? It may, I think, become me to mention even this Particular Act of Your Bounty, since it had a General Aim, and Influence, and was not terminated in the *Person*, how deserving soever, but in the Righteous *Cause* which he espous'd; and which, as Your Lordship's fix'd Judgment leads You, by all Lawful Means, to support, so
Your

The Dedication.

Your Temper inclines You rather to promote by Rewards, than Punishments.

The Fears of Popery were scarce remov'd, when *Heresy* began to diffuse it's Venome; and the sacred Mysteries of our Faith were, after a daring and petulant manner, expos'd to publick Scorn, even in one of those famous Seats of Knowledge, which then were, and still are, the chief Bulwarks of true Religion. It pleas'd God, that You were now possess'd of a See, which gave You Power to Visit and Correct such Enormities; and

The Dedication.

and You exerted that Power with Zeal and Vigour ; driving out from the Schools of Learning a Disciple of *Arius*, who had all the Craft and Obstinacy of his Master, and the good luck, for some time, to be as well Supported. The Prosecution of this Cause was attended with so many Difficulties, as would have shaken a Resolution less firm than YOUR LORDSHIP'S. But the Discharge of Your great Trust, and the Maintenance of God's Truth, were the Springs which had set you on work ; and They, who act upon such Principles,

The Dedication.

ples, can never be discourag'd.

The Issue of that memorable Struggle, as it was of great Advantage to the Church, and the Universities, in other Respects, so particularly in this, that it fix'd the Power of Visitors (not till then acknowledg'd Final) upon the sure Foundation of a Judgment in Parliament; and, by that means, made so effectual a Provision for the future Quiet of those Learned Bodies, as may be reckon'd equal to the greatest Benefactions.

This, and another Parliamentary

The Dedication.

amentary Decision, which Your Lordship, not long after, with equal Difficulty obtain'd; and by which the Bishop's sole Right to judge of the Qualifications of Persons applying for Institution, was unalterably confirm'd; are such Instances of Your Magnanimity and Publick Spirit, as will remain in Memory, while the Church, or the Law of *England* lasts. For they were not Temporary Services, to be made use of, and talk'd of for a while, and then forgotten; but (as the Historian truly said of his own

* 2 Writings)

The Dedication.

Writings) *Perpetual Acquisitions*, laid up for the benefit of succeeding Ages. And He, who contends for Common Rights, with Lower Aims than these, means not the Constitution, but Himself; and deserves not the Applause even of his Own Times, when he is not disinterested enough to look beyond them. It was the Sense of these Important Services, already done by Your Lordship, that occasion'd a general Joy among good Men, when they heard of Your intended Translation to the See of *Winchester.*

The Dedication.

Winchester. Particularly, the Clergy of that Diocese, and the University of *Oxford*, who were chiefly concern'd in the Consequences of Your Promotion, receiv'd the first Accounts of it with the greatest Satisfaction, and were in Pain, while the Event was suspended — A Suspence, which we may presume design'd to do honour to Your LORDSHIP, and to justify the Wisdom of her Majesties Choice; since it tended to shew, how impatiently You were expected, and desir'd, by Those who

of the Sec^o of * were
Winchester

The Dedication.

were to be under Your Inspection and Authority.

Among all the Learned Bodies, whose Hopes and Fears were then in greatest Agitation, None was more (or with more Reason) solicitous than that *House*, which had the Honour of Educating Your LORDSHIP, and instilling into Your Mind those Principles, which, whoever hath once imbib'd, seldom forsakes; and whosoever forsakes not, must immoveably adhere to the true Interests of the Church, and Monarchy. Whilst that fruitful Parent thus trains up
her

The Dedication.

her Children, She is secure of Protection and Favour from Your Lordship, or from Whoever else He be, that hath not been withheld from doing good to Her, in Evil Days, by malicious and groundless Clamours. Under Your, and Their Shadow She hath *rested at Noon*, when the Heat was most intense, and scorching: She hath flourish'd hitherto, and will, I doubt not, still continue to flourish, tho' Her Enemies be Many and Mighty, and daily *shoot out their Arrows against her, even bitter Words*. She looks upon Your

* 4

Lordship's

The Dedication.

LORDSHIP'S Advancement,
as a sure Token that Divine
Providence is still propitious
to Her ; and, encourag'd by
this Prospect, She is ready to
take up her Parable, and say ;
Joseph is a fruitful Bough, e-
ven a fruitful Bough by a Well,
whose Branches run over the
Wall. The Archers have sorely
grieved him, and shot at him,
and hated him. But his Bow ta-
bode in Strength, and the Arms
of his Hands were made strong
by the Hands of the mighty God
of Jacob : from thence is the
Shepherd, the Stone of Israel.

In the Names of These,
and of all Other the true
Friends

The Dedication.

Friends and Sons of the Church, permit me, My LORD, to congratulate Your Accession to a See, which will afford You such a Sphere of Action as You were made to fill ; which will furnish You with many welcome Opportunities of doing Good, of rewarding Merit, of cherishing Piety and Virtue, of encouraging Persons, distinguish'd by their Learning, their undaunted Assertion of Divine Truths, and undissembled Zeal for our admirable Constitution in Church and State ; which will, in short, enable You
to

The Dedication.

to carry on all those Excellent Designs, to which Your Upright and Bountiful Heart is religiously inclin'd.

What may We not promise our selves from the Influence of Your LORDSHIP'S Conduct in so Eminent a Station? from Your known Courage and Fervency in the Cause of God, and his Church? from the Greatness of Your Mind, the Goodness of Your Intentions, and the Soundness of Your Principles? from that Habitual Love of *Worthy Deeds*, which You contracted so early, and have by long Practice confirm'd

The Dedication.

firm'd? and from Your Experience of the Success that hath attended You in all You have suffer'd, or done for the Publick? By YOUR LORDSHIP'S Means, and within the Circle of Your Power, we doubt not but to see all proper Steps taken towards reviving decay'd Discipline; and restoring Church-Censures to their due Force and Credit; towards detecting and defeating Clandestine Simoniack Contracts; towards securing the Rights and Revenues of the Clergy from Encroachments, rescuing their Persons, and sacred
Function

The Dedication.

Function from Contempt, and freeing Religion it self from the Insults now made upon it by Blasphemous Tongues, and Pens, with equal Boldness and Impunity.

These, MY LORD, are the Expectations with which the best Men are now entertaining themselves, and which You are hastning to make good. The Actions of the past Years of Your Life, are a sure Earnest and Pledge of what those to come will produce; and the bright Example You have set long ago to Your Self, and to Others,

The Dedication.

thers, shall grow brighter in Proportion to Your Power and Opportunities : for *the Path of the Just is as the Shining Light, that shineth more and more unto a perfect Day.*

The great Honours and Revenues, still annex'd to some few Stations in the Church, are the chief Mark which Impiety, Envy, and Sacrilege aim at ; and much they have to say, why Religion should be stripp'd of these superfluous and unprofitable Ornaments. But Malice it self is disarm'd, and all Objections are silenc'd, when those Rewards are bestow'd

The Dedication.

flow'd on Men, who by their Birth, and Virtues, and Experience, are every way qualify'd for them; whose Hereditary Fortunes, and Noble Natures set them above all mean Designs of diverting the Patrimony of the Church to improper Uses; and who are ready, therefore, to reflect back upon Religion the Advantages they derive from thence, and to abound in all the Offices of Hospitality and Charity, in proportion to what they enjoy. I need not say, how far these Excellent Qualities belong to Your LORDSHIP,
and

The Dedication.

and are a confes'd part of
Your Character.

When we compare the
Good which You have done,
MY LORD, with that which
You have receiv'd, it brings
to mind the Apposite Passage
of the Prophet : *The Liberal
deviseth Liberal things, and by
Liberal things shall he be e-
stablished.* Your LORDSHIP is
an Illustrious Instance of this
Truth ; for the Blessings,
You have so plentifully scat-
ter'd on those beneath You,
have been multiply'd on
Your own Head from above ;
and You have reap'd the
Benefits of a most generous
and

The Dedication.

and firm Friendship, in like manner as You sow'd them. You have given, my Lord, and it hath been given unto You; good Measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over: for with the same Measure, which You meted withal, hath it been (and may it ever be) measured to you again.

Your Happiness, My LORD, is now as compleat as all the Prosperous Circumstances of Life can make it; and Your Private Domestick Felicities (a Case rarely known) are no ways inferior to those of a more Publick and Splendid Nature.

For

The Dedication.

For You are happy in the best of *Ladies*, as She is in the Tenderest of *Husbands*; You have the best of *Brothers*, and the best of *Children*; those *Arrows in the Hand of the Mighty Man*, which are both his Ornament, and Defence: God be thanked, Your *Quiver is full of them!* And *He* amongst them, who is to inherit Your Ample Fortunes, doth, by his Early Love of Learning, and most Vertuous Disposition, promise, that he will one day do Honour even to that Honourable Stock from which he springs.

†

With

The Dedication.

With such a Variety of Blessings hath God surrounded You ! and, that nothing may be wanting, he hath blest You likewise with an Heart and Skill to use them. May You, thro' his Goodness, enjoy an uninterrupted Continuance of them ; and such a Length of Days, as will give You Room to improve them to the utmost, for His Glory, and the Publick Benefit !

This, MY LORD, is the Unanimous Wish of all that have been Oblig'd by You, of All that Honour You, that is, of All that truly Know
You ;

The Dedication.

You; but of none more than
Him, who now offers these
Sermons to Your Lordship,
and, with that Sincerity
which becomes a Preacher
of Divine Truth, professes
himself to be, by all the
Tyes of Esteem, and Duty,
Gratitude, and Inclination

YOUR LORDSHIP'S

most Devoted,

and ever Faithful Servant,

FRANCIS ATTERBURY.

The ... of ...

You ...

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THE
P R E F A C E.

THE following Sermons, having been, most of them, separately Printed, are now collected into a Volume. One of them, Preach'd at Mr. Bennet's Funeral, was, soon after it came out, reflect- ed upon with great freedom, in A Letter, directed to Me from the Press; and exhorting me either to De- fend, or Retract the Doctrin^e * there deliver'd; * L. p: which is said to have offend'd many Serious Un-⁵ derstanding Christians †. I have the happiness, I † L. p: thank God, to be well acquainted with several Persons⁴ of that Character, to whose Judgment (having great Reason to distrust my Own) I appeal'd on this Occasion. They assur'd me, that, upon a deliberate Perusal of that Sermon, they saw nothing in it which offend'd them; or which could, in their Opinion, justly Offend any one, who believ'd a Future State of Rewards and Punishments. Nor have I, after making what Enquiries I could on this head, met with any One Person, who carefully consider'd my Doctrin^e, and yet judg'd differ- ently of it. I might well therefore have spar'd my self the Trouble of Reviewing and Defending, what appears not to me to have been blam'd by any Wise, or Good Man: for, whether the Writer of the Letter, be such, till I know who he is, I may have leave to doubt. All

* L.P.
4. *he says of himself is, that he is an Obscure Person * ; One, I suppose, he means, that is in the Dark ; and thinks it proper to continue so , that he may take advantage from thence to attack the Reputation of others ; without hazarding his own. There may be somewhat of Wisdom, perhaps ; but sure there is little of Goodness, or Fairness in this Conduct. Several such Obscure Persons as these we have had of late, who have insulted Men of great Abilities and Worth, and taken pleasure to pelt them, from their Coverts, with little Objections. The Ill Success of their Attempts hath justify'd their Prudence in concealing themselves.*

11. P.
5. 44.
45. *Whoever my unknown Correspondent be, he presses hard for an Answer, † and is so earnest in that point, that he would, I perceive, be not a little disappointed if he should miss of it. Nameless Authors have no right to make such Demands. However, the Importance of the Argument it self, the Serious Air with which he hath Treated of it, and the Solemn Professions he makes of being acted by no other Principle but a Concern for Truth *, soon determin'd me to comply with his Exhortations. And what follows, therefore, was drawn up not long after his Letter appear'd ; though the Publication of it hath been delayed by some Accidents, with an Account of which it is not necessary to trouble the Reader. After all, I shall be look'd upon perhaps, as writing rather too soon, than too late ; and as paying too great a regard to an Attempt, which was so far slighted, that the worthy Dean of Canterbury, not long afterwards, preach'd the Doctrine, there oppos'd, before her Majesty, and printed it by her Order *.*

*Ibid. *See his Sermon at St James's, Nov. 3. 1705. on Matth xi. 21. pp. 11, 12, 13. And in truth, there never was a Charge, maintain'd with such a shew of Gravity and Earnestness, which had a slighter Founda-*

Foundation to support it. However, it may be of some use, carefully to examin what this Writer hath said, in order, by a remarkable instance, to shew, how little Credit is due to Accusations of this kind, when they come from suspected (that is, from Nameless) Pens; and how artfully the Mask of Religion may sometimes be put on, to cover Designs which cannot be decently own'd.

That part of my Sermon, to which the Letter-Writer hath confin'd his Reflections, contains the Explication of an Argument, which I suppose employ'd by the Apostle, in the Text, for the proof of a Future State. And I had reason therefore to hope, what I offer'd on this head, should be favourably receiv'd, and candidly interpreted by all such as did in good earnest believe such a State. And yet, to my surprize, I have found One, who would be thought seriously to entertain this Belief, endeavouring all he can to weaken an Argument (and indeed the Chief Argument drawn from Reason alone) by which it is upheld. I might have expected this Treatment indeed from the Pen of some Libertine, or disguis'd Unbeliever: it being an Usual piece of Art, with that sort of Men, to undermine the Authority of Fundamental Truths, by pretending to shew, how weak and improper the Proofs are, which their Asserters employ in the defence of them. But I did not, and could not expect this Usage from a Writer, who every where insinuates, and in one place *, I think, pretty plainly † professes himself to be a Sincere Christian. His Concern for the Cause of Religion ‡ would have appeared to far greater advantage, if he had employed it rather in vindicating some of its great Principles, which are every day openly and daringly attack'd from the Press, than in lessening the Force of what I have urg'd in behalf of one of them. Had I err'd in this case, it had

been a well-meant Mistake, and might have pass'd unobserv'd, at a Time, when Infidelity finds so much Employment of another kind for all those who have a real Concern for the Cause of Religion.

Besides, Discourses on such Occasions as that on which I then Preach'd, are seldom the Productions of Leisure; and should always therefore be read with those favourable Allowances which are made to hasty Compositions. So the Doctrine contain'd in them be but Whole some and Edifying, tho' there should be a want of Exactness, here and there, either in the manner of Speaking, or Reasoning, it may be overlook'd, or pardon'd.

When any Argument of great Importance is manag'd with that Warmth and Earnestness which a Serious Conviction of it generally inspires, somewhat may easily escape, even from a Wary Pen, which will not bear the Test of a severe Scrutiny. Facile est verbum aliquod ardens notare, idque, restinctis (ut ita dicam) animorum incendiis, irridere; said one of the best Writers in the World, who himself needed this Excuse as seldom as any Man.

In particular, what I offer'd on that occasion towards the proof of a Future State, deserv'd to be the less rigorously examin'd, because it was only by way of Introduction to some Practical Points, which I chiefly design'd to insist on. I had not room, in a few Pages at the entrance of a short Discourse, to consider all things

* L. p. on all sides, * to balance the several Advantages, and
23. Disadvantages that attend the Pleasures of Men and
† L. p. Beasts, Good Men and Bad. I pretended not fully
23. to State, † much less to Demonstrate, the Truth
.. I. contain'd in the Text, as I am falsely repre-
P. 22, sented ∴ to have done. Those are Words which
23 40, I never once us'd, nor would the Task it self
41. have been proper at such a Time, and before such an
Audi-

Auditory. My declar'd Intention was only, to explain the Apostle's Argument *, to enlarge on it †; to shew, by several Instances, the undoubted Truth of it. ∴ to open and apply it †; and this, by such Considerations chiefly, as were in some measure applicable to the Person then to be interr'd. For whoever gives himself the trouble of reviewing that mean Discourse, will find that, as it consists of Three Parts; a Speculative point of Doctrine, some Practical Reflexions, and an Account of the Person deceas'd; so the two former of these Points are handled with a regard to the latter; the Practical Reflexions being all of them such as are suited to the Character of the Person, which follows; and the preceding Doctrine being illustrated in such a manner, and by such Instances, as naturally lead both to the one and to the other: that part of the Doctrine, I particularly mean, which is professedly built on the Letter of the Text *, and the express Authority of the Apostle.

* S. p.
230.
† S. p.
377.
∴ S. p.
351.
S. p.
377.

* S. p.
368.

It is no wonder, if in an Argument handled thus briefly, and with such views as these, Every thing should not be said, which may be thought requisite to clear it. That, as it was no part of my Intention, so neither was it Necessary, Proper, or Possible on that occasion to be done: and therefore, for Omissions of this kind, I need make no excuse. As to the other parts of the Charge, which, if true, would really blemish what I have written, I shall, as I promis'd, reply to them very distinctly and fully.

The Accusation of my Doctrine turns, I find, upon Three Heads; That it is altogether New, utterly Foreign from the Intention of the Apostle, on whose Words I build it, and False in it self. A very heavy Charge! nor is the first part of it to be neglected.

For, in Matters of Morality and Religion, which are every one's Concern, and which have therefore been often and throughly examin'd, new Doctrines, or Arguments are deservedly suspected. And when One, who is, by his Function, a Preacher of Virtue, doth, by advancing such New Doctrines, or Arguments, make Concessions to the Cause of Vice † (as I am said to have done) he is doubly Criminal. Let us see, therefore, What I have laid down in that Sermon, how far it is charg'd as New, and with how little Reason.

My declar'd Intention, in that part of my Sermon which displeases the Letter-Writer, is, to explain that great Argument for a Future State, which St. Paul hath couch'd in the Words of my Text. "If in this Life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." I suppose them to signifie, That, If all the Benefits we expect from the Christian Institution were confin'd within the Bounds of this Life, and we had no hopes of a better State after this, of a great and lasting Reward in a Life to come; We Christians should be the most abandon'd and wretched of Creatures, all other sorts and Sects of Men would evidently have the Advantage of Us, and a much surer Title to Happiness than We. From whence, I say, the Apostle would be understood to infer (though the Inference be not express'd) That, therefore, there must needs be Another State, to make up the Inequalities of This, and to solve All Irregular Appearances. *

In the Explication of this Argument, I profess to urge (what I call) the Concession of the Apostle somewhat farther than the Letter of the Text will carry

carry us, by asserting under two different Heads, That, were there no Life after this, 1st, Men would be more miserable than Beasts; and 2dly, The best Men would be Often the most miserable. I mean, as far as Happiness, or Misery are to be measur'd from pleasing and painful Sensations. And, supposing the present to be the only Life we are to lead, I see not but that This might be esteem'd the true Measure of them †. † p. 303.

Upon the first of these Heads I shew, that in this Life Beasts have, in many respects, the advantage of Men; in as much as they (1) enjoy greater Sensual Pleasures, and (2) feel fewer Corporal Pains, and (3) are utter Strangers to all those Anxious and Tormenting Thoughts, which perpetually haunt and disquiet Mankind*. I enlarge on these Particulars, and then proceed, on the same Foot likewise to shew, That the Best Men would be Often the most miserable; since Their Principles (1) give them not leave to taste so freely of the Pleasures of Life, as other Mens do, and (2) expose them more to the Troubles and Dangers of it †. * p. 369. † p. 371.

Both these Points I illustrate by various Instances; and, upon the whole, Conclude, That, therefore, as certainly as God is, a Time there will, and must be, when all these unequal Distributions of Good and Evil shall be set right, and the Wisdom and Reasonableness of All his Transactions, with All his Creatures, be made as clear as the Noon-day*.

I was willing to represent to the Reader, at One View, the whole Course of my Reasoning, according to the Order in which it lies, and in the very Words which I have made use of to express it in my Sermon.

If he compares this short Account of my Doctrine, with the larger Explication given of its several Branches in the Sermon itself, he will find, That (whatever the Letter Writer boldly affirms to the contrary) it must be understood, and is by me actually propos'd, under the Restrictions following;

I. When I prefer Beasts to Men, and Bad Men to Good, in point of Happiness, it is upon a Supposition, not only that there is no other Life than this, but that Mankind are persuaded that there is none. The Men I speak of are such, as those Corinthians were against whom S. Paul argu'd; Men, who in this Life only have hope in Christ; such as expect no Benefits from the Christian Institution, but what are confin'd within the Bounds of this present Life, and have no hopes of a better State after this, of a great and lasting Reward in a Life to come †.

† P. 366. This is the Account which I expressly give of them, when I enter on the Argument, and which I repeat several times * in the Course of it; and which must be understood all along, even where it is not mention'd. And such a sort of Christians I may be allow'd to suppose now, since such there manifestly were in the Days of the Apostles. Nor doth it any ways interfere with this Supposition, to represent these very Men, as having now and then the uneasy Prefages of a Future Reckoning, and as Scaring themselves sometimes with the Fears of another Life, even while they do not entertain the Hopes of it. This, I doubt not, is the Case of all such who profess to disbelieve a Future State; they are not always equally satisfy'd with their own Reasonings about it, but tremble sometimes at the thoughts of it. My Reprover, therefore, deals very unfairly, when he reckons This among the Advantages

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* P. 371,
375,
377.

*peculiar to Men, that they have the present Support of the Belief of a Future State, and the firm Expectation of Rewards * in a Life to come; and assures his Readers, with equal Modesty and Truth, that this is agreeable to what I suppose †: whereas I suppose the quite contrary; and, on that Supposition, all my Reasonings and Reflections turn. Nor is there a Word, throughout the whole Argument, that can be construd to a different Meaning.*

L. P. 21.
 † See L. P. 25, 33, 21.

2. Proceeding on this Supposition, I affirm, not that the Best Men would be always, but often the most miserable. And that I might be sure of not being misapprehended, I repeat This (or some other Equivalent) Expression at least six times, * in the Compass of a few Pages. Nor doth the Argument which I am explaining, require a more extensive Supposition; it being equally necessary that there should be a Future State, to vindicate the Justice of God, and salve the present Irregularities of Providence, whether the best Men be oftentimes only, or always the most miserable. The Letter-Writer dissembles his Knowledge of this Remarkable Restriction; and having taken Advantage from thence to argue and object as he pleas'd, contents himself slightly to mention it towards the close of his Pamphlet; which was discreetly done, since an earlier Acknowledgment of it would have discover'd at first sight, even to the meanest of his Readers, the Impertinence of several of those Objections and Arguments. He would excuse this Procedure, by saying, at last, That though I profess only to shew that the best Men are Often the most miserable, yet I argue, as if they were always so *, viz. from that Obligation to some Particular Practices, from which they are never exempt in any Condition of this Life *: Which

* 36p.
 363.
 371,
 373,
 376,
 377.

* L. P. 41.

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is as great and groundless a Misrepresentation as any of the former, Since;

3dly, *My chief Proof of this Point, is drawn from that State of Persecution, to which Good Men, above all others, are subject: because their Principles expose them most to the Troubles and Dangers of Life**; *because sore Evils and great Temporal Inconveniences attend the Discharge of their Duty †; they become a Reproach and a Bye-word*, are injur'd and outrag'd †, suffer unjust and illegal Encroachments**; the greatest Saints being sometimes made the most remarkable Instances of Suffering †: *for they are Inflexible in their Uprightness—No Prospect of Interest can allure them, no Fear of Danger can dismay them*. Would one imagine, after all these Expressions, and several others of the same kind that I have made use of, any Man so lost to all Sense of Justice and Truth, as to say, That I suppose no Case of Persecution †? that I do not once suppose such a State of Persecution as the Apostle pointed at? but maintain my Positions with reference to the most Quiet and Prosperous State of this Life*? Certainly the Letter-Writer doth not mean this as one Instance of his Concern for the Cause of Virtue, and the Interest of Practical Religion †! I do not indeed build my Reasoning wholly on the Case of Persecution; neither doth the Apostle himself, as will afterwards appear: However, I do not exclude it. On the contrary, I refer to it frequently, and should have dwelt more largely upon it, but that the other Considerations I suggest, were more applicable to the Character of the Person deceas'd; which was (as I have already said) the Point from whence I chiefly took my Views in this Argument.*

Fourthly, *Even when I suppose good Men not to be under a state of Persecution, yet still I suppose them to live in a state of Mortification and Selt denial; to be under a perpetual Conflict with their Bodily Appetites and Inclinations; and struggling to get the mastery over them. I suppose them oblig'd, by their Principles, not to taste so freely of the Pleasures of Life (the Innocent Pleasures of Life; for such I manifestly mean) as other Men do** ; but to sit as loose from them, and be as Moderate in the use of them as they can* ; not only to forbear those Gratifications which are forbidden by the Rules of Religion; but even to restrain themselves in unforbidden Instances*. *And, whenever they taste even the allowable Pleasures of Sense, I suppose them to be under such Checks from Reason and Reflection, as, by representing perpetually to their Minds the meanness of all these Sensual Gratifications, do, in great measure, blunt the Edge of their keenest Desires, and pall all their Enjoyments †.* *And have I not reason therefore to say, that good and pious Persons, by the Nature and Tendency of their Principles, (as they are most expos'd to the Troubles and ill Accidents of Life ∴ so) are the greatest Strangers to the Pleasures and Advantages of it || ? And would not these be great and needless Abatements of their Happiness, if it were confin'd within the Compass of this Life only? But, surely, it doth not from hence follow, nor have I once suggested, much less affirm'd, That the Practice of Vice doth in its own Nature tend to make Men more happy, in all states of this Life, than the Practice of Virtue ||.* *This is an Assertion by which the great Author of our Nature, and E-*

* P.
372,
373.† P.
370.∴ See
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|| p.
375.|| L. P.
32.

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nacler of the Law of Good and Evil, is highly dishonour'd and blasphem'd; and which cannot by any one, who hath the least sense of Religion, be repeated without being abhorr'd.

That Virtue and Vice do, in their own Natures tend to make those Men Happy, or Miserable, who severally practise them, is a Proposition of undoubted (and, I am sure, by me undisputed) Truth; as far as it relates to Moral Virtue, or Vice, properly so call'd; that is, to those Measures of Duty, which Natural Reason, unlightned by Revelation, prescribes: For as to those Rules of Evangelical Perfection, in which we Christians are obliged to excel; they are (some of them) of so exalted a Nature, so contrary to Flesh and Blood, and so far above our ordinary Capacities and Powers, that, if there were no other Life than this, I see not how our Happiness could generally be said to consist in the Practice of them. And, therefore, when God made them Matter of strict Duty to us; he at the same time animated us to Obedience (not only by assuring us of the extraordinary Assurances of his good Spirit, but) by a clear Discovery of a Future State of Rewards and Punishments; whereas the Jews, who had the Promises of this Life only, had also, in proportion to those Promises, a lower and less excellent Scheme of Duty propos'd to them.

And here also this Author is altogether Silent: for he takes no notice of these Improvements made by the Gospel in the Measures of our Duty; but supposes every where the Christian, and Heathen Morality to be in all respects the same; and that the innocent Pleasures of Life (which must be allow'd to have some share in perfecting humane Happiness) are no more affected and retrench'd by the one than the other. He supposes
all

*all the Instances of Abstinence, Mortification, and Self-denial; which the Gospel enjoins, to be included within those Rules of Virtue, which the Light of Nature teaches us to follow; and, upon this Foundation, proceeds to represent me as affirming, that the best of Men are rendred more Miserable than the Wicked, by the Practice of Virtue * : whereas, in* ^{L. P. 43.} *truth, I only maintain, that the best Christians (who are unquestionably the best of Men) are, by their observance of some Gospel-Precepts, render'd (more Miserable, or, which is all one) less happy, than they would otherwise be, if they were releas'd from those Obligations; and, consequently, were there no hope of a Life after this, they, who are not ty'd up to these Severities, would have a manifest Advantage over those who are.*

I instance indeed in some Acts of Virtue, common to Heathens and Christians; but I suppose them to be perform'd by Christians after (a Christian, that is, after) a more sublime and excellent manner than ever they were among the Heathens; and even, when they do not differ in Kind from moral Virtues, strictly so stil'd, yet to differ in the Degrees of Perfection with which they are attended.

This Distinction between a state of Virtue and a state of Mortification, between Moral Goodness and Evangelical Perfection, and the greater Restraints (in point of Worldly Pleasures and Advantages) which are laid upon Men by the former of these than by the latter, ought the rather to have been observ'd and own'd by the Letter-Writer, because, in the

Fifth Place, I pretend not to compare the Happiness of Men and Beasts, good Men and bad, any farther than

than it results from *Worldly Pleasures and Advantages, and the Objects of Sense that surround us.* For these are my Words. “*Were there no other Life but this, Men would really be more Miserable than Beasts, and the best Men would be often the most Miserable.*” I mean, as far as Happiness, or Misery are to be measur’d from pleasing or painful Sensations †. This is the Restriction which I more expressly and formally insist on, than any other. At the very opening of the Argument it occurs; nor do I, in the Prosecution of it, use any one Instance, or Illustration, but what relates to such pleasing and painful Sensations, or to those *Delightful and Uneasy Reflections of Mind, which are, some way or other, consequent upon them.* And if, in these Respects, (and farther I do not go *) the Happiness of Beasts exceeds that of Men, and the Happiness of the Wicked that of the Virtuous, it will not weaken what I have urg’d, to shew, that, in other Respects, (such as the Letter-Writer largely displays) the Advantage may lye on the contrary side; because, were it so, yet this Advantage would not be sufficient to turn the Scale, according to my Supposition; which is, that, without the hope of another Life, pleasing and painful Sensations (taken together with those *Inward Reflections, which are naturally consequent upon them*) might be esteem’d the true Measure of Happiness and Misery ||. On this Supposition (which I had not then time to explain and prove) all my Reasonings proceed; and cannot, therefore, be affected by any Objections, which are so far from being built on the same Bottom, that they are design’d to overthrow it. Whether this Supposition be true, or false, may be a new matter of Dispute: but if it be true, the Argument, I raise

† S. P.
368.

* See
PP.
369.
371.

|| S. P.
368.

raise from thence, is certainly True, and the Objections of the Letter-Writer are as certainly Vain and Impertinent; being levell'd rather against the Supposition it self, than the Inference that I draw from it.

This is not a proper place to justify that Supposition; thus much only I shall say at present concerning it. I am so far from retracting it, that I look upon it to be a most clear and indubitable Truth; and think myself to have express'd it with more Waryness and Reserve than was necessary. My Words are — I see not but that this might be esteem'd the true measure of Happiness, and Misery: whereas this might not only be esteem'd; but would really be the true Measure of Happiness and Misery, to the far greater part of Mankind, if they were not Educated under the Hopes and Fears of Future Rewards and Punishments. The Objects of Sense would then determin the views of most Men; of all such, to be sure, who convers'd perpetually with them, and wanted the Opportunities and Capacities that were requisite towards withdrawing their Thoughts from these things, and fixing them on more refin'd and reasonable Pleasures. And even among those few who were better qualify'd, still fewer would be found, who, without the hope of another Life, would think it worth their while to live above the Allurements of Sense, and the Gratifications of this World, as far as was necessary towards attaining the heights of a Christian Perfection. Nor could any Argument be urg'd sufficient to induce those so to do, who were otherwise resolv'd and inclin'd. The Rule of Good and Evil would not then appear Uniform and Invariable; but would seem different, according to Mens different Complexions, and Inclinations; and whatever they judg'd to be, upon the whole, most agreeable, or disagreeable to them, that they

they would be sure (nay they would look upon themselves as oblig'd) to pursue, or decline, without being restrain'd by any speculative Reasonings concerning the Nature of Virtue and Vice, and the Obligations Men are under universally to practise the one, and eschew the other.

But this, I am sensible, lies without the Compass of my immediate Design, which is only to reckon up the several Restrictions under which, what I have laid down in that Sermon ought to be understood; Restrictions, not now first devis'd to qualifie my Doctrine, but plainly propos'd together with it, and interwoven into the Body of those few short Reflexions, which I had room to make concerning it. And yet the Author of the Letter, in a very grave and solemn manner, argues throughout, as if no one such Restriction had been made. Let his Cause be as good as he pretends it to be, yet surely it is not at all beholden to him for his way of maintaining it. He that talks thus deceitfully even for Truth itself, must needs hurt it more by his Example, than he promotes it by his Arguments.

But to set aside these Restrictions, important as they are, for the present, and take my Doctrine at large, even as the Letter-Writer himself hath represented it; that is, as briefly contain'd in (what he calls) my Two Positions, * and the Notion on which they are founded †: let us see how far the first Charge of Novelty can, even upon this Foot, be made good against it.

* L. p.
20.
† l. p.
22.

My Positions are these; That, were there no Life after this, First, Men would be really more miserable than Beasts; and, Secondly, the Best of Men would be often the most miserable. The Notion, on which they are founded, is, That, supposing

posing the present to be the only Life we are to lead, I see not but that Pleasing and Painful Sensations might be esteem'd the true Measure of Happiness and Misery.

*Against both the One, and the Other, the Letter-Writer exclaims in a most Tragical manner: He is Sorry to see such Concessions made to the Cause of Vice by any Preacher of Righteousness *; he never yet heard, nor ever expected to hear any thing like this from the Pulpit †; he knows not that such Assertions have been ever, before this, seriously maintain'd by any Person of Virtue and Understanding, much less Solemnly dictated as undoubted Truths from the Pulpit *; he thinks, that All who have any Respect for the Clergy, must lament that such strange Doctrine should be recommended to the World by one of that Body; and All, who have any regard to the Honour of Christ, must lament to see it Solemnly back'd and confirm'd by one of his Apostles †.*

*p. 17.

†p. 32.

*p. 151

†p. 45.

The Charge of Novelty is here urg'd with so much Warmth, and Gravity, and such an Air of Assurance, that even a wary Reader would be apt to think it well founded; and yet never was there a Censure more rashly vain, or more entirely destitute of all Colour of Truth. For first, as to the Positions themselves, they are so far from being New, that they are commonly to be met with in both Antient and Modern, Domestick and Foreign Writers; particularly in the Works of our English Divines, which are in every one's hands, and with which the Author of the Letter, I believe, is best acquainted. I begin with Archbishop Tillotson, who cannot be suspected to have made Concessions to the Cause of Vice, either through Weak-

ness, or a worse Reason: and yet these are his Expressions. ' The Condition of Men in this present Life is attended with so many Frailties, lyable to so great Miseries and Sufferings, to so many Pains and Diseases, to such various Causes of Sorrow and Trouble, of Fear and Vexation, by reason of the many Hazards and Uncertainties, which not only the Comforts and Contentments of our Lives, but even Life it self is subject to, that the Pleasure and Happiness of it is by these much rebated: so that were we not trained up with the hopes of something better hereafter, Life itself would be to many Men an insupportable Burthen. If Men were not supported and born up, under the Anxieties of this present Life, with the Hopes and Expectations of an happier State in another World, Mankind would be the most imperfect and unhappy part of God's Creation. For although other Creatures be subjected to a great deal of Vanity and Misery, yet they have this happiness, that, as they are made for a short Duration and Continuance, so they are only affected with the Present; they do not fret and discontent themselves about the Future, they are not lyable to be cheated with Hopes, nor tormented with Fears, nor vex'd at Disappointments, as the Sons of Men are. But if our Souls be immortal, this makes abundant Amends and Compensation for the Frailties of this Life, and all the Transitory Sufferings and Inconveniences of this present State: Human Nature, consider'd with this advantage, is infinitely above the Brute Beasts that perish. *Serm. Vol. ix. pp. 68, 69.* Again, ' What would a Man gain by it, if the Soul were not immortal, but to level himself with the Beasts that Perish? [nay] to put himself into a worse and more miserable

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Condition than any of the Creatures below him ?

Ib. p. 72.

The same thing is said more shortly, but as fully, by the present Lord Bishop of Rochester; ' Without that Belief [of the Joys of another Life] as Christians of all Men, so Men of all Creatures were most miserable. *Serm. on Jan. 30.* p. 14.

To the like purpose Mr. Glanville. ' If this Life be all, we have the same End and Happiness with the Brutes; and they are happier of the two, in that they have lesser Cares and fewer Disappointments. *Serm.* p. 294.

Dr. Moor, whom my Reprover must allow to have been a Person of Virtue and Understanding *, expresses himself, on this occasion, in very significant Terms. ^{L.P.} 19.

If (says he) there be no Life hereafter, the Worst of Men have the greatest share of Happiness; their Passions and Affections being so continually gratify'd, and that to the height, in those things that are so agreeable, and, rightly circumstantiated, allowable to human Nature; such as the sweet Reflection on the Success of our Political Management — the general Tribute of Honour and Respect for our Policy and Wit, and that ample Testimony thereof, our Acquisition of Power and Riches; that great Satisfaction of foiling and bearing down our Enemies, and obliging and making sure our more serviceable Friends: to which finally You may add all the variety of Mirth and Pastime, that Flesh and Blood can entertain it self with, from either Musick, Wine, or Women. *Imm. of the Soul. L. 2. Ch. 18. Sect. 9.*

Dr. Goodman, in his Winter Evening Conferences, a Book receiv'd with general applause, and now in every ones hands, represents one of the Persons in his Dia-

logue speaking as follows ' It is plain, that nothing but
 ' the Hope of another and better World at last can enable a Man tolerably to enjoy himself in this present —
 ' Nothing but Eternal Life is a sufficient Antidote against the Fears of Death. And all these are the Effects and Benefits of Religion. Therefore if this be uncomfortable, Mankind must needs be the most deplorably unhappy kind of Being in the whole World. For
 ' tho' other sort of Creatures are, in some sort, Fellow-sufferers in the common Calamitys of this World; yet, besides that their share is ordinarily not so great as his, it is evident that they fear nothing for the Future, but only feel the present Evil; and they have no Restraint upon them for what they desire, nor no Remorse for what they have done. Therefore, if Mankind have not the
 ' Glory of his Conscience, when he doth well, to set against the Checks and Girds of it when he doth amiss; and if he have not Hopes to counterbalance his
 ' Fears, and a Reward hereafter for his Self-denial at present, his Condition is far the worst of any
 ' Creature in the World: Part 3. p. 43.

In like manner (Part 2. p. 114) after allowing; that ' several sorts of Brute Creatures continue longer
 ' in the World, and have as well a quicker Sense of Pleasure, as a more unlimited and uncontroll'd Enjoyment of it, he makes the same Inference from, hence that I have done; That upon these very Considerations, there is great Reason to believe that there is
 ' such a thing as another World, wherein Man may have amends made him, for whatever was amiss, or defective in this. For it is not credible with me, that
 ' such Power and Wisdom as is plainly display'd in the Constitution of Man, should be so utterly destitute of
 ' Good-

Goodness, as to contrive things so ill, that the noblest Being should be finally the most unfortunate.

Bp Wilkins in his Princ. of Nat. Rel. p. 159, 160.

There is a strong Aversion amongst Men against a dark state of Annihilation, which no Man can think of without great regret of Mind; and likewise, a natural Desire in all Men after a state of Happiness and Perfection. And no natural Desire is in vain. All other things have somewhat to satisfy their natural Appetites. And, if we consider the utter impossibility of attaining to any such Condition in this Life, this will render it highly credible, that there must be another State wherein this Happiness is attainable: Otherwise, Mankind must fail of his chief End, being, by a natural Principle, most strongly inclined to such a state of Happiness as he can never attain to; as if he were purposely fram'd to be tormented betwixt these two Passions, Desire and Despair; an earnest Propension after Happiness, and an utter Incapacity of enjoying it; as if Nature it self, whereby all other things are dispos'd to their Perfection, did serve only, in Mankind, to make them most miserable. And, which is yet more considerable, the better and wiser any Man is, the more earnest Desires and Hopes hath he after such a State of Happiness. And if there be no such thing, not only Nature, but Virtue likewise must contribute to make Men Miserable.

I have search'd the Volumes of Sermons publish'd by Divines here in England, and find as yet but Two on the same Text with mine; one preach'd by the Learned and Pious Mr. Pemble, the other by Dr. Stradling, the late worthy Dean of Chichester; and both of them full of the same Points of Doctrine, and the

same ways of explaining those Points, as I have employ'd. I refer the Reader to the Sermons themselves, and shall mention here but a Passage or two out of each of them.

Mr. Pemble's first Position is, that ' True Christians are more unhappy than other Men, if their Happiness be confin'd to this Life only— are in a worse state than Epicures and Atheists, and other ungodly Persons, &c. — in regard to the Nature of true Religion which they profess, which agrees not with the good liking of the World, and therefore it [the World] cannot agree with That, nor with them that sincerely profess it—— They are Men of another Generation, their Lives are not like other Mens, and therefore the World wonders at them—and always sees, in their Well-doing, a Reproof of their own Evil-doing, &c. ' He concludes thus—— We see then the Point to be plain enough, that true Christians, barr'd in their Hope in Christ, for the Life to come, are more miserable than other Men; because all are alike hereafter; and for this Life, the Godly miss of those Contentments which the Wicked enjoy; nay, are more miserable, not only than Men, but than Beasts also, —p. 480.

Dr. Stradling's second Head is, ' That, upon Supposition of no better Hope [than this Life affords] all good Christians should be not only Miserable, but of all Men most Miserable—— more unhappy than the most Brutish Men, yea, than the Beasts that perish. For whereas these feel their Misery when it comes, but do not anticipate it, &c. * Christians make themselves yet more Miserable by their severe Principles of Mortification and Self-denial, debarring themselves of those Com-

forts

† P.
463.

* P.
47.

‘ *forts and Satisfaction which others enjoy †—They* † p.
 ‘ *lose the good Things here, and fail of those here-* 478.
 ‘ *after*.* • p.
 479.

To these Modern Instances from our own Writers, I shall add that of Mr. Calvin, who says ∴ ‘ that Gryllus, in Plutarch, reasons wisely, when he affirms, that Men, who live without Religion [i. e. without a Sense of God, and a belief of future Rewards] do not only not excel Brute Beasts, but are by many degrees far inferior to them, in as much as they are liable to various sorts of Evils, and live al- in a tumultuary and restless State. ’ And again— There is none of us but who would be thought, throughout the whole Course of his Life, to aspire after Immortality. For we are asham’d in nothing to excel the Brute Beasts, whose Conditions would be no ways inferior to Ours, if we had not the Hope of Eternity after Death to support us †.

I shall trouble the Reader with one Citation more, out of Athenagoras ; because the Words of that an- cient Writer are very full and expressive. If (says

∴ Sapiētissimè, apud *Plutarchum*, *Gryllus* ratiocinatur, dum homines affirmat, si ab eorum Vitâ semel absit Religio, non modo Brutis Pecudibus nihil excellere, sed multis partibus esse longè inferiores ; ut qui tot malorum formis obnoxii tumultuariam & irrequietam Vitam perpetuè trahant, &c. *Instit. Cap. 1. §. 10.*

† Nemo quidem est nostrum qui non videri cupiat ad celestem Immortalitatem toto vitæ curriculo aspirare & eniti : pudet enim Nos nullâ re antecellere Brutis Pecudes, quarum Condicio nihilo nostrâ inferior foret, nisi Spes æternitatis post mortem nobis superesset. *Ibid. Cap. 21. §. 26.*

' be *) *Humane Actions were not to be judg'd, Men*
 ' would have no Advantage over Beasts; indeed,
 ' more miserable than Beasts would such Men be
 ' who were always busied in subduing their Pas-
 ' sions, and improving themselves in Piety and
 ' Justice, and every other Virtue. *At this rate,*
 ' *the Animal and Belluine Life would be the best;*
 ' *Virtue would be downright Folly; the threats of future*
 ' *Vengeance, matter of Sport and Laughter; the pur-*
 ' *suits of all kind of Pleasure, our chiefest Good; and*
 ' *the Rule, by which Men and Beasts ought then*
 ' *equally to guide themselves, would be that below'd*
 ' *Maxim of the Epicures; Let us eat and drink,*
 ' *for to Morrow we die.*

This last Passage from Athenagoras includes, and
very strongly affirms all the parts of my Doctrine
which have been excepted against; not only my Posi-
tions, but the Notion it self also, on which they are
founded; and which now, therefore, I proceed likewise
to vindicate from the Charge of Novelty, by the fol-
lowing Authorities.

My Notion (as 'tis call'd) is, That, supposing
the present to be the only Life we are to lead,
I see not but that pleasing and painful Sensations
might be esteem'd the true Measure of Happiness

* Εἰ μὴ μνηστία μνηστὴ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πεπραγμένων γίγ-
 νοίσο κείτις, ἔδ' ἐν ἔξῃσι πλείον τῶν ἀλόγων ἄνθρωποι μᾶλλον ὃ
 κακίων πράττειν ἀθλιώτερον οἱ τὰ πάθη δελασθῶντες, καὶ
 φρονιζόντες εὐσεβείας καὶ δικαιοσύνης, καὶ τ' ἄλλης ἀρετῆς. Ὅδ' ἔ-
 κληρώδης βίη καὶ θνητῶδης ἀείη ἀρετὴ ὃ ἀνόηη· δίκης
 ὃ ἀπειλή, γέλωτος πλατύς. τὸ δ', πᾶσαν δεξαμένη ἡδονῶν,
 ἀγαθὸν τὸ μέγιστον· δόγμα δ' κοινὸν τέτων ἀπάντων, καὶ νόμος
 τῶν, τὸ τοῖς ἀκολάστοις καὶ λήργοις φίλον, φάγαμα καὶ πιαμα,
 αἴσιον γὰρ ἀποθνήσκειν. πρὸς ἀγασ. Oxon. Ed. p. 255.

and Misery. *This is all I say of the matter, there being no other Passage of like import with this throughout my whole Sermon. And have not Archbishop Tillotson, Dr. Scot, Dr. Sherlock, and Dr. Lucas said the same thing, in a manner less reserv'd, and in Terms of yet greater force and compass, without giving any Offence (that I know of) to any one of those many serious and understanding Christians*, who daily peruse their Excellent Writings with Pleasure and* ^{L.P.} *Edification?*

Archbp. Tillotson, *Vol. ix. p. 48.* ‘*The Determination of the Apostle is according to the Nature, and the Truth and Reason of things, That, if in this Life only we have hopes, we were of all Men most miserable. For although it be true, that, as things now stand, and, as the Nature of Man is fram'd, good Men do find a strange kind of inward Pleasure and Satisfaction in the discharge of their Duty, yet every Man that consults his own Breast, will find that his Delight and Contentment chiefly springs from the hopes which Men conceive, That an Holy and Virtuous Life shall not be unrewarded. And, without these Hopes, Virtue is but a dead and empty Name.*

Vol. ii. p. 265. ‘*If we were sure that there were no Life after this, if we had no Expectation of a Happiness or Misery beyond this World; the wisest thing that any Man could do, would be, to enjoy as much of the present Contentments and Satisfactions of this World as he could fairly come at. For if there be no Resurrection to another Life, the Apostle allows the reasoning of the Epicure to be very good; Let us eat, and drink, for to morrow we die.*

Dr.

Dr. Scot's *Christ. Life*, Part iii. Vol. I. Chap. 5. p. 301. 'If there were no other Life after this, it would be folly so much as to attempt it, [the Enjoyment of God by Contemplation and Love, and the Imitation of his Perfections]: for what Man in his Wits would ever think it worth the while, to spend a considerable part of his Life in waging War with himself, mortifying his Affections, crossing and starving out his dearest Inclinations, (which yet he must do, e'er he can arrive at any comfortable degree of Divine Enjoyment) if there were no other recompence to be expected at last, but to live a few days longer in a Rapturous Muse, and then lie down in everlasting Darkness and Insensibility? Were he not a Thousand times better please and gratifie himself at present, content his craving Desires with the Goods that are before him, and take his fill of those sensual Delights that readily offer themselves to his Enjoyment, than run away from them in a long and wearisome quest of Spiritual Joys, which, for all he knows, he may never arrive to, or, if he doth, is sure, within a few moments, to be depriv'd of them for ever?

Dr. Sherlock's *Practical Disc.* concerning a Future Judgment, p. 116, &c. 'The whole Christian Religion is founded on, and adapted to the Belief of a Future Judgment, and is a very unintelligible Institution without it—The Temporal Promises made to an Holy and Virtuous Life—extend no farther than Food and Rayment, to our Daily Bread—But who would be contented with such a scanty Provision, while he sees the greater Prosperity of bad Men, who dissolve in Ease and Luxury; were there not an happy State reserv'd for him in the next World? Where is the Man who would not comply with the Devil's Temptation

‘ Temptation, to fall down and worship for all the
‘ Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them, were
‘ be not to lose a brighter and a richer Crown for it?
‘ Ib. p. 119, &c. Many of our Saviour’s Laws
‘ are founded on the Supposition of a future Judgment,
‘ and are extremely unreasonable, if there be no Rewards
‘ or Punishments after this Life—The only Rule of
‘ our Actions would [then] be, to live as long, and to
‘ enjoy as much of the World as we can. But Chri-
‘ stian Religion will not in many Cases allow of this,
‘ and therefore is no Religion for this World, were there
‘ not another World to follow— How many Restraints
‘ doth the Christian Religion lay on us, to lessen the
‘ Pleasures and Satisfactions of this Life? It teaches
‘ us a great Indifferency to all the things of this World;
‘ but how unreasonable is that, if this World be our only
‘ Place of Happiness?—It commands us to mortifie
‘ our sensual Appetites, to crucifie our Flesh with its Af-
‘ fections and Lusts, to live above the Pleasures of the
‘ Body, to pluck out our Right Eyes, to cut off our Right
‘ Hands: But what reason can there be to deny our
‘ selves any of these Enjoyments, as far as is consistent
‘ with preserving our Health, and prolonging our Lives,
‘ if we have no Expectations after Death? Nay, if
‘ Men are contented to live a short and a merry Life,
‘ what Hurt is there in it, if Death puts an end to
‘ them?—It forbids Earthly Pride and Ambition,
‘ an Affectation of secular Honours and Power: But
‘ why must we submit to Meanness and Contempt in
‘ this World, if this be the only Scene of Action we shall
‘ ever be concern’d in? For a mean and base Spirit is
‘ no Virtue; and for the same reason it can be no Vir-
‘ tue to be contented with a low Fortune, to be patient
‘ under Sufferings, which if they will never be reward-
‘ ed,

' ed, is to be patiently miserable, and that is Stupidity
 ' and Folly: But to have our Conversation in Heaven,
 ' to live upon the Hopes of unseen Things, is Madness
 ' and Distraction, if there be no Heaven, no unseen
 ' Things for us ——— The Reasons of most of the Evan-
 ' gelical Commands, must be fetch'd wholly from the o-
 ' ther World, and a Future Judgment.

Bp. Wilkins Princ. of Nat. Rel. p. 67. ' If there be
 ' no such thing to be expected as Happiness or Misery here-
 ' after, why then the onely business that Men are to take
 ' care of, is their present well-being in this World: There
 ' being nothing to be counted either good, or bad, but in
 ' order to that: those things which we conceive to be con-
 ' ducible to it, being the onely Duties; and all other things,
 ' which are cross to it, the onely Sins. And therefore,
 ' whatever a Man's Appetite shall incline him to, he
 ' ought not to deny himself in it (be the thing what it
 ' will) so he can have it, or do it, without probable
 ' Danger. Suppose it be Matter of Gain or Profit, he
 ' is dispos'd to; if he can cheat or steal securely, this
 ' will be so far from being a fault, that it is plainly his
 ' Duty, that is, reasonable for him to do; because it is
 ' a proper means to promote his chief End. And so for
 ' other Cases of Anger, Hatred, Revenge, &c
 ' According to this Principle, a Man must take the
 ' first Opportunity of satisfying these Passions, by doing
 ' any kind of Mischief to the Person he is offended with,
 ' whether by false Accusation, or Perjury, or (if need
 ' be) by poisoning or stabbing him; provided, he can
 ' do these things so as to escape the Suspicion of others,
 ' and Human Penalties.

Dr. Lucas, Enquiry after Happiness, part 3. p.
 245. ' The Epicureans confin'd the Happiness of
 ' Man to this short Life; and by a probable Consequence,
 ' resolv'd

5 resolv'd it ultimately into the Enjoyments of the Body.
 6 Ibid. p. 145. Without another Life, all other Mo-
 7 tives to Perfection will be insufficient. For tho', ge-
 8 nerally speaking, such is the contrivance of Human
 9 Nature, &c.—Yet 'tis certain, that not only in ma-
 0 ny extraordinary Cases, there would be no reward at
 1 all for Virtue, if there were not one reserv'd for it in
 2 another World, but also, in most Cases, if there were
 3 not a future Pleasure that did infinitely outweigh the
 4 Enjoyments of this Life, Men would see no Obliga-
 5 tion to Perfection. For what should raise them above
 6 the Love of this World, if there were no other? or
 7 above the Love of the Body, if, when they dy'd, they
 8 should be no more for ever?

[Pract. Christianity part II. Chap. I.] 6 For
 7 the Law of our Nature being, I humbly conceive,
 8 nothing else but the Law and Dictates of Reason: and
 9 the Business of Reason being, in this Respect at least,
 0 only to distinguish between Good and Evil, our Rea-
 1 son would talk to us at another Rate, because it would
 2 proceed by different Principles: Good and Evil would
 3 then peradventurs be different things [from what they
 4 are at present] for whatever would make for the Plea-
 5 sure and Interest of this present World, would be good;
 6 and even Pleasure and Interest would not peradven-
 7 ture be the same thing Then, as Now: For the Soul
 8 would not challenge so distinct a Consideration and
 9 Provision then, as now: For it would not only be
 0 Lawful, but wise for it to become Sensual and World-
 1 ly; and so the same Pleasure and Interest would mi-
 2 nister to the Happiness of both Body and Soul, &c.

[Ibid. Chap. 4.] 6 Were there no Life to come,
 7 it would behove every Man to be content with, and
 8 make the most of This. Nor do I at all doubt, but
 9 that

‘ that Men may manage their Lusts so, as that they may
 ‘ not be able to infer Reason enough to relinquish them,
 ‘ from any Influence they have upon their Worldly Inter-
 ‘ rest. Or if any one should think it necessary to pur-
 ‘ chase a Pleasure by shortning of his Life, or lessening
 ‘ his Estate, I cannot see why he may not have Reason
 ‘ on his Side : For, A short Life and a merry one,
 ‘ and, my Mind to me a Kingdom is, would, up-
 ‘ on the former Supposition, be wise Proverbs : For,
 ‘ upon this Supposition, the Pleasures of the Mind would
 ‘ be narrow and faint, and the Checks of Conscience none,
 [and] ‘ [or] insignificant.

Bp. Pearson, on the Creed, p.p. 304. 305.
 ‘ Such is the sweetness of our Sins, such the unnatural-
 ‘ ness of our Corruptions, so great our Confidence of Im-
 ‘ purity here, that, except we looked for an Account
 ‘ hereafter, it were unreasonable to expect that any
 ‘ Man should forsake his Delights, renounce his Com-
 ‘ placencies by a severe Repentance, create a Bitterness
 ‘ to his own Soul——We are naturally inclin’d to
 ‘ follow the Bent of our own Wills, and the Inclination of
 ‘ our own Hearts. All external Rules and Prescripti-
 ‘ ons are burthensome to us ; and did not we look to
 ‘ give an Account, we had no reason to satisfy any o-
 ‘ ther Desires than our own, &c.

Mr. Glanvile’s Sermons, p. 278. ‘ If this be all
 ‘ the Life of Man, ‘ [i. e. the only Life he is to lead]
 ‘ his End and Happiness would then be to provide for
 ‘ the Body, and the Gratification of its Senses.

Mr. Pembles Sermon, p. 479. ‘ Poor is the
 ‘ Contentment that can be found in Virtue and Relig-
 ‘ ion, if it stretch no farther than to the end of this
 ‘ Life——Cut from a Man his Hope in Christ for here-
 ‘ after, and then the Epicure’s Counsel will seem Good,

‘ Let

Let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow we die.
 Let us take our Pleasure while we may. If we die
 as Beasts, and come to nothing, then let us live as
 Beasts too, &c. What avails it to Joy in Virtue
 and Religion? to follow an empty Name of Good-
 ness? when nothing is got by it after Death, and,
 for the present, nothing worth the desiring? Let us
 restrain our Eyes and our Hearts from no Pleasures
 that may be procured; Let Virtue be only our Stale
 to win Honour, where Men, out of Error, esteem
 highly of it: Among others, love we Vice, where
 Virtue is banish'd, &c. Good wholesome Counsel,
 if the Day of our Death were the utmost Period of
 our Time, beyond which no Happiness were to be en-
 joy'd.

Dr. Stradling's Sermons p. 476. 'The Immor-
 tality of the Soul once deny'd, the Concern for
 it could not be much; it being not probable
 that such Men should please themselves with a
 Pretence of Virtue, who deny'd the Future Re-
 wards of it. And from such Premises that Con-
 clusion mention'd by St. Paul could not but fol-
 low, *Let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow we Die.*
 It is but reasonable to imagin that they, who
 thought they should dye like Beasts, should live
 like them; Husband that Life the best they
 could, which should never return when once
 gone, and make it as pleasant as they saw it was
 short. Which, if there were no other Life to
 come, was no doubt, a Rational Course, and
 the highest Wisdom, &c.

p. 479. But here some may Object, that if
 there were no God, no Life to come, yet there
 is so much satisfaction in living according to the
 Rules

‘ Rules of Right Reason and Virtue, that even
 ‘ that Consideration should oblige Men to do so,
 ‘ and make Men most happy.

In answer to this Objection he confesses (p. 480.)
 That, ‘ to live according to the Rules of right
 ‘ Reason is most agreeable to Human Nature, and
 ‘ conducing to Happiness in this Life, *But adds*
 ‘ — It may be questionable, whether a dry
 ‘ Platonical Idea of Virtue, perishing with our
 ‘ selves, or a bare Moral Complacency in it, might,
 ‘ in the balance of Reason weigh down those o-
 ‘ ther more sensual Delights, which gratify our
 ‘ Lower Faculties ; or a Severe and Morose Vir-
 ‘ tue, have Charms in it Equal to all those vari-
 ‘ ous Pleasures which sooth and flatter our Ap-
 ‘ petites. *And he soon after subjoyns these Admirable*
 ‘ *Words, which I do in a very particular manner, re-*
 ‘ *commend to the Consideration of the Writer of the Letter ;*
 ‘ Far be it from me to decry Moral Virtue, which
 ‘ even Heathens have granted to be a Reward to
 ‘ it self ; but surely, in the case of Annihilation,
 ‘ very short of a full Compleat one. And to cry
 ‘ it up, as some do, to the weakning of our Be-
 ‘ lief and Hope of the Immortality of the Soul,
 ‘ however at first blush it may seem plausible, is,
 ‘ in effect, no better than a Subtile Invention to
 ‘ ruin Virtue by it self ; since it cannot possibly
 ‘ subsist but by the Belief and Support of another
 ‘ Life, &c. p. 481, 482, 483:

The Letter-Writer (Unknown as he is, and resolves to be)
 cannot, I persuade my self, even in his privacy read, these
 Citations, without blushing, after the confident Charge he
 hath advanced against me, of Preaching New Doctrine. If
 he had not any of these Passages in his Eye (as one would
 be

be Charitably inclin'd to suspect) the Accusation is extremely Rash; if he had, 'tis base and dishonest. Either way, there is little room to hope for any Candor, or Common Justice, in the management of this Dispute, from a Man who lays the Foundation of his Reasonings in so Notorious an Untruth.

St. Austin, as I find him cited by Grotius, was exactly of the same Sentiments. Augustinus, sublatiis præmiis pœnitique post hanc vitam, verum staturum ait à partibus Epicuri, in Matth. xvi. 24.

Lactantius speaks very largely, and very Emphatically to the same purpose; where he argues against the Opinion of Epicurus concerning the Souls Mortality. I will not swell this piece with a Translation of the Passages. Quis, cum hoc affirmari audiat, vitiis & sceleribus absteineat? Nam, si peritura sunt anima, appetamus divitias, ut omnes suavitates capere possimus. Quæ si nobis defunt, ab iis qui habent auferamus clam, dolo, vi; eò magis, si humanas res Deus nullus curet: quodocunque spes impunitatis arriserit, rapiamus, necemus — Voluptatibus igitur, quocquo modo possumus, serviamus. Brevi enim tempore nulli erimus omnino. Ergo nullum diem, nullum temporis punctum fluere nobis sine Voluptate patiamur; ne, quia ipsi quandoque perituri sumus, id ipsum, quòd viximus, pereat. Lib. 3. Sect. 17. Again, Virtus soli homini data magno argumento est Immortales esse Animas; quæ nec erit secundum naturam, si Anima extinguitur: huic enim præsentis vitæ nocet, &c. Si ergo & prohibet iis bonis hominem, quæ naturaliter appetuntur, & ad sustinenda mala impellit, quæ naturaliter fugiuntur; ergo malum est Virtus, & inimica naturæ,

stultumque judicare necesse est qui eam sequitur, quoniam se ipse lædit & fugiendo bona præsentia, & appetendo æque mala sine spe fructûs amplioris, &c. *Lib. 7. Sect. 9.*

Need I urge any farther Authorities? perhaps, the Names of Mr. Lock, and Mons. Paschal may be of greater weight with some Men than most of those I have mention'd; and therefore a few Lines, taken from either of their Writings, shall close these Citations.

Lock. Hum. Underst, Book 11. Ch: 21. Sect. 35. 1 Ed.. If Men in this Life only have hope, if in this Life only they can enjoy, 'tis not strange, nor unreasonable, they should seek their Happiness by avoiding all things that diseafe them here, and by preferring all that delight them; wherein it will be no wonder to find Variety and Difference: for if there be no prospect beyond the Grave, the Inference is certainly right, *Let us Eat and Drink, let us enjoy what we delight in, for to morrow we dye.*

Paschal, according to his way, hath rather hinted than fully express'd the same thought. However, those who are acquainted with his manner of Writing, will easily learn his opinion, from what follows. 'Tis certain, that either the Soul is Mortal, or Immortal. And the Rules of Morality will be entirely different, according to the one, or the other of these Suppositions. Nevertheless the Philosophers Treated of Morals without any regard to this distinction. What a degree of Blindness was this †? All our Actions, and all our Thoughts

† *Il est indubitable que l'ame est mortalle ou immortelle. Cela doit metre une difference entiere dans la Morele. Et cependant les Philosophes ont conduit la Morale Independamment de cela. Quel avuglement! estrange* Ch xxix. Sect. 54. ought

ought to be conducted after so different a manner, according as there is, or is not an Eternal Happiness to be hop'd for, that it is impossible wisely to take a single step in Life, without regulating it by this view — 'tis our great Interest, and our chief Duty, to satisfy our selves on this head, upon which our whole Conduct depends*.

The Passages I have cited (though but Few of Many which might have been urg'd to the same purpose) may seem too large and numerous. But it became me effectually to remove this groundless charge of Novelty, with which I am Loaded. I have rather abounded in such Authorities as relate to the Notion, whereon I am said to build my Two Positions, because it is but once, and then but briefly intimated in my Sermon: and, therefore, these Authorities may serve, not only to justify, but moreover to explain, and clear it; and, by that means supply the Omission, which considering the short bounds within which the Argumentative Part of my Discourse was necessarily confin'd, I could not well avoid. And as to the Positions themselves, the Reader sees they are so far from being New, that there is (which I am not ashamed to own) nothing New even in my manner of handling them.

I.

The same Instances, the same Mediums, that I Employ to illustrate them, are made use of also by

* Toutes nos Actions & toutes nos Penſees doivent prendre des cures ſi differentes ſelon qu'il y aura des biens Eternels à eſperer ou non, qu'il eſt impoſſible de faire une demarche avec ſens & jugement qu'en la réglant par la vue de ce point, qui doit être noſtre dernier objet. Ainſi noſtre premier Intereſt & noſtre premier Devoir eſt de nous éclaircir ſur ſujets ce d'ou depend toute noſtre conſtit. Chap. 1.

Archbishop Tillotson, Dr. Sherlock, Dr. Goodman, Mr. Pemble, Dr. Stradling, &c. Nor are these Assertions that drop from their Pens by chance, but deliver'd by them in places where they profess to consider and State the Points in Question; and where, yet, they have express'd themselves with (at least) as few Guards and Restrictions as I have done. It may, I think, even from hence be presum'd, that I am not much mistaken in what I have laid down, since I have fallen into like Thoughts with these Writers, without knowing (I am sure, without attending in the least to) what they had written on the Subject; especially, since I have the Honour so exactly to agree with Archbishop Tillotson, One, who, in my poor Opinion, wrote, and reason'd as justly as any Man of his time.

- II. It is plain that these Writers generally built their Opinions and Reasonings on that very Text of St. Paul, which gave rise to my Discourse; and it being very probable that They, it is very probable also that I, have not mistaken his Sense; tho' the Second Article of my Accusation runs, That the Doctrine I have deliver'd is extremely Foreign from the Design of the Apostle on whom I fix it *.
- * L. p. 20. 13, 5. Of the two Propositions which I profess to maintain, The First is this, that, without Hope in another Life, Men would be more miserable than Beasts. Now this, I am so far from fixing expressly on the Apostle, as the Letter-Writer affirms †, that he himself, † p. 12. 13, 15. in other Places, represents me as only insinuating it to be agreeable to the Apostle's Purpose, tho' not necessarily implied in the Letter of the Text * : * L. p. 6. 11. which is much nearer to the Truth; for it is with regard to this Proposition that I profess to urge (what I call) the Concession of the Apostle somewhat farther

farther than the Letter of the Text will carry me || || s. p. 368.
And therefore, after enlarging on this first Proposition, † s. p. 371.
I conclude by simply affirming the Truth † of it,
without vouching the Authority of St. Paul, or even
alluding to his Expressions: whereas I refer to Both,
at the close of the Second, and say, that ' on the
Accounts [before mention'd] what the Apostle lays
' down in the Text, is evidently and experi-
' mentally true; That, if in this Life only good
' Men had Hope, they were of all Men most Misera-
*' ble *.* * s. p. 375. *It is, then, an Artifice in him, to repre-*
sent me as equally building these Undoubted Truths
on the Authority of the Apostle †. I speak only of
the undoubted Truth of the Apostle's Concessi-
on ||; and I expressly limit that Concession to the Letter
of these two Propositions †, without entitling the Apo- † s. p. 15.
stle to the Former; for the Truth of which, make
my Self (not Him) answerable.

There is (I grant) room still left for a Caviller to
misrepresent my Meaning; and, therefore, he tells
me, that ' I call the Argument, into which I have
' put this first Proposition, that great Argument for
' a future State, which is urg'd by St. Paul in the
' Words before us †. But why must I needs call it so, L. p. 15.
as including that Proposition; since in the same Place,
I own, that I have enlarg'd on the Apostles Argu-
ment, that is, extended it (as I elsewhere speak)
somewhat farther than the Letter of the Text
will carry me? Yes, but in my Paraphrase upon
the Text, I explain those Words [We are of all Men
most Miserable] by these that follow [We Christi-
stians should be the most abandon'd and wretch-
ed of Creatures]: and by Creatures, my froward
*Interpreter will understand Beasts *; forgetting that* * See L. p. 13, 15.

the Scriptural use of that Word determines it sometimes to Men ; particularly, in that Text where our Saviour commands his Disciples to preach the Gospel to every Creature † : I suppose, he meant not, to the brute Creatures of the Air, the Sea, or the Field : For then, St. Francis, I am sure, would have obeyed this Command much better than either St. Paul, or St Peter. By Creature, here, we are to understand, Reasonable Creature ; and so this perverse Gentleman might, if he pleas'd, have understood it, in that Passage of my Sermon ; and have taken, what follows there concerning all other Sorts and Sects of Men, not as a distinct Proposition, but as a farther Explication only of what had preceded. Had he not been very eager to find out mistakes in what I have said, he would not thus in one place have strain'd my Words to such a Sense, as he owns in another they will not bear ; nor have ventur'd to say, and unsay the same thing in a few Pages, rather than miss this small Occasion of a Cavil.

*As to my Second Proposition, That ' were there ' no Life [or, had we no hope of a better State] after ' this, the best Men would be often the most miserable ' [all other Sorts and Sects of Men having the Advantage of Us, Christians upon such a Supposition] — I do indeed fix it expressly on the Apostle ; and am now ready to prove, that I have not sadly (or at all) mistaken * his Meaning.*

• L. p.

17.

The Apostle's Words are, If in this Life only We have hope in Christ, We are of all Men most miserable. Wherein have I misapprehended him ?

Is it, because I suppose those Corinthians, whose Opinions he here encounters, to have believ'd a Future State, as well as the Resurrection of the Body ?

No

No Man, who reads this Chapter, can suppose otherwise. Less cannot be signify'd even by that Phrase in the Text, which speaks of them, as having Hope in Christ in this Life only. Sadducizing Christians, I suppose, they were, who said, there was no Resurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit*, affirming perhaps with Hymenæus, and Philetus, that the Resurrection was past already †, and that, what our Saviour had taught on that head, was not to be understood Literally, but Allegorically, of the New Birth of the Soul, and of it's Rising from the Death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness, by the Efficacy of the Christian Doctrine, and the Operation of a Divine Principle on the Hearts of Believers. The Sadducees † held, and so, it is likely, did these Corinthians, that Virtue and Vice were a sufficient Reward to themselves; and therefore, that Future Rewards and Punishments were not necessary to justify the present Distributions of Providence. However, that they deny'd a Future State, either expressly, or by plain Consequence, is evident from several of St. Paul's Reasonings in this Chapter, which are of no Force but only upon that Supposition, as Origen, in his Comments on St. Matthew, largely and irrefragably proves *. It will not be necessary to produce his words, since the Letter-Writer seems to have yielded this point, where he owns, that St. Paul 'is here arguing against ' some very weak Persons in the Church of Corinth, ' who profess'd to be believe in Jesus Christ, and yet ' deny'd the General Resurrection, and consequently ' (says he) the Rewards of a Future State †.

† Act.
xxi. 11
8.
* 2 Tim
11 17,
18.

* pp.
486,
487.

† L. p.
6.

Am I then mistaken in extending the Apostle's Assertion to Christians in general? WE are of all

† Joseph, Ant. L. 13. c. 9. Bell. Jud. Lib. 2. c. 8.

Men most miserable! that is, You, and I, and All, who profess to live up to the strict Rules of the Christian Institution, without a Future Prospect! The Letter-Writer shall vouch for me in this respect also: for he thus expounds the word, *WE*, We Christians*, All who now believe in Christ †; in which Exposition he is so constant and uniform*, that I need not, in order to any Advantage I may draw from thence in the present dispute, be at the Trouble of proving the Truth of it.

* L. p.
10.
† p. 9.
* See
L. pp.
16, 17,
18, 19.

Thus far then we are agreed. In what Points do we differ? why, chiefly, if not wholly in This; that I make that a General Proposition, and accommodate it to all Times, which the Apostle hath made a particular one, by accommodating it manifestly to the Times of the bitterest Persecution*; what he says, being spoken merely with respect to the bitter Sufferings the Profession of Christianity then expos'd it's Professors to †. Upon this Head I joyn Issue with him; and proceed therefore to prove, that St. Paul's Assertion is not (as he affirms) limited to the Times of the most grievous Persecution*. That it includes them, I have own'd †: but that it is confin'd to them, I absolutely deny; and, I think, with good Reason. For, as to the Words themselves, there is nothing in them that sounds that way, or points particularly at the Case of Persecution. 'Tis own'd, that the Apostle speaks here of Christians in general, that is, of Christians, as distinguish'd from other Sects and Professions of Men: why must these Christians need be consider'd, as in a Suffering State? What Ground, what Colour is there for such a Restriction? There are but Two things urg'd, or insinuated by the Letter-Writer in behalf of it.

* L. p.
14.
† L. p.
10.

* L. p.
19.
† Pref.
p. 10.

And

And One of them is, the Coherence of the Text with the preceding Verse, where mention is made of those who were fallen asleep in Christ; which Expression he would willingly so understand, as if it were intended particularly to signify the Martyrs, who had laid down their Lives for Christ's sake, and dy'd not only in his Faith, but for it †. And indeed, if † L. p. the Apostle be here speaking of the Martyrs, and their Sufferings, it will be natural to understand what follows, in the next Verse, of a Suffering State, and of that only. But this Restriction is altogether as groundless as the former. For by those who were fallen asleep in Christ, the Apostle manifestly means, not the Martyrs alone, but all Departed Christians; as our Learned Gataker proves * from various Authorities, which I forbear to repeat, because the thing is otherwise sufficiently Evident, for the ἐκοιμήθητες ἐν Χριστῷ, v. 18. are plainly oppos'd to those who were still Living, of whom the Apostle spake in the 17th v. And therefore he adds (v. 20.) that Christ, by rising, became the first Fruits of them that slept, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῶν κοιμηθέντων. Now Christ was not the first Fruits of the Resurrection, in respect of the Martyrs only, but of All who died in the Christian Faith; and therefore They, who were fallen asleep in Christ, must comprehend all that died in the Faith of Christ, whether by Martyrdom, or otherwise. The Apostle employs the same Word twice more in this Chapter—v. 6. where he affirms Christ, after his Resurrection, to have been seen by five hundred Brethren at once; of whom (says he) the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep, ἐκοιμήθησαν. A-

* Adv. Milic. Cap. 17. p. 167.

gain, v. 51. We shall not all sleep (*ὅτι κοιμηθήσονται*) but we shall all be changed. In both these places, Sleeping are oppos'd to Living, not to Martyr'd Christians; and so likewise, 1 Thes. iv. 15. We, which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them who are asleep, *τῶν κοιμηθέντων*. Nor is there a single Passage in the New Testament *, where the Word (taken in its Metaphorical Sense) signifies otherwise. For, as to what is said of St. Stephen, that he fell asleep *ἐκοιμήθη*, (Acts vii. 60) it means no more than that he died; though, from the Circumstances of his Death, before related, it appears, that he died by Martyrdom.

I was willing to clear the Sense of this Phrase beyond Dispute, because, leading to the Assertion of the Text, it is of great use to shew the Extent of it, and to prove that it is not limited to the Times of the most grievous Persecution, as this Author peremptorily affirms *. However, he hath still another Evidence of this Limitation in reserve. For, 'that St. Paul speaks this merely with respect to the bitter Sufferings the Profession of Christianity expos'd its Professors to, is (he says) Evident from Verses 30, 31, 32 †. 'The Words of which run thus; And [if the Dead rise not at all] why stand we in Jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, that I die daily. If after the manner of Men I have fought with Beasts at Ephesus, what profiteth it me, if the Dead rise not. Let us Eat and Drink, for to

* See *Matth.* xxvii. 52. *John* xi. 11. *Acts* xiii. 36. *1 Cor.* vii. 39. *1 Cor.* xi. 30. *1 Thes.* iv. 13. 14. *2 Pet.* iii. 4.

Morrow we die. *That St. Paul, in these Verses, argues for the Resurrection and a Future State, from the grievous Sufferings of Christians, is indeed Evident: but is it Evident from hence, that he argu'd from the very same Topick, Eleven Verses before, where nothing of that kind is express'd, or intimated? I should rather think, that he proceeds here to prove his Point by a New Medium, not before particularly insisted on. This, as it is in it self most probable, so is it most agreeable to St. Paul's manner of handling the present Argument. For, however his Reasonings in these and other parts of this Chapter, may, upon a slight view of them, seem to fall in with each other; yet, upon a closer Examination, we shall find them to have been propos'd by him with great variety and distinction.*

But we will suppose that the Apostle argues from the same Medium in both these places, and that the 30th, 31st, and 32d Verses, are a bare Comment on his Assertion in the 29th; it will even from hence appear that his Assertion is not limited to the Case of Persecution, because, in the last of these three Verses, there is somewhat laid down, inconsistent with the supposal of such a Limitation. For the Apostle there plainly allows, that if the Dead rise not, it might be reasonable to resolve with the Men of this World, Let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow we die. ' Let us please and gratify our selves with what we like best, and be as easy as we can be in this World, since we have no Prospect of another.

His Doctrine here is far from being pointed on the particular Case of Persecution: it relates to the Ordinary and Quiet Course of things; and manifestly implies, that, without Hope in another Life, the Austerities

rities of Religion would be an unnecessary Intrenchment on the Happiness of those, who ty'd themselves up to the strict Practice of them: that is, the best Men would by this means [as well as by reason of the Sufferings to which they are expos'd] become the [least Happy, or the] most Miserable. And this is the very thing that I have affirm'd, in my Second Proposition; except only, that I have qualify'd it with the Word, often; thereby making allowance for those Cases, wherein Men of excellent Minds, may possibly, by a long Practice of Virtue, have render'd even the Heights and Rigours of it Delightful, and brought their Duty and Happiness to be in every Case consistent, without attending to the Rewards of a Future State. But these Instances are so rare, that the Apostle seems to have overlook'd them in his Decision; and therefore declares in General, that, if the Dead rise not, the Inference would be just; Let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow we die. And his Steps therefore, I followed, his Doctrine I reasserted, when I thus explained these Words in my Sermon, 'supposing the present to be the only Life we are to lead, I see not but that Happiness, or Misery might be measur'd from pleasing or painful Sensations.' Which being granted, it will follow, that since Beasts have a manifest Advantage of Men, in these respects, they may be call'd the happier Creature of the two, as enjoying greater Pleasures, allay'd with fewer Pains: and so, even, my first Proposition, though it be not contain'd expressly in St. Paul's Words, yet will be found perfectly agreeable to his Doctrine, and manner of Reasoning.

Let me add one thing, to prevent any Cavil, which may be rais'd about the Sense of these Words; that the

Verses

Verse is pointed wrong in our English Translation: for in the Original it was read otherwise; the first Member of the Sentence ending with the Words, what advantageth it me? and the next beginning with those, if the Dead rise not. [If after the manner of Men I have fought with Beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me? if the Dead rise not, Let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow we die.] This way of reading the Words, compleats the Sense of the last Clause, which would otherwise be too abrupt, and disburthens the first of a double [if], whereby the Construction is render'd intricate.

*Thus therefore most of the Greek Expositors divide the Verse, particularly St. Chrysostome, and Theophylact; Thus the Pseudo—Ignatius (and his two ancient Interpreters) in the Epistle ad Tarsenses, read it *; thus St. Jerome cites it, in his Comments †; thus the Arabick Version hath render'd it: nor doth it appear that the Vulgar Latin read it otherwise: for the Eldest MSS of that Version being in Capitals, without any Distinction of Words, the present way of pointing them is of no Authority. Daniel's Edition of Beza's N. T. so divides the verse, both in the Greek, and in His Version. † Piscator, therefore, † Crellius, and Others justly contend for this division; and who pleases may, in the latter of these, see very convincing reasons for it. However, without such a Division. the Sense of the Apostle is still the same and sufficiently plain; as I might shew from the Testimony of various Expositors, if that were requisite. I*

* Pat. Apost. Vol. 2. pp. 107, 138, 156. Ed. Clerk.

† Isaiah xxii. 13.

shall only place their Names at the Bottom * ; and the Reader may be assur'd, that All of them, though they follow the usual way of pointing this Verse, yet suppose the Apostle to have allow'd the Epicure's Maxim to be good, if so be there were no Resurrection. And the [†]Terms, in which several of them deliver his Meaning in this case, are much fuller and stronger than any I have employ'd to that purpose in my Sermon.

As far, therefore, as the Context can guide us into the meaning of St. Paul, we may now rest assur'd, that he did not intend to Limit the Assertion of the Text merely to the Times of most grievous Persecution.

Indeed, were his Assertion so limited, his Argument would not be conclusive ; Christians not being of all Men most miserable, merely on the account of their Persecutions and Sufferings : for the Jews had been then, and have been since, persecuted for adhering to their Religion in (at least) an equal degree with the Christians. No one can doubt of this, who knows the Story of that People, their Sufferings, during their several Captivities, and under their several Conquerors, and particularly in the Times of the Maccabees. Of these Sufferings St. Paul hath given a very copious and moving Description in the 11th Chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, in order to fortify the new converted Jews, by proposing to them the Heroic Patterns of Pa-

* Theodoret.
Oecumenius.
Erasimus.
Luther.
Zuinglius. ⊙
Marlorat.
Pet. Martyr.

Tilem. Heshusius.
Vorstius.
Andr. Hyperius.
Annot. Author. Syn. Dordr.
Episcopiùs, de lib. Arbitr. cap.
4.

science under Affliction, and Constancy on Religion, which had been set by their forefathers: implying certainly, that the Instances of Constancy and Patience which he propos'd, were as remarkable as those to which he invited Christians by the means of them. In later Ages, though the Persecutions of Christians were very great, yet those of the Jews were not less violent. For, after the miserable slaughter made of them at the destruction of Jerusalem, they were scattered into all Corners of the Earth, driven from one Kingdom to another, oppress'd, spoil'd, and detested every where; and sometimes even massacred, and extirpated. Persecutions, therefore, having been the Common and Equal Lot of Jews and Christians; Christians cannot be said to be of all Men most miserable, merely on the account of those Persecutions. It must be somewhat peculiar to the Evangelic Institution, somewhat that distinguishes the Christian Scheme of Duty from all others, which gave rise to this Decision of the Apostle: and that plainly is, the Sublimity and Rigour of those Precepts of Mortification and Self-denial, by which Christians are oblig'd to walk, to govern their Inward Thoughts as strictly as their Outward Actions, to resist their dearest Appetites, and most natural Inclinations, and to taste even the Innocent and allow'd Pleasures of life but sparingly; in a word, to live, as it were, out of the Body, even while they continue in it, and are chain'd to it. Now, no struggle of this kind can be joyous, but grievous, while it lasts: and it lasts usually, in some degree or other, as long as Life it self; a Compleat Mastery of our Appetites being what the best of Men in this Life do very rarely attain. So that the State of Christians, even when they are not actually persecuted, is yet a perpetual State of Warfare, and Voluntary Sufferings.

Sufferings ; such, as neither the Professors of the Jewish Religion, nor of any other Religion, but that of Christ, were ever bound to undergo. And this Consideration, added to that of the External Sufferings to which Christians are expos'd, is indeed sufficient (though those Sufferings, in themselves consider'd, be not sufficient) to justify the Apostle's Assertion, that, Without Hope in Another Life, Christians would be the (le st happy or) most miserable of all Men.

*But if the Apostle's Argument (when limited to a State of Persecution) be not conclusive in general ; it is much less so with respect to those Corinthians, to whom it is particularly address'd, and who gave rise to that Supposition in the Text, on which his Inference is there founded. For, how can an Assertion, relating merely to a bitter State of Persecution, include the Case of those Corinthians, who neither then were, nor had ever been in such a State, since the Gospel was first planted among them? That the Corinthians had been then grievously (or at all) persecuted, appears not from Ecclesiastical History, or the Sacred Writings. On the contrary, they are represented by the Apostle himself in this very Epistle, as abounding in Wealth and Ease, and free from all External Pressures, and Troubles. Now Ye are full, now ye are Rich (says he) Ye have reigned as Kings without us *. The Schisms, and Divisions, the Heynous Impurities, the Intemperance, and Litigiousness, with which he reproaches some of them, are sufficient Evidences that they had not as yet been under any General Persecution ; for these are the Vices of Prosperity and Abundance. The only Difficulty they seem then to have lain under was, a Temptation to partake of the publick Feasts of their Follow-Citizens, in which*

they

They fed upon the Sacrifices offer'd to Idols: These Entertainments were very grateful to a People, naturally Lovers of Pleasure, and bred up in Ease and Luxury, as those of Corinth were: and perhaps the Christians of that place might find themselves under some little Inconveniencies for refusing to partake of them.

But surely nothing of this kind could deserve the Name of an Affliction, much less of a Persecution; and therefore with Relation to these, and all other Tryals of their Stedfastness, which they had hitherto met with; the Apostle expressly affirms, that No Temptation (i. e. no Affliction; for so the word, *πειρασμοις*, often signifies in the N. T.) had taken them but such as was common to Man*, that is, none, but what was Ordinary, and easy to be born. These being the Circumstances under which the Corinthians then were, and the Argument, which the Apostle here advances in behalf of a Future State, being intended to reach their particular Case; can we think it possible, that he should draw it merely from a State of grievous Sufferings, and bitter Persecutions, to which those Corinthians were utter Strangers? No certainly, when he concludes the Corinthian Christians more miserable than other Men., who had not embrac'd Christianity; it must be on the account of somewhat; which, as Christians, they had actually felt; at least, not purely for a Reason, the force of which they had no ways experienc'd.

He argues indeed, afterwards in the same Chapter⁴; from the Head of Persecution. But when he doth so, we may observe, that, with great propriety and justice, he confines his Reflexions of that kind to Himself, and his Own particular Sufferings. 'Tis He; that fought with Beasts at Ephesus †; that dy'd daily;

* Chap.
x. v.
13.

4. 30
31, 32

iv. 31

daily *, that was in jeopardy every Hour †; and 'tis his Own Folly that he there proclaims, and condemns, if he suffer'd all this, without a well grounded hope of a Future Reward: but he doth not endeavour (there, or else where) to prove the Corinthians, Fools, on the account (much less, solely on the account) of Sufferings, which they had never undergone.

Upon the whole, therefore, I conclude, that when S. Paul says, If in this Life only We have hope in Christ, We are of all Men most miserable, He there considers Christians, as denying themselves in the Pleasures and Advantages of this World, for the sake of Christ, and not merely as persecuted for their Christianity.

Nothing now remains toward making good this Interpretation of St. Paul's words, but to shew that the Stream of Expositors falls in with it. And so, indeed, it doth: for this Text hath been thus expounded by Writers both Antient and Modern; Greek and Latin; by Papists and Protestants; Lutherans and Calvinists; by Divines of the Church of England, and by those who separated from her Communion. What our Own Divines have said in this case, (even where they profess'd to explain the Text) I have amply shewn †: As to other Authorities, the narrow Bounds of a Preface (already too much extended) will not allow me to recite them in Terms. I can only refer the Reader to the Authors themselves *, who speak very

† I now add to them, Assemblies Notes upon the place. Gataker Advers. cap. 17 Jackson. Vol. 3. p. 456.

* Theophylact. Pseudo Ambrosius. Hieronymus. Anselm. Remig Ep Rem. Eralinus. Calvin. Luther. Marlorat. Justinianus. Aretius. Hugo de sancto Charo. Musculus. Cornelius a Lap. Claud. Guillaud. David Porcus. Tileman. Hethusius. Pilcator. Episcopus, de lib. Arb. c. 4. Mr. Lock. home

The P R E F A C E.

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home to the point, and do all of them represent the Apostles Decision as built on the peculiar disadvantages which Christians lye under in point of Worldly Enjoyments, and not as restrain'd merely to a State of Persecution. And these (had I room to produce them) would be so many fresh Evidences of the Rashness, or Insincerity of my Accuser, where he represents the Assertions by me laid down, to be such as were never before seriously maintain'd by any Person of Vertue and Understanding †.

† L. p.
15.

Having now fully considered the two first Articles of his Charge, and shewn, that my Doctrine is so far from being New, that it is maintain'd by the most Pious and Judicious Pens, and is exactly agreeable to the Sense of St. Paul; I am the less concern'd thoroughly to examine what is said of it under the 3d Head of Accusation, viz. that it is False and Pernicious in it self. For if the Authority of these Eminent Writers, and of the Blessed Apostle himself will not justify it in that respect, nothing else will. Besides, in the Passages which I have before cited at large from our own Divines, most of the Reflections and Reasonings, which make out the Truth of both my Positions, are already suggested; and therefore need not here be repeated and apply'd to every little Exception made by this Author. Nor hath he himself put me under any Necessity of doing it by his method of attacking my Doctrine: for he pretends only to prove it false, by offering some Observations on my manner of proceeding in the Argument I have undertaken *: as if Observations on my manner of proceeding in this Argument, would determine the Truth or Falshood of the Argument it self! And yet this is the Mark at which his Ten grave Observations chiefly

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aim;

* L. p.
6. 224

aim; not to prove the Doctrine it self false, but my Defence of it weak and improper. And therefore he proposes every one of them with some Phrases of Admiration, which may be worthy of the Curious Reader's Perusal.

1. It hath, (he says) a very strange appearance; and is a very strange way of proceeding †. 2. It is likewise as unaccountable *.— 3. It is again wonderful †.— 4. It is wonderfully strange ∴, it is very strange †.— 5. On the other Hand, it is equally strange ‖.— 6. It is likewise unaccountable *. It is extremely unaccountable †.— 8. It looks very strange and unaccountable *.— 9. It is likewise very unaccountable †. 10. Last of all, he cannot but think it very strange *.— Now all these Exclamations of strange! wonderful! unaccountable! (*manag'd with so happy a Variety of Expression*) have plainly a Personal View; and so have the Reflections themselves, which are usher'd in by them; being intended rather to disparage Me, than disprove my Doctrine; and, indeed, to disprove the one only by disparaging the other. How this is consistent with his solemn Assurances of being acted by no other Principle but a Desire that the Truth may be known in so important a matter*, I do not apprehend; and must have leave to tell this Exclaimer, in my turn, that, if that were his real Aim, his manner of Proceeding is very strange, wonderful, and unaccountable! What tendency hath it towards a discovery of Truth in this important matter, to spend two Pages * in proving, that, when I call the Text a Concession of the Apostle, I speak improperly? Sure the Fortunes of Greece do not depend upon such Criticisms as these! the Merits of our Dispute are no ways concern'd in my use of an improper Expression!

† L. P.
22.

* L. P.

23.

† L. P.

24.

∴ P.

25.

‖ P. 27.

† Ibid.

* P. 23.

† P. 33.

* P. 41.

† Ibid.

* P. 43.

* P. 44.

† L. P.

11, 12,

13.

tion ! which after all is not so improper, it seems, but that the Letter-Writer himself vouchsafes to employ it in the very same Sense, and upon the very same Occasion, a few Pages afterwards ; where, having produc'd what he calls my Explication of the Text, he L. p. adds, This is in Truth a Concession *. And if it ^{17.} be, so also is the Text it self, in that Sense at least wherein I understand it.

But to let this (and some other such material Remarks) pass—If there be any thing in his Ten Observations, which deserves a Reply, 'tis what he hath urg'd in the Fourth of them ; which seems indeed to be directly level'd against the Truth of my Doctrine. And because it contains in it the Summ of what he hath elsewhere loosely scatter'd to the same Purpose, and will give me an Opportunity of proposing at one View, and briefly vindicating, what I take to be the very Truth in this important Matter, it shall therefore be particularly consider'd. He there observes, that ' The Chief

◦ Happiness of any Being, in whatsoever State it is,

◦ or of whatsoever Duration its Life is, must result

◦ from the most excellent part of its Constitution ; that the Happiness of a Being, made capable of

◦ imitating God, though for never so short a time, must

◦ consist in that Imitation ; that Virtue is the Imitation of God, and therefore must be the Happiness of Man : That the chief Happiness of a

◦ Reasonable Creature must consist in living as

◦ Reason directs, whether he lives one Day, or

◦ to Eternity ; whether he lives in this State only,

◦ or in another afterwards ; whether he hath Inclinations to the contrary, or not, provided they be

◦ such as may be conquer'd. For neither can the Time

◦ of his Duration, nor the Tendency of such Inclinations

'ons alter any thing in this Matter, unless to make
 ' Virtue more difficult ; which doth not destroy
 ' the Excellence of it, and present Happiness re-
 ' sulting from it, but enhance and improve it.
 ' Besides, on the other hand, the Practice of Vice, tho'
 ' it be with the Inclination, yet is against Reason and
 * L. P. 26, 27, ' Conscience *.

These are his Words, to which I reply—

I. *That if this Argument proves any thing, it proves
 too much ; even that a Man may be happy under the
 greatest bodily Pains, and the most grievous Persecuti-
 ons. For it is certain, that, notwithstanding such
 Pains and Persecutions, he may still preserve his Virtue:
 and if the Practice of Virtue be the Happiness of
 * L. P. 23, ' Man (Happiness it self, as he elsewhere speaks *)
 then those Pains and Persecutions, not robbing him of
 his Virtue, would not rob him of his Happiness. This
 is too Romantick and Absurd a Doctrine to deserve a
 * ser. 10th. Vol. P. 271. ' serious Confutation : and therefore I shall dismiss it with
 the Words of Archbishop Tillotson *; Tho' some
 Men have been so phantastically Obstinate, as,
 against the Reason and Common Sense of Man-
 kind, to maintain this Paradox, that ' a wise
 ' Man may be as happy upon the Rack , or in
 ' Phalaris his Bull, as in the greatest Ease and
 ' Freedom from Pain that can be imagin'd : ' Yet
 Nature cries shame of this Hypocrisy ; and there
 are none of those wise Men they speak of, who
 where ever such Fools as to try the Experiment.*

2. *If we consider the Being of Man, as circumscrib-
 ed within the Bounds of this Life, I deny that his chief
 Happiness results from the most excellent part of
 his Constitution (as those Words are intended to ex-
 clude all regard for the Pleasures of the Body) : For it
 results,*

results, not from any one Part, but from the Whole. The chief Happiness of a Creature, compos'd of Body and Soul, and design'd for this Life only, is, to be as Happy as it can be, during this Life, both in Body and Soul: And the more and greater Pleasures of both kinds it enjoys (which can be render'd consistent with each other) the more entire and perfect is its Happiness. I grant indeed,

3. That the chief Happiness of a Reasonable Creature must consist in living as Reason directs, whether he lives one Day, or to Eternity, But had we no Hope in another Life, the Directions of Reason for our Conduct in this, would not be the same as they are now. Reason would then direct us to do every thing, in which we delighted, to deny our selves no Pleasure, which Inclination, Custom, or Opinion prompted us to take; so it did not otherwise interfere with our Ease, with our Health, our Reputation, and Convenience; that is, so Men judg'd upon the whole, that it would conduce more to their Happiness to indulge themselves in such or such Pleasures, than to forbear them. And how falsely the greatest part of Mankind would, through the corrupt tendency of their Nature, and the perpetual Solicitations of the Objects of Sense, judge in such a Case, I need not say. And whenever they judg'd wrong, there would be no sure way of setting them right; that is, of arguing them out of their Taste and Experience, to which they would always retreat and appeal, as to the sure Test and Measure of Happiness. The Restraints of Conscience, in such a State, would no ways check Men in their Pursuits: For Conscience being nothing but the Judgment which a Man passes on the Reasonableness, or Unreasonableness of his own Actions; and that being to be measur'd from the Subservi-

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ency

ency of those Actions to his present Happiness; whatever appear'd to him, upon the best Judgment he could frame, necessary to his present Happiness, would appear highly reasonable; and his Conscience would be so far from blaming, that it would approve his Pursuit of it; nay, it would blame him for not pursuing it. And therefore,

4. To tell Mankind, in such a State as this, that their Supreme Felicity consisted in the Imitation of God, would be to talk to them in a Language which they would not relish, or understand. For how should a poor imperfect Creature, compos'd of Body as well as Spirit, and design'd for this material World only, think it self oblig'd, or any ways able, to imitate an Eternal, infinitely-pure and perfect Mind? or place its Happiness in copying Excellencies, which Human Life is too short, and Human Nature too weak to reach?

How should a Soul, made to inhabit Flesh and Blood, and to perish together with it, judge it reasonable, or possible, to live above the Desires and Infirmities of Flesh and Blood? How should one part of the Man be induc'd to neglect and forget the other, in order to arrive at a Divine Perfection and Resemblance, which (not hoping to reach) it would scarce think it self design'd to pursue? No, the Rule of imitating God, can never be successfully propos'd to Men but upon Christian Principles, such as these; that this World is a place, not of Rest and Happiness, but of Discipline and Trial; where we are to be train'd up for another and more perfect State, and to qualify our Selves for the Divine Enjoyments of it, by resisting and subduing our Bodily Appetites and Inclinations; a State, into which Flesh and Blood shall not enter, where our present Struggles shall be rewarded with compleat Conquests, and our Imitation of God end

in the undisturb'd Fruition of him to all Eternity. Upon these Principles indeed it is highly Reasonable to imitate God : but if we are design'd to live only in these Bodies, and in this World, what should binder Us from endeavouring to make the best of both ? and from coming to the Conclusion mention'd (and not disapprov'd) by the Apostle ; Let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow we die ?

5. I deny not, after all, but that, even in such a State as this, the Pleasures of Virtue would be superior to those of Vice, and justly preferable, upon the Comparison ; the Pleasures, I mean, of a mature and confirm'd Habit of Virtue, not of the lower and imperfect Degrees of it. Such an Habit, once acquir'd, would indeed afford the Professors of it greater Satisfactions than any the Wicked and Licentious did, or could enjoy. But how few would judge thus rightly of Virtue at a Distance ? How much fewer would be at the Pains of acquiring such an Habit, and of conquering all the Reluctancies and Difficulties, that lay in the way towards it ? And, till that were done, the strict Practise of Virtue would not be entirely pleasing : to be sure, no part of the Pleasure of it would consist in the Struggle it self ; and therefore I am much at a loss to know, what the Letter-Writer meant by the following Assertion, that the Difficulty of [attaining and practising] Virtue doth not destroy the present Happiness resulting from it, but enhance and improve it. This, I take to be a Stoical Rant, without any Foundation in the Nature of Man, or the Reason of things. For no Practise whatsoever can be attended with present Happiness, any farther than it is easie and delightful to the Doer ; and what is difficult to be done, cannot be easie and delightful, while it is doing.— Unless
when

when those Difficulties are lost and swallowed up in the sweet Hope of a better State, which we are sure of attaining by the means of them. Where once such a Persuasion as this is well-fix'd, I grant, it will smooth all the Roughness of the Way, that leads to Happiness, and render all the Conflicts we maintain with our Lusts and Passions pleasing: but surely, without the Hopes of such a State, the mere Prospect of the Pleasures which Virtue in this Life may yield, would scarce make the Struggle it self delightful to those who were strangers to such Pleasures.

Thus far, in answer to his fourth Remark, which contains the Grounds of his Doctrine, and offers at somewhat toward the Disproof of mine. As to the rest of his Observations on my manner of proceeding in the present Argument, were it worth while to reduce them from their present Confusion into some Order, they might be rang'd and consider'd under Three Heads, my Omissions, my Inconsistencies, and the Ill Consequences of my Doctrine. My Omissions are confess'd, for I did not write a Treatise; but a few Pages only on the Subject; which I handled with particular Views, and pretended not to exhaust. Whether any of the Reasonings by me employ'd, are inconsistent with each other, I securely leave to the Judgment of the Reader, who hath now the Argumentative part of that Sermon before him verbatim as it was first Printed: But the Ill Consequences of my Doctrine, which he objects; deserve to be a little consider'd.

My Doctrine is, as I have endeavour'd to shew, the very same with that of St. Paul; and if this hath been made out, the same Ill Consequences are equally chargeable upon Both, and He too may be said to have made Concessions to the Cause of Vice, by allowing,
that,

that, if the Dead rise not, the Inference would be just, Let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow we Die. All that needs be done toward justifying the Apostle (and my self, by his means) is, to open the Design and Manner of his Reasoning. He is there making use of that sort of Argument, which, in order to prove a Doctrine true, supposes the contrary Doctrine to be true; and then shews, what Absurdities follow upon such a Supposition: and the greater those Absurdities are, the more strongly do they evince the falsity of that Supposition, from whence they flow, and, consequently, the Truth of the Doctrine set aside by that Supposition. Thus, in the present case, the more absurd it is to affirm, that Beasts have the Advantage of Men, and Bad Men of Good, in point of Happiness; or that a Sensual Life may be prefer'd to a Severe and Rigid Virtue; the more clearly doth the folly and falshood of that Supposition appear, which is the Parent of these wild Absurdities, viz. that We have hope in this Life only: and the falshood of that Supposition being prov'd, proves the truth of the contrary Doctrine, which was design'd to be establish'd. Now these very Absurdities, are by the Letter-Writer, represented as Concessions to the Cause of Vice, when indeed they are employ'd by me, and do in themselves tend, to confirm the Truth of a Capital Article in Religion, upon which (as I verily think) the whole Cause of Virtue depends. It may suffice to have given this short, but full Answer to all the Ill Consequences he bath vainly endeavour'd to fasten on my Doctrine; and which are in truth so far from being ill Consequences of my Doctrine, that they are Consequences only of that false Supposition, which I advanc'd, in order to disprove it, and, by that means, to prove the Truth of my Doctrine. If the Letter-Writer was sincere in this part of his Charge, he must be con-

tented

16. L. P. tented to bear the Reproach of understanding nothing of Logick, or good Sense *; An Imputation, which, I find, he looks upon as carrying a greater Absurdity in it, than even any thing I have said in my Sermon!

32. L. P. I doubt whether He can as easily get rid of the Ill Consequences of his Doctrine; which manifestly tends to shew, That there is no need of a Future State, to set right the unequal Distributions of Happiness in this Life. And if once this be allow'd, we give up the very best Argument for such a State, with which mere Reason furnishes us. And of what use that Concession can be to the Cause of Virtue, this pretended Patron of it will be pleas'd to tell us. Had he substituted any other Argument for a Future State, in the room of this he thus endeavours to weaken; had he once, throughout his Pamphlet, directly and plainly affirm'd, that any convincing Evidence of such a State was to be had from Reason alone, or that even the bitter Sufferings of good Men were sufficient to prove it; his Conduct would have been so much the more excusable. But he hath offer'd at nothing of this kind. Once indeed (in a very Odd and Wary manner) he says, I have heard the Sufferings and Afflictions of many good Men here below, made an Argument that, in another State, all the Virtuous shall have the Outward, as well as Inward Tokens of Gods Favor*. But we are left at a loss to know, whether he approves the Argument, he thus heard; whether he thinks it a good Argument for a Future State, as well as a proof of what shall happen in such a State, if such a State there should be: He says not, whether a Future State be, in his Opinion, necessary, in order to a manifestation of these Outward Tokens of Gods favor; or whether the Inward Tokens of it, bestow'd in this Life, may not suffice

*fice to all the purposes of Virtue. In another place, he mentions the Presumptions of Reason, and owns, that our Lord's Resurrection, his Assurances of A FUTURE STATE, and his Miracles, A D D E D to these Presumptions (such is his manner of Speech) are sufficient (for what? why) to satisfy all that are willing to listen to Truth †. But of what Truth they are to be satisfy'd; and, if it be the truth of a Future State, what Interest They are to have in it, and what Right They have to it, he cares not expressly to say. And, as to these Presumptions of Reason, he gives us no account of them, What they are, or whence they arise. On the contrary, he hath all along employ'd such Reasonings, as, if true, are strong Presumptions against a Future State. For he supposes Virtue to be a sufficient Reward to it self in this Life: It is the Imitation of God (he says) and therefore must be the Happiness of Man *; nay, the Practice of Virtue is Happiness it self †. And if so, then it is not necessary that a Future Reward should be reserv'd for Virtue; for it hath a sufficient Reward already. A Virtuous Heathen is, at this rate, as happy as a Virtuous Christian; a Man, without the Prospect of another World, is as happy as with it: for if the Practice of Virtue be Happiness it self, He that possesses Happiness it self can, by no other Considerations, or Views, have any Addition made to his Happiness. If the Doctrine of the Letter be true, This World may be our Home, and not the place of our Pilgrimage, as we Christians think, and call it: for our present State is, it seems, a State of Fruition and Felicity, not a State of Preparation and Tryal; and, should there be no Other Life, yet such a Supposition will not reflect on the Justice, or Goodness of God, which*

† L. p. 31.

* p. 26.

† p. 23.

which are sufficiently vindicated by his wise distribution of Good and Evil in this Life, and by that Pleasure and Pain, with which Virtue and Vice are severally and inseparably attended. Now these Principles do, as I conceive, tend to subvert the belief of a Future State; and have, therefore, been generally entertain'd by all those who doubted of the Reality of such a State, or expressly disbeliev'd it, without shaking off at the same time the Obligations of Morality. Such, particularly, were the Stoics, who first brought these Tenets into Repute and Fashion; an Atheistical Sect of Philosophers, that held the World to be God; and having no certain persuasion, much less Evidence, of another Life, and yet designing to be thought Lovers of Virtue, knew not how to defend it's Cause, but by affirming that Virtue was it's own Reward, and the Practice of it Happiness it self; such an Happiness, as no Afflictions, no Torments, which beset a Man, could deprive him of, or any ways diminish. I will not argue against such wild Paradoxes as these: the Excellent Words I have

* Pref.
p. 32. *once already cited**; are a sufficient Reply to them — Thus to cry up Virtue, to the weakning our Belief and Hope of the Immortality of the Soul, however at first blush it may seem plausible, is in effect no better than a subtle Invention to ruin Virtue by it self, since it cannot possibly subsist but by the Belief and Support of another Life.

Whether the Letter-Writer intended, by what he hath wrote, to undermine this Belief, is left to God, and his own Conscience. Sure I am, there are several Passages in his Piece (besides those I have mention'd) which look that way, and require a great deal of Candor to be interpreted in such a Sense, as doth not reflect on the Certainty of this great Article of all Religion. For he is

not afraid to say, that he much questions, whether ever there was, or can be a Persecution merely for the sake of the Mortal Virtues of any Person *.

*A Doubt which shakes the only Moral Evidence of a Future State, which he can any ways be suppos'd to allow of : For if Virtue be not persecuted here, there is certainly (upon his Principles) no reason for rewarding it hereafter. And what could tempt him to entertain such a Doubt ? were not Socrates, and Aristides (to name no other Heathens) plain Instances of this kind ? and, when Joseph suffer'd under the Accusation of Potiphar's Wife, was he not persecuted merely for the Sake of a Moral Virtue ? And can this be in any degree strange to those who have consider'd, how wicked Men look upon themselves as reproach'd and affronted by Exemplary Goodness ? and how justly, therefore, they are represented in the Book of Wisdom, as speaking this Language ?—The Righteous (say they) is not for our Turn, he is clean contrary to our Doings ; he was made to reprove our Thoughts, He is grievous unto us even to behold ; for his Life is not like other Mens, his Ways are of another Fashion—Therefore let us lie in wait for the Righteous, &c. *.* For my part, I can no way account for his Doubts, in so plain a Case, but upon this Foot, that he foresaw, the Persecution of Virtue, as Virtue, must necessarily infer a Future Reward.

But should Virtue be persecuted, yet still he denies that the Hopes of a distant Recompence would afford it any immediate Relief : for these are his Words—That the best of Men are sometimes in this State the most Miserable, as far as the Evils of this World can make them so, may possibly be true ; but it is equally true, whether you suppose a Future State, or suppose

* L. P. 16. is not *, that is [for I can make no other Sense of his Words] the Vertuous Persons, so persecuted, are equally miserable under both Suppositions; their Hopes of Future Happiness being no manner of allay to their Present Miseries. And how can the Belief of a Future State be more effectually supplanted than by such an Opinion? Can one think him in Earnest when he says, that He is sure, the Certainty of a Future State stands in need of no such Supports, as mine? for even without them, Philosophers asserted it — and so may Christians * — He takes away the strongest Inducement which the best Philosophers had (or indeed which mere Reason could have) to believe a Future State; and then leaves us to depend upon the bare Assertions of some other Philosophers (on their Authority without Reason) for the truth of it. And is not this a very satisfactory and ample Equivalent? What should hinder us from exchanging the clearest Evidences of a Future State, for the Groundless Assurances of these Philosophers of his acquaintance concerning it?

L. P. 31.

Other Passages there are in the Letter, equally liable to Exception: but I delight not to dwell on these Blemishes, or to make the worst and most invidious Construction of things. My chief Business was to prove, that the Doctrine deliver'd in my Sermon was neither New, nor Unscriptural, nor in it self false and pernicious: and having, I hope, effectually made good what I undertook in these respects, I shall not be solicitous to enquire into the peculiar Articles of this Writer's Creed, or even to dive into the secret Springs and Motives that set him a Work.

He Solemnly disclaims any Uneasiness conceiv'd at the Character given of Mr. Bennet, or any desire of less

lessening mine*. If his Professions be real, it will puzzle * p. 2.
 him to give a good account, why he took occasion from
 my Sermon to vent his Thoughts on this Argument.
 How come I to be singled out from that Crowd of Wri-
 ters, who have all along maintain'd the same Doctrine?
 Why must he particularly represent Me, as putting
 Pleas into the Mouths of Licentious Persons †, for † L. p.
 saying That, which hath been so often already said by 25.
 Men of Learning, and Judgment, and Virtue, with-
 out incurring the Reproach either of their own times, or
 of those that followed? But (which is worst of all) why
 are these Positions charg'd upon Me, as their sole Au-
 thor and Inventer; and the Reader led into a Belief
 that they were never before seriously maintain'd by
 any Person of Virtue and Understanding *.

These are such manifest Indications of Insincerity 19.
 and Malice, as all his grave Pretences of Concern
 for the Cause of Virtue will not cover, or elude. If,
 after all, he pleads Ignorance, for his Excuse; since
 I have shewn him his foul Mistakes and injurious Mis-
 representations, it will become him publickly to own
 and retract them; and I now call upon him, in my turn,
 to do it. If he doth not, they will lie heavy upon him
 in another World, to whomsoever he may have
 recommended himself, in This, by the means of
 them.

After I had finished this Preface, and a great part of
 it was printed, there came to my Hands an Assize-
 Sermon, preach'd lately in the Cathedral at Winche-
 ster, by Mr. Richard West, Prebendary of that
 Church. He hath, I find, stept a little out of his way,
 to give his peremptory Opinion in the Points controver-
 ted between me and the Letter-Writer; and withal to

prove himself no competent Judge of them. For, after affirming that the PRACTICE of Christian Virtues, though we set aside the Consideration of a future Reward, HAVE a fairer Title to present Happiness, than their contrary Vices (which is, better Divinity than Grammar) he proceeds to say, Nor does it appear that the Pharisees themselves ever deny'd it, THO' a Notion hath been invented of late, that prefers Brutish Pleasures (for the more Brutish, it seems, the more preferable) to those of Religion. Serm. p. 7. 8, *It is a shrewd remark, which this Sagacious Writer here makes, that, though a Notion hath been invented of late, Yet it doth not appear that the Pharisees of old had the same Notions; He might with as great acuteness of Judgment have observ'd, that the Art of Printing doth not appear to have been known to the Ancients, tho' it hath been invented since their times. But, to pass by this judicious Observation—if Mr. West pleases to read over my Sermon, and this Preface, he will easily see, that he hath mistaken my Notion, of which he here gives a very injurious Account, in very unseemly Language; to say no worse of it. He is still more mistaken in thinking That to be a late Invention of mine, which hath been asserted by so many Pious and Eminent Pens of our Own, and other Communions; to whose Sentiments a Man, that professes to dedicate himself to the Study of Divinity, ought not to have been altogether a Stranger. And I am very apt to think also, that he hath, in this Paragraph, mistaken the Pharisees for the Sadducees. The Sadducees, indeed, set aside the Consideration of a future Reward, and yet pretended to support the Practice of Virtue upon the foot of Present Happiness, as Epicurus likewise did, from whom*

they

they are sometimes call'd Epicureans, in the Jewish Writings. Neither Epicurus, nor Zadock declar'd openly for Vice and Immorality, though they denied a Future State; but held Happiness to be attainable in this Life by our own Conduct and Virtues. But it no ways appears that the Pharisees had any such Notions, or Disputes as these stirring amongst them, or any Occasion to deliver their Opinion about the Title, which the Practice of Virtue hath to present Happiness, setting aside the Consideration of a future Reward: And why, therefore, their Authority should be vouch'd to this Purpose, I do by no means comprehend.

Much less can I imagine, why a JEWISH Sect [whether of Pharisees, or Sadducees] should be represented, as delivering their Judgment about the Consequence of practicing CHRISTIAN Virtues; a Point, in which they had as little reason to concern themselves, as Mr. West hath to interpose in this Dispute, unless he were better acquainted with the true State, and Grounds of it, and with the Opinions of those who have gone before him in the Argument. I hope, this was not one of the Correct Passages, which Mr. Jervoise, and the other Gentlemen had in their View, when they desir'd him to print his most excellent Sermon.——Of which I am tempted to say somewhat more, but shall forbear; having, I hope, sufficiently prevented whatever this Gentleman hath said, or can say, against any part of my Doctrine. And some Attacks are so harmless, that nothing but a Defence can make them Considerable.

What gave rise to this Civil Digression of Mr. W. and at whose Shrine he offer'd his Incense, is too plain to

admit of any Doubt ; and carries in it a Reflection, so much to the disadvantage of Religion, that, could it possibly be conceal'd, I should think my self oblig'd to pass it over in Silence. How must it afflict good Men, to consider, that our unhappy Disputes, about Rights and Privileges, should spread themselves into Points, of a Foreign Nature, and of the most Sacred Importance ; and be pers'u'd to the very Horns of the Altar, without any regard to the Interests of our Common Christianity ! What ! can we not differ about Adjournments, without differing also about the Evidences of a Future State ; and managing our Contests on that Head, in such a manner, as even to take part with, and make Sport for Unbelievers ? Are these the blessed Effects of that Moderation and Temper, of which we have heard so much in some Men's Writings, and seen so little in their Practices ? How long shall the best Words in the World be thus perversly applied to the worst Purposes ; and made use of to cover, and advance Designs, widely distant from our specious Preterensions ! Can we look upon it, as one Instance of that most amiable Virtue, To stand by cool and unconcern'd for the great Truths of Religion ? neither to defend them our Selves, nor yet suffer them to be defended by Others ? and, when we chance to spy an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of our Brethren, to be so far from avenging the Wrong, as to encourage and assist the Doer of it ? What is this, but to imitate the wicked Policy of our worst Enemy, which we have so often complain'd of ? For how Eloquent have some Men been in their Invektives against a Neighbouring Prince (the subject of their Panegyricks on some other Occasions) for making scandalous Leagues with Mahometans, and attacking Christians in Conjunction with the great Enemies a

Christendom ?

Christendome? *And is Their Conduct less liable to Reproach, who are not asham'd to espouse the Cause even of Infidelity it self, rather than miss an Opportunity of expressing their Resentments against Men they do not like, and of keeping up their Little Party-Interests, and Quarrels? When Popery was at our Doors in a late Reign; did we take This way of keeping it out? And are Atheism and Deism less dreadful in themselves? or are We now in less Danger of being overrun with them? In God's Name, if we cannot agree in other things, let us unite at least in an equal Zeal for those Capital Doctrines, which we all equally embrace, and are alike concern'd to maintain: Nor let our Personal Views, and Prejudices (if we will not be persuaded to part with them) ever lead us to do any thing, that may expose Religion it self to the Laughter and Scorn of Profane Men, who shoot out the Lip, and shake the Head, saying, Aha! So we would have it.*

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

SERM. I. **T**HE Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving.

Psal. l. 14. Offer unto God Thanksgiving.
pag. 1

SERM. II. The Power of Charity to Cover Sin.
I St. Peter iv. 8. *Charity shall Cover the
Multitude of Sins.* p. 33

SERM. III. IV. The Miraculous Propagation of the Gospel.

*Isaiah. lx. 22. A Little one shall become a
Thousand; and a small one, a strong Na-
tion: I the Lord, will hasten it in his time.*
p. 77

SERM. V. A Scorner incapable of true Wisdom.

*Prov. xiv. 6. A Scorner seeketh Wisdom, and
findeth it not.* p. 145

SERM. VI. A Discourse occasioned by the Death of the Lady Cutts.

*Eccles. vii. 2. It is better to go to the House
of Mourning, than to go to the House of
Feasting: for that is the End of all Men,
and the Living will lay it to Heart.*

p. 173
The

The Contents.

SERM. VII. The Wisdom of Providence manifested in the Revolutions of Government.

Ezek. xxxvii. 3. And he said unto me, Son of Man, can these Bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest. p.209

SERM. VIII. The Duty of Publick Intercession and Thanksgiving for Princes.

I Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3. I Exhort that, first of all, Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks be made for all Men; for Kings, and all that are in Authority; that We may lead a Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godliness and Honesty: For this is Good and Acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

p.266

SERM. IX. The Rule of Doing as we would be done unto, explain'd.

St. Matth. vii. 12. All things, whatsoever Ye would that Men should do unto You, do Ye even so unto them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.

p. 266

SERM. X. Of Religious Retirement.

St. Matth. xiv. 23. When he had sent the Multitude away, he went up into a Mountain, apart, to Pray.

p.301

SERM. XI. A standing Revelation the best Means of Conviction.

St. Luke

The Contents.

St. Luke xvi. 31. *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perswaded, though one rose from the Dead.* p. 327

SERM. XII. A Sermon preach'd at the Funeral of Mr. Thomas Bennet.

I Cor. xv. 19. *If in this Life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable.* p. 365

SERM. XIII. A Sermon Preach'd at the Election of the Lord-Mayor.

Job xxix. 14. *I put on Righteousness, and it clothed me; my Judgment was as a Robe and a Diadem.* p. 401

SERM. XIV. A Sermon Preach'd before the Lord-Mayor, on a Day of Publick Humiliation.

Psal. xxx. 6, 7, 8. *In my Prosperity I said, I shall never be moved: Lord, by thy favour Thou hast made my Mountain to stand strong. Thou didst hide thy Face, and I was troubled, I cryed unto Thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made my Supplication.* p. 429

E R R A T A.

PREF. p. xxiv. at the bottom, *lin. 1.* for *μνδνμια τ;*
μνδνμια.

The Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving.

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

Q U E E N

A T

W H I T E - H A L L .

M A Y 29. 1692.

P S A L. L. 14.

Offer unto God Thanksgiving.

Among the many Excellencies of this pious Collection of Hymns, for which so particular a Value hath been set upon it by the Church of God in all Ages, this is not the least, that the true Price of Duties is there justly stated; men are call'd off from

B

resting

resting in the outward Shew of Religion, in Ceremonies and Ritual Observances; and taught rather to practise (that which was shadow'd out by these Rites, and to which they were design'd to lead) sound inward Vertue, and Piety.

The several Composers of these Hymns were *Prophets*; Persons, whose business it was, not only to foretel Events, for the benefit of the Church in succeeding times, but to correct and reform also what was amiss in that Race of Men, with whom they liv'd and convers'd; to preserve a foolish People from Idolatry, and false Worship; to rescue the Law from corrupt Glosses, and superstitious Abuses; and to put Men in mind of (what they were so willing to forget) that Eternal and Invariable Rule, which was before these *Positive* Duties, would continue after them, and was to be observ'd even Then in preference to them.

The discharge, I say, of this part of the Prophetick Office taking up so much room in the book of *Psalms*; this hath been one reason, among many others, why they have been always so highly esteem'd; because we are from hence furnish'd with a proper Reply to an Ar-
gument

gument commonly made use of by Unbelievers; who look upon All Reveal'd Religions, as Pious Frauds, and Impostures, on the account of the Prejudices they have entertain'd in relation to That of the *Jews*: the whole of which they first suppose to lie in External Performances, and then easily persuade themselves, that God could never be the Author of such a mere piece of Pageantry, and empty Formality; nor delight in a Worship which consisted purely in a Number of wild and unaccountable Ceremonies. Which Objection of theirs we should not be able throughly to answer, unless we could prove (chiefly out of the *Psalms*, and other parts of the Prophetick Writings) that the Jewish Religion was somewhat more than bare Outside and Shew; and that Inward Purity, and the Devotion of the Heart was a Duty Then, as well as Now. One great Instance of this Proof we have in the words now before us; which are taken from a Psalm of *Asaph*, written on purpose to set out the Weakness and Worthlessness of External Performances, when compar'd with more Substantial and Vital Duties. To enforce which Doctrine, God himself is brought in, as delivering

The Duty of Praise

it. *Hear, O my People, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.* The Preface is very solemn; and, therefore, what it ushers in, we may be sure, is of no common Importance. *I will not reprove thee for thy Sacrifices, or thy Burnt-Offerings, to have been continually before me.* That is, I will not So reprove thee for any failures in thy Sacrifices and Burnt-Offerings, as if These were the Only, or the Chief Things I requir'd of thee. *I will take no Bullock out of thy house, nor He-goat out of thy folds.* I prescrib'd not Sacrifices to thee, for my Own sake, 'because I needed them: *For every Beast of the Forest is Mine, and the Cattel upon a thousand Hills:* Mine they are, and were, before ever I commanded thee to offer them to Me; so that (as it follows) *If I were hungry, yet would I not tell thee; for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof.* But can ye be so gross and senseless, as to think me liable to Hunger and Thirst? as to imagine that wants of That kind can touch me? *Will I eat the Flesh of Bulls, or drink the Blood of Goats?* ---- Thus doth he expostulate severely with them, after the most graceful manner of the Eastern Poetry. The Issue of which is, a plain and full Resolution

lution of the Case, in those few words of the Text. --- *Offer unto God Thanksgiving.* Would you do your Homage in the most agreeable way? would you render the most acceptable of Services? *Offer unto God Thanksgiving.*

The Use I intend to make of these Words is, from hence to raise some Thoughts about that very excellent and important Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving: A Subject, not unfit to be discours'd of, at this Time; whether we consider, either the more than ordinary Coldness that appears of late in mens tempers towards the practice of this (or any other) part of a warm and affecting Devotion; the Great Occasion of setting aside this particular Day in the Kalendar, some years ago; or the New Instances of mercy and goodness, which God hath lately been pleas'd to bestow upon us: answering at last the many *Prayers* and *Fastings*, by which we have besought him so long for the Establishment of their Majesties Throne, and for the Success of their Arms; and giving us, in his own good time, an Opportunity of appearing before him in the more delightful part of our Duty, *with the voice* Ps. xlii. 4.

The Duty of Praise

of Joy and Praise, with a multitude that keep Holy-days.

Offer unto God Thanksgiving ----- Which that we may do, let us enquire first, how we are to *Understand* this Command of Offering Praise and Thanksgiving unto God; and then how *Reasonable* it is, that we should Comply with it.

Our Enquiry into what is *meant* here, will be very short: for who is there, that understands any thing of Religion, but knows, that the offering Praise and Thanks to God implies, our having a lively and devout Sense of his Excellencies, and of his Benefits; our recollecting them with Humility and Thankfulness of heart; and our expressing these Inward Affections by suitable Outward Signs; by reverent and lowly Postures of Body, by Songs, and Hymns, and Spiritual Ejaculations; either Privately, or Publickly; either in the Customary and Daily Service of the Church, or in it's more Solemn Assemblies, conven'd upon Extraordinary Occasions? This is the Account, which every Christian easily gives himself of it; and which, therefore, it would be needless to enlarge upon. I shall only take
notice

notice on this head, That Praise and Thanksgiving do, in strictness of Speech, signifie things somewhat different. Our *Praise* properly terminates in God, on the account of his natural Excellencies and Perfections; and is that Act of Devotion by which we confess and admire his several Attributes: but *Thanksgiving* is a narrower Duty, and Imports only a grateful Sense and Acknowledgment of past Mercies. We Praise God for All his glorious Acts, of every kind, that regard either Us, or Other men; for his very *Vengeance*, and those *Judgments* which he sometimes sends *abroad in the Earth*: but we Thank him (properly speaking) for the Instances of his *Goodness* alone; and for Such only of these as We our selves are some way concern'd in. This, I say, is what the two words strictly imply: but since the Language of Scripture is generally less exact, and useth Either of them often to express the Other by; I shall not think my self oblig'd, in what follows, thus nicely always to distinguish them.

Now the great *Reasonableness* of this Duty of Praise or Thanksgiving, and our several *Obligations* to it will appear; if

we either consider it *absolutely* in it self, as the Debt of our Natures; or *compare* it with other Duties, and shew the Rank it bears among them; or set out, in the last place, some of it's peculiar *Properties* and *Advantages*. with regard to the devout Performer of it.

I. I. The Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving, consider'd *absolutely* in itself, is, I say, the Debt, and Law of our Nature. We had such Faculties bestow'd on us by our Creator, as made us capable of satisfying this Debt, and obeying this Law; and they never, therefore, work more naturally and freely than when they are thus employ'd.

'Tis one of the earliest Instructions given us by Philosophy, and which hath ever since been approv'd and inculcated by the wisest men of all Ages, That the Original Design of making Man was, that he might Praise and Honour Him who made him. When God had finish'd this goodly Frame of things, we call *the World*, and put together the several parts of it, according to his infinite Wisdom, in exact Number, Weight, and Measure; there was still wanting
a Crea-

a Creature in these lower Regions, that could apprehend the Beauty, Order, and exquisite Contrivance of it ; that, from contemplating the Gift, might be able to raise it self up to the great Giver, and do Honour to all his Attributes. Every thing indeed that God made, did, in some sense, glorifie its Author, inasfinuch as it carried upon it the plain Mark and Impress of the Deity, and was an Effect worthy of that first Cause from whence it flow'd ; and Thus might the *Heavens* be said, at the first moment in which they stood forth, *to declare his Glory, and* Pl. xix. 1. *the Firmament to shew his Handy-work* : but this was an imperfect, and defective Glory ; the Sign was of no signification here Below, whilst there was no one here as yet to take notice of it. Man, therefore, was form'd to supply this want ; endu'd with Powers fit to find out, and to acknowledge these unlimited Perfections ; and then put into this Temple of God, this Lower World, as the Priest of Nature, to offer up the Incense of Thanks and Praise for the mute and the insensible Part of the Creation.

This, I say, hath been the Opinion all along of the most thoughtful Men, down from

from the most ancient Times: And tho' it be not Demonstrative, yet is it what we cannot but judge highly reasonable, if we do but allow, that Man was made for some End, or other; and that he is capable of perceiving that End. For then, let us search and enquire never so much, we shall find no Other Account of him that we can rest upon so well. If we say, That he was made purely for the good Pleasure of God; this is, in effect, to say, that he was made for no Determinate End; or for none, at least, that We can discern. If we say, That he was design'd as an Instance of the Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness of God; This indeed may be the Reason of his *Being* in general; for 'tis the common Reason of the Being of every thing besides. But it gives no account, why he was made *such* a Being as he is, a reflecting, thoughtful, inquisitive Being: the particular Reason of this seems most aptly to be drawn from the Praise and Honour that was (not only to redound to God from him, but) to be given to God by him.

This Duty, therefore, is the Debt and Law of our Nature. And it will more distinctly appear to be such, if we consider

sider the two Ruling Faculties of our Mind, the *Understanding*, and the *Will*, apart; in both which it is deeply founded: in the Understanding, as in the Principle of Reason, which owns and acknowledges it; in the Will, as in the Fountain of Gratitude and Return, which prompts, and even constrains us to pay it.

Reason was given us as a Rule and Measure, by the help of which we were to proportion our Esteem of every thing, according to the Degrees of Perfection and Goodness which we found therein. It cannot, therefore, if it doth it's Office at all, but apprehend God as the best and most perfect being; it must needs see, and own, and admire his infinite Perfections. And this is what is strictly meant by *Praise*: which, therefore, is express'd in Scripture by *confessing* to God, and *acknowledging* him; by *ascribing* to him what is his Due: and, as far as This Sense of the word reaches, 'tis impossible to *think* of God without praising him. For it depends not on the Understanding how it shall apprehend things, any more than it doth on the Eye, how Visible Objects shall appear to it.

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The Duty takes a farther and surer hold of us, by the means of our *Will*, and that strong bent towards *Gratitude*, which the Author of our Nature hath implanted in it. There is not a more active Principle than This in the Mind of Man: and, surely that which deserves its utmost Force, and should set all it's Springs awork, is God; the Great and Universal Benefactor, from whom alone we receiv'd whatever we either have, or are; and to whom we can possibly repay nothing but our Praises, or (to speak more properly on this Head, and according to the strict Import of the Word) our Thanksgivings. *Who hath first given to God (saith the great Apostle, in his usual Figure) and it shall be recompenced unto him again? A Gift, it seems, always requires a Recompence: Nay, but of him, and through him, and to him are all things; Of him, as the Author; Through him, as the Preserver and Governour; To him, as the End and Perfection of all things: to whom, therefore, (as it follows) be Glory for ever, Amen!*

Rom. xi.
35, 36.

Gratitude consists in an equal Return of Benefits, if we are able; or of Thanks, if we are not: which Thanks, therefore, must rise always in Proportion as the
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Favours receiv'd are great, and the Receiver incapable of making any other Sort of Requital. Now, since no Man hath benefitted God, at any time, and yet every Man, in each Moment of his Life, is continually benefitted by him; what strong Obligations must we needs be under to Thank him? 'Tis true, our Thanks are really as insignificant to Him, as any other Kind of Return would be: in themselves indeed they are worthless; but his Goodness hath put a Value upon them: He hath declar'd, he will accept them, in lieu of the vast Debt we owe: and, after that, which is fittest for us, to dispute how they come to be taken as an *Equivalent*, or to pay them?

It is, therefore, the Voice of Nature (as far as Gratitude it self is so) that the Good Things, we receive from above, should be sent back again thither in Thanks and Praises, *as the Rivers run into the Sea; to the Place (the Ocean of Beneficence) from whence the Rivers come, thither should they return again.* Eccl. i. 7.

II. We have consider'd the Duty *absolutely*; we are now to *compare* it with Others, and to see what Rank it bears among them. And here we shall find, that,

II.

that, among all the Acts of Religion, immediately address'd to God, This is much the Noblest, and most Excellent; as it must needs be, if what hath been laid down be allow'd, that the End of Man's Creation was, to praise and glorifie God. For That cannot but be the most noble and excellent Act of any Being, which best answers the End and Design of it. Other parts of Devotion, such as *Confession* and *Prayer*, seem not Originally to have been design'd for Man, nor Man for Them: they imply *Guilt*, and *Want*, with which the *State of Innocence* was not acquainted. Had Man continu'd in that Estate, his Worship (like the Devotions of Angels) had been paid to Heaven in pure Acts of Thanksgiving; and nothing had been left for him to do, beyond the enjoying the Good things of Life, as Nature directed, and praising the God of Nature who bestow'd them. But being fallen from Innocence, and Abundance; having contracted Guilt, and forfeited his Right to all sorts of Mercies; Prayer and Confession became necessary for a time, to retrieve the Loss, and restore him to that State, wherein he should be able to live without them. These are fitted, therefore, for a lower Dispensation; before which,

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in Paradise, there was nothing but Praise, and after which, there shall be nothing but that, in Heaven. Our perfect State did at first, and will at last consist in the Performance of this Duty; and herein, therefore, lies the Excellence and the Honour of our Nature.

'Tis the same way of Reasoning, by which the Apostle hath given the preference to Charity, beyond Faith, and Hope, and every Spiritual Gift. *Charity* 1 Cor. xiii. 8, *never faileth*, saith he; meaning, that it is not a Vertue useful only in This Life, but will accompany us also into the Next: *but whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away:* these are Gifts of a Temporary Advantage, and shall all perish in the using. *For we know in part,* ver. 9; *and we prophesie in part:* Our present State is imperfect; and, therefore, what belongs to That, and only That, must be imperfect too. *But when that which is Perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.* ver. 10. The Argument of St. Paul, we see, which sets Charity above the rest of Christian Graces, will give Praise also the Pre-eminence over all other Parts of Christian Worship; and we may
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conclude Our reasoning, therefore, as He doth His: *And now abideth Confession, Prayer; and Praise, these three; but the greatest of these is Praise.*

It is so, certainly, on other Accounts, as well as this; particularly, as it is the most *disinterested* branch of our Religious Service; such as hath the most of God, and the least of our Selves in it, of any we pay; and therefore approaches the nearest of any to a pure, and free, and perfect Act of Homage. For, though a good Action doth not grow immediately worthless by being done with the Prospect of Advantage, as Some have strangely imagin'd; yet it will be allow'd, I suppose, that its being done without the Mixture of that End, or with as little of it as is possible, recommends it so much the more, and raises the Price of it. *Doth Job fear God for nought?* was an Objection of Satan, which imply'd, that those Duties were most valuable, where our own Interest was least aim'd at: And God seems, by the Commission he then gave Satan to try Experiments upon *Job*, thus far to have allow'd his Plea. Now, our Requests for future, and even our Acknowledgments of past Mercies centre purely in our selves; our own Interest is the

Job i. 9.

the direct Aim of them. But Praise is a generous and unmercenary Principle, which proposes no other End to it self, but to do, as is fit for a Creature endow'd with such Faculties to do, towards the most perfect and beneficent of Beings; and to pay the willing Tribute of Honour there, where the Voice of Reason directs us to pay it. God hath indeed annex'd a Blessing to the Duty; and when we know this, we cannot chuse, while we are performing the Duty, but have some Regard to the Blessing which belongs to it. However, that is not the direct Aim of our Devotions, nor was it the first Motive that stirr'd us up to them. Had it been so, we should naturally have betaken our selves to Prayer, and breath'd out our Desires in That Form wherein they are most properly convey'd.

In short, Praise is our most Excellent Work; a Work common to the Church Triumphant and Militant, and which lifts us up into a Communion and Fellowship with Angels. The Matter, about which it is conversant, is always the Perfections of God's Nature; and the Act it self is the Perfection of Ours.

III. I come now, in the last place, to set out some of its peculiar *Properties and Advantages*, which recommend it to the Devout Performer. And,

1st, It is the most *pleasing* part of our Devotions. It proceeds always from a Lively Chearful Temper of Mind; and it cherishes, and improves what it proceeds from. *For it is good to sing Praises unto our God*, (says one, whose Experience in this Case, we may rely upon) *for it is pleasant, and Praise is comely*. Petition and Confession are the Language of the Indigent, and the Guilty; the breathings of a sad and a contrite Spirit: *Is any afflicted? let him pray: but, is any merry? let him sing Psalms*. The most usual and natural way of mens expressing the Mirth of their Hearts, is, in a Song: and Songs are the very Language of Praise; to the expressing of which they are in a peculiar manner appropriated, and are scarce of any other Use in Religion. Indeed, the whole Composition of this Duty is such, as throughout speaks Ease and Delight to the Mind. It proceeds from *Love*, and from *Thankfulness*; from *Love*, the Fountain of Pleasure, the Passion, which gives every

ps. cxlvii.

2.

ames v.

23.

every thing we do, or enjoy, its Relish and Agreeableness. From *Thankfulness*, which involves in it the Memory of past Benefits; the actual Presence of them to the Mind, and the repeated Enjoyment of them. And as its *Principle* is, such is its *End* also. For it procureth Quiet and Ease to the Mind, by doing somewhat towards satisfying that Debt which it labours under; by delivering it of those Thoughts of Praise and Gratitude, those Exultations it is so full of; and which would grow uneasie and troublesome to it, if they were kept in. If the Thankful *refrain'd*; it would be *Pain and Grief to them*: but then, then is their *Soul satisfy'd as with Marrow and Fatness*, when their Mouth *praiseth God with Joyful Lips*.

Ps. lxxiii 5.

2. It is another distinguishing Property of Divine Praise, that it enlargeth the Powers and Capacities of our Souls; turning them from little and low things, upon their Greatest and Noblest Object, the Divine Nature; and employing them in the Discovery and Admiration of those several Perfections that adorn it. We see, what difference there is between Man and Man; such; as there is hardly greater between Man

The Duty of Praise

and Beast: And this proceeds chiefly from the different Sphere of thought which they act in, and the different Objects they converse with. The Mind is Essentially the same in the Peasant and the Prince; the forces of it naturally equal in the untaught man, and the Philosopher: only the One of these is busied in mean Affairs, and within narrower Bounds, the Other exercises himself in things of weight and moment; and This it is that puts the wide distance between them. Noble Objects are to the Mind, what the Sunbeams are to a Bud, or Flower: They open and unfold, as it were, the Leaves of it; put it upon exerting and spreading it self every way; and call forth all those Powers, that lie hid and lock'd up in it: The Praise and Admiration of God, therefore, brings this Advantage along with it; that it sets our Faculties upon their full Stretch, and improves them to all the Degrees of Perfection, of which they are capable.

3. It, farther, promotes in us an exquisite Sense of God's Honour, and an high Indignation of mind at every thing that openly profanes it. For what we value and delight in, we cannot with

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Patience hear slighted, or abus'd. Our Own Praises, which we are constantly putting up, will be a *Spur* to us toward procuring and promoting the Divine Glory in every Other instance; and will make us set our Faces against all open and avow'd Impieties. Which, methinks, should be consider'd a little by such as would be thought not to be wanting in this Duty, and yet are often silent under the foulest dishonours done to Religion, and its great Author. For, tamely to hear God's Name and Worship vilify'd by Others, is no very good Argument, that we have been us'd to Honour and Reverence him in good earnest, Our selves.

4. It will, beyond all this, work in us a deep Humility, and Conscioufness of our own Imperfections. Upon a frequent Attention to God and his Attributes, we shall easily discover our own Weakness and Emptiness; Our swelling thoughts of ourselves will abate, and we shall see and feel, that we *are altogether lighter, to be laid in the bal-* p. 1
lance, than Vanity. And This is a Lesson, which, to the greatest part of Mankind, is, I think, very well worth learning. We are naturally Presumptuous and

Vain; full of Ourselves, and regardless of every thing besides: Especially, when some little Outward Priviledges distinguish Us from the rest of Mankind; then, 'tis odds, but we look into Ourselves with great degrees of Complacency; and are *wiser* (and better every way) *in our own Concept* than *seven Men, that can render a Reason*. Now nothing will contribute so much to the Cure of this Vanity as a due Attention to God's Excellencies, and Perfections: by comparing These with Those which, we imagine, belong to us, we shall learn, *not to think of our selves more highly than we ought to think of our selves, but to think soberly*; We shall find more satisfaction in looking upwards, and humbling our selves before our common Creator, than in casting our eyes downwards with Scorn upon our Fellow-Creatures, and setting at nought any part of the Work of his Hands. The vast distance we are at from Real and Infinite Worth will astonish us so much, that we shall not be tempted to value Our selves upon those lesser Degrees of Pre-eminence, which Custom, or Opinion, or some little accidental Advantages have given Us over other Men.

Prov.xxvi.
16.

Rom. xii.
3.

5. I shall mention but one Use of it more, and 'tis This; That a conscientious Praise of God will keep Us back from all false and mean Praises, all Ful-som and Servile Flatteries, such as are in use among Men. Praising, as 'tis commonly manag'd, is nothing else but a Tryal of Skill upon a Man, how many good Things we can possibly say of him. All the Treasuries of Oratory are ranfack'd, all the fine things that ever were said are heap'd together, for his sake; and No matter, whether it belongs to him, or not; so there be but enough on't. Which is one deplorable Instance, among a thousand, of the Baseness of humane Nature, it's small regard to Truth and Justice; to Right, or Wrong; to what is, or is not to be prais'd. But He, who hath a deep Sense of the Excellencies of God upon his Heart, will make a God of nothing besides. He will give every One his just Encomium, Honour where Honour is due, and as much as is due; because it is his Duty to do so: but the Honour of God will suffer him to go no farther. Which Rule, if it had been observ'd, a Neighbouring Prince, (who now, God be thanked, needs Flattery

somewhat more than ever he did) would have wanted a great deal of that Incense which hath been offered up to him by his Adorers.

Upon these Grounds doth the Duty of Praise stand, and these are the Obligations that bind us to the Performance of it. 'Tis the End of our Being, and the very Rule and Law of Our Nature; flowing from the Two great Fountains of humane Action, the Understanding and the Will, naturally; and almost necessarily. It is the most Excellent part of our Religious Worship; enduring to Eternity, after the rest shall be *done away*; and pay'd even Now in the frankest manner, with the least regard to our own Interest. It recommends it self to us by several peculiar Properties, and Advantages; as it carries more Pleasure in it, than all other Kinds of Devotion; as it enlarges and exalts the several Powers of the Mind; as it breeds in us an exquisite Sense of God's Honour, and a Willingness to promote it in the World: as it teaches us to be Humble and Lowly Our selves; and yet preserves us from base and for-

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did Flattery, from bestowing mean and undue Praises upon Others.

IV. I shall now shut up the Arguing part of this Discourse, with a short Application to Two sorts of Persons; the *Careless*, and the *Profane*; One of which Neglects the Practice of so Important a Duty, the Other lives in an open Defiance of it.

A *Neglect* in this Case, doth certainly involve in it a very high Degree of Guilt and Folly: for 'tis (we see) the Neglect of our Duty, and Honour, our Interest, and our Pleasure, all at once. 'Tis to omit doing that, which we were purposely sent into the World to do; and without doing which, all the other Affairs of Life are but one continued Impertinence: That, which we have so many Obligations to do, and no Excuse for leaving undone; since Praise is within every Man's Reach; there is no one but hath it in his Power, to be Thankful.

God commanded the *Jews* to acknowledge his Sovereignty and Beneficence, by Sacrifices; a Costly and a Troublesome way of Worship. Of Us he requires only the Cheap and Easie Offering of Our
Thanks

Thanks and Praises ---- and shall we not pay it? Alas! we do not! Every thing proves an hindrance to us in the way to this our Bounden Duty and Service: We are too idle, or too busie to attend upon it. And even when we find Leisure enough; yet how cold and how insensible are we, whilst 'tis going forward! *We draw nigh unto him with our Mouths, and Honour him with our Lips* (perhaps); *but our Hearts are far from him.* And do we then know, what it is to praise God becomingly? Do we remember, how the great Teacher of Thanksgiving summons up every One of his Faculties to assist him in it? *Bless the Lord*
 Matth. xv. 8. *O my Soul! and all that is within me, bless his holy Name!* 'Tis a Work that will employ *all that is within us*, will call for all the Application, and Vigor, and Warmth that we can possibly bestow upon it. Cold, and languid Praise, is no Praise; this Sacrifice can be no longer acceptable than 'tis burning.

To those Men, who live in the *Contempt* of this Duty, we have also somewhat to say, if they would but hear us. They are generally such, as pretend a high sense of the Dignity of humane Nature,

ture, and bear no small respect to their own Understandings. Now, though Other Parts of Religious Worship should happen to be too mean and low for such great Minds to take up with; yet This, methinks, might deserve to be thought Equal to them. Let Confession and Prayer go only for the Arts of Whining and Begging, and be as much beneath them as they imagine, yet surely Praise hath somewhat in it so great and so noble as may invite them to practise it. 'Tis a Subject fit for the most enlarg'd Capacities to dwell on; and such an one, as even Those would certainly find themselves rais'd and improv'd by.

If it were possible for These Men to have a Relish of any thing in this Kind, we would desire them to make the Trial; to take the Hymn, call'd *Te Deum*, into their Hands, and to read it attentively; and then tell us truly, whether they did not find their Minds fill'd, and their Affections strangely rais'd by the Images which there occur'd to them; Whether they did not perceive themselves to be somewhat above themselves, whilst they were perusing it. And these Effects, of which every Man, who joins in that Hymn,

Hymn, must be sensible, are owing to that Majestick Plainness and Simplicity of Thought which goes through it, Unadorn'd by Words, Unenliven'd by Figures! 'Tis the Matter alone which supports the Expression: And because the Matter therein contain'd, is, the Excellencies of the Divine Nature, the pure and genuine Objects of Praise, therefore is the Hymn itself so lofty and moving.

But alas! we speak in vain! The Men, who are bold enough to slight a Duty of this Rank and Character, will easily slight every thing that can be offer'd to bring them to it. All we can say to them is, that, as God made them for his Glory, so he will certainly serve the Ends of that Glory upon them; one way, or another. And, therefore, if they will not freely Praise him for his Goodness in this World, they shall surely, whether they will or no, contribute to the Praise of his Justice in the Next.

V. Thus have I attempted to *Describe* this Duty, to set out the great *Reasonableness*, and to stir You up to the *Practice* of it. And, certainly, it
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was never more reasonable, than on This Occasion, when we commemorate such Past, and feel such Present Mercies. The Restoration of the Monarchy, and of all those Blessings in Church and State, that came back with it; the Re-establishment of *the Beauty of Praise* in our Sanctuary; the Return of Peace and Plenty, of Learning, and all the Arts of Civil Life; the Reducing us from Confusion and Rage into Order and Friendliness, and making Us a Nation at Unity in it self; Lovely at home; and Terrible abroad: These were such found and substantial Blessings, as will wear well; and, though done a great while ago, will yet deserve a great while hence a Place in our Calendars. Neither Love to our Country, nor the Honour we bear to Those who Rule over Us; neither Our Gratitude to God, nor our Good-will towards Men will suffer such Wonders of Providence to slip out of our Minds; or the Day, in which they were brought about, easily to grow Old upon Us.

The Benefits, we then receiv'd, were indeed exceeding great, and would justly claim a larger share in our Present Reflections; had not the Goodness of
God

God taken off our Thoughts a little from that Subject, by calling us to the Acknowledgment of New Loving Kindnesses. For, behold, what Glorious Things the Lord hath again wrought for Us! Blessing Their Majesties Forces with a great and signal Victory over the most haughty and insolent of Enemies: A Victory, so Early, so Compleat, and so Cheaply purchas'd, that we have some Reason to hope, it may fix the Fortune of the War, and put an End to the Destructions of the Destroyer; to whom, we trust, God hath now said, as to the Sea it self, --- *Hitherto shalt Thou come, but no farther; and Here shall thy proud Waves be stay'd.*

Job
xxxviii.
11.

Blessed be God, who did not utterly cast out our Prayers, and our Supplications; but delay'd only to answer them; till a *Day of Salvation*, till an *acceptable Time*, when the Mercy would be dearer to Us, and his Goodness more remarkably seen in bestowing it! When we were alarm'd with Invasions from abroad; and Conspiracies at home; when men threatned to *swallow us up quick*; when Success was now so requisite to preserve the Honour of the Nation, to support Their Majesties Throne, and to strengthen
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the Hands of Their Allies: Then did He appear, and own Our Cause; Then was the God of Hosts our Strength, and our Shield. Surely, *There is no End of that Goodness*, which continues thus to pursue us; which vouchsafes to establish to Us, and to our Posterity those Blessings, under which we have been so unthankful, and so ingrateful already! and to give us fresh Opportunities of Praise, which I hope we shall make better use of!

Let us, therefore, *Offer unto God Thanksgiving*; and not That only, but *Our selves also, our Souls and Bodies, to be a Reasonable, Holy, and Lively Sacrifice*: Let us render him the Fruit of our Lips, and the Obedience of our Lives, that these Blessings may not prove a Curse to us; but that He may still be Our God, and we may be His People.

To him, with the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, Praise and Glory, henceforth and for Evermore. Amen.

The Power of Charity to Cover Sin.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

President and Governours

Of the HOSPITALS of

Bridewell and Bethlehem,

I N

BRIDEWELL-CHAPEL,

AUGUST 16. 1694.

I St. *PETER* iv. 8.

Charity shall Cover the multitude of Sins.

GOD be thanked; the frequent Returns of such Pious Meetings as these, in this Rich and Charitable CITY, have made the General Argument of
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CHARITY, the Nature and Chief Properties, the several Grounds and Reasons of this Duty so well understood, that, to Entertain You with a Discourse at large on that Subject, would be a very needless and useless Attempt. So many Eminent Pens have gone before, in This Way, as have left it very difficult for those who come after either to say any thing which They *have not* said, or not to say That much worse, which They *have*.

Upon This Account; and because, indeed, I take General Discourses, for the most part, to be like Large Prospects, where the Eye is lost by the wide Compass it takes, and sees so many things at once, that it sees nothing distinctly; I have chosen at present to point Your Thoughts only on One Particular Property of this Great Vertue, which hath been not often handled, I think; and even Then, not always well understood: It is That which the Apostle St. Peter proposeth to Us in those few words I have read to You — *Charity shall Cover the multitude of Sins.*

Few as they are, they will sufficiently employ our Thoughts at this time, if we consider, in the *First*

First place, the several Explications that have been given of them, and satisfie our selves, which of These ought to take place. If,

I.

Secondly, We free That One True Genuine Meaning of the Words from the Exceptions which lye against it. If,

II.

Thirdly, We establish the Truth laid down upon its Proper Grounds and Reasons. And if,

III:

Fourthly, We make some few useful Deductions from it.

IV.

After this is done, the little Time that is left will properly be spent in Applying what hath been said more immediately to the Occasion of This Present Assembly.

V:

Charity shall Cover the multitude of Sins.

I:

There is scarce any man, I believe, who hears these Words, that is not ready to frame to himself This Sense of them; " That the Vertue of *Charity* " is of so great price in the Sight of " God, that Those Persons, who possess " and exercise it in any Eminent manner, are peculiarly Entituled to the " Divine Favour and Pardon, with regard to numberless Slips and Failings in their Duty, which they " may

“ may be Otherwise guilty of: this
 “ Great Christian Perfection, of which
 “ they are Masters, shall make many
 “ Little Imperfections to be over-look’d
 “ and unobserv’d; it shall *Cover the mul-*
 “ *titude of Sins.*

This, I say, is the account, which every man naturally gives himself of these Words, at his first hearing them; and it is for That very Reason probable, that This is the True and Genuine account of them. For, supposing the Original Text to be well and clearly render’d in our Version, it will, I am of opinion, be found, that That Sense of any Passage, which, after attending to the Force of the Words, and to their Coherence with what goes before, and what follows, First occurs to the Mind, is generally the Justest and Truest.

This hath not however been always thought a Good Rule in the present Case. For several Pious, and some Judicious men, finding the Words, in their plain and familiar meaning, to carry somewhat of a suspicious sound with them, and to border a little (as They Thought) on the Papal Doctrine of *Works Meritorious*, have, therefore, taken some Pains to give a Different Interpretation
 of

of them. I shall offer, first, to your view some of these mistaken Senses, e'er I come to consider That which, I think, was intended by *St. Peter*; because Each of these doth certainly propose a Clear and Apposite Truth to us, tho' perhaps not truly drawn from the Passage now before us.

First, then, the Words have been understood to contain an account of that particular Instance of Charity, which we call *Good-Nature*: by which we pass by little Sights and Injuries, interpret things in the Best sense, are not apt to take, or return an Affront, not forward to publish, or believe an ill Report of any One: by which we turn our eyes always toward the Best side of a man, and chuse rather to look on his Virtues, than his Failures; and by which we constantly interpose our Good Offices, where-ever, we think, they may be Serviceable, either to the composing Old Differences, or preventing New ones.

And This Sense is grounded upon a suppos'd Relation there is between These Words in *St. Peter*, and Those in the *Proverbs*; *Hate stirreth up Strifes, but Love covereth all Sins.* Now, tho' in-
Prov. x.
12.

deed, in *Our Translation*, there is some Similitude between the words of the Text, and this Passage in the *Proverbs*; yet, as it lyes in the *Septuagint-Version* (which the Apostles made use of), it bears no such Resemblance to the Text as may make it probable that the One ought to be Expounded by the Other. On the contrary it deserves observation, that, where ever the Greek Phrase*, which is here translated by *Covering Sin*, occurs in Scripture, it constantly † signifies that Pardon of Sin which proceeds from *God*, not any Instances of Good Nature and Forgiveness exercised by *Men*.

* καλύπτει
την ἁμαρ-
τίαν.
† See Pl.
lxxxiv. 1.
Pl. xxxii.
1. and Ne-
hem. iv. 5.

We may farther observe, that This Sense of the Words is by no means full enough to bear the Weight of that emphatic and solemn Preface with which the Apostle introduces them: *but above all things* (says He, in the Words immediately before the Text) *have fervent Charity among your selves: for Charity shall Cover the multitude of Sins.* Ἐκτενῆ ἀγάπῃ, intense, or fervent Charity must signifie somewhat more than the bare Acts and Offices of *Good-Nature*. If they, to whom the Apostle wrote, were *above all things* to have *fervent Charity* among them-

themselves, it could not be for This Reason, because Charity would render them inoffensive towards Others, and not easie to be offended Themselves. For tho' This be a commendable Degree of Vertue, and very fit to be enjoyn'd, because not frequently practis'd; yet can it not deserve that peculiar Emphasis and Strefs which is here laid upon it. Especially, if we consider it as succeeding the mention of those more important and necessary Duties, to which the Apostle exhorts them in the preceding Verse, the *being sober, and watching unto Prayer*: Above all which, it cannot be suppos'd, that the Duty of conversing with one another according to the Rules of *Good-Nature and Gentleness* should be enjoyn'd.

The Words, therefore, have, in the *Second* place, been thus also interpreted. *Charity shall Cover the multitude of Sins*, that is, says the excellent *Grotius*, it will have a mighty Influence towards reclaiming Sinners from the Error of their Ways; the Consequence of which is, That the Sins of Men thus reclaim'd, are pardon'd, or cover'd. Charity, which is an exalted Love of God and our

The Power of Charity

Neighbour, will make us industrious in procuring Glory to the One, by the Salvation of the Other. It will create a mighty Zeal for the Interests of Vertue, and the Honour of the Gospel, and the Good of Souls; and it will run through all the Difficulties that lie in the way towards so good an End, with Readiness and Pleasure. It will not be frighten'd from making Attempts even on Those of the first Rank in Wickedness, the Worst and most Hardned of Men; because it knows, that *Their* Revolt from Sin to Vertue (if it can be compass'd) will be of mighty Consequence to Religion, and will probably draw whole Troops of Common Sinners along with it: The Sense they have of their Own Sins being cover'd, will make *Them* also eager, in their turn, to cover those of Other Men.

This is a very Good and Pious Sense of the Words, but (I believe, it will be allow'd me) no very Easie and Natural One: they must be rack'd e'er they can be brought to confess This Meaning. However it was what that Learned Person was led into by a former Explication he had made of a Parallel place in *St. James*; which I shall
crave

crave leave to produce at length, and to comment upon, because I take it to be the *Key* of the Text, which easily and readily lets us into the True sense of it. Brethren (says St. James, at the Conclusion of his Epistle) *if any One of You* James v. 19, 20. *do Err from the Truth, and One Convert him, let him know, that he which converteth a Sinner from the Error of his ways, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins.* He intended to shut up his Epistle with recommending to them One of the most important and useful Vertues, That of endeavouring the Conversion and Reformation of Men. And he intended also to stir them up to the Exercise of this Vertue by the most powerful Motives he could propose: What are they? Why, first, That *He who converteth a Sinner from the Error of his ways, should consider, that he saveth a Soul from Death; and then, secondly, and chiefly, That he shall [also] cover a multitude of Sins.* Whose Sins? Those of the Converted Person? Nay, but That was already said, and much more than that in the foregoing Motive, *He shall save a Soul from Death*: for surely the saving a Soul from Death, necessarily includes and presupposes

supposes the Remission of it's Sins. It must then be meant of His Sins who makes, and not of His who becomes, the Convert: And Thus indeed this Last Clause carries a New Motive in it, distinct from That in the Former; and such an One as riseth beyond it, and more sensibly toucheth those to whom it is address'd; and was therefore fit to be propos'd in the Last place, and to be left, as a Sting, in their Minds. 'Tis as if St. *James* had said more at length,

“ Let such an one know, that He shall,
 “ by This Means, not *only* save a Soul
 “ from Death, (though This it self be
 “ a very Great and Desirable Thing) but
 “ shall *also* (which more nearly concerns
 “ him) secure to himself on this account
 “ the Pardon of many Sins.

Now the Words of St. *James* here explain'd, are exactly the same with those of St. *Peter*, in my Text; and the Occasion upon which they are introduc'd, and their dependence on the Context is much the same in both Places; except only that they are used in my Text as a Motive to Charity in general, but in St. *James*, with regard only to One main and eminent Branch of it, the Conversion of Souls: What therefore

fore

fore St. *James* means by them, is meant also by St. *Peter*: and, consequently, that most Obvious and Easie Sense, which I mention'd at the Entrance of this Discourse, is, in all probability, the Truest: And, as such, I shall take the liberty here once again to repeat it. It is This, “ That the Vertue of Charity
 “ is of so great price in the sight of
 “ God, that They, who possess and ex-
 “ ercise it in any Eminent Manner,
 “ are peculiarly entitl'd to the Divine
 “ Favour and Pardon, with regard to
 “ numberless Slips and Failings in their
 “ Duty, which they may be Otherwise
 “ guilty of. This great Christian Per-
 “ fection, of which they are Masters,
 “ shall make many little Imperfections
 “ to be over-look'd and unobserv'd; It
 “ shall Cover the multitude of Sins.

Nor are there wanting Parallel Places in other parts of Holy Writ, which confirm this Interpretation of the Words, and the Doctrine contain'd in it. For, besides those Passages in the Apocryphal Writers, which directly affirm that *Alms shall purge away Sin*, and that *As Water quenqueth Flaming Fire, so Alms maketh an Atonement for Sins*; there are in the Books of *Proverbs* and *Daniel*, two Texts, very express

Tob xii. 9.

Ecclus. iii.
30.

express to this purpose : In the first of
 Prov. xvi. these the *Wise Man* declares, that by *Mercy*
 6. and *Truth Iniquity is purged*; and in
 the Latter the Prophet counsels *Nebu-*
 Dan. iv. *chadnezzar*, to *break off his Sins by Right-*
 27. *eousness*, (or rather, as it is in all the An-
 cient Versions, to redeem his Sins by
 Alms-deeds) and his *Iniquities by shewing*
Mercy to the Poor. And were it proper
 in this place to vouch the Testimony of
 the Earliest Writers of the Church, it
 were easie to produce, from their Works,
 Passages without Number, wherein they
 speak the same Language.

I fear I have been tedious in settling
 the *Sense of the Words*: but it is no
 more than was requisite, in so important
 a Point, so little insisted on from the
 Pulpit; and which may be thought liable
 to some Just *Exceptions*.

II. *These* I am now, in the *Second Place*,
 to propose, and shall endeavour to re-
 move. The doing of which will give
 me an Occasion of clearing the Sense,
 and limiting the Bounds of this Truth
 more exactly and fully.

The *First* and Great Exception against
 This way of Expounding the Text is,
 that

that it gives too great a Colour to the Popish Doctrines of *Merit* and *Supererogation*; and seems to lessen the Worth of that only True and Proper Satisfaction for Sin, made by our Saviour on the Cross. For, at This Rate, what need of Remission of Sin in Every Case by the Blood of Christ, since We our selves are in Good Measure capable of making the Atonement? We, who have it, it seems, in our power, by the Exercise of one Particular Vertue to secure a Pardon to our selves for Neglecting all the Rest; and can blot out the Remembrance of an Ill-spent Life, by a few Acts of Charity at the Close of it? As if God were so much beholden to us for our Good Deeds, as to be bound for Their sakes to forgive us our Ill Ones! Or, as if the Performance of Our Duty in One Case, could make any manner of Amends to Him for our Non-performance of it in Another! This, say They, is very Easie and Comfortable Divinity!

To take off the Force of This Objection, it will be requisite to reflect a little on these following Considerations. And,

1st, We must Explain our selves a little

little more particularly, what is to be understood by that *Charity*, to which the Promise of the Text is made; What it is in the *Nature* and *Extent*, and what in the *Intention* and *Degree* of it.

As to its *Nature* and *Extent*, it must be understood to signify not barely *Acts of Relief* to the Poor and Needy, as the Vulgar and Confin'd Use of the Word imports; but, more largely, all the several ways of *Universal Beneficence* and *Kindefes*, by which one Man can be serviceable to another. Farther, it expresses not the *Outward Material Act* only, but must be suppos'd to take in also the *Vital Form* of it, that *Inward Principle* of a *Sincere Love* towards *God* and *Man*, from whence it regularly flows; and separated from which, the meer external Act is a Lifeless and Useless Performance. And Then, even of Charity thus Largely understood, it is *not a Common Degree* that is meant here; 'Tis to an Intense or Fervent Charity; to a mighty and extraordinary measure of it, that this mighty and extraordinary Blessing is expressly said to belong.

2dly, Even of this Exalted Degree of Charity it is not said, *that it shall cover all manner of Transgressions*, how Gross
and

and Heinous soever; The Words of the Text do by no means carry us to assert thus much concerning it: but only (as You have heard them Explain'd to You) seem to say, that it shall be our Excuse for many Lesser Neglects and Failings in our Duty, many Sins of Infirmity, Surprize, and Daily Incurfion; which are properly enough styl'd *the multitude of Sins*: It shall Cover such Offences only, as are consistent with a state of True *Charity*; and surely Those cannot be very Gross and Presumptuous. For He, who lives in the Perfect Exercise of that Fervent *Charity*, which the Text recommends, abounding Inwardly and Outwardly in all the various Instances and Expressions of it, and in those several Vertues and Graces which do naturally attend it: I say, who ever he is, that is throughly possess'd and act-ed by this Divine Principle of *Love*, cannot be suppos'd capable of committing any Heinous Sins, *whilst* he is under the Guidance of it: And as for Those, which he had fallen into *before* the attainment of this Gift, They were certainly remitted also and cover'd, *before* the attainment of it; else, doubtless, he had never attain'd it. So that

Great Guilt of any kind can well be thought to harbour in that Breast, where true Charity dwells.

Indeed, it is not universally certain, that, when-ever God remits the *Guilt* of Sin, he remits the Punishment too (the *Temporal Punishment*; I mean): for Wicked Men, upon their Return to Virtue, do not seldom find, to their Cost, that a Sin may be pardon'd, and yet all the Ill Consequences of it not prevented; and they can, therefore, often trace the Steps of their Former Misdoings, in the several Evils of Life that afterward befall them. And in This Sense, therefore, it may be, and is probably true, that Charity shall cover many Sins, even of the first Magnitude; *i. e.* it shall prevent the Temporal Inflictions due to them, and often, even after Pardon obtain'd, pursuing the Committers of them: But it contributes to a removal of the *Guilt* only of such Frailties and Infirmities of a lesser size, as may be thought consistent with a state of Charity. And therefore, to except against the Doctrine laid down, as encouraging the Charitable Man to expect Remission of all manner of Sins, how great and how numerous soever, is to load it with a Difficulty

culty which doth no ways belong to it.
But

3dly, Even as to these slighter Omifions and Failings, it is not pretend- ed, that they are cover'd by Acts of Mercy and Charity in any fenfe, but what includes the Application of the Me- rits of our Saviour's Blood, the only Foun- tain of Satisfaction for all Kind of Sins, for the Least as well as the Greatest. It is true indeed, and granted, that the Blood of Christ alone can expiate Sin: However, this hinders not but that God may make fuch and fuch Acts of Ours the *Conditions* and Grounds (as it were) of applying the Virtue of that Blood to us. And thus Our Good Works, tho' they are not the *Meritorious*, yet may become, if I may fo fpeak, the *Occa- sional* Cause of Pardon and Grace to us. And if This be establishing the Popifh Doctrine of Salvation by Works, then hath our Saviour Himfelf, I fear, eſta- bliſh'd it, in that Divine Form of Prayer, in which he hath taught us to fay, *For- give Us Our Trefpaffes, as We forgive Thoſe that Trefpafs againſt Us. As We forgive Thoſe!* i. e. *Inaſmuch as*, on That very account (among Others) *becauſe*, we for- give Thoſe that trefpafs againſt Us.

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Where,

Where, we see, the Exercise of one great Instance of Charity, Forgiveness of Enemies, is made the Ground of our asking and expecting Forgiveness from God.

4thly and *Lastly*, It follows not, that because so Vast a Recompence is promis'd to a Feruent Charity, therefore the Exercise of it is in the way of *Supererogation*, so that we might have let it alone without Fault or Blame. We may be strictly, and by the very Letter of the Law, oblig'd to it; and yet it may include so high a pitch of perfection, and one so seldom attain'd, that God may think fit, where-ever it is attain'd, mightily to reward it; and to encourage us towards doing our Duty in some One Great Point, by an assurance, that in many smaller Instances he will not be *Extream to mark what is done amiss* by us. Our Gracious Master deals with Us in This Case, as a Man oftentimes doth with his Servant; If he be Trusty and Faithful to him in a Business of Great Concern and Moment, tho' his Duty bound him to be so, yet shall That piece of Eminent Service excuse a Thousand Neglects and Failings upon Other Occasions.

There

There is yet a *Second Objection*, tho' indeed so slight an One, as, after the Former hath been remov'd, is scarce worth mentioning. It is taken from that Saying of our Lord, That They *will* Love much, to whom much *hath been* forgiven. Contrary to which the Text, as here expounded, seems to affirm, that They who *do* love much, *shall* have much Forgiven them. But these two Truths are easily reconcil'd. For it is not hard to understand, how That, which is the *Cause* of a thing in One Respect, may be the *Effect* of it in another. And, accordingly, it may be very true, that He, who is Forgiven much, will, for that very reason, Love much: And it may be as True, that He, who thus Loveth much, because much hath been Forgiven him, shall, on that very account, have much more Forgiven him. 'Tis just the same Case as between Me and my Friend. I may passionately love him, because he hath pardon'd me the Great and many Injuries I formerly did him, while we were at Variance: And again, the Knowledge he hath of my Love may incline him to pass over any Future Mistakes and Miscarriages, whereby I may happen to offend him.

III. The Doctrine being thus fix'd, and freed from Exception; I go on, as I propos'd, in the *Third* place, to enquire into the *Grounds and Reasons* of this Wondrous Efficacy, so particularly attributed to the Exercise of Charity: for we read not that God hath annex'd this Promise to any Other Grace, or Vertue of the Christian Life whatsoever, but to This only, that it *shall cover Sin*; of which these several Accounts may, with some Probability, be given.

1st, That it was really more fit and proper that such a Return as this should be made to Charity, than to any Other Vertue; because it adjusts and proportions the Reward of Acting to the Act it self; and makes the Duty of Man towards God, and the Blessing of God upon the Performance of That Duty, to have a near Relation and Resemblance to Each other. I explain my self in this manner: The Chief Employment, the highest Point and Perfection of Charity is, to pass by the Offences and Injuries of Men; to pardon the Malice of our Enemies, and the Ingratitude of our Friends. To Him therefore who advances to this Height of Vertue, God hath very *aptly and suitably* pro-

promis'd, that His Faults and Offences too shall be pardon'd: as he deals with his Neighbour, so will God deal with Him: Mercy shall be shew'd upon Him, who shews Mercy: if we forgive Other Men Their Trespases, then will our Heavenly Father forgive Us Our Trespases also. There is, You see, a strict Analogy betwixt the Reward annex'd, and one Great Instance of the Vertue enjoin'd: which is God's Method of putting us in Mind of what we are to Do, by his Promises, as well as his Commands; and of exciting Us to endeavour after a Perfection, not easily attain'd, by assuring Us, that the Exercise of it shall, in the very same kind, return doubly and trebly into our Own Bosom. But,

2dly, The Good and Charitable Man is peculiarly entit'led to the Pardon of many Sins, because he is in a peculiar manner liable to incur the Guilt of many; either from the *Natural Frame and Make* of his Mind, which disposes him to this Vertue, or from the very *Exercise* of the Vertue it self.

Charity is grafted always on Good-Nature, and a Sweetness of Disposition: which though it be a Temper of Mind very lovely and desirable; yet is it such

as, in the Circumstances of our present Imperfect State, hath its Inconveniences; and is what makes Conversation dangerous in a World, where we are surrounded with Temptations. It hinders us from arming our selves with that obstinate Resolution of Mind, that stubborn in complying Vertue, which is requisite to preserve a Man undefil'd and blameless. It makes us easie and yielding to Common Customs, and Receiv'd Opinions; Ready to comply with a Thousand things (of which we are not exactly well satisfied) upon the pure score of good Nature, and because we cannot allow our selves to be troublesome. And being found and known to be of this Easie and Compliyng Temper; this very thing will invite Ill Spirits, and Ill Men, to make their Attempts upon us.

And then the *Exercise* of the Vertue it self, especially where the Principle of it is strong, lays us open to several Failings. It makes us omit oftentimes the Duties incumbent on us from our Professions and Callings; and perhaps neglect to take care of Those, whom it is the First Point of Charity to take care of, our Children and Families. It warms us with such a Zeal for doing Good, as breaks
out

out sometimes into Acts, not reconcileable to the Rules of Discretion, Decency, and Right Reason; and which do real dis-service to the Cause of God and Religion, instead of promoting it. St. *Francis's* Charity went a little too far, when it was taken up in providing for Birds, and Beasts, after a most Extraordinary and Singular manner: the Vertue was not at all beholden to him for being shew'd in such a Dress, as, instead of rendring it desirable in the Eyes of Men, made it look ridiculous.

Indeed Love (the Spring-Head of Charity) as it is the sweetest of All Passions, so is one of the strongest too; and, if it have the Reins but once given to it, will go near to run away with its Rider: that is, if a due Care be not taken of it, it will exalt our Fancy so high, and disorder it so much, as to put it out of the Reach and Rule of the Governing Powers of the Mind. And then, what wild Works doth there follow! Instead of Wise and Rational Ways of Beneficence, foolish Undertakings and impracticable Designs! Instead of a manly and sober Form of Devotion, all the extravagant Rants and silly Freaks of Enthusiasm! For the Proof of which I appeal to the

Lives of many of those Saints to whom the Church of *Rome* hath allow'd a place in her Calendar!

Finally, the Charitable Man, who Loves every thing, doth not fail sometimes to Love his Own Vertue too; I mean, that he is apt to over-rate the just Price of it, and too much to undervalue every thing else in comparison of it. A Man may be so much struck with the Beauty and Excellence of Charity, as to be less concern'd than he ought to be for a sound *Faith*, and make Shipwreck of the One, whilst he is too hastily and zealously pursuing the Other.

Thus, I say, the Good and Merciful Man, being particularly liable to some Infirmities, is as particularly comforted with a Gracious Assurance of their Pardon.

3dly, God seems on purpose to have plac'd this Mark of Distinction upon Charity, to shew us, how tender and careful He is of *Our* Welfare; what Bowels of Love and Compassion he hath for Us; Since That is His Favourite Vertue, the Vertue he chiefly delights in, and delights to reward; the Exercise of which is most sweet and comfortable,
 most

most useful and advantageous to the Sons of Men. He design'd, by This Convincing Instance of his Goodness, to prove to us, that he was not an hard and rigorous Master, who enjoin'd us Commands, for his *Own* sake, and purely for the pleasure of being Obey'd; but that his great Intention was, to twist our Duty and our Happiness together: And therefore, the more our Ease and Advantage was concern'd in the Practice of any Vertue, the stronger Tyes and Engagements to it was he resolv'd to lay upon us.

4^{thly}, Charity is particularly available to procure a Remission of the Guilt of Sin, and a Relaxation of the Punishment due to it; because it particularly engages in our behalf the Prayers of all Good Men, and of all Those Persons to whom the Instances of our Goodness extend. A Kind and Beneficent Man, as He is a Common Blessing to the World, so is He bless'd by all Mankind that know him: All are ready to Implore the Mercies of God, Spiritual and Temporal, upon the Merciful-minded; especially the Poor and Miserable, (whose Prayers God hath in a particular manner promis'd to hear) are constant and earnest Intercessors at the Throne of Grace for him. So that, where-

whereas the Possessors of Other Vertues stand chiefly upon their Own Bottom for the obtaining Pardon and Grace, Every man almost becomes a Supplicant for the Merciful and Liberal: and no wonder, therefore, if such United Requests prevail. But

5thly, and principally, God hath made This Promise to *Charity*, and to no Other Vertue, because it is really the chief and most Excellent of Vertues; and the most Excellent Thing ought to have the most Excellent Reward. It is the great Perfection, the distinguishing Grace of a Christian, preferable to Faith and Hope, in Dignity, in Use, and in the Length of its Duration, as *St. Paul* hath taught us to reason concerning it. It is call'd the *Great Commandment* †, the *End of the Commandment* *, and the *Fulfilling of the Law* †: and it is really what it is call'd. For where This Divine Grace dwells, and reigns, there no Moral Attainment of any kind can be totally wanting. Charity is the Queen of Vertues *; the Rest are of Her Retinue, and Train, as it were; constantly attending on Her, appearing, and disappearing with Her: and well, therefore, as a Queen, is she invested by God with that Sovereign Prerogative, the Power

† Matth.
xxii. 38.

* 1 Tim. i.
5.

† Rom.
xiii. 10.

* βασιλὶς
τῶν ἀρε-
τῶν. Chryf.
T. VI.
P. 193.

Power of Covering Sin. It is Her Nature to be comprehensive of, and about being in many Duties; and, therefore, it is Her Reward also, to be a Skreen for many Failings. Charity is said in Scripture to establish a True Friendship, and to create a Real Likeness between God and Man: God passeth by the Faults, therefore, of the Charitable, as a Friend doth those of his Friend; the Great Resemblance of the Divine Nature, which shines out in him, hides every Lesser Sort and Degree of Unlikeness, and makes it not to be discern'd.

'Tis difficult to stop on so Fruitful a Subject; and yet more difficult to express one's self becomingly and well. The Tongues of Men and Angels, as they are said to be a worthless Gift, in comparison of Charity, so are they not All able to set out Half the Worth and Excellence of it. St. *Paul* hath done somewhat towards it, in the XIIIth Chapter of the First Epistle to the *Corinthians*; and to Him I refer You.

It remains, that I should make those few *Inferences* I intended from the Whole, and then point all that hath been said particularly upon the Occasion of this Present Assembly. And

1st,

IV.

1st, The Truth, which hath been explain'd, suggests to us One Argument against Their Opinion, who hold *Justification*, and all the Graces of the Gospel to be convey'd to us by *Faith alone*; in such a sense as excludes any manner of Regard to our *Works*. For if Justification be The putting a Man into a state of Favour with God by Remission of Sin, then Works of Charity which contribute to the Remission of our Sins, must contribute also to our Justification. This Point goes generally for a *Speculative* Nicety, not worth insisting upon: But surely They, who think it so, have not well consider'd, what Influence it hath experimentally had upon *Practice* and a Good Life, in many of it's Assertors. Some Spiritual Libertines, of the *Antinomian* Way, have by it undermin'd the very Design of the Gospel; and set us free from the Necessity of being Pious, Just, or Good, upon any other Principle, but that of pure *Gratitude* only. And in Those who do not rise to these mad Heights, yet the Perswasions They have entertain'd about Justifying Faith, are observ'd mightily to lessen their Esteem of Good Works: and from esteeming them less,

to

to come to practise them less, is, God knows, a very Easie step, and almost an unavoidable One! Witness the celebrated *Institutions* of a great Divine, in which of *Faith* much every where, of *Charity* little any where is spoken; and we are not, therefore, to wonder, if the Rules of Charity should in that Book be as little observ'd. Indeed these very Rules of Charity (which I would not willingly, while I am mentioning, transgress) induce me to think, That many Learned and Pious Men hold this Doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, in it's most Rigid Sense, without holding, or even discerning the Ill Consequences that attend it. However, since the Ill Consequences of this Doctrine are sufficiently plain, both from Reason, and Experience, (tho' such Men happen not to perceive them) the same Rules of Charity forbid us, when the Subject falls in our way, to be silent concerning them, or suffer Men to think, that those, who exclude good Works from being any ways Instrumental towards Justifying a Sinner, are guilty only of an Innocent Mistake, which reacheth no farther than bare Speculation. A

2d. Inference is, That, if a Spirit of Charity shall cover a multitude of Sins; then may we assure our selves, that the contrary Temper, a Spirit of Hatred, Malignity, and Ill Will, shall cover a multitude of Vertues; *i. e.* They shall not be reckon'd as Vertues to Him who possesseth them; Neither God nor Man shall regard them as such, if Charity doth not Crown them. Charity covers many Sins, because it is so noble and so excellent a Vertue: what Vertue then, beyond this, can there be found, of value sufficient to cover the Sin of Uncharitableness?

3dly, From the Promise made in the Text, We may take an occasion to reflect on the wondrous Goodness and Condescension of God. He hath a right to all the highest Instances and Degrees of Vertue that it is possible for us to abound in; and when we have practis'd them to the utmost, we have done but what we were strictly oblig'd to do: And yet so far he is pleas'd to abate of this Right, as to accept the Performance of One Great Duty in lieu of the Omission of many Others. An Act of Grace and Kindness, which is enhaas'd to Us, by considering, that Reason never did, or could make this known to the Heathen World; although

though the Gospel hath now Reveal'd it to Us. Nay, remarkable it is, (as I observ'd to you before) that this Great Duty, which is to compensate as it were, for all our Failings, is the most pleasant and delightful Employment that belongs to us ; the most agreeable to our Nature, and the most useful to our Fellow-Creatures. Let us not complain, therefore, of the strictness of the Rule we are to walk by, and of the Hardships, which in our Christian Warfare we are to undergo. The Rule is strict indeed : but then, as there are Great Helps and Assistances, enabling us to live up to it ; so great Abatements and Allowances (we see) are made to us at last, if we do not. There are indeed Difficulties to be undergone : But, surely, the *Labour of Love* is none of them. That, as it makes a kind of Atonement to God for all the Faults we commit, so doth it make an Amends to Us for all the Troubles we are at, in every other part of our Duty ; It gives an Easiness to that Yoke, and a Lightness to that Burthen which is laid upon us.

4thly and *Lastly*, If the Doctrine laid down be good, then have we in it the plainest and most quickning Motive in the World to the Exercise of this great Duty
of

of Charity ; such a Motive, as exceeds the United Force of all the Arguments which ever were offer'd in this Case ; and of whose Power if a Man can be insensible, all Other Motives will doubtless be lost upon him. The wise Son of *Syrach* thought he had made a reasonable Plea for Charity, when he said, *Lay up Thy Treasure according to the Commandments of the most High, and it shall bring Thee more Profit than Gold. Shut up Alms in thy Storehouses, and it shall deliver Thee from All Affliction ; It shall fight for Thee against Thine Enemies better than a mighty Shield, or a strong Spear. But how Flat, and Cold, and Unmoving is all this, when compar'd with the Life and Energy that is in those Few Words ; — It shall Cover the multitude of Sins !*

Ecclus.
xxix. 11,
12, 13.

This Motive indeed hath been carry'd too far, and abus'd to ill Purposes by Men of another Communion, who, by the help of it, have made the most Impure and Profligate Wretches hope for a General Forgiveness of all their Sins, so They were but Liberal enough to the Church in their Wills ; and settled such a Revenue upon it, as should make a Good Number of Fathers think it worth their while to say Daily *Masses* for the
Soul

Soul of the Departed. . And how gross a way soever This is of Expounding the Text, it hath prov'd a very gainful one to those who made use of it; For perhaps half the Wealth of the Church of *Rome* may justly be attributed to it. A strong Perswasion of the Truth of this Exposition seems to have been one of the chief Foundation-stones, upon which a Great Part of Her Charitable Buildings have been Erected.

The Ministers of the Reform'd Church, indeed, dare not go so far in inviting you to Works of Charity and Mercy; But This they dare, and do affirm; That a true Principle of Charity, is that Qualification of Mind, which of all others is most grateful and acceptable to God; and such as, at the Day of final Retribution, He will have a particular Regard to, so as to make no severe Scrutiny into that Man's Faults and Failings, who hath Eminently guided his Life and Practice by it. And this they think sufficiently intimated in our Saviour's Account of the Process of that Day; where the Onely Head of Enquiry he mentions, is, what Good and Charitable Deeds we have done to any of our Poor Brethren? Which implies thus much at least; That This
 F will

will be the Chief Point upon which we shall be examin'd ; and that Our Acquittal, as to Neglects in Other Parts of Our Duty, will depend very much upon Our being able to give a good Answer to it.

And, I hope, this Assurance it self is a sufficient Encouragement to the Practice of Charity, without Our needing to strain the Words of the Text to so Extravagant a Sense, as no Wise Man can believe that we *ought*, and no Good Man would wish that we *might*, take them in.

V. There is indeed one farther Sense of the Words, than hath yet been mention'd ; to which they may, however, be innocently and truly extended. They have been hitherto consider'd only as containing a Particular Promise to Particular Persons : They may be understood also with regard to those Blessings which Publick Charities procure on Publick States and Communities. For it is true also, that Acts of Charity shall Cover the Sins of Cities and Kingdoms, as well as those of Private Men, if Cities and Kingdoms do generally agree to perform them.

Our Fore-fathers, we may presume, were of This Opinion ; and were powerfully influenc'd by it, towards setting forward

ward those Charitable Designs, which are a Lasting Honour and Advantage to this City and Kingdom. They could not but see, that the Wealth of the Church, tho' it was really grown too Great, and was by some Rich Lazy Orders in it scandalously employ'd; yet had been retrench'd, on this Account, *beyond* what needed, and had not been apply'd afterwards to any Religious, or Publick Use: but was squander'd away for the most part upon Favorites, and upon such as fell in with the Honest Zeal of our first Reformers, not out of any Principle of Conscience, but the mere Design of enriching Themselves out of the Plunder of Abbies and Monasteries. The Sense of this, doubtless, affected deeply the Good and Pious Men of those Times; and made them very Earnest and Active to procure some part of these *Church-Spoils* to be set aside for Charitable Uses: that Retribution, as it were, might, by This Means, be made to God, of what had been torn away in too Large Proportions from his Worship and Service: To speak plainly — that by a true Spirit of Charity those Sins might be *Cover'd*, which a Spirit of Lust and Avarice, under the pretence of Reforming the Abuses of Charity, had *caus'd*!

And these Endeavours of theirs God bless'd so wonderfully, that some Millions of Money were, in a few Years, contributed towards erecting and endowing Here, and in other Parts of our Country, Hospitals and Houses of Charity. This sufficiently baffled the Calumnies, and stopp'd the Mouths of Our Adversaries of the Church of *Rome*; who cry'd us down, as Men that were Reforming away Good Works, and turning all Religion into a Notional Faith. How Other Protestant Countries have freed Themselves from that Imputation, I am not able to say: sure I am, Ours clear'd it self so well from it, as to turn the Edge of the Objection back upon the Church of *Rome* it self. For, upon a Fair and Impartial Computation, it appears, that there were Greater Expences upon Publick Works of Charity (such, I mean, as we are at present discouraging of) in Sixty Years after the Reformation, than had been in Five times that Number of Years, while Popery stood: some have added,——than there were from the *Conquest* down to King *Edward the Sixth*; that Good and Excellent Prince, the Great Promoter and Encourager of these Works; and Who is not to be mention'd, without particular Honour,

our, in This House, which acknowledges him for Her Pious and Munificent Founder.

I cannot but observe to You, here, that it was the Ruling Part of This Great City, with a Good Bishop of *London*, and Martyr for the Protestant Religion, at the Head of them, that by their United Application stirr'd up that Young Prince to undertake so publick-spirited a Design. And it is natural for me also at the same Time to wish, that That Honourable Body may thus heartily always continue to join Their Endeavours and Interests with Those of Their *Right Reverend Diocesan*, in promoting Publick Charities, and Publick Blessings of any kind, either in Church, or State.

Indeed, it must always be remember'd, to the Honour of This Great Body, That, as Her Foundations of Charity are larger, for ought I can find, than those of any Other City in the Christian World; so they were All rais'd and endow'd, either directly by Her Own Members; or, if by Other Hands, yet at Her earnest and importunate Suit: So that the Fabricks, and Revenues of this Kind, that belong to Her, are not only (as in Other Parts) the Useful Ornaments of the Place, but so

many standing Monuments also of the Great Piety, and Unparallell'd Bounty of Her Ancestors; who solicited the Cause of the Poor and the Infirm, the Lame and Wounded, the Vagrant and Lunatick, with such a particular Industry and Zeal, as had those Great and Blessed Effects, which we at This Day see and feel. A Zeal, never to be forgotten by Men! and which, we hope, God also will never forget! but, when he comes down to Visit this City for the many Ill Effects of Wealth misapply'd, will, for the sake of it, Visit in Mercy; and consider the *Multitude of Her Charities* as well as That of Her *Sins*; Graciously allowing the One to be in some Measure a *Cover* to the Other!

But I have not Room to speak severally of All the Great Benefactions with which She abounds; and am call'd upon, by the Occasion of this Present Assembly, to say somewhat more particularly of those of This Place.

I think it, by no means, a fit and decent thing to vye Charities, and to erect the Reputation of One upon the Ruines of another: This is, for the sake of Charity to forget the True Character, and Essential Properties of it; which are, as

St.

St. Paul tells us, *to be kind, and not to envy, not to vaunt it self, or be puffed up, not to behave it self unseemly.* However, This, I think, I may say, with Modesty and Truth, to the Advantage of That Charity to which we belong; That, though the Bottom of Wealth, it stands upon, be not so Large as that of some Others, yet is it in the Design of it so Comprehensive and Full, as not any where, I think, to be parallell'd.

1 Cor. xiii.
4, 5.

Here are Supplies to Outard Want and Necessity liberally imparted; The Poor and Fatherless, not only taken Care of, but so bred up, as to be useful to the Common-wealth, and perhaps to take care of many Others. Here Idle, and Useless, (and therefore Necessitous) Persons are taught the Best of Lessons, Labour; inur'd to it, and made acquainted with it; and then sent out with such a Stock of Industry, as will do them more real Service than any Other Kind of Benefaction, if They will but make use of it, and improve it.

Here, Loose Men and Women are reduc'd by wholesome Discipline, and Vagrants by Confinement: Punishment it self is made an Instrument of Mercy and Goodness; and, as Meat is provided

for the Belly, so is there *a Rod for the Back of Fools*. These Particular Instances of Charity deserve to be enlarg'd on: It is an Argument that hath not yet been handled in it's utmost Extent, and may perhaps ask Your Patience, on some Other Occasion: but the Time to which I am confin'd, is now almost run out; and there are yet Other Instances behind, to be insisted on. For

Here, not only External Necessities are relieved, but Inward Wants also are supply'd; not Ill Manners only are outwardly corrected, but Ill Dispositions also are better'd, Ill Minds reform'd. And Every single Instance in this kind is not confin'd to the Person who receives the Benefit, but is a real Service to an whole Community. It puts a stop to a spreading Plague; nay, it gets Ground upon it, by making Those, who have had the Infection, turn Physicians to Others, by their Example, and Future Good Manners.

Nay, Here, Men recover their Understandings as well as their Vertues; that is, they recover their Very Selves; and are made once again Members of the Rational Creation, able to See and Know their Duty, and to Guide themselves by that

that Knowledge of it; to pay their *Reasonable Service* to God, and to maintain a *Civil Intercourse* with Men.

And on this Occasion, that *Worthy and Learned Person* deserves a particular, and Grateful mention, who hath, by his Eminent Skill, assisted the Hospital to be Charitable in This Way, to much greater Numbers of *Lunatics*, than have been known to be Cur'd in Former Times.

So that this Great Receptacle of Miserable Objects of every kind, seems to be like that Medicinal Pool at *Bethesda*, where there were Vertues proper for every Malady; all Infirmities were equally heal'd, in Those, who had the Happiness to get into it. I can carry the Parallel no farther, I thank God, — For the Prudence and Vigilance of it's Governours, as it hitherto *hath*, so, I question not, always *will* take Care, that (Contrary to what happen'd to the Impotent Man in That Story) They who have most need of the Pool, shall ever have the Happiness to get first into it. Impartiality is the Soul of Mercy, as well as Justice; and adds Farther Degrees of Use and Beauty to the most Useful and Beautiful Thing in the World.

To

To give You, therefore, in little the true Character of This Great Benefaction; As Charity comprizeth almost all Kinds of Vertues; so doth This Foundation take in almost all Sorts of Charities!

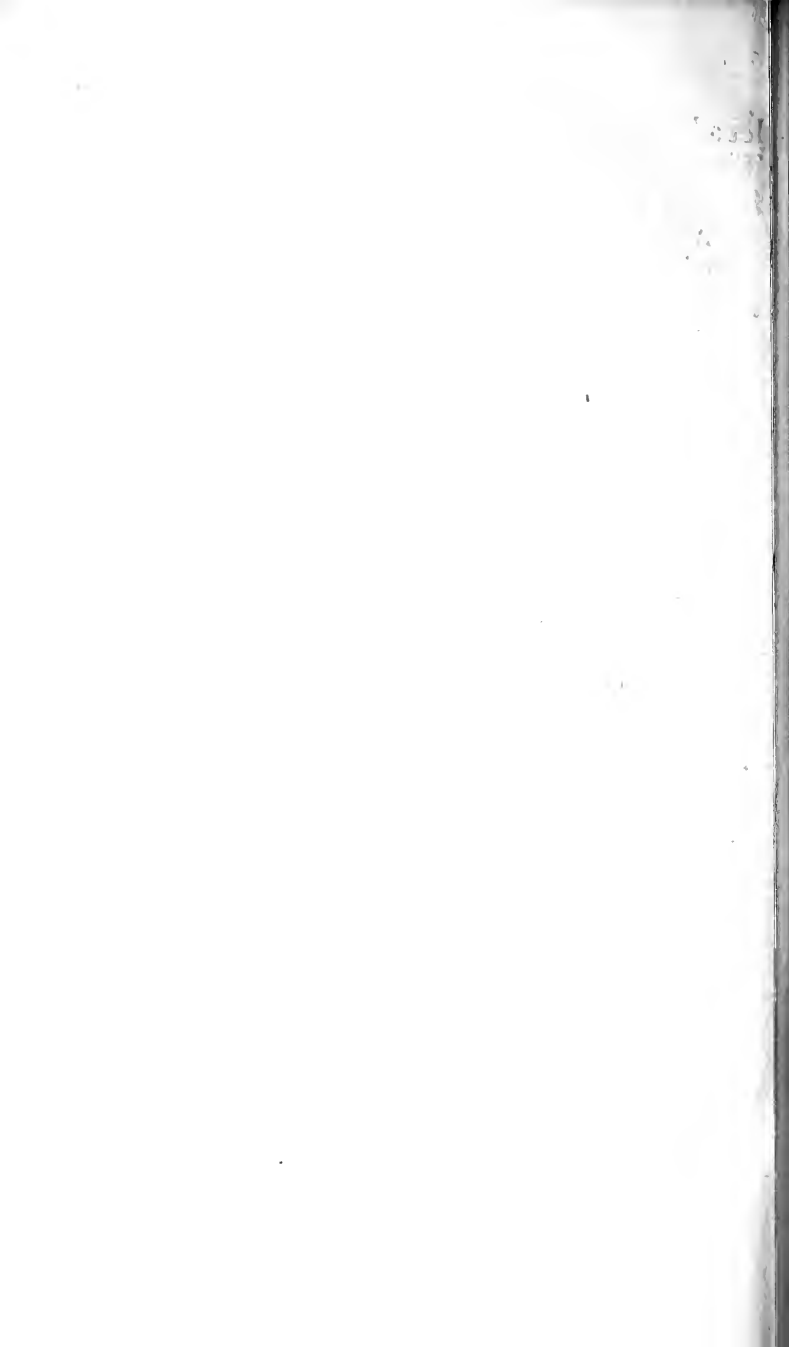
But tho' all the Chief kinds of Beneficence are here pursu'd, yet many Miserable Objects in Each Kind are not possible to be reach'd, with the present Stock of Charity, which belongs either to This Hospital, or to all Her Other Rivals in This *Labour of Love*. God open the Hands of the Rich, and direct the Hearts of the Merciful, to build upon the Foundation Their Forefathers have laid; and to supply what is wanting, to compleat Their Designs! Approving Themselves thus, the true Heirs of Their Piety and Bounty, as well as of their Wealth! Else, these Great Buildings and Endowments of a former Age, like the Vertuous Acts and Atchievements of the First Founders of Noble Families, will become a Reproach, rather than be an Honour, to a Degenerate and Worthless Posterity.

Consider with Your selves, how God hath blest this City for the sake of the mighty Works that have been done in Her; I say, for the *sake* of them. — For
let

let a Man carry his Thoughts back to that Time, when these Good Designs were first set on foot, and He shall find, that from Thence the Rise and Growth of this City in Trade, Wealth, Interest, and Greatness, is precisely to be dated.

May it grow on, in the same Proportion! and by the same Means also! That is, may there still be found such a Number of Charitable Persons in it, as will continue the Character which hath hitherto belong'd to it; and, by That means, secure the Continuation of God's Blessings upon it. May Charity go on *to have it's Perfect Work*; not Living meerly upon the Old Stock, not continuing at a stay; but Growing and Increasing still, as the Necessities of Some Men increase, and the Abilities of Others to Relieve them! And thus spreading it self to a wider Compass, it shall assuredly procure a Greater Share of God's Mercies, and Cover a greater *Multitude of our Sins*.

That This may be the Case, the Good and Merciful God grant, through the Great Steward and Dispenser of his Mercies, Christ the Righteous! To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascrib'd, as is most due, all Honour, Adoration, and Praise; Now, and Ever! Amen! The



The Miraculous Propagation of the Gospel.

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

Q U E E N

A T

W H I T E - H A L L .

October 21. 1694.

ISAIAH lx. 22.

*A Little one shall become a Thousand; and
a Small one, a strong Nation : I, the
Lord, will hasten it, in His time.*

THE Evangelic Prophet is very particular, throughout this Chapter, in describing the *sudden and mighty increase of Christianity*, it's triumphant progress thro'

thro' all Nations, and it's prevalence over all the other Religions of the World. And this wondrous Enlargement of it he takes occasion (at the close of the Chapter) to represent as so much the more Admirable, on the account of that Small Appearance it should make at first, those Slender and Unpromising Beginnings, with which it should set out. *A Little one*, says he, in the Words I have read to you, *shall become a Thousand; and a Small one, a strong Nation: I, the Lord, will hasten it, in His* (i. e. *in the Messiah's*) *time.* From which words, therefore, I shall, without farther Preface, take occasion to raise these several Heads of Discourse.

- I. *First*, I shall briefly represent to You the *matter of Fact* it self; to which this Prophecy refers; how *swift* and *strange* a *Progress* the Gospel made, at, and after it's first setting out from *Jerusalem*.
- II. *Secondly*, I shall prove to you, that this *Success* of it *must* have been *Miraculous*, and owing *chiefly* to the mighty Operations, and effectual Assistances of the Holy Spirit of God. After establishing which great Truth upon firm and proper Arguments, I shall, in the

Third

Third place, fairly lay together what can be offer'd to evade the force of them; and give the several *Objections*, their *Answers*.

III.

Fourthly, I shall consider, how Great and how Distinguishing an *Advantage* this was to the *Christian Institution*; and to what *Useful Ends* and *Purposes* the Consideration of it may be apply'd.

IV.

Fifthly, and Lastly I shall enquire into the time *when*, and the manner *how*, this *Miracle ceas'd*; and make some suitable Reflections upon it, with regard, both to Those who liv'd Then, when this Stop was put to the Gospel; and to Us, who live Now, in the Latter Ages of the World.

V.

First, I am to represent to You the *Matter of Fact* itself, to which the Prophecy of the Text refers; how *swift* and *strange* a *Progress* the *Gospel* really made, at, and after it's first setting out from *Jerusalem*. And the account of this is as much above Imagination, as it is beyond Dispute.

I.

From S. *Luke* we learn, that, upon the Ascent of Our Saviour, the *little Flock*, He had gather'd, consisted of but *One hundred and twenty* Disciples: These receiv'd
a mighty

The Miraculous Propagation

a mighty addition to their number, on the very day of Pentecost, (the day, on which the *Gospel*, as well as the *Law*, was first *promulg'd*); even on That day *Three Thousand Souls* were brought over to the Faith, by a Sermon of *S. Peter's*: so well did that Spiritual Fisher begin to make good the Character, which Christ had given of him, that *he should catch Men!*

Acts vi. 7.

After this, *the number of the Disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly*, saith the same holy Pen, (greatly, even in proportion to their first increase): and from thence the Doctrine was soon carried into all the Remoter Regions of the Earth; insomuch that the Book of the *Apostles Acts* (which, being written by *S. Luke*, the Companion of *S. Paul*, is chiefly taken up in giving an account of that particular Apostle's Labours, and Travels; and of those of them only, which he underwent in the First years of his Ministry: I say, even this Book it self) doth contain an account of the spreading of the Gospel, forwards, thro' many Eastern Countries; and, backwards, thro' a great part of the West: of it's piercing, on the one side, into all the Civiliz'd, and some of the Barbarous Provinces of *Asia*; and, on the other, as far as the great Metropolis of *Europe*,

Europe, Rome it self; so mightily grew the Word of God, and prevail'd!

Acts xix.
20.

Indeed, The Writers of the Story of the Church do with one consent agree, that *Scythia, India, Gaul, and Egypt*, all the most distant parts of the World Then known, had the Doctrine of Christ conveyed to them in less than forty years, *i. e.* before the destruction of the *Jewish State* by *Titus*.

And what degree of Success the Voice of these Preachers had in the several Countries, thro' which it sounded, we may learn from the Antient Apologists, who, e'er Two Centuries were as yet run out, pleaded for Christianity, on the account of it's vast and incredible numbers; represented to the Heathen Emperors, that their Courts, their Camps; their Cities, their Provinces; were all full of them; and that it was impossible to extirpate them, without destroying the far Greater part of their Subjects.

The Gospel is frequently in the New Testament compar'd to *Light*: and it did in nothing more resemble Light than in This, that, as soon as the Heavenly Doctrine, therein contain'd, arose upon the World, it darted it's Bright Rays, and diffus'd it's quickning Influence from

G

East

East to West, with an unconceivable
 Luke xvii. Swiftneſs. This *Kingdom of God came not*
 20, 21. *with Obſervation, neither could Men ſay, Lo*
Here, and Lo There! That is (as we
 may interpret the Words) it did not
 eſtabliſh it ſelf like other Kingdoms, in
 a ſlow and leiſurely manner, ſo as that
 Lookers-on might trace it eaſily from
 it's Riſe through the ſeveral Steps of it's
 Progreſs; but fix'd it ſelf at once almoſt
 every where, with ſo rapid and amazing
 a Courſe, as did, as it were, leave the
 Eyes and Obſervation of Men behind it.
 And ſtill, as it went along, it gain'd
 mighty ſpoils from all Religions, and
 gather'd vaſt multitudes of every Coun-
 try under it's Banners. And, therefore,
 well did the Founder of this Kingdom
 thus prophetic concerning it: — *Unto*
 Luke xiii. *what is the Kingdom of God like? and where-*
 18, 19, 20, *unto ſhall I reſemble it? It is like a Grain*
 21. *of Muſtard-ſeed, which a Man took, and threw*
into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a
great Tree: and the Fowls of the Air lodged
in the branches of it. And, again he ſaid,
Whereunto ſhall I liken the Kingdom of
God? It is like Leaven, which a woman
took, and hid in three meaſures of meal, until
the Whole was leavened.

But

But because the matter of Fact it self, [That there was such a sudden and prodigious increase of Converts to Christianity] is on all hands so well agreed upon, as to need no solemn Proof; it may suffice to have given this short Account of it.

I go on now, in the *Second* place, to prove, that this Success of the *Gospel* was certainly *miraculous*, and owing *chiefly* to the mighty Operations, and effectual Assistances of the Holy Spirit of God: and that, for this plain Reason; because the *Natural* and Visible Causes, which concurr'd to the production of this great Effect, were not any ways Equal to the Effect produc'd; and, therefore, some *Supernatural* and Invisible Cause must needs have given birth to it.

The *Appearing* Causes and Instruments of this Wondrous Revolution were, chiefly, Twelve Men, of obscure Birth and Parentage, of the meanest Education, of the plainest and simplest Understandings, unpolish'd by Learning and Eloquence, unimprov'd by Experience and Converse; Men of no Subtilty, no Art, no Address; who had no manner of Authority, Interest, or Repute in the World. These Men

undertake to convince the World, that One *Jesus*, a Man, who had just before expir'd publickly on a Cross, was the true God, blessed for ever; and, in consequence of this, to preach up a Doctrine, the most unwelcome to Flesh and Blood that could be, the most repugnant to Men's natural Desires and Inclinations, to their settled Habits, and inveterate Prejudices; contrary to the Establish'd Rites and Religions of all Countries, and in all Ages of the World. They set out from *Jerusalem*, with this Design; they disperse themselves through all the quarters of the Earth, they succeed every where; and, in a very short time, prevail with great Multitudes, in every Nation, and Kingdom, to submit to the Laws, and to own the Religion of *Jesus*.

Now, I say, here was no manner of Proportion between the Cause, and it's Effect; between the Work which was wrought, and the Instruments which wrought it: and therefore we may, and must from hence conclude, that a Divine Invisible Power went along with them in every Step, and *miraculously* bless'd their Endeavours. Which Truth that it may appear to you in it's full Strength and Evidence, I shall consider more particularly,

ticularly, Which (naturally speaking) are the best Advantages for a New Opinion to set up with, and under what Circumstances it is most likely to prevail; and I shall shew, that the Christian Religion was utterly destitute of Every One of these Advantages, and yet, nevertheless, *did* prevail.

Now there are *Four* Things, that chiefly conduce towards the spreading of any New Doctrine, and most remarkably make way for it's reception in the World.

As, *1st*, If the *Principles* of it be suited to the *Lusts*, the *Interests*, and *Wishes* of Those, among whom is to be propagated.

2dly, If it be *supported* and *countenanced* by Persons in *Power* and *Authority*, of great *Name* and *Note*; if it be either forcibly obtruded upon men by Sanguinary Laws and Edicts, or more indirectly advanc'd by Art, and Management, and the Methods of worldly Prudence.

3dly, If it be first brought into the World in *dark* and *barbarous* Ages, when Men are either too Rude and Illiterate, to be Able to weigh, and dispute the Truth of it, or too much sunk in Sloth

and Vice, to be Willing to do it. Or,
4thly, If it be not proposed to men, all
at once, but be insinuated into them *by*
Degrees; Secretly, and Insensibly.

1. As to the *First* of these, it is certain, that nothing recommends a new Doctrine so much, or goes so far towards promoting an Universal Reception of it, as it's falling in with the corrupt Desires and Inclinations, the Passions and Prejudices of Men. For Men are, without difficulty, brought to believe an Opinion true, which they wish true beforehand. And This was the way in which that cunning Impostor, *Mahomet*, set up for a new Prophet. He made his Doctrine as relishing and palatable as he could; contriv'd it, on purpose, so as that it might gratifie Men's Lusts and Appetites; and, especially, that it might comply with the loose and wanton Manners of the *East*, where he erected his Standard.

And thus also, ever since, hath Libertinism of all kinds promoted it's Interest, and increas'd it's Party. False and foolish Opinions have gotten footing, and thriven, in prejudice to true Religion, and sound Morality; because there was something
in

in them, which flatter'd either our Vanity, our Lust, or our Pride, and fell in with a darling Inclination. And to this single Art Mr. *Hobbs* ow'd all his Reputation, and his Followers: it was not his Philosophy, and his boasted Reason, that drew men in; but the skill he had in fitting his Principles to men's Constitutions, and Tempers: He knew what would take, and be lik'd; and he knew how to express it after a taking manner; and no wonder, then, if it were greedily entertain'd. To talk against receiv'd Opinions, and in behalf of some belov'd Vices, and Frailties; to dress up his Discourse in all the natural Beauties of Language, and to give it beside the Air (and he gave it nothing but the Air) of Demonstration; This, he saw, would be a sure way of engaging the Men of Wit and Pleasure on his side; and This, therefore, he follow'd, with application and success; like one of the *Children of This World, who are, in their Generation, wiser than the Children of Light.*

Luke xvi.
8.

But Christianity, when it set out, took none of these methods of recommending it self, and enlarging it's Interests: on the contrary, it propos'd plain, naked Truths, without Colours, and Dis-

guises, or any regard to what was Agreeable and Pleasing. It held forth high and unconceivable Mysteries, which the Pride of man would make him apt to suspect, because he could not perfectly comprehend; and it preach'd up harsh and ungrateful Doctrines, which did violence to mens Natures, and which it was death to them to think of entertaining. And yet, I say, under this great Disadvantage it made it's way, and prosper'd. But

2dly, It is another great Advantage to a rising Opinion, if it be espous'd by men of Authority, Repute, and Parts; who may either force it's way into the World by dint of Power, or bring it about by arts of Management, and Contrivance. In this manner the Prophet of the East hew'd out his way by the power of the Sword; took advantage from the divisions and weakness of Christendom, to arm a Savage Multitude, and make large inroads upon it; and, having, first, brought into subjection the Bodies of men, had no hard task, afterwards, to inflave their Souls.

In like manner the Papal Usurpations often prevail'd; the Bishops of *Rome* got
Zealous

Zealous Princes into their Interest, and made them blindly obedient to the Holy See; and then, by Their help, impos'd their own Decrees upon whole unwilling Provinces and Kingdoms. And, as some of their Encroachments thus got footing, so many others, we know, were brought in, at first, and have been supported, ever since, by the highest and most refin'd Arts of Policy. That See hath never wanted, from the very moment since it first set up it's pretences, a number of skilful Managers, who have continually pleaded it's Cause, and carried on it's Interests, with all the Dexterity and Address, with all the Industry and Zeal, of which Human Wit is capable: It hath ever had the warmest, and ablest, (I had almost said the wisest) heads employ'd in it's defence; and hath taken care to make sure of them, by Bountiful Rewards, dealt out in proportion to their Services; and by making a Zeal for the Papal Chair, a sure and never-failing step towards all manner of Honours and Advantages: and no wonder, therefore, if it's Delusions have spread so far, and wide, and infected such Numbers.

It was much the same case, with regard to the broachers of Heresie in the antiene Church;

Church; they were generally leading men, of some Figure and Repute in the world, of great Wit and Subtlety; and, by the help of these, they were able to raise a dust, and make a noise; to form a Party, and set themselves at the Head of it.

But now, when Christianity first appear'd, how weak and defenceless was it, how artless and undefigning! How utterly unsupported either by the Secular Arm, or Secular Wisdom! *I send you forth*, said our Saviour to his Apostles, *as Sheep in the midst of Wolves*: And, accordingly, they went forth, in the spirit of Simplicity, of Humility, and Meekness; arm'd only with Truth, and Innocence; a good Cause, and an equal Resolution: *The Weapons of their Warfare were not Carnal, but Spiritual!* The Messengers of these glad Tidings were so far from having a Name in the World, that they were contemptible: were scorn'd, as *Jews*, by the rest of Mankind; and as the meanest and lowest of *Jews*, by the *Jews* themselves; and were not likely, therefore, to credit the high Embassy, on which they came. They left their Nets, and their Hooks, (the Only things, probably, that they understood)

to

Matth. x.
16.

2 Cor. x.4.

to come into a New World, wherein they were perfect Strangers, and to preach a New Gospel, with which all men were unacquainted: and they preach'd it, not to the *Wise*, the *Mighty*, or the *Noble*, who, when converted, might have forwarded it's Reception by their Influence; but to the *Foolish*, *Weak*, and *Base*, who were able to do nothing for it's Advantage, but by Living according to the Rules, and Dying for the Truth of it. As they had no Help from the Powers of this World, Civil, or Military, so had they all the Opposition that was possible; which they withstood, and baffled: they sow'd the good Seed of the Word under the very Feet of the Roman Magistrates, and Soldiers; who, tho' they trod it down, and rooted it up, yet could not destroy it so far, but that still it sprang out again, and yielded a fruitful and glorious Harvest. A

3^d Thing, that promotes the Progress of a New Religion, is, if it be brought into the World, in Dark and Barbarous Times; when men are either too Rude and Illiterate, to be Able to weigh, and to dispute the Truth of it, or too much sunk in Sloth and Vice, to be Willing
to

to do it. And This, again, cannot but put us in mind of the *Romish* Superstitions : for it is plain, that they took That time of settling and spreading their Empire, which, of all times since the coming of Christ, was the most Ignorant, and the least Inquisitive ; when Men were Vicious, Lazy, Dispirited, Fearful, and Credulous ; when gross Darknes sat upon the Face of the West ; when the Irruptions of the *Goths* and *Vandals* had destroy'd all the Old Learning, as well as the Old Buildings, and left nothing but Ignorance and Barbarity behind them. Then, in that *Night*, as the Parable speaks, did the cunning *Enemy* come, and *sow his Tares*, when there was no body at work, or awake to observe him. And, when he had thus covertly sown them, what Wonder was it, that they should grow up together with the Corn, and Flourish ?

But did the Gospel make such advantages as these of Mens Credulity, and Supineness ? No, it took all ways of being Try'd and Examin'd to the uttermost. It alarm'd the World a good while before-hand, and gave fair Warning of it's approach, by plain Signs, and Predictions : and if the Prophecies of the Old Testa-

Testament will not be admitted, as Proofs in this case, sure *Tacitus*, and *Virgil* may be heard; the First of which lays it down, as a known truth, that there was (about the time of our Saviour) a strong Tradition, thro' all the *East*, of a certain mighty Prince that was then, and there expected to arise, and to govern the World; and the Latter, out of the *Sibylline Verses*, transcrib'd such an Account of things, as did evidently, and could only belong to the Days of the Gospel, and the Reign of the Messiah.

But the most Observable thing on this Head, is, that God pitch'd upon that particular Point of Time, for the manifestation of his Gospel, when Good Sense, and Learning, and Wit, were at the highest; when the *Roman Empire* was in it's full Glory, and, together with it, all the Arts and Sciences flourish'd: when the World enjoy'd a profound Peace, and was at Liberty to examine the Truth of an Opinion, which set up with such pretences. Then did the Glorious Light of the Gospel shine forth, and dazle the Eyes even of Those, who were thought to see best, and farthest. And soon afterwards the Apostles open'd their Heavenly Commission, and executed it publickly;

lickly ; challenging those who look'd on, with all their Curiosity, Subtlety, and Spite, to disprove, or blemish it. The Doctrine of the Cross shew'd it self barefac'd to all the Wits and Sages of both *Rome* and *Athens* ; and defy'd their Doubts, and their Reasonings. And yet, under These discouraging Circumstances also, it took root downwards, and brought forth fruit upwards, speedily, and abundantly. A

4th Help towards establishing any New Opinions in Religion is, if they be not propos'd to Men all at Once, but insinuated into them only by insensible Steps and Degrees : and this method hath often made way for the belief of the most monstrous Doctrines, and the entertainment of the wildest Absurdities. Witness [once more] several Articles in the *Roman Catholic* Faith ; which, had they been offer'd to the minds of Men, at first, in their full Latitude, had been rejected with indignation and horror ; but being propos'd at half Views, and advanc'd by little and little, were also gradually admitted by Men, not well aware of their Utmost Import and Tendency : every first step into Error smoothing the way

towards a second, and so on, till the passage was widen'd enough for the grossest Contradictions to enter in at it.

Far from this Artificial Method of winning belief, was the Religion of *Jesus*: Upon it's first appearance, after the Descent of the Holy Ghost, it offer'd it self to the View of Men, at full length, and in all it's proportions. No Moral Precept was reserv'd for a more Convenient Time, no Doctrine (no Great, Fundamental Doctrine) was disguis'd, or conceal'd. The Message it brought, it deliver'd, plainly and openly, at once; the most unwelcome Practical Truths, as well as Those, which were better Known, and Receiv'd; the Sublimest Points of Faith, together with such as were more Easie and Credible.

The Primitive Apostles did not, like those of a Later date, the Fathers of the Mission of *China*, preach up first a *Glorify'd*, and then a *Crucify'd* Saviour; but bore the Scandal of the Cross wheresoever, and to whomsoever they open'd the Doctrines of it: The *slaying of Jesus*, and his being *hanged on a Tree*, is mention'd in one of the first Sermons of *S. Peter*. This (humanely speaking) was an Unlikely way of gaining Profelytes; and

Acts v. 30

and yet, as Unlikely a Way as it was,
Thus were innumerable Profelytes gain'd.

Let us lay together what hath been said: — The Gospel of Christ, at it's Earliest appearance, had all the Probabilities in the World *against* it's Success: for it was possess'd scarce of any One of those advantages, which do most signally recommend a new Doctrine, and make it thrive: It had no Complying Tenets, to sooth Mens Appetites and Passions; but was all Harsh and Austere. It had no encouragement, no protection from the Civil Power; no Force, or Cunning to uphold it; no Men of Eminence, and Esteem, to engage on it's side. The Age, which was pitch'd upon for the discovery of it, was more discerning and enlightned, more curious and inquisitive, than, perhaps, any that either preceded; or followed it: and therefore the Success of this Doctrine could not be owing to Men's Ignorance or Supineness. Finally, it's Promulgers deliver'd it not out by Parcels, as is the way of Cunning and Designing Men; but offer'd the Whole of it to be all together examin'd, and compar'd. Nevertheless, tho' press'd with All These Clogs and Incumbrances,

it sprang forth, and made it's way into the World, by a swift and incredible Progress.

The Inference from hence is plain and indubitable; That a Divine Power and Vertue certainly went along with it, to supply what was Wanting to it, upon Other accounts; and that it's *Increase* must needs have been *Supernatural*, and *Miraculous*: so that, were we acquainted with nothing more, concerning the Apostles, than what the Four Evangelists have left us; were the Book of their *Acts* lost, and, together with it, an account of the wondrous Effusion of the Holy Spirit upon them, at the Day of Pentecost; and of the mighty Signs and Wonders, which they afterwards perform'd, in Vertue of that Unction: I say, were we in the Dark to all these Transactions, which declare the Christian Religion to have been *propagated* by *Miracle*; yet still every Considering Man must think that there was somewhat *Miraculous* in it. Such an Increase, from such beginnings; such a wonderful Revolution, brought about by such weak and disproportion'd Instruments; is itself a *Miracle*, and the greatest of Miracles; and doth as evident-

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1 Cor. ii.
4.
ly assure us, that the Preaching of the Apostles was in the *Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power*, as if we had heard them speaking Strange Tongues, seen them healing the Blind and Lame, and reviving the Dead.

III. In which Truth that we may be yet farther confirm'd, let us consider (as I propos'd), in the *Third Place*, what *Shifts* the Enemies of the Gospel make use of, to evade the force of this pressing Argument. And the utmost that any of them pretend to say, is, as follows. 'Tis true, they will own, Christians multiply'd very fast, and the Increase of them was, in some sense, *Miraculous*: That is, it was *wonderful*; as every Unusual Thing is to Those, who do not know, or consider the Causes of it. But to a man, they say, who dares to go out of the Common road, and to think for himself, it will appear, that there was at that time a Set of *Natural Causes* on foot, sufficient to account for this Effect, without any recourse to a *Divine* and *Supernatural Agent*. The Apostles indeed were twelve plain Illiterate Men, who had not, of Themselves, force, or skill enough, to bring about such an Event: but their
Natural

Natural Inability was supply'd by a favorable Juncture, by an happy Coincidence of such Conspiring Causes, and Accidental Advantages, as mightily help'd on the Work. For Example,

The *Sufferings* of those poor bigotted Creatures, the *Martyrs*, made mighty impressions upon Men; especially upon those of the same Rank with the Sufferers, the Common people; who never fail to take the side of the Oppress'd, and to think That Cause good (let it be what it will), for the Profession of which Men are us'd ill. Then, the *Purity* of the *Christian Morals* was a mighty Argument to bring the Men of Probity and Vertue into the Interests of the Gospel. And so likewise was the *Analogy* of some of it's *Mystical Truths*, to the *Doctrines* of *Plato*, (then in great esteem and vogue), a very good Bait to the Men of Philosophy, and Learning. The *Distribution* of *Goods*, which the first Christians made, and their Living together in Common, was a good Reason for Many men's embracing that Faith, which, they were sure, would maintain them. The *Casual Cessation* of *Oracles* was immediately turn'd to the advantage of the Religion of *Christ*, as if *That* had procur'd it. And the *destructi-*

on of the *Jewish* State, contributed greatly to the Increase of the Christian Numbers; because it seem'd to have been foretold by the Founder of their Faith: and therefore, luckily coming to pass about that time, rais'd an high Opinion in Men of his Person, and Doctrine; and inclin'd them to think, that His Institution, then newly set up, was design'd by God to succeed in the Room of the *Jewish* Establishment, which, about the same time, hapned to pull'd down. In the mean while, the *Rulers* of the World over-look'd, and neglected to crush, a Doctrine, which was so harmless in it self, and so unlikely to succeed, on the account of it's Abettors; till, through Their Conivance, it was at last Universally receiv'd among the Vulgar sort, and the Number of it's Votaries was grown so formidable, that even Princes themselves were forc'd, for their Own Ease and Interest, to come into it, and profess it.

And thus, say they, several extraordinary and unheeded Advantages concurring to favour the Growth of Christianity, it grew indeed mightily, and prevail'd; as a little River will swell high, and spread itself wide, and run far, when swoln by Casual Rains, and by many other

other Streams, which have emptied themselves at once into it. Such is the Account they pretend to give of the Rise and Progress of our Faith, from *second Causes*, without calling in a *first*, to solve the appearance.

In opposition to these Pretences, I will shew, that the Causes here assign'd were utterly insufficient to produce the Event, for which they are assign'd: a short Review of them, I think, (and the time will allow of but a short one) will easily satisfy us concerning it.

The *Blood of the Martyrs* was, indeed, what it hath been often styl'd, the *Seed of the Church*: but how? Not, certainly, by alluring Men to the Profession of Christianity, at the Time *when* those Martyrs suffer'd: for nothing could have a greater tendency to frighten and discourage men from professing the Gospel, than to find, that they should be persecuted, and must die for it. This only is meant by that Saying, and thus far it holds good; That the Sufferings and Torments, which the first Christians underwent so willingly and bravely, were a strong Evidence of the Truth of that Doctrine, which could inspire it's Fol-

lowers with so much Courage, Constancy, and Patience; and dispos'd men mightily to embrace the Religion of Christ *afterwards*, in better and more quiet Times. But before that this Motive could have any considerable Force and Influence, the Gospel had *already* spread and settled itself every where: and therefore nothing can well be accounted for by it, but the Accession which was made to Christianity, *after* it was sufficiently establish'd; and This, we are ready to confess, had nothing Extraordinary in it, nor are we at present making any Enquiries concerning it.

The same Answer serves to disprove that Other pretended account of this Increase, drawn from the *Destruction of the Jewish State*. We allow it to have added to the Numbers of Christian Converts, *when* it hapned: but it hapned not till near forty Years after the Death of Christ; and by that time, Christianity was strong enough of itself, and needed no Aids. And, even when this Event hapned, tho Several *Jews* promoted the Interests of the Gospel, by embracing the Faith; yet the Obstinate Part of them, which stood out, did it much more harm than the Profelytes did it good.
For

For the uncomplying *Jews* were not satisfy'd with rejecting Christianity, themselves; but made it their business to render it odious, suspected, and contemptible to the Heathens also, in all the Corners of the *Earth*, to which they were driven.

The *Purity of the Christian Morals*, and the answerable Lives of Christian Converts, did indeed very naturally lead men to admire and value the Doctrine of Christ; but, by no means, to come under the Yoke of it: for tho' Most Men have an Esteem for strict Rules, and strict Livers; yet Few care to practise the one, or to imitate the other. And nothing, I think, could be contriv'd so effectual, (next to the former wise Motive from the Sufferings of the Martyrs) to *deterr* men from Christianity, as to tell them, that, when they took it upon them, they must renounce their dearest Appetites, and Passions, and deny their very Selves. And I desire the Men, who raise these Objections against the Divine Original of the Gospel, to tell us fairly, whether, if they had liv'd at that time, they would have come in upon *This* Principle. I am sure, they would not; because it is *This* Principle alone, [that they must

The Miraculous Propagation

part with their Satisfactions, and Pleasures, if they do] which keeps them out of it now. Therefore, neither can This be any Sufficient Reason for the sudden and wide Growth of Christianity.

The *Analogy of some mystical Truths in the Gospel to the Doctrine of Plato*, is yet a weaker Plea. For this Motive is calculated to touch but very few, onely the Philosophers of the *Academic School*. And with such, it could have no Great weight, surely; or, at least, not enough to over-balance that Scorn and Contempt, with which, on other accounts, they treated the Christian Religion, and its Promulgers; That, for its short, Unphilosophical way of proposing Truths, without Demonstration, or Reasoning; and Those, for their Ignorance, and the Meanness of their Education. Accordingly, we find not that the Sublime Mysteries of our Faith made any Impression on these haughty Reasoners: *St. Paul* was derided at *Athens*, when he propos'd them; nor can we certainly learn that any one Philosopher, of Note, embrac'd our Religion, till it had been for many Years preach'd, and disseminated, and had taken deep root in the World.

The *Casual Cessation of Oracles* (as 'tis call'd),

call'd), about the Time of Promulging the Gospel, was not Casual, but the direct and genuine Effect of it: and, we own, had men understood it to be so Then, and imputed the Total Silence of those Oracles to its True Cause, such a Perswasion would have been very useful towards bringing in the Heathen World to the acknowledgment of Christ. But we deny that they did at all understand, or allow it to be so. And for a plain Proof of this, we refer our selves to that Celebrated Discourse in *Plutarch*, about the Reasons of this Cessation; where, among Many, which that Learned Man assigns for it, (vain Reasons indeed, and such as shew him to have been at a Loss for the True One!) This, of the Coming of Christ, is not mention'd, or hinted at: tho he gives there such an account of things, that a Christian might easily prove, from what *He* relates, that it was really the Coming of Christ which effected it. But this is a Point of too important and nice a Nature to be settled incidentally, and might well deserve to be consider'd in an entire Discourse.

Again, neither can any probable account be given of this matter, from the *Charitable Distribution of their Goods, which*
the

The Miraculous Propagation

the first Christians made. For, supposing that some of the poorer sort might be tempted by this Motive; yet, surely, those who had wherewithal to sustain themselves, and were easie in their Circumstances, did not come in upon it. It will not be said, I hope, that such as *made* this Distribution of their Goods (which will be found to have been no inconsiderable number) came in themselves to *partake* of it. Nor could these Hopes have any Great Influence, even on the Meaner sort; since there was something in the Christian Religion, of far more force to frighten them, than This was to allure them; the strict Rules of Honesty and Temperance, according to which they were bound to live, and the great Calamities and Persecutions, which they were sure to undergo.

Lastly, no weight can be laid, in this case, on that *Contempt*, which *Heathen Princes* are said to have had of the *Christian Religion*, and the little Care they, therefore, took to restrain it: for it is not true, that they stood by, unconcern'd at its Growth; on the contrary, it is certain, that they look'd upon it with a jealous

lous Eye, from its first Rise; and the Early Persecutions of *Nero* (not to mention those of *Domitian*, which were after the Destruction of *Jerusalem*) shew that he took great notice of it, and endeavour'd to Extirpate it. However, let the *Roman* Emperours have been never so regardless of its Increase; yet it is certain that they did no ways Countenance it; and that every one, who turn'd Christian, was sure by that means to forfeit the Favour of his Prince, and to be look'd upon as an Apostate from the Religion of his Country. And how, even under such a Pressure as this, could Christianity have made so Rapid and Astonishing a Progress, if He, who is mightier than the mightiest, had not bid it *go forth and prosper* against all Humane Discouragements? Had *this Counsel, or this Work been of Men*, it would, even without any direct Opposition from the Temporal Power, have certainly *come to nought*, as *Gamaliel* argu'd; but *being of God, nothing could overthrow it*.

Acts v.
38, 39.

I do not deny, after all, but that Every One of these Particulars might, in a natural way, contribute somewhat, either to the Planting, or Spreading of the Gospel. But I think it is evident,
from

from the short Hints I have suggested to you, that All of them together were not able to do the thousandth part of that Work, which is allotted to them. And, therefore, to resolve this Great Event into a *Conspiracy of second Causes*, as 'tis call'd, without any regard to the *first*, is an absurd and senseless Attempt; and onely shews us, how very strong an Inclination and Biass there is in Some Minds towards Infidelity, which they can be brought to espouse upon so very slight Grounds.

A man, who should see an Acorn put into the Earth, and perceive, in a few weeks, or months, an Oak shooting up from it, to a prodigious height, and spreading its Branches to an amazing extent, so as to over-top the loftiest Mountains, and even to cover the whole Field where it grew; might as well say, that there was a strange *Conspiracy of Natural Causes*, an extraordinary degree of warmth, moisture, and so forth, which concurr'd to produce this effect; as affirm, that the vast Success of the Gospel was owing to those *petty Principles*, from whence Some men pretend to derive it.

But it must be granted to them, that
their

their Thoughts are of a piece, and that this Opinion of theirs falls in with the rest of their System. For their Account of the *New Creation* by Jesus Christ, is much like that which they give of the *Old* one. It was a Lucky Hit of concurring Causes which propagated Christianity. And it was a Lucky Hit also of dancing Atoms, which first made the World: and 'tis the same Lucky Hit, which still preserves and governs it too. They, who can bring themselves to believe the Latter of these Opinions, may, consistently enough, be suppos'd to entertain the Former. But, certainly, no other Creature, but an Atheist by Complexion, could ever take up with such pitiful Accounts of things.

Well then, The Christian Religion, from small and weak Beginnings, spread it self far, and wide, after a sudden and strange manner; and this it did, against all Probability, and contrary to all the Rules of Success, which all other Rising Opinions have ever set up with: It had no One of those great Advantages, some of which recommend every new Sect, that stands, and prevails: and, as for all other Lesser Helps, and Assistances toward it's Increase, which the
Gospel

Wit of Man can assign ; they are apparently too weak to sustain the Weight, that is laid on them. It remains, therefore, that this wondrous Effect sprang undoubtedly from the immediate Influence of the First Cause, actuating after an Extraordinary manner the Industry, and blessing the Endeavours of the Apostles ; stirring up the Minds of Men to attend to, and disposing their Hearts to embrace the Truths of the Gospel ; in a word, accompanying all they said, and did, with mighty Signs and Wonders, with the *Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power !*

I have fully consider'd *Three* of the *Five* Points, on which I intended to discourse : Having represented to You,

First, The Matter of Fact it self, to which the Prophecy of the Text refers ; how swift and strange a Progress the Gospel really made, at, and after its first setting out from *Jerusalem* : Having prov'd to You,

Secondly, That this Success of it must have been *Miraculous*. After which I did, in the

Third place, fairly lay together what I thought might be offer'd to evade the
Force

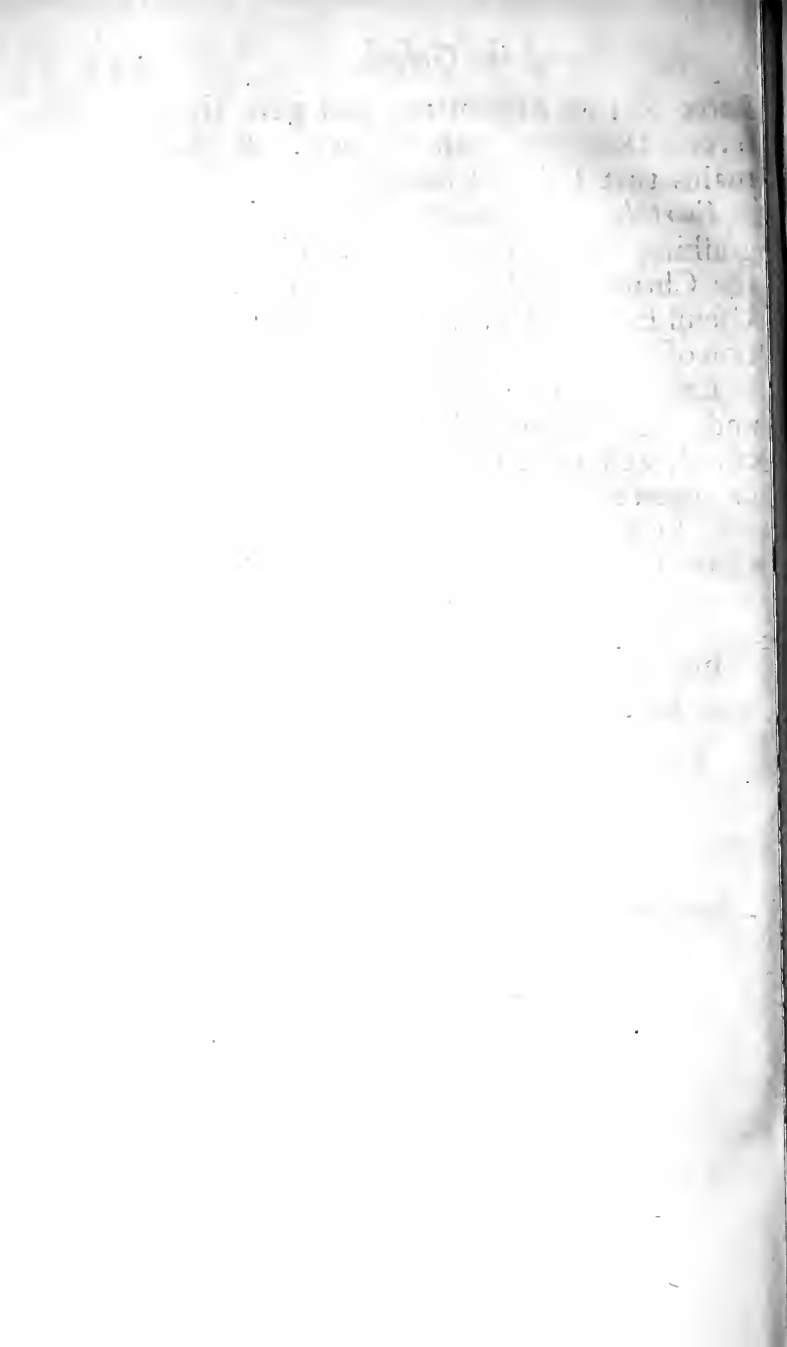
Force of this Argument; and gave the several Objections their Answers. It remains that I should consider,

Fourthly, how great and how distinguishing an Advantage this brings to the Christian Institution; and to what Useful Ends and Purposes the Consideration of it may be apply'd: And then,

Lastly, Enquire into the Time when, and the Manner how this Miracle ceas'd, and make some suitable Reflections upon it, with regard both to Those who liv'd Then, when this stop was put to the Gospel, and to Us who live Now in the Latter Ages of the World.

But the handling of these Two Points must be the Work of a Second Discourse.

A



PART II.

ISAIAH IX. 22.

A little one shall become a Thousand; and a small one, a strong Nation: I, the Lord, will hasten it in His Time.

OF the *Five* Points which I propos'd, from these Words, to handle, *Three* have been consider'd: I come now, in the

Fourth place, to shew, How great, and how *distinguishing* an *Advantage* it is to the Christian Institution, to have been propagated after so swift and unaccountable a manner; and to what useful *Ends* and *Purposes* the Consideration of it may be apply'd. And

I

I. This

1st. This is, I say, an Advantage peculiar to the Christian Institution: For no other Religion ever had so large an Increase, with so little of Humane Aid and Assistance; or prevail'd in such a manner, as to make a Recourse to Supernatural Influences necessary, in order to explain the Success of it. This may be collected, in great measure, from what hath been already hinted, in the preceding Discourse. However, I shall here resume the Reflection, and more particularly and fully evince the Truth of it.

Of all false Religions, the *Mahometan* came nearest to the Christian, in the swift manner of its Propagation; for in a small time it over-ran a great part of the Eastern World. But this Success, how extraordinary soever, had nothing miraculous in it; nothing, but what may easily be accounted for, by reflecting on the Circumstances (already intimated) with which the Propagation of that Imposture was attended. Such, as the loose Manners, and lamentable Divisions of the Christians of that time; the Suitableness of *Mahomet's* Doctrine to the sensual Inclinations of Men, especially of those East-ern

ern People, to whom it was first address'd; and the Method he us'd of procuring Submission to it, by the Dint of the Sword, not by the Power of Persuasion and Argument. A Religion, that gave a full Indulgence to the Ambition, the Lufts, and Cruelty of Mankind, could not fail of gaining Profelytes; and, when a Warlike and Savage Race of Men, united by the hopes of Rapine and Spoil, set upon a dissolute, divided, and weakned Enemy (as the Christians then were) the Success of such an Enterprize was sure and easie: and on the Success of *Mahomet's* Arms the Success of his Religion depended. When, by an uninterrupted Course of Victories, he had laid the Foundation of the *Saracenz* Empire, it was no wonder that a new Empire should be able to introduce a new Religion; the Increase of the One, was naturally follow'd by a proportionable Enlargement of the Other: which, therefore, I say, had nothing *miraculous* in it; nothing, that rivall'd, or any-ways resembled the Success of the *Gospel*—
that Stone, which was cut out of the Mountain, without Hands (i. e. without visible Causes and Instruments, proportion'd to such a Work) and brake in pieces all other

Kingdoms, and at last became it self a
 Dan. ii. great Mountain, and filled the whole Earth.
 34, 35.

As to the Jewish Religion, it will not admit of any Comparison with the Christian, either as to the Manner of its first Reception, or the Addition of Converts afterwards made to it. It was given to the *Israelites*, by *Moses*, in the Wilderness, whither he had led them out of the House of Bondage, in their way to a Land flowing with Milk and Hony. Now (setting aside the Consideration of *Miracles*, by which the Jewish and Christian Dispensations were alike confirm'd) the Reception of the *Law* by the *Israelites* from such a Deliverer, under whose Conduct and Command they then entirely were, and in a place, where they had no Communication with the rest of the World, had nothing in it near so wonderful as the first Plantation of the Christian Church, by means of the Apostles Preaching. And, as to the Accession of Gentile-Converts, after the Tabernacle was set up in *Shiloh*; it was too small and inconsiderable, to give the Religion of the *Jews* any Title, or Pretension to a Divine Original, on that Account.

The

The narrow Limits of the Jewish Church are thus, under the Emblem of a transplanted Vine, aptly represented by the Psalmist. *Thou hast brought* (says he) *a Vine out of Ægypt, Thou hast cast out the Heathen, and planted it; Thou preparedst Room for it, and didst cause it to take deep Root, and it filled the Land, viz. the Land of Jewry, wherein it was set. The Hills* (i. e. the Hill-Country of Judah, the farthest Point of Palestine, Southward) *were covered with the Shadow of it, and the Boughs thereof were like the Cedars of God, on Mount Lebanon, in the Extremity of its Northern Borders. She sent out her Boughs into the Sea* (the Mediterranean Sea, her utmost Limit to the West,) *and her Branches to the River, even as far Eastward, as the River Euphrates.* Thus was the Jewish Church, even in its most ample and flourishing Condition, shut up within the Bounds of Canaan, and the Countries adjacent: Whereas that Mustard-Seed, the Kingdom of Christ, though it were less than all the Seeds that be in the Earth, yet, when it was sown, it grew up, and became greater than all Herbs, and shot out great Branches, and the Fowls of the Air lodged in the Branches of it: Men of all Countries,

Psa. lxxx.
8,9,10,11.

Luke xiii.
19.
Mark iv.
31, 32.

and all Religions under Heaven flock'd to it for Shade and Shelter.

Indeed, the *Mosaic* Law was intend'd for a single People only, who were to be shut in, as it were, from the rest of the World, by a Fence of Legal Rites, and Typical Ceremonies; and to be kept by that means separate and unmix'd, till the great Antitype, the *Messiah*, should appear, and break down this Fence, and lay open this Inclosure; publishing a Religion, of a more extensive Nature and Use, which all Mankind should be invited to profess, and in which all should have an equal Interest. To these different Ends the *Law*, and the *Gospel*, were severally design'd; and to these, therefore, the Different Circumstances of their Promulgation, and the chief Parts of their Worship, were severally accommodated. The *Law* was (as I said) given in the Desert, to a particular People; the *Gospel* was publish'd in *Jerusalem*, before a mixt Multitude of various Nations and Languages. The Miracles, by which the *Law* was confirm'd, were done before the *Jews* only, who alone were concern'd in them [for as to those, perform'd by *Moses* in the sight of *Pharaoh*, and the *Aegyptians*; they

were not intended to authorize the *Law*, which was not as yet given, but only to prove his Divine Mission for the *Temporal Rescue* of that People]: Whereas the Gospel-Miracles were wrought before the Enemies of the Gospel, in all Countries; because in all Countries the Gospel was to be propagated, believ'd, and practis'd. The chief Parts of the Jewish Worship (which consisted in Sacrifices) were confin'd to a certain Place, at which all the Males of that Religion were bound, thrice every Year, to appear; and that Religion, therefore, could be intended for such only as liv'd at no great Distance from the Jewish Temple: Whereas, when the Ends of the Earth were to be converted to Christ, the Christian Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving, and even the great Oblation of the Eucharist, was to be perform'd every where with equal Degrees of Acceptance, according to the Prediction of *Malachi*, the last Prophet of the Jewish Dispensation. *For from the rising of the Sun to the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering: for my Name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

The *Jewish*, then, and *Christian* Institutions, as they are widely different in many Respects, so particularly in This; that the one was, by its original Frame and Intention, limited as to Place, Persons, and Time: whereas the other was to be diffus'd throughout the World, and to endure together with it, that is, to be, indeed, what we find it not long after its first Erection stil'd, the *Catholick Church*. *Whereunto*, therefore, *shall we liken this Kingdom of God*, and its marvellous Increase? or *with what Comparison shall we compare it?* There is, indeed, some faint Resemblance of it in the prodigious Fecundity of *Seeds*; which, accordingly, our Saviour makes use of more than once, to illustrate it: but there is nothing parallel to it in the History of all the Religions which have sprung up, and obtain'd amongst Men, from the beginning of the World to this Day.

Luke iv.
30.

And this *peculiar* Advantage of Christianity is so much the more remarkable, because

2dly. It was prefigny'd by *Types*, and foretold by various *Prophecies*. And when, therefore, the Event came to pass, it did, as it were, point out its Author, and

and declare itself to spring from Him, who alone *knoweth*, and ordereth the *Times and the Seasons*, and calleth the things that are not, as if they were.

Of *Types*, the most illustrious, and most worthy of our present Consideration, is That, which relates to the wonderful Increase of the *Israelites* in *Ægypt*; concerning which the Sacred Story speaks in very expressive and emphatical Language: *They were fruitful* (says *Moses*) *and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the Land was filled with them*; and this (it seems) notwithstanding the Arts that were us'd to lessen their Numbers, notwithstanding the great Hardships and Severities that were laid upon them: for again it is said, *The more the Ægyptians afflicted them, the more they multiply'd, and grew*. A livelier Image than which there cannot be of the thriving Estate of the Christian Church, under all the Cunning and Malice of its Heathen Persecutors. Were the Seed of *Abraham* few, when they first came to sojourn in *Ægypt*? no more than *seventy* Souls? The Number of the first Disciples of Christ, on the Day of Pentecost, when his Gospel began to be

Ex. i. 7.

Ib. v. 13.

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The Miraculous Propagation

propagated, was not much greater. Did the several Kings of *Aegypt* keep a jealous Eye over the Children of *Israel*, and take all manner of unjust and cruel Methods to prevent their Increase? Just so far'd it with the earliest Professors of the Gospel; the Rulers of the World harass'd and oppress'd them, and did what they could to crush Christianity, in its first Seeds, by severe Edicts, and Penalties, and subtle Contrivances. Did the *Israelites* thrive nevertheless, and multiply exceedingly; so as in the Space of 430 Years, from the time of the Covenant made with *Abraham*, to come out of *Aegypt* above 600000 strong, that were Men from twenty years old and upwards, besides Women and Children, and a mixt multitude not rank'd into distinct Tribes and Families, that were without Number? The Increase of Christian Converts was yet more wonderful; and attended with this remarkable Circumstance of Resemblance, That it came to its utmost Pitch, near the same Period of Time, to wit, about 430 Years after our Saviour had begun to preach and to say, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* Such a strict Correspondence there was between these Events, that we may justly reckon

reckon the one of them, as design'd to prefigure and typifie the other. Especially, since the Promise made to *Abraham*, about the Fertility of his Descendants was so worded by God, as at once to include the Increase of his *Natural* and *Spiritual* Seed, and plainly to point out that Access of Converts from All Nations to the Church, which should happen in the Days of the *Messiah*. In blessing Gen. xxii. 17, 18. *I will bless thee*, said God, *and in multiplying I will multiply thy Seed, as the Stars of the Heaven, and as the Sand which is upon the Sea-shore. And in thy Seed (i. e. in Christ, the promis'd Seed) shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed.* God begins, we see, with the Assurance of a Temporal Blessing, a numerous Off-spring, according to the Flesh, and ends with the future Enlargement of the Spiritual Kingdom of *Christ*; the former of these being indeed a Figure only, or Mystical Emblem of the latter, to which this Divine Promise chiefly referr'd, and in which it was finally and fully accomplish'd. For the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through Faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, *In Thee shall all Nations be blessed.* The same Promise was afterwards expressly renew'd to *Isaac*,

Gal. iii. 8.

Gen. xxvi. *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, but to none other of the succeeding Patriarchs: and from *these* alone, therefore, God took his *Title*, and vouchsafed to be call'd the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; because to *these* alone he had made the Promise of that *Seed*, in whom all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed, by being ingrafted into his Church, and becoming the Subjects of his Spiritual Kingdom.

Many Predictions of the same kind are to be met with in the *Psalms*, and the *Prophets*; particularly in *Isaiah*. His LXth Chapter, is nothing else but a Description of the glorious State of the Christian Church, upon the abundant Access of the *Gentiles*; and he closes that Prophecy, as we have heard, with the *Text*, which in few Words comprizes the small Appearance the Gospel should make at first, the vast Increase it should afterwards receive, and the speedy manner in which it should take place. *A little one shall become a Thousand, and a small one a great Nation; I the Lord will hasten it in His time*: In the *Messiah's* time this great Event shall come to pass; and, when it begins, it shall be *hastned*; it shall proceed with an astonishing and irresistible *Swift*ness, until it be fulfill'd.

If then the victorious Progress of the Christian Faith be in itself a sufficient Evidence of its Divine Original; that Argument must needs be somewhat heightened and improv'd, by considering, that the Spirit of Prophecy had long before signify'd and promis'd this Success: for from the same Spirit, from which the Prophecy came, the Completion of it afterwards proceeded. I add,

3dly, That the Advantage, peculiar in this respect to Christianity, doth from hence also appear; in that the wondrous Success of the Gospel confirms the *Truth* of those *Miracles*, by which it is said to have been planted, and frees the Account of them from all possible Suspicion of Mistake, or Imposture.

The only way that Infidelity hath left, to escape the Force of the Argument drawn from Miracles, is, by denying the Truth of the Facts. How unreasonable and absurd a Plea this is, may be shewn many ways, particularly from hence: That they, who deny the Credibility of the Gospel-Miracles, must allow somewhat else, altogether as incredible; to wit, that the Gospel was propagated into all the Regions, and subdu'd all the
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ligions of the World, without Miracles : which, considering the Meanness and Incompetency of the Instruments, that wrought this Effect, is itself a Miracle, and the greatest of Miracles*.

In vain, therefore, do some Men reject the Account of the Miracles done by the Apostles, if they admit (and they cannot but admit) the Account of the extensive and swift Propagation of the Gospel by the Apostles means; for the one of these Accounts evidently confirms and establishes the other. The very Existence of the World is a Proof, that it was at first miraculously created; and so, even the Existence of the Christian Religion (as at present spread and profess'd in the World) is a Proof, that it was at first miraculously planted. For the second Creation by *Christ Jesus*, can no more be accounted for by Natural Causes, than the first; and carries in it as evident Marks and Impressions of an Omnipotent Power.

* Πῶς, εἰ μὴ σημεῖα ἐποίουν, ἔπειθον; εἰ μὴ ἐποίοιμι, δεῦ δυνάμεις ἦν: εἰ δ' ἢ μὴ ἐποίοιμι, καὶ ἐκρήτοισι, πολὺ θαυμαστότερον ἦν τὸ συμβᾶν *Chryl.* in 1 Cor. cap. 1.
 "Οταν λέγωσι μὴ γενέσθῃ σημεῖα, μείζονας ἐαυτοῖς περιπέρουσι τὸ το μείζισον σημεῖον, τὸ, χαλεπὸν σημεῖον, ἢ ἐκκεκμηλὸν περιδεγμένῃ ἀτασταν; ἅπὸ δ' αὐθῆκα πτωχῶν καὶ ἀγγελημάτων ἀνθρώπων ἀλωθῆσαν. *Id.* in Act. cap. 1.

Now this is such a Proof of the Reality of the Apostles Miracles, as is wanting to those wrought for the Establishment of the Law of *Moses*; the Authority of which stands solely on the Authority of External Testimony, and the Traditional Belief of the Jewish Nation: but we have no Internal Evidence of their Truth from the Nature and Reason of the Event. This way of Proof is particular to the Gospel-Miracles; the Account of which comes to us, not merely as Matter of Historical Truth, but as in itself demonstratively certain; because Miracles were necessary towards diffusing the Gospel in that speedy and effectual manner, wherein it is confess'd to have been propagated. And, where an End cannot be obtain'd, without particular Means, the visible Accomplishment of the End is a sure Proof that those Means must have been employ'd, which were necessary towards attaining it. The Jewish Worship might *possibly* have been erected by *Moses* in *Canaan*, though he had wrought no one Miracle to confirm it. The Christian Faith could not *possibly* have taken place in all the World, unless Miracles had made way for it: And the Truth, therefore, of the Gospel-Miracles, is doubly

The Miraculous Propagation

bly certain to us, both from the Authority of Testimony, and from the Reason of the Thing; which gives a mighty Advantage to them over those of *Moses*, and cuts off all possible Occasions and Pre-
tences of Distrust from the Infidel, and the Gainfayer.

Thus much to shew, “ How great,
“ and how distinguishing an Advantage
“ it is to the Christian Institution, to have
“ been propagated after so swift and un-
“ accountable a manner, as we find it
“ was.” It remains, that I should shew
likewise, “ To what useful Ends and
“ Purposes, this Consideration may be
“ apply’d.

Three things there are, which we may plainly learn from it. For it enables us to give a clear Account,

1. Why the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the utter Extermination of the Jews was delay’d till 40 Years after the Death of our Saviour.

2. Why Miracles ceas’d so soon in the Christian Church, when they were continu’d so long in that of the Jews; even as long at least as their first Temple lasted.

3. Why God did not suffer Human Learning, or the Civil Power to come in

to the Support of Christianity; the one, till above a 100; the other, till 300 Years after our Saviour. And

1. We may satisfy our selves, Why the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the utter Extermination of the *Jewish* State, was delay'd till 40 Years after the Death of *Christ*.

One would think, that the *Jews* had compleatly fill'd up the Measure of their Iniquities, when they spilt the Blood of *Christ*, and made themselves in the most solemn manner answerable for the Guilt of it; and that they were even Then grown ripe for Divine Vengeance. But our Saviour having Pray'd on the Cross for his Murtherers, the Merit of that Blood which they spilt, prevail'd with God to respite their Punishment for some time, and to leave them still farther room for Repentance. The Apostles, therefore, by an Express Order of our Lord, as an Antient Tradition informs us, tarr'd in *Judea* and the neighbouring Countries, Twelve Years after his Ascent; Preaching the Gospel of *Reconciliation* to the *Jews*, and exhorting them to Repent, and be Baptiz'd, every one of them, in the Name of *Jesus*, for the Remission of their Sins:

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Acts 11.
par- 38.

The Miraculous Propagation

particularly of that Great Sin they had committed in *Crucifying the Lord of Life*; which is mention'd, not only in the *First*, but in all the several Sermons Preach'd to them by *St. Peter*, *St. Stephen*, and *St. Paul*, whereof any Account is preserv'd to us in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*. These Applications proving fruitless, and the Twelve Years expiring, God commanded the Disciples to execute their Commission in its utmost extent, and to go *Teach and Baptize all Nations*, that the Faith of the *Gentiles* might be a Reproach to the *Jewish* Infidelity. And so indeed it was. For nothing could better illustrate the Infinite Goodness of God, and the incorrigible Perverseness of that People; than to observe, that the rest of the World flock'd in to the Obedience of Christ, as soon as the Apostles erected the Standard of the Cross, while the *Jews* still stood out Obdurate and Impenitent: The Rest of the World, I say; who had neither so immediate an Interest in the *Messiah*, as They; nor were so capable of discerning his Character, and the Time of his Coming; nor had any Share in the Guilt of spilling his Blood, which might excite them the more eagerly to the Possession of the Gospel-Pardon. Within
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less than *Thirty Years*, after the *Apostles* set out from *Jewry*, they made *Profelytes* every where; *Their Sound went into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World.** And now, therefore, God's Mercy to the Seed of *Abraham* being manifested in the most conspicuous manner, and their *Infidelity* being heightned by all possible *Circumstances of Aggravation*, He inflicted the *Sentence of Excision*, which he had before pronounc'd; but which could not be executed, till the *Church of the Gentiles*, which was to succeed that of the *Jews*, had taken sufficient *Root in the World*. *Haste thee*, (said the destroying Angel to *Lot*) *escape to Zoar, for I cannot do any thing [i. e. cannot execute my Commission against Sodom] till thou be come thither.†* And, in like manner, may the Spirit seem to have quickned the *Industry of the Apostles*, by saying, "Haste Ye, spread the *Doctrine of Christ* every where; for, till that be done, I cannot pour out my *Fury on Jerusalem.*" Thus had our Lord himself, a little before his *Passion*, declar'd; *This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be Preached in all the World, for a Witness unto all Nations; and then shall the End come; ||* that is, the *End of the Jewish Polity,*

* Rom. x.
18.

† Gen. xix.
22.

|| Ma. xxiv
14.

The Miraculous Propagation
and of the whole *Mosaic* Dispensation. A

2d. Thing, we may learn from the swift manner in which the Gospel was propagated, is, to give our selves from thence an Account, why Miracles ceas'd so soon in the Christian Church, when they were continu'd so long in that of the *Jews*, even as long at least as their first Temple stood.

The great Use of Miracles was, to confirm the Truth, and promote the Reception of the Gospel, at its first setting out. That Use ceasing, Miracles likewise ceas'd; being gradually, and, in about an Age after the Ascent of Christ, almost totally withdrawn. For what *St. Paul* says expressly of *Tongues*, holds equally true of all other Supernatural Gifts and Powers, indulg'd to the first Promulgers of Christianity; they were *Signs to those who believ'd not, not to those who believ'd.*

Indeed, since the *Jewish* Dispensation had receiv'd its Authority entirely from Miracles, it could not, without more and greater Miracles, be abolish'd. Since the Kingdom of Satan, and the Idolatrous Worship of the Heathen Gods, had been erected

erected upon *false* and *lying* Wonders, *true* ones were necessary to overthrow it. But, as soon as the Cross of Christ had every where triumph'd in some measure over *Judaism* and *Paganism*; there was no need of a continu'd Series of Miracles, to compleat the Conquest, or to confirm the Faith of those who embrac'd Christianity. The manifest Reasonableness and Excellencè of its Precepts, were of themselves sufficient to make it flourish still more and more, and baffle all remaining Opposition. Especially, since those, who were to live at the greatest distance from the Miracles done in the Infancy of the Gospel, might be as clearly satisfi'd of the Truth of them, as if they themselves had actually seen them; partly, from the Evangelic Writings, receiv'd early in all Christian Churches; and, partly, from the Reason and Nature of the Thing itself; it being (as I have already shewn) altogether impossible, that, without Miracles, such a Degree of Success should have attended the first Preachers of the Gospel.

But now, as to the Law of *Moses*, the Case was quite otherwise: For, though it was usher'd in by Miracles, yet those Miracles being perform'd in the Desert,

without any Witnesses, but what were of that Nation; and before a Race of Men, that were extinct e'er the *Jewish* Worship was erected in *Canaan*; and the Account of those Miracles being contain'd in a Book, which was all along kept secret from the rest of the World; Infidelity found some Room, or Colour to suspect the Truth of them; Nor could it necessarily be inferr'd from that Degree of Success which the *Jewish* Religion met with, that it *must* have sprang originally from Miracles. The Whole of that Religion consisted in Ceremonious *Rites* and *Observances*, which had no Intrinsic Goodness in them, nor any clear Marks or Characters upon them of that Divine Authority by which they were commanded. Their *Typical* Use and Reference was little known to the *Jews* themselves, and could be less discern'd by those who were *Strangers to the Covenant of Promises*. In a word, the Law of *Moses*, as distinguish'd from all other Religious Institutions, had nothing in the Frame and Design of it, apt either to recommend it to its Professors, or to invite Profelytes. During such a Ceremonious State, it might be requisite for God, by frequent Manifestations of his Divine Power and

Presence, to keep that backsliding People within the Bounds of their Duty, and procure Reverence to the Worship which he had set up from the Idolatrous Nations around them: It might be requisite, Ifay, that he should at, fit Intervals, own himself to be the Author of their Religion, and do New Miracles, to keep up the Credit and Influence of the Old ones. Miracles, therefore, continu'd in that Church for many Ages after its first Erection: For, besides those which their several Prophets occasionally wrought, the immediate Appearance of God in the *Shechinah*, or Cloud of Glory, and his Answers by *Urim* and *Thummim*, were familiar, while the Tabernacle, and first Temple lasted; and even many of their *Laws*, (for Instance, the *Law* of *Jealousy*, those for the Attendance of the *Jews* at their *Three Great Festivals*, and for their Resting in the *Sabbatic-Year*) were so contriv'd, as to be Demonstrative Proofs of the Immediate Interposition of God in the Affairs of that People. With good Reason, therefore, was a long Succession of Miracles indulg'd under that Dispensation: Not so, under the Gospel; which, after it was sufficiently establish'd, needed not

New Signs and Wonders, to preserve, or promote the Belief of it; its Original Success being, as it were, a perpetual Standing Miracle, of sufficient Force to evince its Divine Extraction, from the Beginning of Christianity to the End of it. A

3d. Use, which, I thought, might be made of the Miraculous Manner of Propagating the Gospel, was, to give our selves from thence an Account, Why God did not suffer *Human Learning*, or the *Civil Power* to come in to the Support of it; the One, till at least an Hundred; the other, till three Hundred Years after our Saviour. The Design of this Part of the Divine Conduct seems to have been, that the Establishment of our Faith might appear manifestly to be the Immediate Work of Heaven, and not owing to Human Means, or any Set of Natural Causes. The Apostles themselves confess (and glory in confessing) that, as they Preach'd the Doctrine of *Christ* in the most simple, artless manner; not with *Excellency of Speech*, or the *Enticing Words of Man's Wisdom*; so the first Converts, whom their Labours brought over to the Faith, were generally Mean
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Persons, of no acquir'd Knowledge, no Rank, no Education. For, *Not many Wise Men after the Flesh, not many Mighty, not many Noble were call'd; but God chose the Foolish things of the World, to confound the Wise; and the Weak things of the World, to confound the things which were Mighty; and the Base things of the World, and the things which were despis'd did he chuse; yea and the things which were not, (such is the Less'ning-Phrase of St. Paul) to bring to nought the things which were.** The Reason of which Choice is plainly set down in the following Words; *That no Flesh might glory in his Presence: He would have no Rivals, no Sharers in the Glory of this Event; and, therefore, produc'd it in such a Manner, and by such unproportion'd Means, as to make it impossible for considering Men to mistake the true Author; so, as that all, who look'd on, should be ready to cry out, This is thy Hand, and thou, Lord, hast done it.†*

* 1 Cor. i.
26, 27, 28.

† Psal. cix
27.

Indeed it was, on more Accounts than one, requisite, that Human Learning should not be admitted into the Christian Church, till it was sufficiently spread and settled. For, tho' the Use of Learning might from the beginning, have been great, in order to confound the vain Sophistry, and wild Super-

stitution of the *Greeks*, and to vindicate the Doctrine of *Christ* against all their Objections; yet great Inconveniences might also have redounded to the Faith by the means of it. For it must be confess'd, that, when Philosophers in after-times embrac'd our Religion, they blended it often with the peculiar Notions of those Sects in which they had been educated, and by that means, corrupted the Purity and Simplicity of the Christian Doctrine. Had this hapned from the Beginning, such an Early Mixture of Philosophy with Christianity would have bid fair for an Universal Reception in succeeding Ages. But the Gospel being first, for an Age and more, purely and simply profess'd, there was no great danger of its suffering from the Subtilties and Refinements of Philosophy afterwards; because every Christian was then able to compare them with, and try them by the plain Primitive Rule of Faith, receiv'd till that time in all Churches; and might securely reject, or admit them, upon such a Comparison.

For these Reasons, the Learned and Wise of this World seem to have been overlook'd by God in the first Plantation of the Gospel; that neither its Success
might

might be imputed to their Skill and Assistance, nor its Doctrine run the Risque of being blended early with their particular Opinions. However, still we may observe, that the Admission of *Learning* was long before the Admission of the *Civil Power*; because the former, having less Force and Influence than the latter towards procuring the Establishment of the Gospel, was, consequently, less liable to be suspected as the Cause of it. Let me add also, that, as the Powers of this World would have been mightier Instruments of advancing Christianity, than Human Learning could be, so would they have been more able, and more likely to corrupt it, and enervate the Force of it; as we find, that, not long after their coming into the Christian Church, they actually did: And therefore, on this Account likewise was their Admission longer postpon'd. For near 300 Years after Christ, no *Roman Emperor* embrac'd the Faith; tho' they were (several of them) Men of great Moral Vertues, and not far from the Kingdom of God, as to their Personal Qualifications and Characters. Such, particularly, were *Vespasian*, *Titus*, *Trajan*, *Adrian*, and the two *Antonines*. Yet it pleas'd the Divine Providence, that

that even these good Emperors, instead of embracing, and protecting the Christian Faith, should discourage and persecute it; that so the *Kingdom of Christ*, which was *not of this World*, might not be beholden to any of the Kingdoms of this World for its Establishment; but spread and fix it self every where, not only without the Aid of Princes, but against their Will; in spite of their fiercest Opposition, nay even by the *means* of it. *The Kings of the Earth, and the Rulers took Counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed. He that sat in the Heavens laughed them to scorn; the Lord had them in derision. He set his King upon his holy Hill of Sion, first; and then, gave him the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of*

the Earth for his Possession. Herod, and Pontius Pilate began this Opposition, (for thus hath St. Peter expressly apply'd the*

Prophecy †) and the Roman Emperors, till Constantine, continu'd it. Nevertheless the Word of God went on, conquering, to conquer; till it had subdu'd even these Subduers of the World to the Obedience of the Faith, and brought them to cast their Crowns before the Throne of the Lamb, and to acknowledge, that the Foolishness of God is wiser than Men, and the*

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* Psa. ii. 2,
4, 6, 8.

† Act. iv.
27.

* Rev. iv.
10.

*the Weakness of God is stronger than Men,** 1 Cor. 1.
 even than the strongest, and the highest among the Sons of Men. There was then a Christian Church, long before there were any Christian Princes; She did not grow up under Their Shadow, but receiv'd them into Her Bosom: And, as she subsisted for several Centuries, e'er the Civil Power came in to her, so will She endure for endless Ages, when the Civil Power shall be no more; and even now, when she receives Protection and Encouragement from it, yet is She in all the chief Functions and Operations of the Ministers of her Spiritual Kingdom, independent upon it. Thus did God order things, on purpose, that the Distinction of these several Societies, Offices, and Powers might be evident; and perpetually, without Encroachment, or Confusion, preserv'd: And, *let no Man join together what God hath thus put asunder!* It remains that I should under my

V.

.. Fifth and last General Head, briefly inquire into the Time when, and the Manner how this Miracle ceas'd, and make suitable Reflections upon it, with regard both to those who liv'd then, when this Check was given to the Gospel, and to Us, who live now in the Latter Ages of the World.

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The Miraculous Propagation

The plain Answer to the Enquiry propos'd, is, That the Miracle ceas'd, when the Civil Power began to declare openly in Behalf of Christianity; that is, soon after *Constantine* came to the Throne. For it was no longer a Wonder, that our Religion should thrive and flourish; when, instead of bitter Persecutions, in met with all manner of Encouragements. For a Century after *Constantine*, and upwards, the Number of Christians multiplied exceedingly in all the Parts of the World in which it had already been planted, and to which the Empire of the *Romans*, or their Influence, did extend. For above a Century after that, Christianity seems to have been at a stand, neither gaining much ground, nor losing much, unless only in the Lives of its lukewarm Professors. But then it declin'd apace every day; Dissentions among Christians grew hot, and their Zeal for Religion waxed cold. The great Honours and Endowments, which Religious Princes had bestow'd on the Church, did too often occasion Ambition and Luxury in those who contended for them, or possess'd them. In a word, all the Vices of Prosperity abounded, together with the Advantages of it: So that the Name of Christianity was no longer Venerable
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in the Eyes of Men; and its holy Doctrine not producing an answerable Sanctity of Life, made no farther Impressions upon them. This unhappy Opportunity *Mahomet* laid hold of, to set up his Religion; which being (as I have said) suited to the Voluptuous Manners of the East, and seconded by the Power of the Sword, made large Inroads into Christendom, and tore away entire Provinces at once from the Profession of the Gospel. Since that time, Christianity seems to have been almost in a continual Decay: *The Hedges of this Vineyard of God being broken down, all they that went by plucked off her Grapes; the Wild-Boar of the Wood did root it up, and the wild Beast out of the Field did devour it;** till a Discovery of some unknown Parts of the World open'd a new Way for enlarging the Bounds of Christ's Kingdom. The Zeal of some Devout Men, (tho' mix'd often with Private Interests and Designs) stir'd them up to make use of this Advantage, and to Publish the Gospel of Christ in the remotest Corners of the East, whither, it is probable, none of the Apostles ever came. There also Christianity (a corrupt and superstitious Christianity) hath gotten footing. How long it may continue, and
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* Ps. lxxx.

12, 13.

how far it may advance, is known to Him alone, *who hath determin'd the Times before-appointed*, (to Religions, as well as Nations) *and the Bounds of their Habitation.*†

† Act. xviii.
26.

I shall not presume to inquire into it; but shall raise an Useful Reflection or two, from what hath been observ'd on this Head, and with a short Application of it to our Selves, shall conclude this Discourse.

The Imperfect Propagation of the Gospel, and the Prevalence of *Mahometism* over it, are some of the darkeſt Secrets of Divine Providence. But the Cauſes, that contributed to produce this great Revolution, are manifeſt: they were plainly the Vices and Diſcords of the Chriſtians of thoſe Times, that gave the Enemies of our Faith Courage to attack it, put Weapons into their Hands, and furniſh'd them with all manner of Advantages againſt it. Chriſt came into the World on purpoſe to ſubdue the Power, and deſtroy the Kingdom of *Satan*. He diſplay'd the Banner of his Croſs, and ſummon'd all Nations to repair to it; who accordingly obey'd the Signal. But, while the Extremeſt Parts of the Earth were meditating a Submiſſion, while his greateſt Enemies were haſtening to put
their

their Necks under his Feet, a stop was put to their Intentions, and his Triumphs, by the Mutinies and Desertions of his own Soldiers. Who can sufficiently deplore the Guilt, and detest the Ill Influence of those Vices which cut off so many Kingdoms at once from the Empire of Christ? not only arrested his Doctrine in its full Course, and said to it, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further*; but made the Sun of Righteousness go backward, as it were, *ten Degrees*, and leave many Countries under gross Darkness, which had once been enlighten'd with the saving Truths of the Gospel? Certainly, Spiritual Faction and Pride, and Uncharitable Breaches of Christian Unity and Peace, are not such slight Offences as some Men are willing to think them; since it was owing in great measure to These, that the Universal Reign of *Christ* upon Earth was then hinder'd, and the Accomplishment of the Prophecies in that respect deferr'd to distant Ages.

Many Princes since, indiscreetly Pious, have made Attempts to regain the Ground Christianity lost, by the Force of their Arms, and to plant the Faith anew in those Places, where it once had

Possession, by the Points of their Swords. But (alas!) that great Work is to be accomplish'd, not by such *Holy Wars* as these; but by Conflicts of another kind, which we must maintain with our own Corrupt Habits, and Vicious Inclinations; not by Foreign Acquisitions, but Domestick Victories over those Impieties of Christians, which gave the great Enemy of our Faith his first Advantages against it: For tho' the *Kingdom of Heaven suffer violence, and the violent take it by force*; yet *the Weapons of our Warfare are not Carnal, but Spiritual*. When the Conversations of those that name the Name of Christ become agreeable to the Purity of his Doctrine; when the Divisions of *Christendom* are healed, and the Professors of our Holy Faith live together every where like Men of one Mind, in one House; then shall the Sceptre of Christ's Kingdom extend itself to all the unconverted parts of the Earth, and not sooner.

That God, e'er the Day of Final Doom, will bring this about, the Scripture seems to say: but of the particular Time, at which he will effect it, we know no more, than of That, in which he will come to Judgment. However, let us
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Matth. xi.
12.

2 Cor. x. 4.

All, as far as lies in our Power, contribute to this Great Event, and prepare the way for it. None of Us, I think, are now oblig'd to enter upon the *Mission*, and sacrifice our Lives, in order to spread the Gospel among the *Mahometans*, and *Heathens*: I say, None of us, I think, are now *oblig'd* to it, as not being arm'd with the Power of *Miracles*, requisite for such an Attempt. However, without hazarding our Lives, much may be done by us, both at Home and Abroad, towards encouraging and promoting so good a Work. And let us not blame, much less deride those Good Men (though of another Communion) whose honest Zeal hath carried them yet farther. Let us rather mention with Honour the Names of as many of them, as we can reasonably suppose to have been led into this Design by sincere Motives of advancing the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls, without aiming at By-Ends, or any Temporal Advantages; and let us wish, that the Reformation had not undergone just Reproaches for its Backwardness to promote so glorious an Enterprize: an Omission, not easily to be excus'd in such Protestant Nations, as have greatly enlarg'd their Traffick

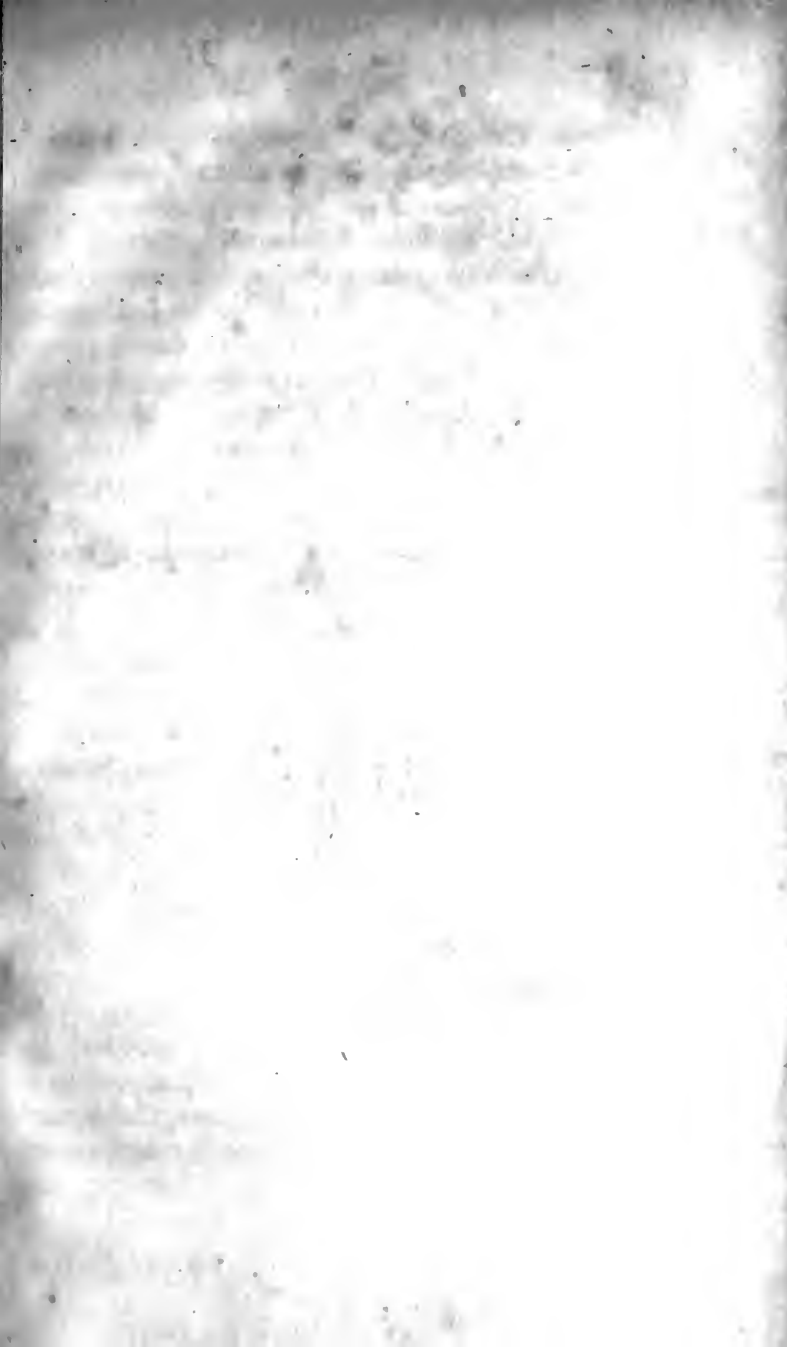
and Wealth, by the Productions of those Countries, wherein many poor Ignorant Savages dwell, who want only to be instructed in the saving Knowledge of *Christ*, in order to embrace it. But, *how shall they believe in Him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher?* It might justly be expected, that Those, who *had been partakers of the Carnal things of these Gentiles*, should have *ministred unto them in Spiritual things*; that, after enriching themselves by the Spoils of those Provinces (which I know not what Right they had to invade, and conquer) they should at least have made them that charitable Return of planting the Gospel among them; a Work, of greater Importance, and Service to the the Publick, than all their other *Plantations*.

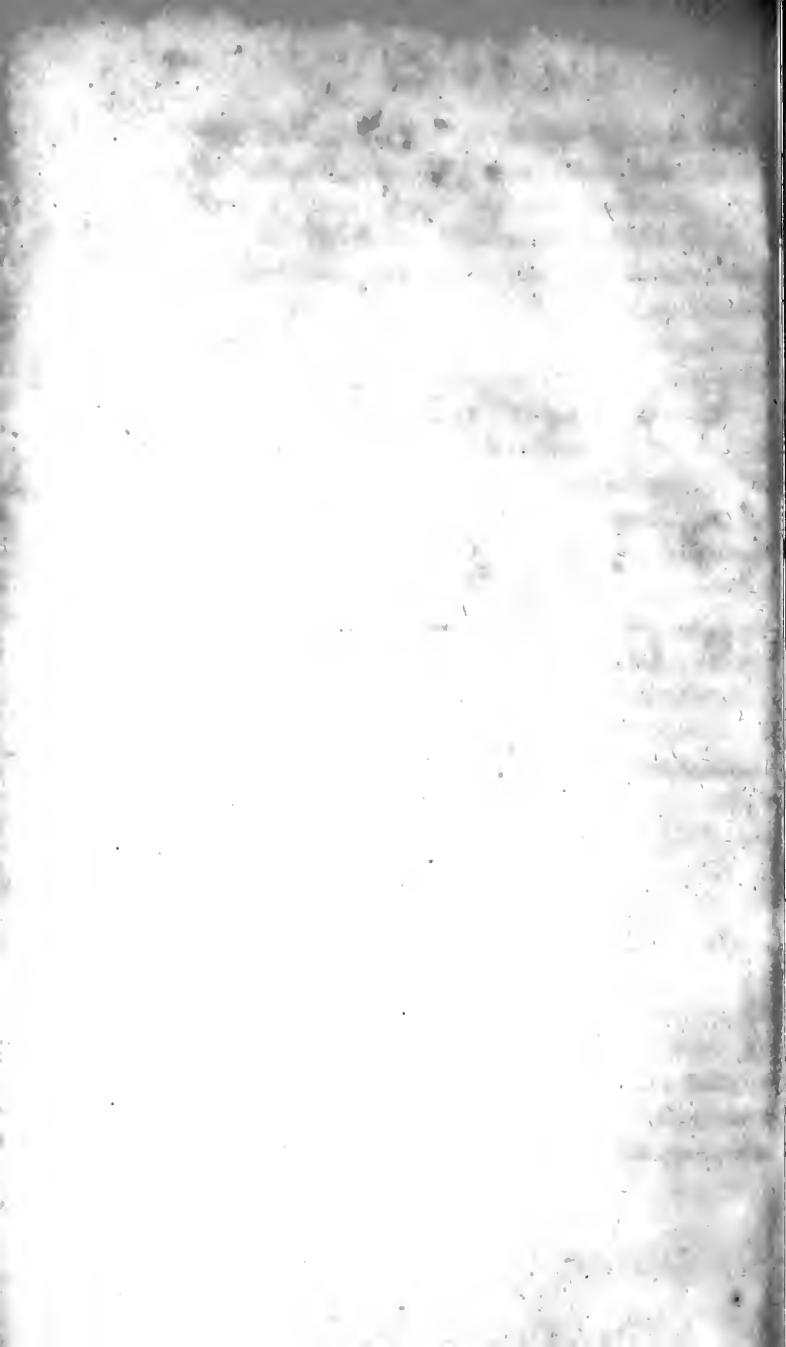
But this is a Reflection, in which, perhaps few, if any, that hear me, are concern'd. To conclude, therefore, Let every One of us, in our several Places and Stations, do our best to promote the Kingdom of *Christ* within us, by promoting the Love and Practice of Evangelical Purity, and Holiness; and let us likewise frequently put up our most ardent Requests for the Enlargement of his

Vifi-

Visible Administration without us; beseeching God, in the Words of our Church, that he would please, of his Gracious Goodness, shortly to accomplish the Number of his Elect, and to hasten the Kingdom of his Dear Son!

To Him, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascrib'd all Honour, Dominion and Might, now and for ever!
Amen.





A Scornor Incapable of True Wisdom.

A
 S E R M O N
 Preach'd before the
 Q U E E N
 A T
 W H I T E - H A L L.

October 28. 1694.

PROVERBS xiv. 6.

*A Scornor seeketh Wisdom, and findeth
 it not.*

IT is the Wisest among the Children
 of Men, who speaks; and about That,
 which most nearly concerns Us, and He
 best understood, even the Method of at-
 taining True Wisdom; It becomés us,
 L there-

therefore, to give the most fixt and ferious Attention, we can, to what he is saying.

A Scornor, saith he, *seeketh Wisdom, and findeth it not.* Where we are, first, to enquire, Who it is, that is represented to us, under the Character of a *Scornor*; and, then, in what Sense he is said to *seek Wisdom, but not to find it.*

The *Scornor* is One, who is frequently mention'd in this Book of *Proverbs*; and against whom the Author of it hath levell'd no small Number of his Apophthegms, and wise Sayings. We find in the *Psalms*, and *Prophetick* Writings also, many Glances at him, many Complaints of him: so that the Nation of the *Jews* did, it seems, abound mightily with this Sort of Men; and they were a Great and Particular Grievance to the Followers of True Piety and Wisdom.

Their Character seems, in short, to have been This. They were Men, that, with much ado, had made a shift to get rid of Good Principles, and such stiff Opinions, as they found inconsistent with a Loose Practice. As they had not any Religion themselves, so their Way was to despise Those who had; to look down with

with Pity and Contempt upon a poor deluded Under-World; Beasts of Burthen that follow'd, in a Track, after their Leaders; Slaves to receiv'd Rules, and Precarious Opinions, to Foolish Empty Forms and Observances; but who never once reason'd freely, or thought for Themselves. They were unfortunately fallen into a Time, when frequent Commotions hapned in the *Jewish* State (as the Case remarkably was, in the Age before *Solomon* came to the Throne) and had seen several Sorts of Men uppermost, and, consequently, several Notions of things prevailing by Turns. This contributed mightily to unsettle their Thoughts, or (as They call'd it doubtless) to *enlarge* them; to create in them a slight Opinion of the Eternal Differences of Right and Wrong, Good and Evil; and to make them laugh at Those, who were Eager on any Side, or for any Cause whatsoever, which they did not get by.

They evidently saw that Some, who sat up for greater Purity, and a Demurer Shew and Face of Religion than their Neighbours, were really Counterfeits, and meant nothing, at the bottom, but Their own Interest. And they wisely resolv'd, upon this, that All Religion

was, like Theirs, a Convenient Trick and Pretence only; invented by Cunning men to keep silly People in awe, to make Princes Reign safely, and the Priesthood Live Easily. But as for Them; they knew better things than to fall in with the Herd, and to give themselves up to be ridden by the Tribe of *Levi*; the Poorest and most Contemptible Tribe of the Twelve, which had no Lot, no Inheritance among their Brethren; but liv'd upon the Cheat of Sacrifices and Offerings, and upon driving a Gainful Traffick for the Good Things of This World, here paid down to them, by promising, and preaching up to Those they dealt with, a Recompence in a World to come.

Nor were these men content to enjoy this Secret, which they had thus found out, quietly among themselves; but set up openly for Profelytes, and a Party; for running down all Religion, and for laughing Piety and Virtue out of Countenance: so that a Good and Honest Man was sure to be their Mark, wherefoever they found him; and they were ever *shooting their Arrows* against him, even *Bitter Words*. And this was come to that pass, that the True Servants of
 God

God did almost sink under the Affliction; and did make it matter of Publick Request to God in the Solemn Service of the Church, to be freed from it: — *Have mercy upon us, O Lord, said They, have mercy upon us, for we are exceedingly filled with Contempt. Our Soul is exceedingly filled with the Scorning of Those that are at Ease, and with the Contempt of the Proud.* Ps. cxviii.
35 1.

This is, in some measure, the Character of That man, who, in the Language of the Text, is call'd *A Scornor*; and You see now, in what Sense he is said to *seek Wisdom*, but *not to find it*. For the meaning of these Expressions is plainly this; That He pretends to know more, and to see farther, than the rest of mankind; to have made freer Enquiries after Truth, and to have shaken off the Prejudices of Education more thoroughly: He sets up for examining things to the bottom, without taking them upon Trust, or relying on the Authority of any Man. What God is pretended to have said in the Holy Writings, what Wise and Good Men have said in all Ages, and Countries of the World, he is not much concern'd to know. To the *Oracles of Right Reason* he goes, (by Right Reason always meaning his Own), and from thence he enquires,

what he is to think, and to do; raises some Fanciful Scheme of things to himself, frames some Particular Set of Opinions; and then rejoices in the mighty Discovery he hath made, and wonders at the Rest of the World, that they do not fall in with it, and adore it. Now these Pretences, the Wise-man tells us, are vain, and these Searches are vain; he hath taken a great deal of pains, only to be out of the way, and to miss the mark which he aims at: *A Scorners seeketh Wisdom, and findeth it not.*

Having thus largely open'd the Sense of the Text, I shall endeavour, in what follows, to justify the Truth of the Observation contain'd in it, by shewing you, how it comes to pass, that the Men, who thus set up for a more than ordinary pitch of Wisdom and Sense, by Contemning Religion, and Deriding the Professors of it, do always, and must always, fail of the End which they propose to themselves; since, whatever Abilities they may have in Other matters, yet they are the most unqualified and incapable, of all men, to make impartial Enquiries after Divine Truth, and to discern between That and Error,

There

There are *Four* things, which particularly unfit a Man for such a Task, a very *Proud*, or a very *Suspicious* Temper; *False Wit*, or *Sensuality*. And These are the Chief and Prevailing Ingredients in the Composition of that man, whom we call a *Scorner*. The Two Last do generally, and in most instances, belong to him; but the Two First are Essential to him, and inseparable from him.

Pride is that Ruling Quality which, of all others, seems to take the fastest Hold of him; *Proud and Haughty* Scorners is his *Name*, says *Solomon*, elsewhere. And again, *There is a Generation, O how lofty are their Eyes! and Their Eylids lifted up!* The truth is, there never was, nor ever can be a settled Contempt of Religious Principles, that is not built upon *Pride*, *i. e.* upon an undue Value, which a Man hath for himself, and for his own Opinion, and a Disregard for every thing besides. And, therefore, the Author of (that Fantastical Book) the *Leviathan*, doth, at the very Entrance of it, very honestly, and in Terms confess, that he is a Man who *Loves his own Opinions*. And so, doubtless, doth every

I.

Prov. xxi
24.Prov. xxx
13.

Man too, who treads in His Steps, tho' he doth not own it so frankly, or perhaps know it so thoroughly. Indeed, a Modest Humble man can hardly bring himself once to think of shaking off common receiv'd Principles, and going against the United Wisdom of mankind: or, if he should entertain, yet will he never venture to publish that Thought; but will conceal it, as carefully as he would his own Bosom Infirmity, or the Secret of his Friend. 'Tis the Presumptuous and Proud man alone, who dares to trample on those Truths, which the rest of the World reverence; and can sit down quietly in the assurance, that He alone is in the Right, and all Mankind beside in the Wrong.

Now, I say, as there is no One Quality, that sticks more closely to a Scornor than that of Pride, so is there none that doth more evidently obstruct right Reasoning, and an impartial Search after Truths of all kinds, especially those which relate to Vertue and Piety. And no wonder, therefore, if, on This Account, the Scornor, tho' he *seek Wisdom, yet findeth it not.* Pride makes a man seem sufficient in his own Eyes for all manner of Speculations and Inquiries: and, therefore,

fore, puts him indifferently upon the pursuit of all Knowledge, and the determination of all Doubts, without giving him Leave to distrust himself in the least, or once to consider, which way his Genius and Abilities lie. Hence it happens, that the Man, not being duly Qualified for Every Search, or, if he were, yet not having leisure and opportunity enough to go through with it, is fain to take up with slight and superficial accounts of things; and then, what he wants in true Knowledge, to make up in downright Assurance. As soon as he hath touch'd on any Science, or Study, he immediately seems to himself to have master'd it; is as Positive in his Opinions, and as hardy in his Assertions, as if the Thoughts of his whole Life had been directed That way only: which is, as if a Coaster, who hath gone from Port to Port only, should pretend to give a better description of the Inland Parts of a Country, than Those who have travell'd it all over. But this, I say, is the mischievous Nature of Pride; it makes a Man Grasp at every thing, and, by Consequence, comprehend nothing effectually and throughly; and yet (which is worst of all) inclines him to despise and contradict

tradict those that do. It gives him just enough Understanding, to raise an Objection, or a Doubt ; but not enough to lay it : which, as it is the meanest and most despicable, so it is also the most dangerous State of mind, a man can be in ; and by so much the more dangerous, as the Subject, upon which his Enquiries turn, is more important, and the Errors more fatal which he runs into, for want of a due knowledge of it. He that is but Half a Philosopher, is in danger of being an Atheist ; an Half-Physician is apt to turn Empiric ; an Half-Bred man is conceited in his Address, and troublesome in his Conversation. Thus it is in all matters of Speculation, or Practic ; He that knows but a little of them, and is very confident of his own strength, is more out of the way of True Knowledge, than if he knew nothing at all. Now there is, I say, a Natural Tendency in Pride, towards putting a Man's mind into such a Situation as this ; and, therefore, it must needs be a Quality very opposite to the Search and Attainment of True Wisdom.

And then, supposing a Proud man to be once in the Wrong, it is scarce possible that he should ever be set right again ; he is plac'd

plac'd above the reach of that great means of amendment, Reproof; *A Scorners hear-eth not rebuke*, says *Solomon*: and, therefore, as his Pride led him into a mistake at first, so will it be sure to keep him there; and to harden him in his way, against whatever wise men can think, or say of him.

Prov. xiii.

1.

Thus, I say, is Pride an Enemy to the Knowledge of Truth in general; but most of all doth it hinder men from discerning Sacred Truth, and the Doctrines of Reveal'd Religion. A Proud man is very hardly brought to digest the Humble Duties of the Cross, or to admit a belief of the Mysteries of Christianity: the One are too low for him, and he cannot stoop to the Practice of them; the other are too high for his Understanding, and he desires to be excus'd from entertaining any Proposition as true, which he doth not perfectly comprehend. If he cannot give himself a certain plain account, in what Manner, and to what End God did a thing; he wisely resolves, that therefore he did it not at all. If he hath not as clear an Idea of every Term in an Article of Faith, as he hath of those in a Mathematical Proposition; 'tis presently unphilosophical, absurd, and foolish; in-
vented

vented by Those, whose Interest it is, to puzzle mens Understandings, that they may have their Wills and Affections at their Service.

- II. And This puts Us in mind also of that *Second Great Ingredient* in the Character of a Scornor, which we propos'd to consider; a strange and unreasonable degree of *Suspicion*, by which he doubts of every thing he hears, and distrusts every man he converses with; imagines the World to be all Cheat and Imposture; that there is no Sincerity, no Honesty any where; but that every man is continually studying how to put a Trick upon his Neighbour. Without this Temper (it might be easily prov'd that) a man cannot bring himself to run down Religion, and the Professors of it; and, with it, it is impossible, I think, to arrive at True Wisdom. Indeed, to be Cautious, and upon our Guard, in receiving Doctrines, and not easily to give up our assent to every Tale that is told us, is a Point of great Prudence, and very requisite, in such a multiplicity of Opinions as there is in the world, to preserve us from Error. But then, we may carry this point too far; we may be so scrupulous

pulous and circumspect in admitting the Testimonies of men, as to reject some Good Witnesses among several Bad ones; and to deceive our Selves often times, for very fear of being deceiv'd by Others. A General undistinguishing Suspicion is altogether as apt to mislead a man, as a too Easie and Unwary Credulity. And to this Excess a Scornier is naturally inclin'd: He is so possess'd with the Notion of *Priest-Craft*, and *Pious Frauds*, as to apply it indifferently to all Religions, and to Every thing in Religion; He is so afraid of having his Understanding impos'd upon, in Matters of Faith, that he stands equally aloof from all Propositions of that kind, whether True, or False: which is, as if a Man should refuse to receive any Money at all, because there is a great deal goes about that is False and Counterfeit; or resolve not to make a Friendship or Acquaintance with any man, because many men are not to be trusted. Certainly this is a very great Instance of Folly; and, in what Breast soever it harbours, cannot but indispose a man extremely for the Study and Attainment of Religious Wisdom. An extremity of Suspicion, in an Inquirer after Truth, is like a Raging Jealousie in an Hus-

Husband, or a Friend; it leads a man to turn all his thoughts toward the ill-natur'd side, and to put the worst construction upon every thing; and (in consequence of that) for once that he is really in the Right, in his Guesses and Censures, to be very often, and very much in the Wrong.

- III. A *Third* part of the Character of that Man, whom we are describing, is, *False Wit*; or a Way of exposing things Sacred and Serious, by passing a bold Jest upon them, and Ridiculing arguments, instead of Confuting them. The very name of a *Scornor* will tell us, that This is One of his most belov'd Accomplishments: And, I am sure, it is Such an one, as can never help a man to procure right Impressions of things, and will scarce ever allow him to Improve, or Preserve them. Wit indeed, as it implies a certain uncommon Reach and Vivacity of Thought, is an Excellent Talent; very fit to be employ'd in the Search of Truth, and very capable of assisting us to discern and embrace it: but in the Way, in which the Scornor exerts it, the Way of Satyr and Prophane Drollery, it betrays a man into a Thousand Errors,

Errors, for One that it discovers to him. Men of Quick and Lively Parts are apt to give themselves a loose beyond plain Reason and Common Sense; and to say many things not exactly Right and True, in order to say somewhat New and Surprising. Their Great Aim is, in general, *to please*; and, in order to it, they must bend all their Wit that way, to which the Corrupt Nature of man is inclin'd, and be sure always to speak *against* that which is uppermost; I mean, the Opinions that are most General, and Prevailing. This gives them a Light and Trifling, instead of a Serious and Manly Frame of Spirit; and makes them think, they have answer'd all the Wisest Reasons that can be brought for any thing, if they have but clap'd a *Nickname* upon it, and dress'd up a Grave and Venerable Truth in so Odd a disguise, as to raise Mirth and Laughter from it. Thus a late Person, Eminent for Wit and Wickedness, till a Death-bed made him more Serious, and gave him truer apprehensions of things, us'd to please himself mightily with this Thought, that the doing of a Miracle was only another Phrase for the *shewing of a Trick*: and having once represented the thing to himself under

der such a light Image, he could hardly be brought to think reverently of it ever afterwards; or to allow the strongest Arguments which could be brought for the Truth of Miracles, a due and impartial Consideration. And thus also the great Leader of the Libertines of this Age (whom we have already had occasion to mention), made sport with the Doctrine of the *Divinity* of Christ, by Translating, after an Absurd Manner; the Greek Word $\Delta\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\omicron\varsigma$, (which *S. John* applies to Him) and assuring us, that That Appellation given to our Saviour, was, in Our Tongue, as much as to say, the *Verb of God*. And this vain and blasphemous Criticism he thought sufficient to overthrow a prime Article of the Christian Faith. In the same manner he pretended to Ridicule the Doctrine of Grace, by enquiring into the meaning of Two Words, generally us'd by Divines concerning it, to wit, *Infusion*, and *Inspiration*; and by informing us, that they signified, in plain *English*, *Inpouring*, and *Inblowing*. I bring These Instances to shew, how far a Scorners may be led out of the Way of Truth, by a little Knack of playing upon Things and Words, which he mis-calls *Wit*; and upon which he shall value

love himself more, and be wiser in his own
Concept than *Seven Men that can render
a Reason.*

The *Fourth* and Last Thing, from
whence we propos'd to give an account
of his Deceptions, was *Sensuality*: and
whether This too doth not, for the most
part, accompany a Contempt of Reli-
gion, I appeal to the Observation and
Experience of every One that Hears me:
Look round the World, and you shall
feldom find a man Loose in his Princi-
ples, who is not so likewise in Manners.
There may possibly be, now and then
in an Age, an Instance of some Cold
Phlegmatic man, that shall set up for
overturning Religion and Morality,
merely for the sake of Contradiction, or
to get himself a Name by it, without the
design of Indulging his Own Appetites,
in so doing: But this is a very Rare
Case; generally the *Scorners* are, as S.
Peter and S. *Jude* have in their several
Epistles, agreed to describe them, *Men,*
who walk after their own Lusts. Accord-
ingly, we may observe, that this Scorn-
ing Humor hath been most prevalent in
Those Ages of the World, in which the
Love of Pleasure, and the Arts of Ease
M and

IV.

² Pet. iii.
³ Jude xiii.

and Luxury did most abound; and is commonly Incident to Men, at that Time of their Lives, when their Lusts are most ungovern'd, and their Blood boils hottest. 'Tis chiefly the Young Robust Sinner that indulges himself in it, *whilst* he is in the midst of his Enjoyments: for tho' a Man may continue in the Practice of this Impious Folly to the very end of his Life, yet the Habit it self is generally form'd much Earlier.

Now the Sensual Man is, of all men living, the most Improper for enquiries after Truth, and the least at Leisure for it. He is never Sedate and Cool; and, therefore, not able to fix his attention to a Point, and go through with it. He is never Disinteressed and Impartial; and, therefore, not capable of deliberating Freely. He is already under the Dominion and Power of his own Lusts; and perhaps likes to be so, and is very unwilling to shake off his Chains. Now such a Man, so qualified, is, no doubt, a very incompetent Judge of Divine Truth, and very unfit to consider the Pleas that are brought for it. His Search into These things is like to be with no great Evenness and Fairness; How can it, when he comes with strong Wishes
that

that he may find it all a mistake? Indeed, when a Man allows himself in all sorts of Impurities, and is determin'd to go on in them; and yet finds himself under the Troublesome Restraint of Principles, and the Dread of Religion, which hangs continually over him; the only way for him to pursue his Enjoyments, and yet be easie, is, to set his Face directly against the Doctrines of Religion; that give him any check or disturbance, and resolve to get rid of them as soon as he can. And he may put the Thoughts, which arise in him upon This occasion, together, and make a Book of them, if He pleases; and then tell us, that This is a sober Enquiry after Truth, and a free discussion of the Point in debate; but there is nothing of That in it: He thinks of Truth, just as a man doth of his Enemy, with Spite and Anger, and a Design only of finding out whatever may blast and expose it. This is a strange contumelious way of treating Divine things; and would tempt even a Good man to return the affronts done to Vertue and Piety, by opening the Characters of Those who do them; in which we should commonly find; that Sensuality and Looseness of Life had a very great and particular

cular share. But Some Men, who Write Pretended *Histories of Religion*, are beholding to the Real Religion of Others, that Their Histories are not written.

Thus have I run through those four several Properties which remarkably belong to the Character of a *Scornor*; and shewn You, how Each of them contributes to misinform and mislead Him in his pursuit of Wisdom; so that, supposing him really and in good Earnest to *seek* it, yet, thus setting out, and thus Qualified, it is not at all probable that he should *find* it.

And now the Plain and Obvious Use we are to make of this Discourse, is, to satisfy our selves from hence, how it hath come to pass, that the True Religion, all along, in the several Ages of the World, hath not been entertain'd by many of the seemingly Wittiest and Wisest among the children of Men. To This startling Question we can now give a Short and Easie Answer, from the Observation of the Text; *They were Scornors*. They were either *Proud* and Opinionative Men, that could not endure to learn plain humble Lessons of Piety and Goodness, especially

cially from Such as they had no esteem of, no value for. Or their Minds were tainted with an ill-natur'd, and unreasonable *Suspicion*, which, from finding out Some Cheats in Religion, led them to pronounce All Religion a Cheat. They had a Talent, perhaps, at *Ridiculing* honest Rules and Maxims, and making Sport with things Sacred and Serious; and, therefore, to have own'd any fix'd Scheme of Religious Principles, would have been a mighty Damp to their Imaginations, and have taken away from them the Subject of above half their Wit and Pleasantness. Or, Lastly, They were Men of *Sensual* and *Impure Lives*, who were resolv'd to make their Opinions and their Pleasures as consistent as they could; and who therefore were oblig'd, in point of interest, to disbelieve every thing that made against them.

This is the Short and True Account of the Matter; and will appear to be so, if we cast our Eyes backward on the Story of the World, and consider, Who they have been, that have rejected the True Religion, all along from the Creation down to this Time.

In the Old World, *Noah*, Who was the only man that preserv'd the Worship of

the True God in his Family, seems to have been an honest plain-hearted man; *Gen. vi. 9. just and perfect in his Generation,* (as he is describ'd in Scripture) *and walking with God.* The Rest of the World are said to have Eaten and Drunken, to have Married and been given in Marriage, *i. e.* They were men, who liv'd in all the Enjoyments of Sense, who revell'd, and took their fill of all the Good things of this World; and, to be sure, were very Merry, and very Bitter upon those who did not. How did they deride that Grave Preacher of Righteousness, and his Precise Family, when He and his Sons talk'd to them of Righteousness, Temperance and Judgment! especially, when he told them that there was Such a Flood coming, and that he was building That Ark to preserve himself and his Household, what a Jest was he to the Men of Parts and Pleasure! How many Scornful and Gay things were said upon this Occasion, while the Work went forward, by Those, who thought themselves very Wise, and Him very Foolish! But the Fountains of the great Deep were broken up, and the Windows of Heaven open'd; and Then they began to change their Opinions, when (alas!) it was too late to learn.

In the next great Period after the Flood, the true Religion was confin'd to the single Nation of the *Jews*: and one may think it strange, at first sight, that, if it were the True Religion, it should be so confin'd; that the wise and knowing part of Mankind should not discern the strength of the Evidence that was brought for the Divine Original of the Law of *Moses*, nor receive the God of *Israel* for Their God. But, if We consider a little farther, we shall be satisfied, that the true reason of Mens Infidelity, throughout this long Period of time, was, a Mean and Contemptuous Notion they had entertain'd of the *Jewish* People, and of their Rites and Ceremonies. The Wise Men of the East, in the Earliest Ages, and the Philosophers of the West, in Later Times, had too high an Opinion of themselves, and too low an one of that Little, Narrow-soul'd, Superstitious Nation, to submit themselves to be taught by them. The *Jews* were a Proverb and a By-word to the rest of the World, the perpetual Subject of their Scorn and Reproach: And who can think (may we suppose one of those Wise Heathens to have said) that Truth should lie hid among such an *Odd* sort of People, in such a little Spot of the World?

1 Cor. 1.
23.

And thus, again, when Christianity first appear'd, it made no great Progress among the Disputers of this World, among the Men of Wit and Subtlety, for this very Reason; *because* they were Scorners. The Gospel was to the *Jews* (to the most Learned and Proud Sect among the *Jews*, the *Pharisees*) a *Stumbling-block*; and to those of highest Repute among the *Greeks*, *foolishness*. The Great pretenders to knowledge every where unanimously contemn'd and derided it, as a poor and low Systeme of Principles; and could never once think of humbling their minds, to entertain the Simplicity of the Gospel.

How should the Great Lords of the Earth, who swarm in all the Delights of Sense, and thought themselves born to enjoy them, submit to be talk'd out of their Pleasures and their Privileges by a few Ignorant Fishermen, and Tent-makers? The Story of the Propagation of the Gospel in *Jewry*, might perhaps make a part of the Conversation in the Court of *Tiberius*; it was, probably, such a Subject of Discourse to Them, as the *Quietists* in *Italy* were to Us, at their first appearing. The Novelty of the thing might occasion some Reflections, and En-

Enquiries : but it was not to be expected, that Men of Pleasure and Parts should give themselves the Trouble of Examining nicely into the Pretensions with which this New Religion set up, or of considering, in good Earnest, whether they ought to become Profelytes to it.

We are not to wonder, therefore, if, in some Ages after Christianity, we find not much said to the advantage of it, in the Writings of those Eminent *Greeks* and *Romans*, who are allow'd to have been the best Masters of Polite Thought and Expression. Alas! *Porphry* must have been contented to confess the Vanity of Philosophy, and *Lucian* must in great measure have foregone his Skill in Satyr ; The Witty Libertines of those Times must have parted with much of the Esteem they had, and with most of their Pleasures, if they had once admitted the Truth of Christianity : and, therefore, they agreed in running down the Reputation of That, lest they should lose their Own.

And, as it was immediately after our Saviour's coming, so hath it been ever since, to this very day. The Doctrines of the Cross have never in any Age met, nor will they ever in any future Age meet

A Scorners Incapable

meet with a kind and hearty Reception, among Those, who *sit in the Seat of the Scorners.*

But let us not Therefore be dejected, because there are Many, whom the World esteems, who yet esteem not Us, and Our Holy and Undeiled Religion! Neither let us suspect our selves, as being out of the way and impos'd upon, because Men of a greater Reach, perhaps, and of a more improv'd Understanding than We, are not of Our Mind. *Solomon*, who was certainly a Man of Understanding, and who was of our Mind; doth, in a very few Words (which I cannot repeat too often) afford us a full and comfortable Solution of the Case; *A Scorners* (saith he) *seeketh Wisdom, and findeth it not.*

From the Account of Former Times it appears to us, that thus it always *hath been*; and from reflections on the Nature of Man, that thus it necessarily *must be*: and, therefore, let us possess our Souls in Patience and Peace; and go on in the plain Paths of Godliness and Honesty, without Turning to the Right, or to the Left, for whatever Men scornfully-Witty can say of us, or to us.

Prov. iii.

34.

Let us beg of Him, *who scorneth the Scorners, but giveth Grace unto the Lowly,*
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let us beg of him to Bestow on us, to Preserve, and Increase in us that *serious and humble* Frame of Spirit, which alone can qualifie us for a Right Apprehension of the Truths and Mysteries of the Gospel; and which is, therefore, certainly Preferable to all Other Endowments of Mind, however the World may have misplac'd the greatest part of it's Esteem upon them.

And let us, in order to this end, frequently take to our selves the humble Words of the *Son of Syrach*, and say; *O Lord, Father and God of my Life, give me not a proud Look; but turn away from Thy Servant always an haughty Mind! Turn away from me vain Hopes and Concupiscence, and thou shalt hold him up that is desirous always to serve thee! Let not the Greediness of the Belly, nor Lust of the Flesh take hold of me; and give not over Me thy Servant to an Impudent Mind!*

Eccelus.
xxiii. 4.
5, 6.

And as for Those, who contemn Us, and Our Narrow Principles, and who makes us their Derision daily, let us (in the Words of the Apostle) *not cease to make mention of them in our Prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto them*

Eph. i. 16,
17, 18.

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A Scorner Incapable

the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation to the Acknowledgment of him : The Eyes of their Understanding being enlightned, that they may know, what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints.

A
DISCOURSE

Occasion'd by the

DEATH

Of the Right Honourable

The Lady CUTTS.

A. D. MDCXC VIII.

ECCLES. VII. 2.

It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to go to the House of Feasting: for that is the End of All men; and the Living will lay it to heart.

THE first Step towards Happiness is, to correct our false Opinions concerning it, by learning to esteem every thing,

thing, not according to that Rate and Value, which the World, or our own mistaken Imaginations may have plac'd upon it, but according to that which in it self, and in the accounts of right Reason and Religion, it really bears.

The Preacher therefore hath, in this Chapter, lay'd together a Set of Religious Paradoxes; which, however they may startle and shock us a little, upon the first hearing, yet, when closely examin'd, will appear to be clear unquestionable Truths, by which the whole course of our Lives ought to be steer'd and govern'd.

In the first Verse of this Chapter (the Verse before the Text) he tells us, that *a Good Name is better than precious Ointment, and the Day of one's Death than the Day of one's Birth.* *A Good Name is better than precious Ointment; i. e.* rich Oils, and sweet Odors, (in the use of which the People of the East much delighted) are not half so grateful, or valuable, as a good Reputation, well founded: This is more truly fragrant, more diffusive of its influence, more durable: it gives a man greater comfort and refreshment, while he is Living; and preserves him, when Dead, better than the most precious Embalmings. And

And agen, *The day of one's Death is better than the day of one's Birth; i. e. the day of the Death of such an one, as possesses and deserves a Good Name; of such an one, as hath liv'd well, and dy'd well; is preferable by far to the day of his Birth: for it gives him admittance into a State of perfect rest and tranquillity, of undisturb'd joy and happiness; whereas the Day of his Birth was only an Inlet into a troublesome World, and the beginning of sorrows.*

And then it follows, very naturally, in the words of the Text, that *It is better also to go to the House of Mourning, than to go to the House of Feasting.* As Death to a Good man is more advantageous than Life; so to a Wise man the Contemplation of the First is more desirable than all the Enjoyments of the Latter: He had much rather be present at the sad Solemnities of a Funeral, than partake of those Festival Rejoycings, which are usual in all Nations, but especially among the *Jews*, at the Birth of a Child.

Hard Doctrine this, to the Men of Liberty and Pleasure! who have said to themselves, *Come on, let us enjoy the things that are present, let us fill our selves with*
costly,

costly Wine and Ointments, and let no Flower of the Spring pass by us; let us crown our selves with Rose-buds before they be wither'd: Hard Doctrine, I say, it is to such men as These; and which will run the hazard of not being entertain'd by them. The Wise man therefore hath condescended to prove, as well as assert it, and to back the severe Rule, he hath lay'd down, with very convincing Reasons: *for that,* says he, *is the End of all men, and the Living will lay it to heart.* As if he had said, This Dark and Melancholy State it will one day certainly come to Our share to try; and what must some time or other be undergone, ought to be consider'd beforehand: this is *the End of all men,* and all men therefore should have their Eye and their Thoughts upon it. And then farther — We are most of us so immers'd in the Pleasures, and so taken up with the Follies of Life, that we need all methods of reducing our stragling Thoughts and Desires, and of giving our selves a serious Frame and Composure of Mind: and of all Methods, this of repairing to the House of Mourning is best adapted to that Good End, and will soonest and most effectually bring it about; *The Living will lay it to heart.*

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I have largely explain'd the Connexion and Meaning of the Words, which have been pitch'd upon to employ Your Thoughts on this mournful Occasion. The next thing should be, to excite You to a compliance with the Direction there given, by the particular Arguments suggested in the Text, and by several other powerful and moving Considerations: to prove to You the Folly and Emptiness of a Life led all in Mirth, and Jollity, and Pleasure; the Wisdom and Reasonableness of shifting the Scene sometimes, of turning the Gloomy side of things towards our selves, of exchanging *the House of Feasting* for *the House of Mourning*, and of making a discreet and decent use of those sad Opportunities of Reflection, which God, mercifully severe, is pleas'd to put into our hands.

But I am prevented in this part of my Discourse by the Pious Design of this present Assembly: You are already doing that which I should recommend to You from the Text; paying the Tribute of Your Tears to the Memory of One, whose Worth You knew, and whose Loss You sensibly feel; and bewailing Her, under the different Characters She bore of a Wife, a Daughter, a Relation, a Mistress, a Friend.

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All,

All, therefore, I have to do, on this occasion, is, to fall in with Your Pious Grief, already rais'd, and to bear a part in it, by dwelling together with You a while on the Character of that *Incomparable Lady*, whose Death we lament; by uniting, as well as I am able, the scatter'd parts of it, and recalling to Your Thoughts at once the several Excellencies and Perfections of which it was compos'd: which made her belov'd and reverenc'd by You while Living, and will make her Memory ever Dear and Desirable to You, now she is Dead; and which rais'd her above the greatest part of her Sex, much more than any Outward Marks of Rank and Distinction.

It is now, after her Decease, a fit time to speak of her in those Terms of Respect which she deserv'd: for in her Life-time she would not suffer it, and took some pains to avoid it; hiding as many of her Vertues as she could from Publick Observation, and so behaving her self in the practice of those she could not hide, as shew'd, she had no mind to be told of them: discountenancing, as far as lay in her power, that odious and designing Flattery, which, through the wicked Fashion of an Insincere World, is now
thought

thought to be a kind of Customary Debt due to her Sex, and almost a necessary part of good Breeding.

But, tho' the Living can seldom be prais'd with Decency, yet the Dead certainly often may; especially such of the Dead, as had a very unusual Degree of indifference and unconcernedness for what was said to their advantage, while they were Living.

There is a Publick Homage due to Desert, if we take a proper Season of paying it; and the Ministers of the Gospel, who are entrusted with so many Methods of promoting Piety in the World, are, among the rest, entrusted with This, of *giving Honour where Honour is due*; and of truly representing to the Minds of men such shining Patterns of Vertue, as are most likely to engage their Attention, and provoke their Imitation: It is Our immediate and particular Employment to Praise God; and it doth, no doubt, in some measure also belong to us, to praise those that are Like him.

And now how shall I enter upon this fruitful Argument? What Particular of her comprehensive Character shall I first chuse to insist on? Let us determine our

selves to begin there, where she always began, at her Devotions. In These she was very Punctual and Regular: Morning and Evening came not up more constantly in their Course, than her stated Hours of Private Prayer; which she observ'd not formally, as a Task, but return'd to them always with desire, delight, and eagerness. She would on no occasion dispense with her self from paying this Duty; no Business, no common Accident of Life could divert her from it: She esteem'd it her great Honour and Happiness, to attend upon God; and she resolv'd to find Leisure for That, for whatever else she might want it.

How she behav'd her self in these Secret Transactions between God and her own Soul, is known to Him alone whom She worship'd: but, if we may guess at her Privacies by what was seen of her in Publick, we may be sure, that she was full of Humility, Devotion, and Fervency; for so she remarkably was always, during the time of Divine Service. Her Behaviour was then very devout and solemn, and yet the most decent, easie, and unaffected, that could be; there was nothing in it either negligent and loose, or extravagant and strain'd: it was through-

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out such, as declar'd it self not to be the work of the Passions, but to flow from the Understanding, and from a clear knowledge of the true Grounds and Principles of that her Reasonable Service.

This Knowledge she attain'd by early Instructions, by much Reading, and Meditation, (to which she appear'd from her Childhood to be addicted) and, give me leave to add, by a very diligent and exact attendance on the Lessons of Piety which were utter'd from the Pulpit; which no one practis'd better, because no one delighted in, listen'd to, or consider'd more. For, at these Performances, she was all Attention, all Ear; She kept her Heart fix'd and intent on its holy Work, by keeping her Eye from Wandring.

It was her misfortune indeed, that the Exemplariness of her Behaviour call'd off the Eyes of several to observe it; but more Her and Their misfortune, that, when they had seen it, and satisfi'd their Curiosity, they did not go on also to imitate it. She often express'd her dissatisfaction at that Indecency of Carriage which universally prevails in our Churches; and wonder'd that They should be most careless of their Beha-

viour towards God, who are most scrupulously nice in exacting and paying all the little Decencies that are in use among Men.

When the Bread of Life was distributed, she was sure to be there, a devout and never-failing Communicant; and the strictness of her Attention, and the reverence of her Behaviour were, if it were possible, rais'd and improv'd on those occasions: The lively Image of a Crucify'd Saviour, then exhibited, could not but make very moving impressions on a Mind that abounded with so much pious warmth and tenderness.

Books she took pleasure in, and made good use of; chiefly Books of Divinity, and Devotion; which she studied, and relish'd above all others. History too had very often a share in her reflections; and sometimes she look'd into pieces of pure Diversion and Amusement; whenever she found them written in such a way, as to be Innocently Entertaining. I need not tell You, to how narrow a choice she was, by this means, confin'd.

But of all Books, the Book of God was That, in which she was most delighted and employ'd; and which was never, for any considerable time, out of her hands. No doubt, she knew, and felt
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the great use and sweet influence of it, in calming her mind, and regulating her desires, and lifting up her thoughts towards Heaven; in feeding and spreading that holy Flame, which the Love of God had kindled in her Heart, and which she took care, by this means, to keep perpetually burning.

When she met with any thing there, or in any other pious Book, which would be of remarkable use to her in the conduct of her Life and Affairs, she trusted not her Memory with it; not even that excellent Memory, which she safely trusted with things of lesser moment; but immediately committed it to Writing. Many Observations of this kind she hath left, drawn from good Authors, but chiefly from those Sacred Pages; in collecting which, whether her Judgment, or her Piety had the largest share, it is not easie to say.

The Passages of Holy Writ which she took notice of, were indeed commonly such, as related either to the Concerns of her Spiritual Estate, or to Matters of Prudence: but it appears also that she spent some time in meditating on those places where the sublimest Points of Christian Doctrine are contain'd, and in pos-

A Discourse on the Death

nessing her self with a deep sense of the wonderful Love of God towards us, manifested in the mysterious Work of our Redemption; for she had something more than what, in the Language of this loose age, is call'd, *a Lady's Religion*. She endeavour'd to understand the great Articles of Faith, as well as to practise the good Rules of Life, contain'd in the Gospel; and she sensibly found, that the best way to excite her self to the practice of the one, was to endeavour to understand the other:

And in this Book of God she was more particularly conversant on God's day; a Day ever held sacred by her, and which, therefore, always in her Family wore a Face of Devotion suitable to the Dignity of it. It was truly a Day of Rest to all under her Roof: her Servants were then dismiss'd from a good part of their attendance upon her, that they might be at liberty to attend on their great Lord and Master, whom both She, and They, were equally bound to obey. There was such a Silence and Solemnity at that time observ'd by all about her, as might have become the *House of Mourning*; and yet so much Ease and Serenity visible in their Looks (at least in Her Looks there was)

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as shew'd, that They, who were in the *House of Feasting*, were not better satisfi'd. Thus did she prepare and dispose her self for the enjoyment of that perfect Rest, the celebration of that endless Sabbath, which she is now enter'd upon; thus did she practise beforehand upon Earth the Duties, the Devotions, the Customs, and Manners of Heaven.

To secure her proficiency in Vertue, she kept an exact Journal of her Life; in which was contain'd the History of all her Spiritual Affairs, and of the several Turns that happen'd in her Soul: a true, naked, impartial History! and yet, (which seldom happens in True ones) such an one, where the Person describ'd is not charg'd with many Blemishes and Failings. Alas for Us, that the Thread of it was no longer continu'd!

In this Glass she every day dress'd her Mind, to this faithful Monitor she repair'd for advice and direction; compar'd the past with the present, judg'd of what would be by what had been, observ'd nicely the several successive Degrees of Holiness she got, and of Humane Infirmary she shook off; and trac'd every single step she took onward in her way towards Heaven.

A Discourse on the Death

One would have imagin'd, that so much Exactness and Severity in private should have affected a little her publick Actions and Discourses, and have slid insensibly into her Carriage; and yet nothing could be more free, simple, and natural. She had the Reality, without the Out-side and Shew of strictness: all her Rules, all her Performances sat so well and gracefully upon her, that they appear'd to be as much her Pleasure as her Duty; She was, in the midst of them, perfectly easie to her self, and a delight to all that were about her: ever Cheerful in her Behaviour, but withal ever Calm and Even; her satisfaction, like a deep untroubled Stream, ran on, without any of that Violence, or Noise, which sometimes the shallowest Pleasures do most abound in.

However, Cheerful and Agreeable as she was, yet she never carried her good Humour so far, as to smile at a Prophane, an Ill-natur'd, or an Unmannerly Jest; on the contrary, in her highest Mirth, it made her remarkably Grave and Serious. She had an extraordinary nicety of temper as to all the least approaches to faults of that kind, and shew'd a very quick and sensible concern at any thing, which she
thought.

thought it did not become either Her to hear, or Others to say.

True Piety, which consists chiefly in an Humility and Submission of mind towards God, is attended always with Humility and Goodness towards his Creatures ; and so it was in this *Excellent Lady*. Never was there a more deep, and unfeign'd, and artless Lowliness of Mind seen in her Rank and Station : as far as she was plac'd above the most of the World, yet she convers'd as it were upon the level with all of them ; and yet, when she stoop'd the lowest towards them, she took care, even at that time, to preserve the respect that was due to her from them. She had so much true Merit, that she was not afraid of being look'd into, and therefore durst be familiar : and the effect of that familiarity was, that, by being better known, she was more lov'd and valu'd. Not only No one of her Inferiors ever came uneasie from her, (as hath been said of some Great ones) ; but no one ever went uneasie to her : so assur'd were all beforehand of her sweetness of Temper, and obliging Reception ! When she open'd her Lips, Gracious Words always proceeded from thence, and *in her Tongue*

was

was the Law of Kindness. Her Reservedness, and Love of Privacy, might possibly be misinterpreted sometimes for an Over-value of her self, by those who did not know her; but the least degree of acquaintance made all those Suspicions vanish. For, tho' her Perfections both of Body and Mind were very extraordinary, yet she was the only Person that seem'd, without any endeavour to seem, insensible of them. She was, 'tis true, in as much danger of being Vain, as great Beauty, and a good Natural Wit could make her: but she had such an over-balance of Discretion, that she was never in pain to have the one seen, or the other heard. Indeed, This was particular to her, and a very distinguishing part of her Character, that she never studied appearances, nor made any advances towards the Opinion of the World; being contented to *be* whatever was Good or Deserving, without endeavouring in the least to be *thought* so: and this, not out of any affected disregard to Publick Esteem, but meerly from a Modesty and easiness of Nature, which made her give way to others, who were more willing to be observ'd. And yet she had also her Hours of Openness and Freedom, when her Soul
eas'd

éas'd it self to Familiars and Friends; and then *out of the good Treasure of her Heart* what *good things* did she *bring forth*? and with what delight was she listned to by those who had the Happiness to converse with her? So that a doubt it is, whether she were most to be admir'd for what she did, or for what she did not say. It was wonderful that One, who, when she pleas'd, could discourse so fitly and so freely, should yet chuse to be silent on so many occasions; and it was surprizing that she, who was such a Lover of Silence, should, whenever she spake, charm all that heard her.

We may be sure, that, while she thus commanded her Tongue, she kept as strict and watchful a Guard upon her Passions; those especially of the Rough and Troublesome kind, with which she was scarce ever seen to be disquieted. She knew not what the Disorders of Anger were, even on occasions that might seem to justifie, if not to require it: as much as she hated Vice, she chose rather to look it out of countenance, than to be severe against it; and to win the bad over to the side of Virtue by her Example, than by her Rebukes.

Her

Her sweet Deportment toward Those who were with her, could be outdone by nothing but her tendernefs in relation to the Absent; whom she was sure to think, and speak as well of as was possible: and when their Character was plainly such, as could have no good Colours put upon it, yet she would shew her dislike of it no otherwise than by saying nothing of them. Neither her Good-nature, nor her Religion, neither her Civility, nor her Prudence, would suffer her to censure any one: She thought she had enough to do at home, in that way, without looking much abroad; and therefore turn'd the edge of all her reflections upon her self. Indeed she spar'd others as much as if she had been afraid of them, and her self as little, as if she had had many Faults that wanted mending: and yet, 'twas because she could, after the severest scrutiny, find no great harm in her self, that she could scarce be brought to suspect any in others.

Her Conversation might, for this reason, seem to want somewhat of that Salt and Smartness, which the ill-natur'd part of the World are so fond of; a Want, that she could easily have supply'd, would her Principles have given her leave: but her

her settled opinion was, that the Good Name of any one was too nice and serious a thing to be play'd with ; and that it was a foolish kind of mirth, which, in order to divert some, hurt others. She could never bring her self to think, that the only thing which gave Life and Spirit to discourse, was, to have some-body's faults the subject of it ; or, that the pleasure of a visit lay, in giving up the Company to one-another's Sport and Malice, by turns. And if These are the chief marks of Wit and Good-breeding, it must be confess'd that she had neither.

With all this Goodness, Gentleness, and Meekness of nature, she had at the same time a degree of Spirit and Firmness, unusual in her Sex ; and was particularly observ'd to have a wonderful presence of mind in any accident of danger : for Innocence and Courage are nearly ally'd, and even in the softest Tempers, where the one of these is in perfection, there will and must be a good degree of the other.

Shall I say any thing of that innate Modesty of Temper, and spotless Purity of Heart, which shone throughout her whole Life and Conversation ? a Quality, so strictly requir'd of her Sex, that it may
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be thought not so properly commendable in any of them to have it, as infamous to want it. However, in the most common and ordinary Graces there are uncommon Heights and Degrees; and it was the particular happiness of this *Lady* Remarkably to excel in every Vertue that belong'd to her; even in those, in which Christians of the lowest Attainments do in some degree Excel.

Shall I add, that this love of Purity was the Cause, why she banish'd her self from those Publick Diversions of the Town, at which it was scarce possible to be present, without hearing somewhat that wounded chaste Ears; and for which, she thought, no amends could be made to Vertue by any Degree of Wit, or Humour, with which, perhaps, they might otherwise abound. These Good Qualities, she knew, serv'd only to recommend the Poison, and make it palatable; and, therefore, she thought it a piece of service to other people, (who might perhaps be influenc'd by her Example) to stand off, tho' she her self were secur'd from the Infection. This, questionless, was One reason of her allowing her self in those dangerous Entertainments so sparingly; but it was but One of Many:
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She had really neither Relish, nor Leisure for them; nor for a thousand other things, which the World miscals Pleasures. Not that she wanted naturally a Taste for any thing of this kind; for her Apprehension was fine, and her Wit very good, and very ready at Command, whenever she pleas'd to exercise it: but she had turn'd her Thoughts so much towards things of Use and Importance, that matters of meer Pleasure grew flat and indifferent to her; She was so taken up with the care of improving her Understanding, and bettering her Life, in the discharge of the Offices necessary to her Rank, in the Duties of her Closet, and the Concerns of her Family, that she found, at the foot of the account, but little time (and had less mind) to give in to those vain Amusements.

She did not think it (as, I fear, it is too often thought) the peculiar Happiness and Privilege of the Great, to have nothing to do; but took care to fill every Vacant Minute of her Life with some useful or innocent Employment. The several Hours of the Day had their peculiar business allotted to them, (whether it were Conversation, or Work, Reading, or Domestick Affairs) each of which

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came

came up orderly in its turn; and was, as the the Wise-man speaks, (to be sure, under Her management it was) *beautiful in it's Season.*

And this Regularity of Hers, was free and natural, without Formality or Constraint; it was neither troublesome to Her, nor to those that were near her: when, therefore, any accident interven'd, it was interrupted at that time with as much ease as it was at other times practis'd: for among all her discretionary Rules, the chief was, to seem to have none; and to make those she had laid down to her self, give way always to Circumstances and Occasions.

She wrought with her own hands often, when she could more profitably, and pleasingly have employ'd her time in Meditation, or Books: but she was willing to set an Example to those, who could not; and she took care, therefore, that her Example should be well follow'd by all that were under her immediate influence: for she knew well, that the description of a Good Wife and a Perfect Woman in the *Proverbs*, (a Description which she much delighted in, and often read) was spent chiefly in commending that Diligence by which *She looketh well to the*

the ways of her Household, and eateth not the bread of Idleness: and she knew likewise also, that the Person, whose words these are said to be, was no less a Woman than the Mother of King Lemuel.

Diligence, and Frugality are Sisters: and She, therefore, who was so well acquainted with the one, was not likely to be a stranger to the other. She was strictly careful of her expences; and yet knew how to be Generous and to abound, when the occasion requir'd it. But of all ways of good management, she lik'd That the worst which shuts our hands to the Poor; towards whom she always shew'd her self very Compassionate and Charitable. Of the other delights, with which an high Fortune furnish'd her, she was almost insensible; but on This account she valu'd it, that it gave her an opportunity of pursuing the several pleasures of Beneficence, and of tasting all the sweets of Well-doing. *She deliver'd the Poor that cry'd, and the Fatherless, and Him that had none to help him: the Blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon her, and She caused the Widows heart to sing:* Very easie, sure, will this make her Audit at the great day of account; That Charity will, doubtless, be allow'd to

screen her few Infirmities and Faults; which is of Efficacy sufficient to *cover the multitude of Sins.*

In the exercise of this, and of all other Vertues, She was wonderfully Secret; endeavouring to come up, as near as she could, to the Rule of *not letting her right hand know what her left hand did.* And this Secrecy of hers she manag'd so well, that some of the most remarkable Instances of her Goodness were not known, till after her death; no, not by Him, who was partaker of all her Joys and Sorrows.

Retirement and Privacy she always lov'd, and therefore chose it, when, after the Death of a near Relation, who had the Care of Educating Her, she was at Liberty to have liv'd otherwise. From that Time to her Marriage, which was more than Three Years, she hid her self in the Country; having an early and settled aversion to the Noise and Inconveniences of a Town-life; and too little an opinion of her self, to think, that it was so much the interest of Vertue and Religion, as it really was, that she should be known and distinguish'd.

When, afterwards, she went to Court, (as it was necessary for Her sometimes to do)

do) she did it with an Air, which plainly shew'd, that she went to pay her Duty there, and not to delight her self in the Pomp and Glitter of that place. Had she gone thither soon enough, to see that *Good and Glorious Queen*, who was the Ornament of It, and of her Sex, she had been taken, we may presume, into her Intimacy : for their Minds were nearly ally'd, and their Characters, and Manners, and ways of Life not unlike; allowing for the difference of Stations.

I need not, I cannot well say more of her : and if, therefore, I have fallen short of her Character, (as I am sensible I have, in many parts of it, which are here mention'd, and in others, which are still left untouch'd) I desire, those particular Defects may be supply'd from this General Account; that she did not a little resemble *Her*, who was the Pattern of all that is Good and Amiable in Woman-kind.

Whether She had this excellent Pattern in her Eye, I am not able to say, when, soon after her Marriage, She declar'd to several Friends her thoughts, that Every Woman of Quality was as much more Oblig'd, as she was more Enabled

abled than other Women, to do Good in the World ; and that the shortest, and surest way of doing this was, to endeavour, by all means, to be as good a Christian, and as good a Wife, and as good a Friend, as was possible.

She endeavour'd to be all this, and she fell not far short of it : for she excell'd in all the Characters that belong'd to her, and was well nigh Equal to all the Obligations that she lay under : She was devout, without Superstition ; strict, without Ill-humour ; good-natur'd, without Weakness ; chearful, without Levity ; regular, without Affectation. She was, to her Husband, the best of Wives, the most agreeable of Companions, and most faithful of Friends ; to her Servants, the best of Mistresses ; to her Relations, extremely respectful ; to her Inferiors, equally obliging : and by all, that knew her either nearly, or at a distance, She was reckon'd, and confess'd to be one of the best of Women.

And yet all this Goodness, and all this Excellence, was bounded within the Compass of Eighteen Years, and as many Days : for no longer was she allow'd to live among us. She was snatch'd out of the World, as soon almost as she had made

made her appearance in it ; Like a Jewel of high price, juſt ſhewn a little, and then put up again ; and We were depriv'd of her by that time We had learnt to value her. But Circles may be compleat, tho' ſmall ; the Perfection of Life doth not conſiſt in the Length of it : if it did, Our Saviour, to be ſure, would not have dy'd ſo ſoon after Thirty.

Short as her Life was, ſhe had time enough to adorn the ſeveral States of Virginity and Marriage ; and to experience the Sadneſs of a kind of Widowhood too ; for ſuch ſhe accounted it, when her Lord was long abſent from her ; mourn'd aſ much, and refus'd as much to be comforted, till his Return.

As her Life was ſhort, ſo her Death was ſudden ; She was call'd away in haſte, and without any warning. One day ſhe droop'd, and the next ſhe dy'd ; nor was there many hours diſtance between her being very eaſie in this World, and very happy in another.

However, tho' She was ſeiz'd thus ſuddenly by Death, yet was She not ſurpriz'd ; for She was ever in preparation for it ; *her Loins girt*, (as the Scripture ſpeaks) *and her Lamp ready trimm'd, and burning* : The moment almoſt that She

A Discourse on the Death

was taken ill, she was just risen from her Knees, and had made an end of her Morning Devotions. And to such an One a sudden Death could be no misfortune. We pray, indeed, against it, because few, very few, are fit for it; and the Church is to proportion her Forms to the Generality of Christians: But where a Good Soul is in perfect Readiness, there the sooner the fatal Stroke is struck, the better; all Delays in this case, are uncomfortable to the Dying, as well as to those Friends who survive 'em.

In truth, she could not be call'd away more hastily, than she was willing to go. She had been us'd so much to have *her Conversation in Heaven*, and her Soul had been so often upon the wing thither, that it readily left it's Earthly Station upon the least Notice from above; and took the very first opportunity of quitting her Body, without lingering, or expecting a second summons. She stay'd no longer, after she was call'd, than to assure her Lord of her entire resignation to the Divine Will; and of her having no manner of uneasiness upon her Mind; and to take her Leave of Him, with all the expressions of tenderness. When this was over, she had nothing more to do with her Sen-

ses;

ses; she sunk immediately under her Illness, and, after a short unquiet slumber, slept in peace.

Thus liv'd, and thus dy'd this Excellent Lady, whose Character I have so far represented, as my Time, and the Measure of such Discourses as these would suffer me; and endeavour'd to renew a faint Image of her several Vertues and Perfections upon your Minds. I have done it in a confus'd manner, and without the nice Divisions of Art; for Grief is not Methodical: it is enough, if I have been able to set before you some Resemblance of her, tho' I should not have done it after the best and liveliest manner: When the Life is gone, a Picture drawn even by an unskilful hand hath it's Use and Value; and those who Lov'd what it doth (however unequally) represent, will be touch'd at the sight of it.

You all are so, I question not; touch'd, by what hath been said, in various Manners, and in different Degrees, as Your Relation to her was nearer, or remoter; as You knew more, or less of her. But You do not mourn alone; many *Living* there are, that do now, and many more there are, who shall hereafter, when her Character

A Discourse on the Death

rafter hath spread it self, *lay it to heart.* The World hath had a Loss as well as You; True Vertue and Piety have suffer'd in her fall: and All, therefore, that have any Regard for These, shall bear a part with You in Your Sorrows.

The *True Servants of God* shall *lay it to heart*, who, from their Souls, desire the Increase of Religion and Goodness, and know the Power and Influence of so sweet, so winning, so perfect a Pattern as was set by Her; who promis'd Themselves a mighty Countenance, and the World strange Advantages, from her Exemplary Sanctity and Goodness.

They that *Minister in holy things* will *lay it to heart*, to whom she repair'd, with so much constancy and seriousness, to hear the Divine Oracles explain'd by them, and to *enquire the Law at their mouths.* They will consider, what an Helper and Furtherer of their pious Labours they have lost; and how much more lifeless and ineffectual their Discourses are now likely to be, than they were heretofore, when she encourag'd those Exercises by her presence, and taught others to attend, by the strict attention she her self paid to what was said in them. In whatever Congregation

tion she appear'd; She secretly rais'd and improv'd the Devotions of the Place; Every Day of her Life preach'd up Goodness as effectually, as the most rational and moving Sermon.

The *Enquirers into the Methods, and Mysteries of Divine Providence*, will lay it to heart. Why, will they say, when God hath most Work to do in the world, is one of the best and most faithful Instruments of his Glory call'd out of it? Why is she snatch'd away from us, at a Time when we could least have spar'd her? when Iniquity and Irreligion run high, and Piety is in danger of growing out of Fashion, and out of Countenance? Why, in such a Juncture, is this *Good Lady* taken? and, why are so many of her Sex, so unlike her, left? Is it in Mercy to Her, or in Judgment to Us? Is it because She was too good to live here, or because We were too wicked to deserve her company? *Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when we plead with Thee: yet let Us talk with Thee of thy Judgments!*

Her *Domestics* will lay it to heart, whom She shone upon always with a singular Goodness; who were near Witnesses of her most retir'd Graces and Vertues; and had the best opportunities of forming them-

themselves upon her admirable Model: and who will now (alas!) be destitute of her Example, and Encouragement; of her sweet Advice, and gentle Reproofs; and will be left to live upon that Stock of Vertue, which hath been happily laid in by them, that Measure of Goodness which They have already deriv'd, from attending and observing Her.

Finally, the *Poor* will *lay it to heart*, whose Bowels she refresh'd, and whose Wants she reliev'd; and was ever their sure Refuge, and Support, their Kind and Merciful Patroness and Friend.

But, above all, her *Relations* will *lay it to heart*; Those, to whom she was most nearly join'd by Blood, or Love; and who had a more particular Interest in all her Vertues: They will lay their hands on their Breasts, *in the Day of Adversity*, and *consider*; how have we offended, that we are thus grievously punish'd? and which of Our miscarriages is it, that this heavy infliction is intended to reform?

This is the wisest and best Use that can be made of such Solemnities as these; not, by the means of them, to excite our truly pious and Christian Grief to an immoderate and unchristian Degree, nor to *sorrow as Men without hope*; but to take
Occa-

Occasion from thence, to search and enquire into our selves; to learn the meaning of these Divine Admonitions; and; after we have interpreted them truly, to resolve upon obeying them.

The Deceas'd Person, whose Loss we deplore, is Happy without Question: Happy will the Living be also, if they thus wisely, thus effectually *lay it to heart!* *It is better, doubtless, to go into the House of Mourning, than into the House of Feasting;* but upon this condition, that we come better out of the one, than out of the other: that we leave our Vanities and our Vices behind us; that we lay aside our Affections towards this World, and our Indifference towards another; that we put on holy and hearty Resolutions of being even Now, what we shall wish we had been, Hereafter, when the Fatal Hour approaches; and of *living the Life* of this *Righteous* Person, that we may *die her Death* too; and be remember'd and lamented, as she is, by those who survive us.

Let us assure our selves, that the best way of doing honour to her Memory will be, by making her Character still live in Our Lives and Actions, that the truest instance of our Love and Esteem of Her is;
to

to endeavour to be Like Her : for Thus, we shall even add some farther Degrees of Happiness and Honour to the Vast Reward which she is already entitled to ; and shall make the Crown of Glory, she is to wear, bright as it will be, yet brighter, in the Day of General Retribution : Till when, (it may be piously suppos'd) the Saints departed are not admitted to the *Fulness of Joy*, that, in the mean time, the Influence of their good Examples and good Deeds spreading far and wide, That too, when their Accounts are made up, may be taken into them ; and the Fitness and Proportionableness of their exceeding great Recompence, then bestow'd, may be manifested in the Sight of Angels and Men.

Wherefore, *lift up the Hands that hang down; and the feeble Knees!* Think not so much and so long on the incomparable Character of the Deceas'd, as to forget the true Use You are to make of this afflicting Accident ; and to neglect those good Improvements under it, which the Wise and Kind Inflicter expects at Your Hands. You have paid Your last Respects to Her, be not now wanting to Your selves ; but *Gird up the Loins of Your Mind*, and be Ye comforted !

That

The Consideration of what She was, which Afflicts You, should much rather Cheer and Revive You: had She not been so good a Woman, You would with more reason have bewail'd her. But, why should You continue to mourn for One, who is enter'd upon a state of unspeakable Joy? Why should You be dejected at Her Advancement?

She is gone to the place, where all Tears are wip'd from her Eyes; where there is no more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying: She is gone, and her Works have follow'd, and will follow her, to her Great and Endless Advantage. God grant that, when We also follow her, we may do it with as little Surprize, and as much Cheerfulness!

*To Him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
be ascrib'd, as is most due, all Honour,
Adoration, and Thanks, now, and for
ever! Amen.*

*The Wisdom of Providence manifested in
the Revolutions of Government.*

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd before the Honourable

House of Commons,

A T

St. Margaret's Westminster,

May the 29th. 1701.

B E I N G

The Aniversary for the Restoration of
King CHARLES the Second.

E Z E K. xxxvii. 3.

*And he said unto me, Son of Man, can
these Bones live? And I answered,
O Lord God, thou knowest.*

TH E S E words are part of that Vi-
sion of the *Valley of Bones*, where-
in the Prophet *Ezekiel* doth, in a very
lofty

lofty and lively manner, set out the Lost and Hopeless state of *Israel*, then under Captivity; and their future Recovery out of it, by the immediate Interposition of a Divine Power, contrary to all Human Probability and Appearance.

The hand of the Lord was upon me, (says he, at the Entrance of this Chapter) and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of a Valley which was full of Bones, i. e. the Spirit of God represented to my Imagination such a sight: And (as he goes on) caused me to pass by them round about; and, behold, there were Many in the open Valley, and, lo! they were very Dry: i. e. they were as Numerous as the Dispers'd of Israel in the Plains of Mesopotamia, and as destitute of lively Juice and Moisture, as that Exil'd People were of all hopes of Returning. And he said unto me, Son of Man, can these Bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest: i. e. Thou, that art the Author and Bestower of Life, canst doubtless restore it also, if thou will'st, and when thou will'st; but whether thou will'st please to restore it, or not, That Thou alone knowest. After which, the Spirit commands him to Prophecy upon those Bones, and to say, O ye Dry Bones, hear the Word:

of

of the Lord, together with what follows, in the two next Verses. *And as I prophesied* (continues he) *there was a noise, and behold a shaking; and the bones came together, bone to his bone: And — lo! the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above: And, at last, the breath also came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great Army.* Where we have, in the Prophetick way, an Assurance given to the Jews, that, though their Polity was now dissolv'd, and their Tribes dispers'd, yet the time was coming, when the Providence of God would, in a wonderful manner, work out their Deliverance and Return; re-unite the several parts of their shatter'd Frame, and make that People live together once again under their own Laws, and in their own Country. 'Tis true, this Vision hath, by some of the Ancients, been understood of the *General Resurrection*; and by others, of the *General Restoration of the Jews*, before the Second Coming of Christ; and perhaps Both these Great Transactions might be glanc'd at in it, and remotely intended by it: For the Predictions of Scripture are generally so contriv'd, as to extend to more than One Event; so, as

to be fulfill'd at several Times, by several Steps and Degrees of Accomplishment. However, That, which the Prophet had chiefly and most nearly in his View, was, the Recovery of the Jewish State from the Captivity which it then groan'd under; and to That therefore the Vision is, at the close of it, expressly applied; *Son of man, these Bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts: therefore, Prophecy and say unto them, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.*

The words of the Text, therefore, when taken together with the other parts of the Prophecy, to which they belong, carry in them this Consideration, “ That
 “ God doth sometimes interpose in be-
 “ half of lost States and Kingdoms, and
 “ delights to manifest his Power and
 “ Providence, in retrieving them from
 “ Ruin, when they are as incapable of
 “ Restitution by all Human means, as
 “ dead and dry Bones are of recovering
 “ their Vital Juice, and being compact-
 “ ed again into a living Body. A Sub-
 ject,

ject, fit every way to employ our Thoughts, at a Time, in which we are call'd upon to commemorate a *Revolution*, as surprizing in it's Manner, as happy in it's Consequences, as full every way of Wonder, and of all the Marks of a Divine Contrivance, as any Age, or Country, (even This Country it self, which hath experienc'd so many and great Vicissitudes) can shew; and which, tho' plac'd in our Annals at some Distance from us, cannot yet be forgotten by us, as long as we feel the Influence, and reap the Benefits of it; that is, as long as Regal Government, and the free use of Parliaments, the profession of God's pure Religion, and the Enjoyment of our Antient Laws and Liberties shall continue among us: And, if it can be forgotten with the Loss of These only, there is no good *English* Man but will say, may the Memory of it always flourish!

Give me leave, therefore, to lay before you some Thoughts concerning the Wisdom of Divine Providence, in interposing so particularly to bring about these mighty unexpected Turns of State; which it doth, doubtless, for many Wise Reasons, known only to that Infinite Mind which Steers the Course of such great Actions:

however, some there are, that lie open even to our narrow Apprehensions. And

1. The Providence of God concerns it self in producing such surprizing Events, in order to have it's Influence on things below observ'd and acknowledg'd; which would go near to be forgotten, did he not, by some remarkable Instances of his interposition in Human Affairs, raise Men up, at fit times, into a lively and vigorous Sense of it. Though we know, that we Live, Move, and have our Being in God that we are supported every moment by his Power, and conducted in all our Actions by his Unerring Wisdom and Goodness; yet the Impression which this Knowledge makes upon our Minds, is but faint, and is quickly effac'd. His Concurring Influences in this case are so secret, and so difficult to be distinguish'd from the working of Natural and Moral Causes, that we are too apt to rest in the Contemplation of these, without any recourse to those; and to resolve all that happens to us, in our Own Concerns, into the Power of such Principles as lie nearest to us. And, even in the greater and more Publick Transactions of the World, when they go on in such a manner,

ner, as to look like the effects of Human Foresight and Contrivance, we are apt to stop short in our Reflections upon them, without carrying our Thoughts up to that invisible Hand, which wields the vast Machine, and directs all it's Springs and Motions. *Since the fathers fell asleep,* ^{2 Pet. iii.} *said the Scoffers in St. Peter, all things continue as they were;* ^{4.} and they were ready to infer, therefore, that all things went on of themselves, without a Superior Power to Influence, or Controul them. But, when the great Scene of Government is shifted all at once, and the Causes, that Visibly contribute to the production of this Effect, bear no proportion to it; then we look out for others of a more extended Force; we perceive a Divine Providence interesting it self in our Affairs, and adore the footsteps of it. When these National Judgments, or Mercies of God, are *abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of it will learn righteousness.* And that Lesson of Divine Wisdom then learnt, will be apply'd by them to other Circumstances, and on far different Occasions. For, when once a true Principle of Piety, and of a Religious Dependence on God, is duly excited in us, it will operate beyond the particular Cause from whence it sprang,

and give a general Turn and Tendency to all our Thoughts and Reflections; as One wise Rule of Behaviour, deeply imbib'd, will be useful to us in hundreds of Instances, and spread it's Influence throughout the whole Course and Conduct of our Lives and Actions.

Since, therefore, we are so apt to forget God's Administration of the great Affairs below, when they go on evenly and regularly; he is pleas'd, I say, by Awakening Notices, now and then to put us in mind of it; to present to our view some astonishing Revolution of State, like a Glaring Comet, hung up in the Air, whose Extraordinary Appearance, and Irregular Motion, shall sooner lead our thoughts up to the Author of Nature, and imprint a deeper Awe of him upon our minds, than the sight of the whole Host of Heaven, in Orderly Array continually moving round us.

Indeed, since the Age of Miracles ceas'd, as it did, when the Testimony of the Gospel was fully Seal'd, the chief way, in which God hath been pleas'd to give Extraordinary Indications of his Power and Providence, hath been by such *Signs of the times*, such Wonders of Government as these; which were not calculated,

culated, like other Miracles, for any particular Purpose, or Period; but have been in the World as long as Kingdoms and Nations have been, and are to last together with them. And this suggests to us also, a

2d. Reason of God's interposing so remarkably, in the sudden Depressing or Advancing of Kingdoms and States, because this conduces to the Manifestation of his *Political* Justice, or of that Rule of Acting which he observes, as the Great Governour and Lord of the World, towards Publick Bodies and Communities of Men; and which is very different from that by which he Punishes the Sins, or Rewards the Virtues of Private Persons. The Justice of his dealing with Particular Men may be manifested here, or hereafter, as he thinks fit; for their Duration is Eternal: and should their Successful Crimes, or Unmerited Afflictions be wink'd at in this World, it suffices, if such Irregularities are set right in another. But, as to Societies, and Combinations of Men, which are of a shorter date, another Rule must take place; they will at length be lost and swallow'd up in the Kingdom of the Lamb,

Lamb, and be made one Fold under one Shepherd, one People under one Lord, and Head, Christ Jesus: and, therefore, the Justice of God's Administration; in regard to such Communities, must be manifested either here, or not at all. For which Reason, I say, and that the Manifestation of it may be the more Glorious and Worthy of him, he sometimes turns about the Affairs and Fortunes of States in a very wonderful manner, and makes himself to be known to be the *most High, that ruleth in the Kingdoms of Men.*

Dan. iv.
17.

And from this Notion of God's Governing, or Political Justice we may give our selves some account why Temporal Felicities and Calamities are so often spoken of, and make such a Figure in the Writings of *Moses*, and the Prophets: For, under that Dispensation, God's Messengers address'd themselves to the *Jews* generally, as to a Nation, or Civil Body of Men; and stirr'd them up to Vertue, therefore, or dehorted them from Vice, by such Motives as were properly applicable to States and Communities. Whereas, in the Gospel, we meet but few Passages, or Instructions of this kind; the Precepts of it being chiefly de-

design'd to improve the Morals, and regulate the Behaviour of Private Persons, and to advance their Vertue to a degree of Perfection, answerable in some measure to the Gracious Discoveries then first imparted to them. But, as to the Conduct of Societies, or of particular Members in relation to them, little is said; because the Doctrine of the Law, and the Prophets, was so full in that Point, that there was no need of repeating Lessons, there so often inculcated, and no room for improving upon them.

For this Reason, among others, may we suppose, that the *Jews* were so remarkably separated from other Nations, and kept so entire within themselves, by the express Commands of God, and by a Fence of many Peculiar Rites and Ceremonies; and that the History of the various and strange Vicissitudes they underwent, from their first Erection into a People, down to their final Excision, is so punctually registred and transmitted to us; that we might in Them, as in the Glass of Providence, (if I may so speak) distinctly see all the several Ways and Methods of God's dealing with great States and Kingdoms, and be fully instructed

structed in the Rules of his raising, or depressing, prospering, or punishing them, by the Interposition of a Divine Power, as Visible almost as the Vertues, or Vices, that occasion'd it. But,

3dly. It may afford us a farther Account of those Unexpected Turns of State, and Deliverances, which the Arm of God brings to pass, if we consider of what Use they are, to baffle the mistaken Policy of Men, and to discover the Vanity and Emptiness of all those Pretences to a deep and consummate Wisdom, which the falsely-wise of this world please themselves in, and value themselves upon.

Men of Ability and Experience in great Affairs, who have been long at the Helm, have hit oft, in their Conjectures upon things, and have been very Prosperous in many of their Projects, are apt at last to give themselves the Honour of all their Good Luck, and to grow vain upon it; saying proudly in their Heart, according to the Elegant Expressions of *Isaiah*, *By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent; and I have remov'd the Bound,*

Bounds of the People, and have robbed their Treasures, and I have put down their Inhabitants like a Valiant Man. And my hand hath found, as a Nest, the Riches of the People; and as one gathereth Eggs that are left, have I gathered all the Earth; and there was none that moved the Wing, or opened the Mouth, or peeped. Thus they adore the goodly Scheme, by which they brought all these things to pass, and reckon upon it as sure and infallible, for the future; when, nevertheless, it hath this one Terrible Defect, that God is left out of it: and, therefore, he gives them often a Convincing Proof of the Folly of it, by unravelling all their Measures at once, and blasting all their Undertakings, and bringing about a New Scene of things, through unheeded, unsuspected Methods, which they could not foresee with all their Skill, nor prevent by all their Prudence; that so the Wise Man may learn, not to glory in his Wisdom, and the Mighty Man not to glory in his Might; but he that glorieth may glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth Me; that I am the Lord, which exercise loving Kindness, Judgment, and Righteousness in the Earth; for in these things I delight; saith the Lord. Were it not for such

Jerem. ix.
23, 24.

such surprizing Revolutions of Affairs, which disappoint the Devices of these Crafty ones, and make the Heads of the Ablest and most Experienc'd Lookers on, giddy at the sight; God would, in the opinion of many of his Creatures, be shut out from the Government of the World, and the Honour of his Conduct would be devolv'd upon some of the Mean and Subordinate Instruments of it; those poor Insects, that sit upon the Wheels of State, and imagine themselves to be the Authors of all its Motions, and able to check, or to quicken them, at their Pleasure.

There is yet a (4th) good Use, to which these great National Changes are subservient, (those of them, especially, which carry a People at once from the extremity of Bad, to the Height of Good Fortune; such as That we are now Met to Commemorate) and it is this; That the Belief of them tends to create and encourage a *National Piety*, and a Publick Avow'd Dependence upon God, in the greatest Extremities. For, when once men are firmly perswaded, either from the Experience of what They themselves have felt, or from the Assurance
of

of what hath happen'd to Others, that no People can be reduc'd to such a wretched and forlorn Condition, but that the good Providence of God may, and will, if it sees fit, come in to their Rescue, and Deliver them; even without Hope, and against Hope: I say, when this Opinion is once fix'd in mens Minds, it introduces presently a Publick Face of Religion amongst them, and common Endeavours of expressing their common Trust and Dependence upon God; and it ties them together by the strictest Bands of Fraternal Love, Amity, and Union. Of this the *Jews* are a very Signal and Instructive Instance, under their several Captivities, and Dispersions; where, tho' they were lost to all human hopes of recovery, yet, having an Assurance of the known Favour and Protection of God towards their State, they persisted, in the Strength of it, to wait for, and to expect their Deliverance; and had, at those times, such a true Sincere Spirit of Piety stirring amongst them, such Zeal towards God, such Unanimity amongst themselves, as they were utterly strangers to, upon Other Occasions: Infomuch that They, who, when at home, under the free enjoyment of their Temple-Worship,

were

were prone to all manner of Idolatry; when scattered into the Lands of Idols, where they had the Temptation ever near them, and before their Eyes, are observ'd never once to have comply'd with it. And this very Principle it is, that still supports and animates them, under this their Last and Greatest Dispersion, keeps them still rigidly addicted to their Rites, and closely combin'd among themselves, without mixing with any of the Nations among whom they dwell; under the hopes, that God will, yet once more, as he hath often already done, make bare his Holy Arm in their Behalf, and restore the lost State of *Israel*. Nay, even We our selves, who are now met to Worship God, were very lately an Instance of the Efficacy of such persuasions as these, towards raising up a dissolute People into all the Heights of an Universal and Undissembled Piety. For when, in the Late Hour of Distress and Danger, our Constitution in Church and State was just Sinking under us, and the two greatest Evils that belong to Human Nature, the Oppression of our Liberties, and of our Consciences, were ready to overtake us, and no Human help, that we could Then see, was near; how yet did

did our Belief of the Over-ruling Power of God sustain us with the Hopes, that he would, in some way, or other, own our Cause, support our sinking State, and work out Salvation for us? And how were we wrought upon by this Confidence to turn to him with the Utmost Unanimity and Earnestness? What Zeal did we then express for the Pure Religion of Christ? What Reverence towards his Priests? What Love towards one another? What good Resolutions did we take up? What Solemn Vows did we make of living answerably to Our Holy Profession? and, I believe, sincerely meant (tho' by our Behaviour since, one would scarce think, we meant) to perform them? How were our Churches then fill'd with Crowds of Worshippers? Our Altars surrounded by unusual Numbers of Devout Communicants? How were all Ranks and Conditions of Men Then remarkable for their Piety and Seriousness; as remarkable as they are Now for their Indifference and Prophaneness? Doubtless, the Addresses we then made to God for Relief, were actuated and enliven'd by a reflection on the Surprizing Blessings of this Day; and we were encourag'd to hope that God, who had once before

wonderfully restor'd our Constitution, even when it was lost, would be prevail'd with also, by a timely Application, to preserve it from Ruine. And methinks, therefore, our Latter Deliverance should not make the Former forgot; when the One of these was the Foundation of our asking, and obtaining the Other. How know we, what Need we may Yet have of retreating to such Considerations, and fortifying our selves with a Reflection on such Encouraging Precedents as these? And we do well, therefore, to Cherish the Memory of them.

That we may do so, give me leave, in compliance with the Design of this Day, and this Assembly, briefly to set before you, First, the Greatness and Extent of that Publick Blessing for which we think our selves oblig'd so long afterwards to pay our Publick Thanks; and then (what my Text more particularly directs me to) the Extraordinary and Surprizing manner in which it was Convey'd to us.

The Blessing was of it self Vast and Comprehensive; for it took in all that was valuable and dear to us, either on a Religious, or Civil Account; and resettled a ruin'd Church, and Kingdom on
that

that Firm Basis; on which they stood, till Violent and Wicked Hands remov'd them; and on which may they stand for Ever! 'Tis natural for Men to think that Government the Best, under which they drew their first Breath, and to propose it as a Model and a Standard for all Others. But, if any People upon Earth have a just Title thus to boast, 'tis We of this Island; who enjoy a Constitution, wisely moulded, out of all the different Forms and Kinds of Civil Government, into such an Excellent and Happy Frame, as contains in it all the Advantages of those several Forms, without sharing deeply in any of their Great Inconveniences. A Constitution, nicely poiz'd between the Extremes of too much Liberty, and too much Power; the several Parts of it having a Proper Check upon each other, by the means of which they are all restrain'd, or soon reduc'd, within their due Bounds: and yet the peculiar Powers, with which Each is separately invested, are sure always, in Dangerous Conjunctions, to give way to the Common Good of the Whole. A Constitution, where the Prince is cloth'd with a Prerogative, that enables him to do all the good he hath a mind to; and wants

no degree of Authority; but what a Good Prince would not, and an Ill one ought not to have: Where he governs, tho' not Absolutely, yet Gloriously, because he governs Men, and not Slaves; and is obey'd by them chearfully, because they know that, in obeying Him, they obey those Laws only which They themselves had a share in contriving. A Constitution, where the External Government of the Church is so closely interwoven with that of the State, and so exactly adapted to it, in all its parts, as that it can flourish only, when That flourishes; and must, as it hath always hitherto done, decline, die, and revive with it. In a word, where the Interest of Prince and Subject, Priest and People, are perpetually the same; and the only fatal Mistake, that ever happens in our Politicks, is, when they are thought to be divided.

It is objected indeed to this Admirable Model, that it is liable to frequent Struggles and Concussions within, from the several Interfering Parts of it: But this, which is reckon'd the Disease of our Constitution, may rather be thought a mark of it's Soundness, and the chief security of it's Continuance. For 'tis with Governments exactly contriv'd, as with
Bodies

Bodies of a nice Frame and Texture; where, the Humours being evenly mix'd, every little change of the Proportion introduces a Disorder, and raises that Ferment which is necessary to bring all right again; and which thus preserves the Health of the Whole, by giving early notice of whatever is noxious to any of the Parts: Whereas in Governments, as well as Bodies, of a courser Make, the Disease doth often not begin to shew it self, till it hath infected the whole Mass, and is past a Cure; and so, though they are disorder'd later, yet they are destroy'd much sooner. Accordingly we know that, under this Disadvantage, if it be one, our Constitution hath now lasted pretty Entire through many Ages: for, excepting the short Interruptions which *Conquest* gave, (which, however, have not been either so Many, or so Great, as Some would make them) it hath continu'd much the Same, in the main Parts and Branches of it, from the Earliest Times of our *Saxon* Ancestors, down to these Days. A clear Proof, that it is a Government suited every way to our Temper, and to our Cline; that it is perfectly made for Us, and We for It: and that God, therefore, never punishes us

more forely, than when he deprives us of it for a time; nor ever confers a greater Blessing upon us, than when he restores it —

As he did on this happy Day; when, after the Confusions of a Long Civil War, attended with the Destruction of an Excellent Church, the Murther of a Gracious Prince, and the Grievous Tyranny of our fellow Subjects, he was pleas'd at length to give us back again, what we had so lightly departed from, our Old *English* Government and Laws; and, together with them, what we before boasted of in Name only, the True Liberty of the Subject, and the Real Freedom and Honour of Parliaments. And to This Day, therefore, we owe all the Benefits we have since reap'd from the Regal Administration, all the Peace, Plenty, and Happiness, we have enjoy'd, or our Posterity after us shall enjoy, under it.

To the Influence of this Day it is owing, that we have now at the Head of our Troops, and our Councils, a Prince, who hath happily join'd together the Extremes of Martial and Political Vertues; and knows as well how to Govern a Free People by their Own Laws and Customs,

as

as to Command Legions: who, whether in the Cabinet, or in the Field, is still equally in his Sphere; and is always indifferent, therefore, either to War, or Peace, any farther than the One, or the Other, shall conduce to the Good of his People, and the General Interest of Mankind.

Nay, to this Day it is owing, That that Great Assembly before which I stand, are, under the Auspicious Conduct of our Prince, Arbiters of the Fate, and Governours of the Balance of *Europe*: That their Resolves have as wide an Influence, as the Firmest Leagues and Confederacies; and their very Counsels are more Formidable than the Hostile Preparations of Others: So that They, who lately felt the weight of the *English* Arms, will be afraid of entring upon such Measures as may awaken Your Resolution of once again taking them up; saying within themselves, according to the Expressions of the Enlightned Patriarch; *Judah is a Lion's Whelp, he hath gone up from the Prey: He Stooped down, he Couched as a Lion, and as an Old Lion; Who shall rouze him up?*

Gen. xlix.
2.

The Blessing, therefore, we Commemorate, was Great; and it was made yet greater by the Way in which God was

pleas'd to convey it to us: for he did it in such a Manner, as to shew, that He was the Sole Author of it, and that it sprang not from Human Wit, or Contrivance. He did it, after our Forefathers were reduc'd to Extremities, and had tir'd themselves by Various Attempts to bring this Great End about, and had been baffled in all of them, and sat down at last in despair of effecting it. Then was it time for him to appear for our Redemption, and to give Himself the Glory of it. All was Darknes about them, without Form, and void; when the Spirit of God mov'd upon the Face of this Abyss, and said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*: And both God, and Man saw that this Light was Good; the One, rejoicing in his Own Gift; and the Other, blessing and magnifying the Bestower of it. 'Tis true, the Reasoners of this World, who love to solve every Event, without any Recourse to a Divine Power, will be ready to point out several Causes, which help'd forward this End, and smooth'd the way towards it. But tho' there were many such, yet must it be own'd, that All of them put together were not of Force enough to produce the Effect; nor, particularly, to ac-
count

count for that Universal Bent and Inclination of the People of all Ranks, Interests, and Opinions, which, upon the first Opening of this wonderful Scene, at once discover'd it self; and which could proceed from Him alone, who hath the Hearts of all Men in his Hand, and turneth them whithersoever he listeth.

Alas! when Man is to influence Man, in order to bring about such Mighty Changes as these, the Work goes on but slowly. 'Tis hard to Unite in any Common Measures all the several little Sects and Parties, into which a Nation is crumbled; their interfering Interests, Passions, and Prejudices will obstruct the best-laid Design: what it gains in one Place, it will lose in another; and never, but by the Intervention of a Superior Power, succeed Universally. But when God once comes into such a Work, it ripens apace; all Obstructions presently cease, all Difficulties vanish. As the Tops of Corn bend this way, or that, before the Wind; so are the Various Minds of the Multitude sway'd and inclin'd by the Inward Breathings of his Spirit.

It is worth observing, therefore, in the Vision of *Ezekiel*, from whence my
Text

Text is drawn, how, even after *the Sinews and the Flesh were come up upon the Dry Bones, and the Skin had covered them above*, yet still it is said, that *there was no Breath in them*; and still therefore the Prophet is commanded to *Prophesie to the four Winds*, and to bid them *breathe upon those slain, that they might live*: and then, and not till then, it was, that *the Breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their Feet, an exceeding great Army*. The meaning of which is, that in every sudden Revolution of State, tho' there be many Visible Dispositions and Causes, that concur to favour it, yet still the last Finishing Turn is always from God; who animates and invigorates the whole Design, puts all its Parts at once into Motion, and removes all Impediments.

Thus he effected the Deliverance of this Day; by opening at once the Eyes of a Deluded People, shewing them their True Interest, and inspiring them with Unanimity and Zeal to pursue it; and, in order to it, allaying their Mutual Heats, lessening their Prejudices, and softning their Aversions. *The Wolf he made to dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard to lye down with the Kid*; that is, the most

most Opposite Tempers were brought to conspire peaceably in this Great Event, the most Divided Interests were reconcil'd in it: and even They, who were prepar'd to Propheſie againſt it, were yet, by an Over-ruling Influence, determin'd to pronounce a Bleſſing; and forc'd, as they look'd on, to take up their Parable, and ſay; *God hath not beheld Iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he ſeen Perverſneſs in Iſrael, the Lord his God is with him, and the ſhout of a King is among them. God hath brought them out of Egypt; he hath, as it were, the ſtrength of an Unicorn. Surely, there is no Inchantment againſt Jacob, neither is there any Divination againſt Iſrael: according to This time it ſhall be ſaid of Jacob, and of Iſrael, What hath God wrought?*

Nu xxiii.
21, 22, 23.

Since the Work, therefore, was His, let us give Him the Praise of it! even as we do, by this Solemn Appearance: falling low on our Knees before his Footſtool, and ſaying, *Not unto Us, O Lord, not unto Us, nor unto our Forefathers, but unto Thy Name give Glory; for thy Mercy, and for thy Truth's ſake!* For thy Mercy's ſake, which induc'd thee to give ſo happy a Turn to the Affairs of ſo Undeſerving a People; and for thy

Pſa. cxv. t.

Truth's

Truth's sake, which thou intendest to secure and to reestablish by the Means of it.

Let us piously ascribe this, and all other our Deliverances to God, and all our Calamities to our Selves; acknowledging the One to be as properly the Consequence of our Sins, as the Other is the Result of his Unmerited Favour and Goodness. And let us from such surprising Events as these, which have confessedly something Divine in them, learn to lift up our Thoughts above Material Causes, and to instruct our selves in all the Amazing Lessons of God's Governing Providence; by which he holds the Balance of Nations, and inclines it which way he pleases; so that *all the*

Dan. iv. 35 *Inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing to him, and he doth according to his Will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, and none can stay his Hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

And this he now performs by the Administration of the Man Christ *Jesus*; to whom, immediately upon his Resurrection, he gave all Power, in Heaven, and in Earth: and whom, upon his *Ascent* into Heaven, (the Holy Subject also

also of this Day's Solemnity) he inflated in the full Possession and Exercise of that Power; declaring him King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. And, indeed, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive* Rev. v. 12, *Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and* 13. *Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing. Therefore, Blessing and Honour and Glory, and Power be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!*

A

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*The Duty of Publick Intercession and
Thanksgiving for Princes.*

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd before the Honourable

House of Commons,

A T

St. Margaret's Westminster,

On Wednesday, March 8. 1704.

B E I N G

The Day of Her MAJESTY'S Happy Ac-
cession to the THRONE.

I TIM. ii. 1, 2, 3.

*I Exhort, That, first of all, Supplications,
Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks
be made for all Men; for Kings, and all
that are in Authority; that we may lead a
Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godliness,
and Honesty: For this is Good and Accep-
table in the sight of God, our Saviour.*

THERE was nothing by which the
Enemies of Christianity endea-
vour'd; and hop'd so much to retard the
Pro-

Progress of it, as by representing to Princes, and Rulers, that the Propagation of this Doctrine tended to subvert their Government; that the Spreaders of it, wherever they came, *exceedingly troubled Cities, and turn'd the World upside down.* It behov'd the Apostles, therefore, to guard against this Objection, with all imaginable Care: As they knew, that the great Work, in which they were employ'd, was not, as yet, to be promoted, or countenanc'd by the Powers of this World; so they resolv'd to give them no just Ground, or Colour to obstruct it: and wisely, therefore, took all Occasions to declare their Abhorrence of Such as *despis'd Dominion, and spake evil of Dignities;* frequently press'd upon their new Converts the Duties of paying *Honour, and Fear, and Tribute to the Higher Powers,* [as being *the Ordinance of God*] and of *submitting themselves to them, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake.* And, for this Reason, it may be presum'd that St. Paul introduceth his Instructions to Timothy, the new Bishop of Ephesus, by *Exhorting him,* that, in order to a due Discharge of his high Trust, he should *first of all, or, above all things, take care, that Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and*
giving

giving of Thanks be made for all Men; especially for Kings, and all that are in Authority; that we may lead a Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godliness; and Honesty: for this, says he, is Good, and Acceptable in the sight of God, our Saviour.

The Exhortation hath a double Aspect, on Mankind in general, and on Princes and Rulers in particular. I shall consider it; with regard to the Latter of these only, for whose sake the Apostle seems chiefly to have made it; and, under this View, it suggests to us Three Heads of Discourse, very proper to be handled on this Day, and in this Assembly,

I. It recommends a great Duty to us, I.
the Duty of *making Supplications, Prayers, and Intercessions*, and of *giving Thanks, for Kings, and all that are in Authority.*

II. It expresses the general Reason, and II.
Ground of that Duty: *For this is Good, and Acceptable in the sight of God, our Saviour.*

III. It quickens us to the Exercise of it III.
by a special Motive, drawn from the Consideration of our own Ease, Advantage, and Happiness: *That we may lead a Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godliness and Honesty.* R. These

These Points I shall first consider, and explain, in that Latitude, with which the Apostle hath propos'd them; and then adapt the general Argument to the particular Occasion of this Day's joyful Solemnity.

- I. The Writers on this Place have distinguish'd with some Exactness between *Supplications*, *Prayers*, and *Intercessions*, and endeavour'd to give us the strict and proper Sense of each of these Words; which, I think, it is neither necessary, nor easie to determine. Sure we are, that by All these together the Apostle intended to express the Petitionary Part of our Devotions; and by *giving of Thanks*, the other Part, which consists of Hymns and Praises. These Two comprise the whole of our Religious Service; and in both these ways we are exhorted to address our selves to God, *for Kings, and all that are in Authority*, i. e. for the Supreme Magistrate, and all Inferiour and Subordinate Governors.

Ancient and Modern Interpreters agree to understand this Passage of the Publick Offices, or Devotions of the Church: and, indeed, the Episcopal Character

rafter of *Timothy*, to whom the Exhortation is address'd; the Instructions which immediately follow, and manifestly relate to the same Head of Publick Worship; and the profess'd Design of *St. Paul* in writing this Epistle, which was, to instruct *Timothy*, *How he ought to behave himself in the House of God*; do, I think, naturally, and necessarily determine us so to understand it: especially, if we consider, that the Exhortation, thus understood, was agreeable to the Practice of the *Jewish* Church; the Pattern, which, in Matters of Worship, Discipline, and Government, the Apostles chiefly follow'd: and, accordingly, we find the Earliest Apologists for Christianity representing it as the Constant and Known Usage of the First Christians, in all their Sacred Assemblies, to Pray for the Lives of their Emperors, and for the Prosperity of their State and Government.

1 Tim. iii.
15.

Our Church is in This, as in Other Respects, truly Primitive; for thus we pray daily in her Liturgy. And what we do Every day, we may, at Some times, be allow'd to perform more devoutly and solemnly; even as often as the Course of the Year shall bring on that Happy Day, when Her Majesty first began to Reign,

on the Throne of her Ancestors, and in the Hearts of her Subjects, and to refresh this Church, and State, with the kind Influences of her Mild and Gracious Administration. Whenever this Annual Season of Joy returns, a lively and affecting Sense of the Mercies, it convey'd to us, cannot but return with it; which we have no better way of expressing, than by Offering up to God (as now we do, and are by *St. Paul* Exhorted to do) our Devoutest Thanks for the Blessings we already feel, and our most earnest Prayers for the Continuance, and Increase of them.

The Reason and Ground of which Duty is thus, in the

- II. Second place, express'd; *For this is Good, and Acceptable in the sight of God, our Saviour.* It is Good, i. e. highly Decent, Expedient, and Reasonable in it self; and, therefore, *Acceptable in the sight of God, our Saviour,* a Performance particularly well-pleasing to Him, by whom Kings Reign, of whose Power they partake, and whose *Image and Superscription* they bear. Let us take a distinct View of the several Springs, from whence our Obligation to this Duty may be suppos'd to arise. And 1st.

1st. Our Applications to God in behalf of the Princes and Rulers of this World are highly reasonable, as they are Proper Expressions of our Good-will to Mankind, whose Fate is in their hands, and whose Welfare in great measure depends upon their Actions and Conduct. Sovereign Princes, and States, are the Chief Instruments, which the Providence of God employs, in his Administrations here below, and by which he brings about all those Mighty Events, that fix, or unsettle the Peace of the World. When these great Wheels move irregularly, the whole Machine of State is presently render'd unserviceable, and numberless depending Motions are either stopp'd, or disorder'd.

The Execution of all Laws is entrusted with Them; and Laws are the Source of every Advantage that redounds to Mankind from Society, which, without them, would not be preferable to Solitude. To the Influence of These it is owing, that we can call any thing our Own, even Life it self; and are shelter'd from the Attacks, which the Lusts and Passions of Men, not restrain'd by the Principles of Reason and Religion, would be every Day making upon us: That we

are polish'd in our Manners, and bred up in all the Arts of Civil Life, which can render us Useful, or Agreeable to each other: and, chiefly, that we have Opportunities of thus appearing before God, and praising him in the Great Congregation; of hearing his Everlasting Gospel expounded to us, and being directed in all those Paths of Piety and Vertue, which lead to Peace in this World, and to Everlasting Life in the next.

“ Of Law (said the excellent Mr. *Hooker* long since, with a Compass of Thought, and a Force of Words peculiar to him; Of Law) “ no less can be acknowledg'd, “ than that her Seat is in the Bosom of “ God; her Voice, the Harmony of the “ World; that all things in Heaven, and “ Earth, do her Homage; the very Least, “ as feeling her Care, and the Greatest, “ as not exempt from her Power; both “ Angels, and Men, and Creatures, of “ what kind soever, though Each, in “ different Sort and Manner, yet All, “ with one Uniform Consent, admiring “ her as the Mother of their Peace and “ Joy. He, therefore, upon whose Authority, and Will, the Observation of Human Laws depends, hath the Happiness, or Misery of Mankind in his Power; *the*

the Earth, and all the Inhabitants thereof, would be dissolv'd, did not such Persons bear up the Pillars of it. Pfal. lxxv
3.

Nay, even the Examples of Princes is, it self, a Living Law to their Subjects, which fashions them by degrees into a Likeness of Manners, and spreads it's Influence insensibly, but powerfully, through Cities, and Kingdoms.

So that, to make Supplications for Kings, that their Government may be Wise, Just, and Prosperous, is, to pray at once for all the Temporal Felicities which can accrue to us; a good Reign being the most Universal and Comprehensive Blessing, which either Man can ask, or God bestow; and for which we have as much Reason to be Thankful as for the Light of the Sun, for Temperate Weather, and Fruitful Seasons.

Even an Ill Prince cannot help doing a great deal of Good, by preserving some degree of Order and Government in the World; and, therefore, even Such an One hath a Title to our Prayers, and Thanksgivings. But, when Vertue ascends the Throne, it dispenses Blessings without Number, and without Measure; and spreads it's Influence on all around, and beneath it: Pfal. xix.
6.

The Duty of Publick Intercession and the End of a Kingdom, and it's Circuit to the Ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. Happy are the People that are in such a Case; They have great reason to Bless, who are thus Blessed of, the Lord. But,

2dly, As the Vertues and Vices of those who Govern, operate on all Inferior Ranks of Men, in the way of Natural Causes, so have they another, and a more Extraordinary Effect; inasmuch as God doth often take Occasion to Reward, or Punish a People, not only by the Means of Good, or Ill Princes, but even for the Sake of them. Plain Instances of this kind we have, recorded in Scripture; particularly, where Subjects have suffer'd for the Iniquities of those who were set over them, and the Vengeance, Merited by the One, hath been Inflicted, and, as it were, Transferr'd on the Other. Whether it be, that the good, or ill Conduct of Rulers is sometimes Owing to their People, and may therefore justly be Imputed to them; or whether (as in the case of Visiting the Sins of Parents on their Children), by making them mutually liable to the Consequences of each Others Actions, God intends to imprint a Mutual Concern and Endeavour for each

each Other's Welfare, and to Unite them together in the strictest Bands of Interest, and Affection: Whatever the Reason of God's dealing in this manner with Princes and States may be, sure we are, that he doth thus deal with them, and that this is one Chief Article in that Scheme of Political Justice, by which he governs the World. And can there be a better Argument for our Interceding with God in the behalf of *Kings, and all that are in Authority*, than This, That we are really at such times interceding for our selves? since We may be chastis'd for Their Transgressions, and reap the Rewards of Their Piety and Goodness? Further,

3dly, The Cares of Empire are great, and the Burthen, which lies upon the Shoulders of Princes very weighty; and, on This account, therefore, they Challenge, because they particularly want our Prayers; that they may *have an Understanding Heart, to discern between Good and Bad, and to go out and in before a great People*. With what Difficulties is their Administration often clogg'd by the Perverseness, Folly, or Wickedness of those they govern? How hard a thing do they find it, to inform themselves truly of the State of Affairs; where Fraud and Flattery

ry furround, and take such pains to mislead them? How nice a Task is it, to distinguish between the Extremes of allowing too much Liberty, and affecting too much Power? To what Daily Dangers are their Persons expos'd, from the Attempts of Treachery, and Violence? How particular and pressing are the Temptations, to which the Height of Power, they have attain'd, makes them liable? They are above the reach of Fear, Reproof, and most of those Outward Checks, which God hath plac'd, as Guards upon Private Mens Vertue; and are, on that account, in great danger of letting loose their Appetites and Passions into all manner of Excesses, without an Extraordinary degree of God's Restraining Grace; which, therefore, it becomes, and concerns us to beg of Him, and for Them.

Christian Charity and Beneficence, is a Debt, which we owe to Kings, as well as to the Meanest of their Subjects. But how shall we extend our Good Offices to Those, who move in so High a Sphere? how, but by applying our selves to One, that is yet Higher than They, even our Common Lord and Master; and humbly imploring the Aids of his good Spirit, to
Com-

Comfort, Support, and Guide them? This is the Only Compensation, or Return, which most of us are capable of making to them, for their Vigilance, and Concern for the Publick Safety, the Pains which they take, and the Hazards which they run, to secure it.

And, to encourage our Requests in their behalf, we may consider, in the

4th place, That the Providence of God doth, in a very Particular manner, interpose towards swaying the Wills and Affections, directing, or over-ruling the Intentions of those who sit at the Helm:

for *the King's Heart is in the Hand of God, as the Rivers of Waters; He turneth it, whithersoever he listeth*: he gives a Bent to it, this way, or that; which it takes as certainly, and easily as a Stream is deriv'd into the Channels, which the Hand of the Workman prepares for it. On This Foundation Our Church professes to build the Duty, and the Expedience of praying for Princes: *We are taught (says She) by thy holy Word, that the Hearts of Kings are in thy Rule and Governance, and that thou dost dispose and turn them, as it seemeth best to thy godly Wisdom.* Indeed, the Spirit of God operates on the Spirits of All Men; but not in so Copious, so Powerful,

ful, and Extraordinary a manner, as it doth on the *Spirits of Princes*, which God delighteth to *refrain*, and, by that means, to shew himself *Wonderful among the Kings of the Earth*. It is the chief Care, the peculiar Province, the great Prerogative of the King of Kings, to rule the Thoughts of Those, who rule the Actions of Others; and thereby to bring about the Ends, the mysterious and inscrutable Ends of his Providence. And, 'tis well for mankind that there is a Being, who hath, and exerciseth such a Power: for, unless there were, Human Power, left to it self, would make wild work in the World; the Chariot of Government would be often, and dangerously misguided by Rash Unskilful Drivers, did not an Invisible Hand hold the Reins, and gently direct the Course of it.

The Scripture seems to intimate, that God hath appointed Tutelar Angels, to act under him, for this purpose; at least, that such Ministring Spirits there were, before the Erection of the Mediatorial Kingdom of our Saviour: for, in *Daniel*, we read of Particular Princes, or Patrons, assign'd, from the Angelic Host, to the *Gracians*, and *Persians*; in order, as is piously believ'd, to Encourage, Enlighten,
and

and Protect the Governours of those Estates and Empires. We are interested more nearly in the Welfare and good Conduct of Princes than those Ministring Spirits are; shall we not have some share in procuring it? Ought we not with our utmost Zeal to assist Those, whom God, for our sakes, vouchsafes in so Eminent a Manner to direct, and assist? and, what better way of assisting them have we, than by our *Supplications, and Thanksgivings*? Which, let me add, in the

Last Place, are never, on this Occasion, so becomingly and forcibly address'd to God, as in the Great Congregation. Blessings of a Publick Nature and Influence require as Publick and Solemn Acknowledgments; and the Proper way of obtaining Mercies, which affect Many, is, by pouring out the Joint-Requests of Many in behalf of them: for in the Spiritual, as well as the Carnal Warfare, Numbers are most likely to prevail. The Ancients, therefore, represent the Strength of such United Devotions by that of an Army, Encompassing, Besieging God; not to be defeated, or resisted by him. *Coimus ad Deum* (saith One of them) *ut, quasi* Tertullian. *Manu factâ, Precationibus eum ambiamus; hæc Vis Deo grata est:* "We come together

“ther in Troops, as it were, and sur-
 “round God with our Prayers; this
 “Violence of ours is well-pleasing to
 “him. We Then Ask, and we Then
 give Thanks, with the greatest Alacri-
 ty and Earnestness, and, consequently,
 with the surest Hope of Acceptance, and
 Success, when we excite and warm
 each other into this Holy Performance;
 and, with One Heart, and One Mouth,
 utter the Awaking Words which the
 Devout Psalmist us’d, at a Solemnity
 like This, which we are now met to ce-
 lebrate: *This is the Day which the Lord
 hath made; let us be glad, and rejoice in it.
 Help now, O Lord; O Lord, send us now Pro-
 sperity. God is the Lord, who hath shewed
 us Light; bind the Sacrifice with Cords, yea
 even to the Horns of the Altar.*

Pf. cxviii.
 24, 25, 27.

III. I have explain’d the Grounds and Rea-
 sons of the Duty, intimated to us in those
 Words of the Text: *For this is Good, and
 Acceptable in the sight of God, our Saviour.*
 I proceed to consider the special Motive
 there propos’d, to quicken us into the
 Exercise of it: *That so we may lead a Quiet
 and Peaceable Life, in all Godliness, and
 Honesty.* I shall briefly shew, in what re-
 spects the Devotions recommended by the
 Apostle

Apostle contribute to this End; and how far, therefore, our Own Ease, Advantage, and Happiness is concern'd in paying them. And

1st, They have a Plain Tendency this way, as they are a Prevailing Argument with God, so to dispose and incline the Minds of Princes, that they may study to promote the Quiet, Good, and Prosperity of their Kingdoms. If we believe our Prayers to have any effect, we cannot doubt their Usefulness in This Particular; which is too evident, to need a farther Enlargement.

2dly, Such Prayers facilitate our *leading a Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godliness, and Honesty*; inasmuch as they express, in the most significant manner, our Love, and Zeal, and Reverence towards the Persons of Princes: and by such Instances of Duty invite them to make us suitable Returns. They effectually prevent those Jealousies, which Men cloth'd with Sovereign Power are too apt to entertain of their Inferiors; and promote that good Understanding between them, which is the Common Interest, and should be the Common Aim of Both; and wherein the Security, and Happiness of all well-order'd States chiefly

ly consists. The Holy Wishes and Vows we make for Their Welfare, will engage their unweary'd Endeavours for Ours; and the Thanksgivings put up by us for the Tranquillity, we enjoy under their Reign, will move them to afford us fresh and frequent Occasions for New ones.

.. Particularly, the Church is in This way best capable of giving Aid and Assistance to the State; and, by that means, of deserving, and securing it's Protection, and Favour. This is the *Spiritual Tribute, and Custom*, which she pays to the *Supreme Magistrate*; and for which she receives, in Exchange, all the Temporal Blessings and Encouragements, that flow from the Munificence of Princes, and make her not only to Subsist, but Flourish.

3dly, *A Quiet and Peaceable Life* is the Fruit of these Publick Devotions, as We our selves derive from thence a Spirit of Meekness, Submission, and Respect to our Superiors, and are led into an Habituall Love and Practice of those Mild Graces and Vertues, which we, at such times, solemnly exercise, and pray God to inspire us with; and which, when generally practis'd, make Crowns sit easie on the Heads of Princes, and render Them, and their

their Subjects, equally a Blessing to Each Other. Such as sincerely pray for the Prosperity of a State, are not likely to disturb it themselves, or to push on Others into Attempts against the Peace of it: They come out of the Church, still more Devoted to their Prince, and Country, than they went in; more Zealous, and better Qualify'd to discharge their Duty to the Publick, in their several Places, and Stations.

I have sufficiently explain'd the Exhortation of St. Paul, and the General Arguments, and Motives, by which he enforceth it. The best way of closing, and applying these Reflections will be, to take a View of the Character of those Princes, on whose behalf the Apostle presseth on the Christians of his time the Practice of this Duty, and from thence to shew, how much stronger Obligations We are under of complying with it. And

IV.

1st, The Princes, for whom the Apostle pleads, were Infidels, *without Christ*, Eph. ii. 12. *Aliens from his Commonwealth, and Strangers from the Covenants of his Promise*; and such also they were, by the Permission of God, to continue for Three Hundred Years after the Coming of our Saviour;

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that so his Gospel might not owe it's first Establishment, in any degree, to the Secular Powers ; but might spread and fix it self every where, without their Help, and against their Will ; and manifest to all the World it's Divine Original, by the Miraculous manner in which it should be propagated. The Kings of the Earth were not, during this Period, to promote the belief of the Gospel, any otherwise than by Opposing it. When the rest of the World had come in, and own'd our Saviour, Then, and not 'till Then, were the Rulers of it to submit their Scepters to the Scepter of Christ ; to Embrace, Protect, and Encourage his Doctrine, but not to Plant it : that, in This Sense also, the Prediction of our Lord concerning the Progress of his Kingdom, and the Call of Believers, might be verify'd, that *the Last of Men should be First ; and the First, Last.*

Matth. xx.
16.

If, then, the Tribute of *Supplications and Thanksgivings* was due to those Heathen Princes, is it not much more due to those who are Christians? who are ingrafted, as Principal Members, into that Mystical Body, of which *Christ Jesus* is the Head? who, under Him, are the Chief Governours of his Church here below,

low, and Guardians of all her Sacred Rights and Privileges? They beseech, and they praise God together with Us, in the same Common Assemblies; and We are, therefore, doubly oblig'd to beseech, and to praise God for them. It may be observ'd, in the

2d place, That the *Roman* Emperors, for whom the Apostle here directs, that Prayers should be made, were Usurpers, and Tyrants; who acquir'd Dominion by invading the Liberties of a Free People, and were Arbitrary and Lawless in the Exercise of it. Their Will and Pleasure was the sole Standard of Justice; Fear was the Foundation of their Government, and their Throne was upheld only by the Legions which surround- ed it.

Even for such Rulers the first Christians were exhorted to Supplicate, and give Thanks. How much more reasonably and chearfully do We, who are met here this Day, now offer up that Sacrifice for a *Queen*, who wears the Crown of her Forefathers, to which She is Entitled by Blood, and which was plac'd on her Royal Head, not only with the Free Consent, but with the Universal Joy and Acclamations of her Subjects? Who

rules a Willing People, not by the Terror of Rods and Axes, but with the Indulgent Tenderness of a Common Parent? who desires rather to be Belov'd, than Fear'd by them, and takes the truest way toward securing their Utmost Love, by shewing, in every Step of her Gracious Conduct, that She entirely loves them? Who hath no Interest, can have no Interest, separate from Theirs; and upon whom Malice it self could never fasten a Suspicion of Her pursuing any Measures, which aim'd rather at her Own Glory, or Advantage, than the Common Good of *England*.

The Law is as much a Rule to Her, as to the least of Those who Obey her; the fixt Measure, not only of Her governing Power, but even of Her Will to govern; and She makes no other Use of that Power, with which the Laws have invest'd Her, than to give Life and Force to them.

The Blessings of Her Mild and Merciful Government descend from the Throne upon Her People, *as the Small Rain cometh down into a Fleece of Wool*, without Vehemence, or Noise; *like the Drops of Rain, that water the Earth*, gently, and insensibly. She draws up the Free Offerings

ferings of our Love, and Duty, only to return them back again in Showers of Royal Bounty; which make glad the Land, and produce a mighty Increase.

Surely, our Lips cannot better be employ'd, than in Praising God for such mighty Benefits, as these, and for the Blessed Hand, through which he conveys them!

3dly, Those who govern'd the World, at, or near the Time of *St. Paul's* writing this Epistle, had no Personal Merits, or Vertues, to recommend them to the Prayers of the Faithful. *Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero*, under whom the Christian Faith was disseminated, and for all whom, we may presume, the Faithful equally made their Supplications, were not only Bad Princes, but Bad Men; infamous for their Lust, Cruelty, and other Vices: but they were in *Authority*, and that gave them a Right to be mention'd in the Stated Offices of the Church.

How different from Their Case is Ours, whose Eyes behold on the Throne a *Queen*, who deserves to sit there, as well by Her Vertue, as by Her Birth; Who, in that Publick and Exalted Station, preserves all the Innocence and Sanctity of

a Private Life; Who is Superior to all the Temptations, which a great Power suggests, and which nothing but as great Goodness ever overcomes; and to whom, therefore, Her Subjects seem to be almost as much oblig'd for the Shining Pattern of unaffected Piety, which She sets them, as for all the Other Blessings of Her Prosperous Reign. The Accession of such a Queen to a Crown is indeed a Felicity, which we may commemorate Annually, with a Devout and Sincere Joy: God grant, that we may Commemorate it Often! and that we may still find more and more reason thankfully to acknowledge it!

Finally, the Emperors of *Rome*, for whom the Primitive Christians were oblig'd to Pray, and to give Thanks, were their avow'd Enemies, and Persecutors; who did, what they could, to hinder the Establishment of the Church of *Christ*, and to suppress those very Assemblies, wherein these Devotions were offer'd up to God in their behalf.

Whereas She, for whom we now Adore and Bless the good Providence of God, is, by Her Office, and by Her Inclination, the Defender, and Friend, the Patroness, and Nursing-Mother of his Church establish'd

blish'd amongst us. In this Church She was Baptiz'd, and Bred, and, therefore, naturally loves it; She was made early, and throughly acquainted with its Doctrine, and Government, and, consequently values it; She hath been a Religious Frequenter of its Worship, and a steady Adherer to its Interest; and was prepar'd, in the late times of Distress and Danger, to Suffer with it, and for it. From Her, therefore, now She is advanc'd to a Throne, all the Members, and Ministers of this Church may justly promise themselves, not only the Opportunity of *leading a Quiet and Peaceable Life*, (the utmost which the First Christians could hope for from Their Emperours) but Farther Advantages; not meerly Protection, but all Suitable Instances of Royal Favour and Encouragement.

Witness Her late Act of Princely Bounty and Compassion to the Poor Clergy of this Church: an Act, unequal'd by any Prince, nay by all our Princes, since the Reformation; and which (I was going to say) may atone for Acts of a very different kind, done in some of their Reigns. It griev'd Her Religious Heart to see, that Those, who

wait at the Altar, should not Partake with the Altar, in such a Measure, as is requisite to preserve the Respect due to their Characters, and to give Encouragement, and Success to their Labours. She seem'd to hear them complaining, in the Pathetick Words of the Psalmist; Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us; for we are exceedingly filled with Contempt: Our Soul is exceedingly filled with the Scorning of those that are at Ease, and with the Contempt of the Proud. To rescue Them, and the Religion which they taught, from these Disadvantages, She extended Her Beneficence in the most Ample manner; and took care to have the good Effects of it perpetuated to Future Ages; through the Chearful Assistance of those, who Compose this Illustrious Assembly, and whose Assistance, we are sure, will never be wanting, to perfect any Work, that is begun for the Honour, Advantage, and Security of the Church of England. Scarce any but a Royal Heart, was capable of Entertaining so large a Design; as none but Royal Hands were, in any degree, equal to the Execution of it.

The Benefaction is, indeed, worthy of Her, from whom it sprung; and carries
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in it Marks of a Wisdom, as Extensive as Her Goodness. For it is not Confin'd, tho' Given, to Those who Minister in Holy Things; the Happy Fruits, and Effects of it will, through this Channel, be convey'd to all Ranks and Orders of Men among us. All will share in that Munificence, which redounds to the Service of Religion, the Common Inheritance, and Blessing of All; and which gives Life and Weight to the Instructions of Those, who, as meanly as they may be thought of, on other Accounts, are yet *the Ambassadors of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God.*

An Unenvy'd Bounty, therefore, it needs must be; *a Good*, which cannot decently be *evil spoken of*, even by Such (if there be any Such) who wish not well either to the Objects, or the Bestower of it.

Great and groundless Reproaches have, in other Respects, been cast on Our Church, as if there were still some Remains of Popery in it. Poor Vicarages are really such; which took their Rise from the pretended Vicar of Christ, who endow'd Abbies, and Monasteries, oftentimes, with the Spoils of Church-Livings, for the Support and Maintenance

nance of his Spiritual Tyranny. 'Twas the great Blemish of our Reformation, that, when Religious Houses were suppress'd, some Part, at least, of their Revenue was not restor'd to its Original Use. But the Defects of that Time were, we trust, reserv'd to be supply'd by Her Majesty; and the goodly Frame of our Constitution is to be perfected, as it was modell'd, by the Hand of a Woman.

A Prince, less solicitous for the Good of Religion, tho' intent on such a Work, would yet have deferr'd it, till the Expensive War, wherein we are engag'd, was brought to a Close. But the Compassion, and Godly Zeal of our Gracious Sovereign would not be check'd by this Consideration: The Love of doing Good overcame all the Difficulties, which lay in the Way towards doing it. She thought, That, to Consecrate One Part of Her Revenue to so Pious an Use, would draw a Blessing on the Management of all the other Branches of it; That the *Cruise of Oil* would not fail ever the sooner, for bestowing a Portion of it on a Prophet, or any of the Sons of the prophets; That the Earnest Prayers of Those, whom She thus reliev'd, would be as Serviceable to Her in this War,

as

as the Income it self; and that Her Charity would, in the Expressions of the Son of Syrach, *Fight for her against her Enemies better than a Mighty Spear, and a Strong Shield.*

Eccclus.
xxix, 13.

And, surely, the Unanimous and Early Dispatch of the Supplies, the Present Height of Publick Credit, and the Eagerness with which all her Subjects press to fill Her Coffers with their Loans, are not Signs, that She hath by any Act of misapply'd Bounty hitherto lost Ground, either in the Favour of Heaven, or in the Affection, and Esteem of Her People.

May that God, whom She thus serves, and imitates, extend Her Life and Reign beyond the Ordinary Term of either; and crown every Year of them with new Instances of his Goodness to Her, and to these Kingdoms!

*Now, unto the King Eternal, Immortal,
Invisible, the only Wise God, be Honour,
and Glory, for ever ever!
Amen.*

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The R U L E of
Doing as we would be Done unto,
 Explain'd in a
S E R M O N,
 Preach'd before Her
MAJESTY,
 A T
 St. J A M E S ' S Chapel,
 On *Sunday*, NOVEMB. 5. 1704.

St. M A T T H. vii. 12.

*All things, whatsoever ye would that
 Men should do unto you, do ye even
 so to them; for this is the Law and
 the Prophets.*

THE Sentence, I have read unto
 you, is very fitly plac'd towards
 the Close of our Saviour's admirable
 Ser-

Sermon on the Mount ; as being, in great measure, the Epitome and Sum of what the Divine Preacher had there express'd more at large. Nor is it less fitly order'd to be recited at the Holy Table, in the most Solemn part of the Service of this Day ; on which we meet annually to Commemorate our Deliverance from the Attempts of those bloody and merciless Men, who seem to have out-done all their Predecessors and Successors in Wickedness, by a Notorious Contempt of this great Evangelical Rule, and of all the Principles of common Humanity. The Practice of those Conspirators was the perfect Reverse of this Precept; and we cannot, therefore, better be taught, or incited to detest the one, than by a due Illustration and Enforcement of the other. This I shall attempt, by offering to your Thoughts some Considerations, First, on the Rule here laid down ; *All things, whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so to them* ; and, then, on the short, but full *Encomium*, bestow'd upon it, that it is *the Law and the Prophets* : Which shall be follow'd by some *Inferences*, naturally arising from the whole ; and the General Reflections advanc'd, (tho' they may all along easily be

be understood to refer, yet) shall afterwards be particularly apply'd, to the Subject of this Day's Solemnity.

As to the Rule it self, we may distinctly consider the just Extent and Bounds of it, the Reason of its Preferableness to all other Rules, in point of Evidence and Conviction, the manifest Equity and Exactness, the peculiar Properties and Advantages of it.

All things, whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so to them! Words of great force and energy; and yet, the most simple, plain, and perspicuous that can be! And which therefore Commentators do (as they too often do) obscure and perplex, by a pretense of Explaining. The only possible Doubt is, concerning the *Extent* of the *Matter* contain'd in them: For it must be allow'd, that there are many Cases, wherein we are by no means oblig'd to grant that to others, which we our selves perhaps (were we in their Circumstances, and they in ours) might be willing enough, unreasonably willing, to obtain from them. A Benefactor is not bound to comply with the Demands of such as
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ask unmerited Favours, tho' conscious, that He himself might be apt to make as Extravagant Requests, were it his turn to be the Object of another Man's Beneficence. A Magistrate is not at Liberty, much less under any Obligation, to turn the Edge of Justice from an Importunate Offender; because, if He himself were the Criminal, he should certainly, and equally desire to escape unpunish'd. The Rule, therefore, which makes, what we desire of other Men, the Measure of our dealing toward them, is to be understood, not of vicious and excessive Desires, but of such only as are fit and reasonable; such Requests as we can, in our calmest Thoughts, justify to our selves; such as, we are sure, may be made without Indecency, and cannot be refus'd without Inhumanity. And, under this necessary Limitation, the Precept of the Text may be thus understood: " Put thy self
 " into such a Man's Condition, and con-
 " sider, what Treatment, what Favours,
 " in That Case, thou might'st fairly and
 " justly expect *from* Him; and be Thou
 " sure to deal *with* Him, according to
 " those thy just and regular Expectations.
 And this I take to be the true Explication of that other equivalent Precept,
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given in the *Gospel*, to *Love our Neighbours, as our selves*; which we may then, in the most proper and strict Sense of the Words, be said to do, when we, first, place our Selves in our Neighbour's stead, and, then, learn to love him; by considering, what degree of Love and Good-Will, of Forbearance and Forgiveness we might, under that Change of Circumstances, challenge from him.

It may be thought, that the Rule, thus temper'd and qualify'd, will not be of any special Use, or Moment to us, in the Direction of our Practice; inasmuch as the Lines of Duty do not seem to be more clearly mark'd out, by this Method of Comparison, than they would have been, by a direct Injunction to us, to deal with others, as right Reason and our Consciences inform us, that we ought to deal with them. For, after all, when we have made another Man's Case ours, we are still left to judge, what, under such a Charge of Circumstances, we might, in Equity and Reason, expect from him; before we can determine, after what manner we are to behave ourselves towards him. And, therefore, which way soever we take the Measure

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of our Duty ; to the Bar of Equity and Reason we must, it seems, in order to the fixing it, always finally appeal.

'Tis true, we must --- But the Maxim of the Text is That, which, of all others, doth most effectually assist us towards making a free use of our Reason, and forming right Judgment of things, on such Occasions : For, by the Means of it, we are able to consider our Duty without prejudice, and to state the Bounds of it impartially and fairly. When we determine amiss concerning the Obligations incumbent upon us, in respect of other Men; 'tis by reason of that strong weight of Self-love, which, like a Byass, inclines, and secretly sways our Minds towards That Side, on which our Own Interest lies. To set this Error right, we suppose our Selves to be the Men, who are to receive this Treatment *from* Others, which we are about to practise *toward* Them ; and, then, the same Selfish-Principle makes that appear very hard and unreasonable, which before it inclin'd us to approve ; and thus our warp'd and perverted Judgment, by being bent as much towards the Opposite side, recovers its straightness. The Rule of the Text, therefore

fore, is, at the bottom, a wise Art of rebating one degree of our Partiality by another; it enables us to take two several Views of our Duty, to eye it in different Situations, and under different Lights; and, by that means, more distinctly and thoroughly to discern it. And, in this Sense, *Measuring our selves by our selves, and comparing our selves with our selves*, we take the surest way to be both Just and *Wise*.

2 Cor. x.
12.

There's nothing, we know, that gives a Man so true and lively a Sense of the Sufferings of Others, or restrains him so powerfully from doing Unrighteous and Oppressive things; as his having smarted, formerly, himself, under the Experience of them. Now, the supposing another Man's ill usage to be Ours, is, the giving our selves a present Sense, as it were, a kind of Feign'd Experience of it; which doth, for the time, serve all the Purposes of a True one.

Upon these Accounts it is, that the Precept of the Text carries greater Evidence, and a fuller degree of Conviction in it, than any other Rule of Morality; its apparent Equity and Reasonableness, is what we are next to consider. And this

Deut. xxv.
13, 14.

is so plain a Point, as not to want, or indeed be capable of, a Solemn Proof: For the Precept manifestly aims at That, which is the known Foundation of Equity and Justice, in all Matters of Intercourse between Man and Man; the reducing things to one Common Standard, by the Application of which they are all to be examin'd, and try'd. *Thou shalt not have in thy Bag, or in thine House (said the Levitical Law) divers Weights, and divers Measures; a Great and a Small [i.e. one, wherewith to Buy; and another, wherewith to Sell:] but thou shalt have a perfect and just Weight, a perfect and just Measure shalt thou have.* What is said here of ordinary Traffick and Dealing, holds as true of the General Commerce of Human Life, and that Exchange of Good Offices by which Society is upheld: There must be a *perfect Weight, and a just Measure*, by which all Men are mutually oblig'd to regulate their Conduct, in acting and suffering, in commanding and obeying, in giving and receiving; and this can be no other than the Equal and Righteous Rule of the Text, the *Doing* in all Cases, and to all Persons, *even as we would be done unto.* There is no one so absurd and unreasonable, as not to see
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and acknowledge the Absolute Equity of this Command, in the Theory, however he may swerve and decline from it in his Practice; and to agree upon it, as that Golden Mean, which, if universally observ'd, would make the World universally Happy; every Man a Benefactor, a good Angel, a Deity, as it were, to his Fellow-Creatures; and Earth, the very Image of Heaven! I need, I can say no more, concerning the Reasonableness of this Precept: However, it may help to excite and quicken your Desires, and Hopes of obeying it, if I proceed, as I propos'd, to point out some Distinguishing Properties and Advantages of it.

The First of which is, that it is alike easie and obvious to all Understandings, to the meanest, and most ignorant Men, as well as to those of the greatest Parts and Improvements. God is, on this, as well as on other Accounts, no Respector of Persons; having made that, which is most necessary, most common, and, consequently, suited this Principle, which all Men have equal occasion to use, equally to the Aparehensions of all Men. They, therefore, who are incapable

of long Trains and Deductions of Reason, and of adapting the several Rules of Morality to the various Circumstances of Action, are yet able (as able as the acutest Philosophers, or Casuists) to look into their own Hearts, to ask themselves this plain Question, and to return a clear Answer to it: "Would I my self be
 " content, that others should thus deal
 " with me? Why then should I so
 " deal with any Man?"

Human Laws are often so numerous, as to escape our Memories; so darkly sometimes and inconsistently worded, as to puzzle our Understandings; and their original Obscurity is not seldom improv'd by the nice Distinctions and subtle Reasonings of those who profess to clear them: so that, under these several Disadvantages, they lose much of their Force and Influence; and, in some Cases, raise more Disputes than, perhaps, they determin. But here is a Law, attended with none of these Inconveniences; the grossest Minds can scarce misapprehend it; the weakest Memories are capable of retaining it; no perplexing Comment can easily cloud it, the Authority of no Mans Gloss upon Earth can (if we are but sincere) sway us to make a wrong
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Construction of it. What is said of all the Gospel-Precepts by the Evangelical Prophet, is more eminently true of This; *It is an High-Way; and the Wayfaring-Man, tho' a Fool, shall not err therein.* Isa. xxxv. 8.

'Tis not enough, that a Rule, which is to be of General Use, is suited to all Capacities; so that, where-ever it is represented to the Mind, it is presently agreed to: it must also be apt to offer itself to our Thoughts, and lye ready for present Use, upon all Exigences, and Occasions. And such, remarkably such, is that which our Lord here recommends to us. We can scarce be so far surpriz'd by an immediate necessity of Acting, as not to have time for a short Recourse to it, room for a sudden Glance, as it were, upon it, in our Minds; where it rests, and sparkles always, like the *Urim* and *Thummim* on the Breast of *Aaron*. There is no occasion for us to go in search of it to the Oracles of Law, dead, or living; to the Code, or Pandects; to the Volumes of Divines, or Moralists: *Quod petis, hinc est*; we need look no farther than our Selves for it: for (to use the apposite Expressions of *Moses*) *This Commandment, which I Command thee this Day, is not* Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 13,

hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the Sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the Sea for us, and bring it unto us; that we may hear it, and do it? But the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that thou may'st do it.

It is, moreover, a Precept, particularly fitted for Practice; as it involves in the very Notion of it a Motive, stirring us up to Do what it Enjoins. Other Moral Maxims propose naked Truths to the *Understanding*, which operate often but faintly and slowly on the *Will* and *Passions*, the two Active Principles of the Mind of Man: but it is the peculiar Character of This, that it addresseth it self equally to all these Powers; imparts both Light and Heat to us; and, at the same time that it informs us certainly and clearly, what we are to do; excites us also, in the most tender and moving manner, to the performance of it. We can see our Neighbour's Misfortune, without a sensible degree of Concern; which yet we cannot forbear expressing, when

when we have once made His Condition our Own, and determin'd the Measure of our Obligation towards him, by what We our selves should, in such a Case, Expect from Him : Our Duty grows immediately our Interest, and Pleasure, by the means of this powerful Principle; the Seat of which is, in truth, not more in the Brain, than in the Heart of Man : it appeals to our very Senses; and exerts its secret Force in so prevailing a way, that it is even Felt, as well as Understood by us.

The Last Recommendation of this Rule I shall mention, is its Vast and Comprehensive Influence: for it extends to all Ranks and Conditions of Men, and to all kinds of Action and Intercourse between them; to matters of Charity, Generosity, and Civility, as well as Justice; to Negative, no less than Positive Duties. The Ruler and the Ruled, are alike subject to it; Publick Communities can no more exempt themselves from its Obligation, than Private Persons; *All Persons must fall down before it, all Nations must do it Service.* And, with respect to this Extent of it, it is, that our Blessed Lord pronounces it, in the Text,

to

Psa. lxxii.
11.

to be *the Law and the Prophets*. His meaning is, that, whatever Rules of the *Second Table* are deliver'd in the Law of *Moses*, or in the Larger Comments and Explanations of that Law, made by the Other Writers of the Old Testament, [here, and elsewhere, stil'd *the Prophets*] they are all virtually compris'd in this one short significant Saying, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them*: From this, as from their Common Source, they were all originally deriv'd; and into this they may be all ultimately resolv'd. For all

Gal. v. 14. *the Law is fulfilled in One Word*, (saith St. Paul) *even in This, Thou shalt Love thy Neighbour as thy Self*: and I have shew'd You, that this Word is the same in Sense with the Word, or Precept of Text; tho' it be not deliver'd in so clear, so expressive, and so convincing a Manner. And this Word therefore the same Apostle calls elsewhere, *The End of the*

1 Tim. i. 5. *Commandment*; and St. James, *The Royal*

Jam. ii. 8. *Law: That*, (they both mean) in which all the Lines of Duty, relating to our Neighbour, center, and under which, as under one common Head and Principle, they may be reduc'd and rang'd.

Various are the Uses, into which this Important Truth thus handled, is capable of being improv'd.

For from hence I might, in the first place, take Occasion to consider, Whether, and how far, the Precept here given be the *Whole*, not only of the *Law*, and the *Prophets*, but of the *Gospel* also; and what Evangelical Duties * there are, which seem, as the Schools speak, to *transcend* it; to be (as Mysteries are, in respect of Reason) not indeed *against* this great Principle, but *above*, and *beyond* it; and such, as we cannot thoroughly account for, without taking the Consideration of another World into our Schemes and Reasonings.

I might, in the next place, proceed to shew, how large a share Moral Truths have, even in the Body of Reveal'd Doctrines; since the Precept of the Text, which comprehends only the Duty we

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* Grotius in Act. xv. 20. *Si quis dicere velit, hęc verborum summā comprehendī omnia Evangelii præcepta, fallitur. Cūm præceptum de Uno Deo colendo per Christum, de abnegatione Sui, de subeundę Cruce, non sint intra hunc ambitum: alia etiam non nisi obscure admodum huc referri possunt.*

owe to our Neighbour, is said to be *the Law and the Prophets*. An Expression, not indeed to be taken rigorously, and and in the Letter ! but which may however be understood to imply, that, as a great part of Holy Writ is employ'd in directly pressing the Duties abridg'd in this Precept, so the Rest of it plainly points and refers to them : Even the highest Mysteries of Faith were not made known to us, without some regard to our Improvement in Practical Vertues ; and the Knowledge of those, unless it tends to quicken our Obedience to these, will be of no manner of service to us, will neither better us in this World, nor save us in the next.

From the Assertion, in the Close of the Text, it may be yet farther, and more clearly inferr'd, That there is a Chain of Moral Reasoning, by which the several Duties of the Second Table are connected together, and have an orderly dependance on One Common Principle, out of which they were drawn. That Virtue, therefore, is not the blind Homage of our Nature, arbitrarily exacted from us ; but a Duty fitted and proportion'd to the Light of our Faculties, and every way
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our Reasonable Service: in a word, that Rom. xii. 1. Morality is a true and proper Science, and all the Parts of it capable of strict Demonstration.

An Observation, of manifold and excellent use! for it teaches us to reject the Pretences of those vain and fanciful Enthusiasts, who have fram'd a Rule of Duty to themselves, as contrary to the Common Sense and Reason, as it is to the Current Language of Mankind; so Refin'd and Sublime, as to be utterly unintelligible and impracticable: It is not to be learn'd, or confuted, in the Method of other Doctrines; It is to be made out only by the force of some Unaccountable Impressions; by a Light, that shines inward, and which cannot be communicated, or discover'd. Eph. iv. 20. But *We have not so learn'd Christ*: On the contrary, we are assur'd, that we do our Lord and Master good Service, such as he will own, and reward, when we apply our selves to establish the Truths of our Religion upon Principles of Reason, and to argue Men into their Duty by appealing to Natural Light, to the Certainty of first Principles, and to the Evident Deductions which may from thence be made by the sure Rules of Discourse; and that we are not

not to regard the Censures of those, who, on this account, shall stile us mere Moral Teachers, and Carnal Reasoners; but will not allow us to speak by the Spirit, or to be at all acquainted with the Life and Power of Godliness. As if Religion were a thing design'd not to be understood, or made out! but lost somewhat of it's native Majesty and Force, when once we came to reason upon it!

Nor would it be an Unprofitable Reflection, to observe from hence the great Benignity and Goodness of God, who hath made even our *Own Will*, and our *Self-love*, a compleat Law of Action, and Measure of Duty to us. *All things whatsoever Ye would* [i. e. whatsoever Ye are willing] *that Men should do unto You, do Ye even so to Them!* Surely, a very Easie Yoak, and Light Burthen! We may be averse, perhaps, from submitting to the Divine Will, or to the Will of any of our Fellow Creatures, exercising Authority over us: but can we be otherwise than contented, and pleas'd, in submitting to our *Own Will*, whatever it is? and yet a submission to *That*, (when regulated by Proper Circumstances, and Views) is all that is requir'd of us. Merciful Saviour,
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thou saidst once indeed to thy Father, as thou wer't Man, *Not my Will, but thine* Luke xxii. *be done!* but who could expect, that thou shouldst have said the same thing to Us also, as thou art God! However, thus, in effect, thou hast said, in the Precept now before us. Teach us, O Lord, by the means of this Precept, so duly to regulate our Wills, that we may safely follow them! make Thy Will, Ours; that so, in doing our Own Will, we may be sure to fulfil Thine also!

We see from hence, how far the Gospel is from suppressing, or checking the principle of *Self-love* in us, which it makes the Ground and Rule of all that Love we owe to Others; and which, therefore, we may Innocently, nay Usefully carry to what Degree, what Height we please, if we do but take care that the Love of our Neighbour keeps pace with that of our Self, and is govern'd by it. Away then with those Extravagant Flights of Devotion, which some pretended Saints (but real Enthusiasts) of the Church of *Rome* have indulg'd themselves in; who make it necessary for every Christian, in order to perfection, to divest himself of all manner of regard for himself; nay to despise, to hate, and to abhor himself, in the utmost

most Propriety of the Expression. Certainly, if what these Mystical Divines say be true, impossible it is for a perfect man to Love his Neighbour at all: since he is not allow'd, by their Scheme, to love himself; and yet is bound to love his Neighbour, as he loves himself, (or, which is all one, to do as he would be done unto) by our Lord's exprefs Determination.

Several other weighty Truths there are, which this fruitful Theme would suggest; and most of those, I have mention'd, might deserve to be handled more largely. But I must contract my thoughts on this head, that I may have room to insist on one Plain, Useful Inference, wherein I am to apply the Doctrine hitherto deliver'd. It is this — If the Precept of the Text be so Fundamental and Necessary, so Obvious and Easie, so Sure and Safe, so Full and Comprehensive a Rule of Life and Manners; how inexcusable, upon all these accounts, must those Persons be, who, throughout the whole Course of their Actions, shew, that they do not regard it? I shall, first, expostulate the Case with such as offend against this Precept at large; and, then, con-

consider that particular and flagrant Instance of the Breach of it, which This Day affords us.

Are we then, any of us, profess'd Contemners of Reveal'd Religion? we would yet be thought to have a mighty reverence for Reason (since by the help of Reason it is, that we endeavour to throw off Revelation); and while we have, this its Eldest and most Unquestion'd Law should, methinks, be very Sacred to us. What! shall the great Masters of Exact Thinking, and Idolizers of Reason live in a perpetual Contradiction to the first Principle of it! Will They, who have so Little Light to guide themselves by (that of Nature alone), neglect to make use even of that Little which they have? And yet, perhaps, there is no sort of Men whatever, that offends so remarkably against the Evident Righteousness of this Rule, as Those, who pretend most to magnify the Principle from whence it flows: There are none who pursue their Pleasures so keenly, and sooth all their Passions so carefully; are every way so Selfish, and so directly set in Opposition to this Generous and Equal Maxim; as the Men, who will tell you, They adore plain Common Sense, but cannot digest

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a Mystery: From whence it is manifest, that their Disesteem of Faith proceeds, not from any just Esteem they have of Reason, or any Regard they bear to its Laws; but merely from a Spirit of Libertinism, and a desire of coming under as few Obligations as possible. 'Tis not a freedom of Thinking, which they aim at; but a freedom of Living, and of Doing what they please, without the Control of Law, or Fear of Punishment. And, in order to this, One good Step is, to shake off Reveal'd Religion; and such an One as is usually follow'd by another, the parting with All Religion, even That which Nature it self prescribes. To these Reasoners therefore we say, that the Rule of *doing as they would be done by* is not (what they are so jealous of) any Imposition upon their Understandings, any puzzling mysterious Doctrine; It is all Pure Light, and Evidence, *and in it is no darkness at all*. Why then do They not Submit to it? Why do They, of all Men Living, do as they would not be done by? Oppress and trample upon their Inferiors, Revile their Betters, and Supplant their Equals? Carry on their Unlawful Desires, without Stint, or Bounds, to the Injuring the Property of those who are

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too weak to contend with them, to the defaming their Neighbour's Reputation, or defiling his Bed? Why, in a word, do they make Themselves the only Centre of all their Actions, Wishes, and Designs? and regard nothing, that is without them, any farther than it may be useful to their purposes and enjoyments? Let us see this Lofty Race of Men in good earnest stoop to this plain Dictate of Reason, and then we shall be inclin'd to think them sincere, when they pretend to hearken to the Voice of Reason, and to that only; and may have room to hope, that the good God, who sees them honestly practising all those Vertues which flow from this Rule, will add what is behind, and, in his own time, graft Grace upon Nature.

But do we (as every one, I trust, doth, who hears me this day) profess our selves to be the Disciples of Christ? and, can we think our selves really to Be, what we profess, while we openly and avowedly break this great Precept of Christ; the main Hinge, upon which the Morality of his Gospel turns? We may boast, if we please, of our having all Knowledge, and all Faith, and of our understanding all Mysteries: but if we do not govern our Lives by this Truth, which is evi-

dent by Nature, 'twill be to no purpose, that we firmly assent to those Truths which are reveal'd to us by Grace. We deny Christianity, indeed, if we reject These: but if we live in contradiction to That, we renounce the Principles of Human Nature it self; without supposing which, there can be no Christianity. Let us Profess, and Believe what we will; unless We Do also as We would be done unto, all Our Faith, and Our Religion is vain. Nor is it Vain only, and Unprofitable, in respect of our Selves; it is also of pernicious Consequence to Others, who, from such Instances as these, will take occasion to disparage the Efficacy and Influence of Reveal'd Religion, and to harden themselves in their Infidelity. The Ridiculers of Divine Faith, the Despisers of Mysteries, never exercise their Scornful Talent with greater Pleasure, or Success, than when they attack the Principles of Christianity, by comparing them with the Practice of Christians; especially in this Capital Article of all Schemes of Religion, *the doing to Men as we would be done unto*; and can point out our manifest and scandalous Violations of this plain Rule of Reason, while we pretend to embrace all the Sublime Doctrines,
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and to inherit all the Glorious Advantages of a Divine Revelation. The Heathen Emperor, *Severus*, shall rise up in the judgment with such a Generation of Christians, Matth. xii. 41. and condemn them: for He, by the Light of Nature, was taught highly to reverence this Precept; it was written on the Walls of his Palace, and in the Banners of his Army; it was engrav'd in his very Heart, and transcrib'd from thence into his Practice. Would to God, that many of those pretended Vicars of Christ, who have since erected their Thrones in the Chief Seat of this Prince's Empire, had alike succeeded him in an Awful and Conscientious Regard for this Excellent Maxim, and had been, in that Respect, as good Christians, (or rather, as good Heathens) as He was! They would not, then, have become the Authors and Fomenters of all that Discord and Confusion, all those Wars and Massacres, those Conspiracies and Rebellions, with which they have, for many Centuries past, shook the Thrones of Princes, and disturb'd, the Quiet of this Western World. Nor would they, in order to cover and palliate these Wicked Attempts, have openly encourag'd the Casuists of their Communion to publish such loose

and scandalous Systems of Morals, as, instead of being Comments on this Rule, are a perfect Contradiction to it, and are calculated, not to bring up Mens Obedience to the Terms of the Gospel, but to bring down the Gospel-Terms, as near as can be, to the Infirmities and Failings, nay to the Corruptions and Vices of Human Nature.

The Time would fail me, should I attempt to mention the most remarkable Instances, which would readily offer themselves, in either kind: That One Instance, which the Treason of This Day affords us, doth, in effect, comprehend the Wickedness of all the Rest; and is, when briefly insisted on, sufficient to raise in us a due Abhorrence of those Ungodly Principles and Practices, by which the Papacy hath enlarg'd its Interests, and establish'd its Spiritual Tyranny over the Understandings and Consciences of Men.

The Treason of This Day was a Contrivance, Wicked and Cruel beyond Example, and beyond Expression; Such, as the Ears of any Honest Heathen would, when they heard it related, tingle at; Such as, if perpetrated in the Infancy of Christianity, would have gone near to
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have arrested the Course of it, in Countries as yet unconverted, and to have render'd even the Miracles, done for its Confirmation, insignificant and vain: In a word, Such, as nothing but the Malice of One of that Order, which hath been, ever since its first Erection, the Scourge and Pest of Mankind, could have Projected; nor Any, but some of its Bigotted and Furious Votaries, durst to have Executed. Blessed *Jesu!* that ever Men more particularly calling themselves by Thy Name, and pretending more immediately to devote themselves to Thy Service, should so far forget the Law of Humanity and Kindness, which was visible in every part of thy Behaviour, while thou wast on Earth, and is still legible in every Page of thy Gospel! That they should be misled, by the perverse Comments of their Own Casuists upon this Law, so far, as to believe that a Massacring Spirit was reconcilable to the Spirit of Christianity, and that the Genuine Principles of it could lead, or permit Men to overturn States and Kingdoms! Such Ill Effects may spring from the best of Causes, Religion, when perverted and abus'd! such Horrid Impieties may Men arrive at, when they have

once fix'd this Persuasion firmly in themselves, That, how Vile soever the Attempts are, in which they engage, yet, if the End be good, it justifies and sanctifies the Means; and that the plainest Rules and Duties of the Gospel do not bind Those, who are, as they imagin, propagating the Interests of it.

Blessed be thy Name, O Lord, who did'st, as on this Day, after a marvellous manner, disappoint their Bloody Designs, when they were even ready to take place, and did'st suffer our Princes, our Prelates, our Nobles, all the Chief Ornaments and Supports of thy pure undefil'd Religion Establish'd among us, to *escape out of their Hands, even as a Bird from the snare of the Fowler!* Surely the *Wrath of Man* hath prais'd, and shall praise thee: --- *The Remainder of Wrath shalt thou restrain.*

Pla. cxxiv.
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Psa. lxxvi.
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I need not endeavour to raise your Thankfulness for the Mercies of this Day, by shewing, that, as distant as they are, they still belong to us. Some Blessings wax not old, or decay; but, like the Rod of the Tribe of *Levi*, laid up in the Tabernacle, tho' seemingly sapless and dead, do yet shoot, and send forth such their Blossoms. And such is That,
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we now Commemorate, even Now we taste the sweet Fruits and Effects of it: for to this Day's Deliverance (this Day's Double Deliverance) it is owing, that we are freed from the Fears of Papal Superstition and Bondage; that we enjoy all our Religious, and Civil Liberties, all that is dear and valuable to us, in respect of This World, or Another; and even that we see H E R on the Throne (the Throne of her Royal Ancestors, design'd this Day for Slaughter) Who, by sitting there, protects and secures us in these Enjoyments.

Great and manifold have the Instances been of God's Interposition to rescue this Church and Nation, when they most needed it; nor is his *Hand yet shortned*, Isa. lix. 1. that it cannot save: for, behold, what mighty things he hath lately wrought for us! in how seasonable and surprizing Manner he hath bless'd the Arms, which have been taken up in defence of his True Religion, the Liberties of *Europe*, and the Rights of Mankind, against the Common Invader and Destroyer of all of them! whose haughty Heart he hath at last humbled, and stain'd his boasted Glory; the Vain Idol, which that proud Monarch set up, and commanded all

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Nations to fall down and worship! The Success, which God hath given us, is great in it self; but much greater in the Consequences which it seems to promise. For who knows but that, by this single Blow, the Fate of that Kingdom may at length be decided? of that Insolent Kingdom, which thought she had *put her Nest in the Rock*, whither none could approach to hurt her? and seem'd (in the Expressions of the Prophet) *to say in her heart, I shall be a Lady for ever; I am, and none else beside me?* Who knows, but that the mighty Hunter of Men may, from this moment, be oblig'd to forego his Chace? may find it come to his turn, to fly, and be persu'd every where? and have the Preys, which he hath violently seiz'd, ravish'd again out of his Hands! Who knows, but that the several Victories which he hath meanly Stollen, or Purchas'd, may now, after a more fair and generous manner, be regain'd? and all the Laurels, he unjustly wears, be torn from his Temples, and plac'd on the Head of *Another*, who better deserves them? Certain it is, that God hath already begun to do these great things for us; which, unless we are wanting to our selves, he will as certainly finish. Already,
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Nu. xxiv.
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Isa. xlvii.
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since this Blow was given, we have seen the Happy Effects of it, in the Publick Confession of an Exhausted Exchequer, and a Languishing Credit: Evils, which, God be thanked, are neither felt, nor fear'd by Us at home, under the present Vigilant and Wise Administration.

Do Thou, O God, we beseech Thee, go on to strengthen the thing which thou hast wrought for us! Shew thy Servants thy Work, and their Children thy Glory! And the Glorious Majesty of the Lord our God be upon us! Prosper thou the Work of our Hands upon us! O, prosper thou our handy-work.

Pfal. lxxvii.
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Pfal. xc.
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Of Religious Retirement.

A
S E R M O N
 Preach'd before the
Q U E E N,
 A T
St. JAMES'S Chapel,

On *Friday*, MARCH 23. 1704.

MATTH. XIV. 23.

*When he had sent the Multitude away,
 he went up into a Mountain, apart,
 to Pray.*

IT hath been disputed, which is a
 State of greater Perfection, the
 Social, or the Solitary; whereas, in
 truth, neither of these Estates is com-
 plet without the Other; as the Example
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of our Blessed Lord (the Unerring Test and Measure of Perfection) informs us. His Life, (which ought to be the Pattern of Ours) was a Mixture of Contemplation and Action, of Austerity and Freedom : We find him often, where the greatest Concourse was, in the Market-Places, in the Synagogues, and at Festival Entertainments; and we find him also retiring from the Croud into a Desert, or a Garden, and there employing himself in all kinds of Religious Exercise, and Intercourse with God, in Fasting, Meditation, and Prayer. In Imitation of His Spotless Example, we *may*, doubtless, lead Publick Lives, Innocently, and Usefully; Conversing with Men, and doing good to them; mutually sowing, and reaping the several Comforts and Advantages of Human Society. But because the Pleasures of Conversation, when too freely tasted, are Intoxicating, and Dangerous; because the Temptations we there meet with are many and mighty; and even where the *Spirit is Willing* to resist, yet the *Flesh is often Weak*; we ought, therefore, to lessen the too great Complacence we are apt to have in such Satisfactions, by fit Intermissions of them; to strengthen our
selves

selves for such Publick Encounters, by our Religious Privacys; to retire from the World sometimes, and Converse with God, and our own Consciences; examining the State, and fortifying the Powers of our Souls, in Secrecy and Silence: We must do, as our Lord did, *Send the Multitudes away, and go up into the Mountain, apart, to Pray.*

I shall, from these Words, take Occasion to discourse to you concerning the Great (but much Neglected) Duty of *Religious Retreat* and *Recollection*. I shall, first, briefly shew you, under what Limitations I would be understood to recommend the Duty; and, then, What the Advantages are, which arise from a devout and discreet Performance of it.

I mean not to press upon you that sort of Retirement, which is so much esteem'd and practis'd in the Church of *Rome*; where all Perfection is reckon'd to consist in Solitude, and no Man is allow'd capable of arriving at the height of Virtue, who doth not strip himself of all the Conveniences of Life, and renounce all manner of Acquaintance with the World, and the Things of it:

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I see not, wherein this State of Life claims the Præminence over all others; how it is founded in Nature, and Reason; what particular Example, Precept, or Direction there is in the Gospel, inviting us to it. *John* the Baptist is, indeed, there represented, as sequestering himself from Human Converse, and spending his Time *in the Wilderness*: but as he is said to have come *in the Spirit and Power of Elias*, (a Spirit far different from the Spirit of the Gospel) and did, therefore, professedly imitate that Prophet, in his severe manner of Life, and Look, and Diet, and Garb, and Behaviour, and Doctrine; so his Example belong'd rather to the *Mosaic State*, under which he liv'd and taught, than to the *Christian Dispensation*, which began, where his Preaching ended. Nor did even the Baptist himself propose his Own Practice, as a Pattern to his Followers: on the contrary, when *the People, the Publicans, and the Soldiers* enquir'd of him, *what they should do, to flee from the Wrath to come*, he did not exhort them to go out of the World into the Wilderness; but gave them such Directions only as related to a faithful Discharge of their Duty in their several Stations and Callings: And when

and when afterwards our Saviour began to enter on his Ministry, and to appear as our Saviour, by publishing the Gospel of his Kingdom, we find nothing either in his Actions, or his Doctrine, to countenance that Recluse and Solitary State, which some since, who would be thought best to have imitated his Example, and obey'd his Precepts, have so zealously espous'd and practis'd. His Divine Discourses were chiefly spent in pressing Men to exercise those Graces which adorn the Sociable State: even his first Sermon on the Mount to the Multitude did, in the Entrance of it, recommend and enjoin a Publick, Conspicuous, and Exemplary Vertue; and (with some allusion, perhaps, to that Eminence on which he sat, and the Company which surrounded him) he then liken'd his Disciples to *a City set on an Hill, that cannot be hid*; Matth. v. he commanded them to *put their Light* ^{14.} *in a Candlestick, not under a Bushel, and so to make it shine before Men, that They, seeing their good Works, might glorifie their Father which is in Heaven.* 1b. v. 15. 1b. v. 16.

Far be it from me, however, to condemn all those Good and Holy Persons, who have betaken themselves to this Solitary and Austere Course of Living.

Doubtless, many of them were acted by a sincere, but misguided, Principle of Piety; the Fruits of which, tho' mix'd with a great Allay of Superstition, did yet, in divers respects, redound to the Credit of Religion, and the Good of Mankind. But supposing these to be Real, yet they were, I say, Uncommanded Instances of Vertue; not possible, or, if possible, not fit to be practis'd by the far greater part of Christians. The Retreat therefore, which I am speaking of, is not that of *Monks* and *Hermits*, but of Men living in the World, and going out of it for a time, in order to return into it; it is a Temporary, not a Total Retreat; such as we may leave off, or resume, at pleasure, according as we have Need of it, or an Opportunity for it; such, as is consistent with all the Business, and even with the Innocent Pleasures of Life; and is so far from interfering with the Duties of our Publick Offices and Stations, that it disposes and enables us for the better Discharge of them. 'Tis this sort of Retreat which may properly be made the matter of general Exhortation from the Pulpit, because it is really matter of general Obligation to every good and sincere Christian.

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No Man is, or ought to be so deeply immers'd in the Affairs of This World, as not to be able to retire from them now and then into his Closet, there to mind the Concerns of Another. Every day of his Life, Early, or Late, some Moments he may and must find to bestow this way ; the Lord's Day particularly is a great Opportunity of this kind, which can never wholly be neglected without Indevotion, or even without Scandal. And such also is the Annual Season of Recollection in which we are now far advanc'd ; not, I trust, without having employ'd it, in some measure, to those good Purposes for which it was intended. At such Times as these, either when the Labours and Ordinary Occupations of Life cease, or when Publick Diversions and Entertainments are forbidden ; Then every One, the Noble and the Mean, the Wealthy and the Poor, hath it certainly in his Power, if it be but in his Heart, to retire ; to step aside from the Hurry and Vanities of Life, and all the Allurements of Sense, and to Examine, and Improve, and Enjoy himself in private.

That we may be all excited so to do, I shall proceed, in the next place, to repre-

lent to You the several Advantages attending this Religious Practice; whether we consider it, as a Means of effacing the Ill Impressions made on our Minds in Daily Conversation, or as an Opportunity of pursuing farther Degrees of Perfection, and abounding in all the Methods of Spiritual Improvement.

The Advantages of the first kind, which it affords us, are plainly such as These; That it unites and fixes our scatter'd Thoughts; places us out of the Reach of the most Dangerous Temptations; frees us from the Insinuating Contagion of Ill Examples, and hushes and lays asleep those troublesom Passions, which are the great Disturbers of our Repose and Happiness.

A Dissipation of Thought is the Natural and Unavoidable Effect of our Conversing much in the World; where we cannot help squandering away a great deal of our Time upon Useless Objects, of no true Worth in themselves, and of no real Concern to us. We roul on in a Circle of vain empty Pleasures, and are deliver'd over continually from one slight Amusement to another; ever seemingly very
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Busie, and ever really very Idle; applying our selves without respit to That, which it becomes us most to neglect, and utterly neglectful of that One thing Necessary, which it becomes and behoves us most to pursue. This gives us by degrees such a Levity and Wantonness of Spirit, as refuses Admittance to all serious Thoughts, and renders us incapable of Reflection; makes our Closet a Terrible place to us, and Solitude a Burthen. To retrieve our selves from this vain, uncertain, roving, distracted way of thinking and living, it is requisite to retire frequently, and to Converse much with (what We above all things Love, and yet above all things hate to converse with) Our Selves; to inure our Minds to Recollection, to fix them on the greatest and most concerning Objects, those which Religion suggests, and which will, by their Importance, deserve, and engage, and command our Attention; 'till the busie Swarm of vain Images, that besets us, be thoroughly dispers'd, and the several scatter'd Rays of Thought, by being thus collected together, do by little and little warm our Frozen Hearts, and at last produce an Holy Flame.

The Expedience of Retirement is yet greater, as it removes us out of the way of the most pressing and powerful Temptations that are incident to Human Nature: Ye all know by Experience, that These meet us most frequently, and affect us most strongly in Society; where our Senses, the great Inlets of Temptation, are most awaken'd, and tempting Objects, by their Number and Nearness, make the most Vivid and Lasting Impressions upon us. Indeed, there is no Place, no State, or Scene of Life, that hath not its proper and peculiar Temptations; even Solitude it self is not without them: but they are few, and faint, in comparison with those to which our Appearance on the great Stage of the World exposes us; and whenever they attack us in our Recesses, they do, or may find us prepar'd, and upon our guard; we are then at leisure to encounter them, and have Helps near at hand, which, if made use of, will enable us to decline, or baffle them. Whereas, in Publick, we are merely Passive to such Impressions; which strike our Minds so violently, and succeed each other so fast, that we have no Opportunity, no Strength, no Inclination almost to withstand them.

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The great Risque which Vertue runs in Company, is, from the Neighbourhood of Ill Examples, which are of so Contagious a Nature, that, if we live much amongst them, we shall as surely be corrupted by them, as he, that often breaths an ill Air, will at last partake of the Infection. 'Tis dangerous for the most Innocent Person in the World to be too frequently and nearly a Witness to the Commission of Vice and Folly. Such Views lessen the Natural Horror we have for such Actions; and render the Thoughts of them more Familiar, and less Displeasing to us. Especially, when we are us'd to see Ill Things practis'd by Persons, whom we regard; the favourable Opinion we have of the Doer extends it self to the Action done; and leads us insensibly from seeing to approving, and from approving to Imitating. And thus being (the very best of us) prone to do Evil, and Living in the midst of Evil; being attack'd thus from without, and betray'd from within, we are not capable of making an Effectual Resistance: The only Refuge, we have, is in Retreat, where we may at leisure correct the Ill Impressions that have been made upon

us ; and, by Difuse, and Distance, weaken the Force of those Ill Influences which we could not wholly avoid.

Another Advantage which Retirement affords us, is, that it calms and composes all the Passions ; those especially of the tumultuous kind ; which, while the Business and Pleasures of Life possess our Hearts, are under a Restless and Violent Agitation. We seldom mix long in Conversation, without meeting with some Accident that ruffles and disturbs us ; somewhat that plays either upon our Hopes, or our Fears ; our Aversions, or Desires. An Injurious, or Slighting Word is thrown out, which we think our selves oblig'd to resent ; or some Innocent Expression of ours is misinterpreted and resented by Others, and That provokes a Return. Our Enemy comes in our way, and kindles Thoughts of Aversion and Hatred in us ; we look upon those, who are above us in all the Advantages of Life, with Envious Eyes, and with Contempt on those who are beneath us. Thus are we deliver'd over from Passion to Passion, toss'd and disquieted in our Minds, during the Intercourse we maintain with the World. But when we quit
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it, and retire, all these Winds are presently laid, and there is a Perfect Calm. The Objects, which excite us, being remov'd, our Appetites also Languish and Die away; we possess our Souls in Patience and Peace, and enjoy a profound Tranquillity and Rest, the Pleasure of which is great to those who are so happy as to have a Relish for it, and is enhans'd by being always tasted with Innocence.

Wouldst thou then be free from Envy and Scorn, from Anger and Strife? fly from the Occasions of them; steal away from the great Scene of Passion and Business into thy Privacy, shut the Doors about thee, *Commune with thy Own Heart in thy Chamber, and be still.* Psal. iv. 4. There all Animosities are forgotten, all Pursuits, all Competitions cease; there all Marks of Distinction are laid aside; the Great and the Lowly, the Prince and the Subject are upon the Level; equally under the Eye of one Common Master, equally desirous of pleasing Him, and mindless of lesser Interests and Concerns. There the Vanities and Vexations of this World are shut out, and the Considerations of another are let in; and our Soul enjoys that sweet Contentment and Repose, which it enjoys no where else, on this side Heaven. I

I have hitherto consider'd the Usefulness of Religious Retreat, with respect to some Ill Impressions made upon us in Conversation, which it removes: I shall now consider it, as productive of the Chief Christian Graces and Vertues; in as much as it affords us the best Opportunity of knowing *God*, and our *Selves*; and of taking all the proper Methods to reconcile and approve our selves to God, which are Consequent upon such a Knowledge. For, tho' it be expedient for Every Rank and Order of Men, yet is it more particularly advantagious to Penitents, to *go up with our Saviour into the Mountain, apart, to Pray*.

Job xxii.
21.

'Tis our Duty, and our Privilege, our Chief Honour and Happiness, to be *acquainted with God*; and this Acquaintance can never be made, but, where we divest our selves of all Other Acquaintance, in our Closets. When we have call'd off our Thoughts from Worldly Pursuits and Engagements, then (and not 'till then) are we at Liberty to fix them on the best, the most deserving, and desirable of Objects, God; to study his Blessed Nature and Perfections, to imprint a filial Awe
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of him on our Hearts, a lively Sense of his perpetual Inspection and Presence; to abound in all the Methods of Devout Application to him, in Acts of Petition and Praise, of Joy and Wonder, of Submission and Hope, of Love and Affiance; to open all our Wants, and impart all our Grievs to him, and to express in the most significant manner, we are able, our Entire and Unlimited Dependance upon him; 'till, by often dwelling on such Thoughts and Reflections as these, we have made them Familiar, Habitual, and Natural to us; and can have as Easie and Delightful a Recourse to God, in all Accidents, and upon all Occasions, as a Son hath to a Belov'd and Loving Parent, who, he knows, is at all times able to assist, and ready to receive him: In a Word, 'till we can look up to God in Each Step of our Conduct, as the Supreme End and Guide of all our Actions, the fix'd Centre of all our Wishe, Desires, and Designs; 'till we bring our selves to Love Nothing in Competition with him, nothing but in order to the Enjoyment of him; and resolve to Do nothing, and Be nothing, but what we are sure will please him.

Can any thing refine, raise, or ennoble our Natures more than such a Conversation as This, which is thus begun, improv'd; and perfected in Solitude? Shall we not think it worth our while, to cease for a time from cultivating Useless and Perishing Friendships with Men, that we may be the more at Leisure, and the better qualify'd, to enter into this Divine Correspondence, which is of the vastest Concern to us, and upon which our Everlasting Welfare depends?

While indeed our Hearts are deeply engag'd in the Concerns of this World, we cannot well relish the Pleasures of such a Spiritual Commerce: but, after we have once accusom'd and inur'd our selves to it, we shall find it the most delightful Entertainment of the Mind of Man, pleasing as Light to the Eyes; *sweeter than Honey and the Honey-comb.* Sensual Men may make sport with such a Pretence, and call it Enthusiasm, and the Product of an Heated Imagination; but They, that taste the Satisfaction, know it to be real, and would not part with it for all the Delights this World can afford; and which (in the disparaging Phrase of the Apostle) they *count but as Dross*, in comparison of the *Excellency*

lency of this Knowledge of God, and Christ Jesus.

As Religious Retirement is a great Means of advancing us in the Knowledge of God, so doth it assist us towards attaining a True Knowledge of Our selves; towards searching and trying all our ways, and getting a right Information concerning the state of our Consciences. He that will thrive in his Temporal Affairs, must often ballance his Accounts, examin his Gains, and his Losses, and see what proportion they bear to each other; consider, where his Conduct may have been faulty in any respect, and how for the future to rectifie it. The same Vigilance and Care is requisite in relation to our Spiritual Concerns also; and we can never exert it effectually but in the Closet, where Privacy and Silence befriend our Enquiries. When the Importunity of Outward Objects ceases, when the Noise and Avocations of a troublesome World are at a distance, we may enter upon these Searches without difficulty, and finish them without Interruption. We may then look inwards, and take a Distinct View of what at Other times passes there unobserv'd; of
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our hidden Inclinations and Aversions, of the Springs which secretly move us in all our Pursuits, of the Temptations that beset us hardest, and most frequently foil us, of the Ground that we have lost, or got, in our several Encounters. And when we are advanc'd thus far in the Knowledge of our selves, and of our Ruling Sins and Infirmities, we have taken the most useful and necessary Step towards abounding in the Three great Duties of the Penitent, *Contrition*, *Resolution*, and *Prayer*.

Contrition is an holy Grief excited by a lively Sense, not only of the Punishment due to our Guilt, (That the Schools call *Attrition*), but likewise of the Infinite Goodness of God, against which we have offended; accompany'd with a Detestation of our Sin, and of our selves, for the sake of it. At this Act of the Mind Repentance (properly speaking) begins; and this Godly Concern of Heart is rarely attain'd, to be sure, it can never be duly exerted, and improv'd, but in private. And, therefore, in the Story of *St. Peter* we may observe that, as soon as a Conviction of his Guilt had

had seiz'd him, it is said, that *he went out, and wept bitterly*; he withdrew into a Secret Place, where he might mourn his own Fall with freedom; where he might feed, and raise up to a due height the Inward Anguish he felt, and indulg'd himself in all the Expressions of sincere Sorrow. The Wounds of Conscience, like other Wounds, tho' generally receiv'd in Publick, must always be heal'd in Private: There they may be laid open and search'd to the bottom, there the raging Smart of them is best endur'd, and there suitable Remedies are most easily, and most usefully apply'd; where Leisure, and Rest, Silence, and a Proper Discipline assist the Patient, and promote the Cure.

The next Step to Contrition is, *Resolution*, or a firm immutable Purpose of Heart, never more to allow our selves in that Transgression, which we now abominate, and deplore. And, in order to the forming such a well-weigh'd and stable Resolution, there must be a calm and clear foresight of the Difficulties which may attend the Execution of it, and a just Computation of our Own
Strength

Strength to bear up against them; we must deliberately consider, under what Circumstances the Temptation, against which we are now arming our selves, hath beset us hardest, and how, for the future, we may best decline them; what Helps and Supports we have by Experience found most useful, and how, in the Day of Tryal, we may be secure of them; to what a broken dispirited State of Mind we have already reduc'd our selves, by so often and lightly departing from what we had purpos'd; and, with how much greater difficulty, every time that we give way, we recover our ground. I need not prove to you, that these, and the like Reflections, which are necessary towards our Resolving well and wisely, can never be dwelt on, in all their due Compass and Force, but at Leisure, and in Sacred Retirement. Doubtless, the good Psalmist had been some time in his Closet, and on his Knees, when he utter'd those Emphatical Words; *I have sworn, and am stedfastly purpos'd to keep thy Righteous Judgments.*

Psal. cxix.
100.

But of all the Duties of the Penitent, that which Privacy best Qualifies us for,
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is * *Prayer*; which it enables us to perform in such a Manner, as is likely to be most prevalent and effectual. Great indeed is the Excellence and Advantage of Publick Devotions, as they testify our Common Reverence of the Divine Being, as they are best fitted to implore, or to acknowledge Publick Blessings, and as they excite a Publick Emulation in the Breasts of Sincere Worshipers. However, in some Respects, they must yield the Preheminence to Closet-Prayer; particularly in This, That they are not so well calculated, as That, to procure Ease and Repose of Conscience to the Sinner, and to adjust particular Accounts between God and our Souls. For it is of special use to this Purpose, in these Three Respects; as it affords us the best Opportunity of being *Fix'd, Fervent, and Circumstantial* in our Addresses to God.

* Τινοῦ ἕνεκεν εἰς τὸ ὄρη ἀναβαίνει; παιδῶν ἡμῶν ὅτι καλὸν ἢ ἐρημία καὶ μόνωσις, ὅταν ἐνηυγάσθῃ δέη τῷ θεῷ. Διὰ τῆς τοῦ σωεχῶς εἰς τὰς ἐρήμους ἀπεισι, καὶ κτὶ δια-
 νυκτερεύει πολλάκις ἐν χόρῳ, παιδῶν ἡμῶν καὶ ἔξ τῶν τῶ
 καιρῶ καὶ ἔξ τῶν τῶ τόπων θηροφάται ἐν ταῖς ὄχαις ἀταρξίαν,
 ἡσυχίας γὰρ μήτηρ ἢ ἐρημῶ, καὶ γαλήνη, καὶ λιμῶ, ἀπάν-
 των ἀπαλλάττεσα θρούβων ἡμῶν. Chrylost. ad Matth.
 xiv. 23.

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In the Solemn Service of the Sanctuary, let us endeavour never so much to prevent *Distractions*, we shall now and then be sensible of them : Outward Objects will break in upon our Senses, and divert the Application of our Minds; even the Length of the Office, and the Daily Return of the same Forms, will, to Persons not rightly Qualify'd and Dispos'd, occasion Spiritual Languors and Wandrings. And this is not the Case only of Stated Forms; the same Inconvenience doth, in a much higher degree, belong to Unpremeditated Prayer; the Hearers of which must first judge of the Fitness, both of the Matter and the Expression, before they can reasonably join in what they hear. And thus the Novelty of the Phrase, instead of fixing, breaks and divides the Attention of a sincere Worshipper; his Curiosity indeed may be awaken'd by this means, but his Devotion is certainly check'd and suspended. Now these Obstacles are all remov'd, these Inconveniences are prevented, when we pray in Private. We are then plac'd immediately under the Eye of God, which awes us; but under no Other Eyes, and in the neighbourhood of no other Objects, which might
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divert or discompose us: we are at Liberty to employ that Part of our Time in the Performance of this Service; when we find our selves best dispos'd for it; to make Choice of our own Thoughts, and our own Words; such, as are best suited to our present Necessities, and Desires: and what is thus passing within our selves, we cannot but perceive, and attend to. We may break off from the Duty, when-ever, we find, our Attention flags; and return to it, at a more seasonable Opportunity.

Nor are we capable, at such times, of being more *Fix'd* only, but likewise more *Fervent* and *Inflam'd*. True Religion is ever Modest and Reserv'd in its Demeanor, when it appears in Publick; jealous of doing any thing that may favour of Vanity and Ostentation; unwilling to allow it self in any such Earnestness of Speech, or Singularity of Behaviour, as may call off the Eyes and Ears of Others to observe them: It contents it self, for the most part, with a Compos'd and Serious Look, with a Simple and Unaffected Carriage. But when Publick Regards and Restraints are taken off, the Pious Soul may then let it self loose into the highest Fervors

of Zeal, into the freest Raptures of Thought, and into a suitable Vehemence, and Warmth of Expression: there is no sort of Holy Address, which it is not then allow'd to make use of; no outward Signs of Devotion and Reverence, which it may not decently abound in.

There is yet another great Advantage that attends our Private Devotions; They give us leave to be as Express and *Particular* as we please in our Representations. In the Church, the Sinner and the Saint, Men of all Ranks, Distinctions, and Attainments in Vertue must join in the same Common Forms: and tho' each of them may, by a sudden Glance of Mind, adapt the General Words to his own Circumstances; yet one Branch of the Service presses too fast upon another, to admit of any Pause between them. And They, therefore, who lye under the Load of any Particular Guilt, rise not from their Knees with so much Comfort, as they would have done, had they been at Liberty to dwell upon it, and confess it in all its Aggravations. This Liberty their Closet, and that alone, can afford them. There they may Expatiate as much as they please upon their Wants and Unworthiness: There they may
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pour out all their Complaints to God, and lay open all their Grievs, and Fears, and send up all their Thanks and Acknowledgments: There Importunities are not forbidden, Repetitions are not unbecoming; but they may persist Knocking 'till it is Open'd to them, and Asking 'till they have Obtain'd.

These are some of the many Spiritual Advantages, which the present Hours of holy Recollection, when well employ'd, will be sure to afford us. And God grant, that All of us may, as we have Opportunity and Leisure, so employ them!

Indeed, the greater our Sphere of Publick Action is, the less Time we can allow our selves to spend in these Religious Exercises; but still some of it is due to them, nor can any Secular Cares, or Avocations whatsoever wholly excuse us from paying it. Our Blessed Lord, we are sure, had very great Business to transact with Mankind, and a very short Time in which to finish it; and yet, during his Three Years Conversation on Earth, we find him often exchanging the Duties of the Active and Publick State, for those of the Solitary and Pri-

vate; sending the Multitudes away, and going up into the Mountain, apart, to Pray. And we are sure, that in This, as well as Other Respects, he left Us an Example, that we should follow his Steps.

2 Pet. ii.
31.

To Him, together with the Father and the Blessed Spirit, Three Persons, and One God, be ascrib'd all Majesty, Dominion and Power, now and for evermore. Amen.

*A Standing Revelation, the best Means
of Conviction.*

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd before

Her MAJESTY,

A T

St. JAMES'S Chapel,

On Sunday, October 28. 1705, being the
Festival of St. SIMON and St. JUDE,

LUKE XVI. 31.

*If they hear not Moses and the Pro-
phets, neither will they be persuaded,
though one rose from the dead.*

THE Happiest of Mankind are
often subject to this great Infir-
mity, That, overlooking those
solid Blessings which they already have,

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they set their Hearts upon somewhat which they want; some untry'd Pleasure, or Advantage, which if they could but taste, if they could but obtain, they should then be certainly and compleatly blest. And yet, no sooner have they climb'd that Hill, which thus determines their View at a distance, but a new Prospect is open'd to them, and they find themselves as far remov'd from the imaginary Point of Happiness, as ever.

In like manner, the Standing Evidences of the Truth of the Gospel, tho' in themselves most firm, solid, and satisfying, yet make but faint Impressions on the Minds of many Christians; who, after all the old Miracles done by our Saviour and his Apostles, are still ready to demand new ones; to desire, that some Special Proof should be given, some Extraordinary Application made, to Them in particular: and then, they would resign all their Scruples, believe without Doubt, and obey without Reserve. Thus do *the Ungodly reason with themselves, but not aright*; as the Lips of Truth have assur'd us: For, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the dead.*

The Assertion is our Saviour's, tho' utter'd by him in the Person of *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful; who, on the account of that Character, is very fitly introduc'd, in the Parable concerning the Rich Man and *Lazarus*, declaring, what Arguments and Motives are most likely to produce in Men that firm, unshaken Faith in God, of which He himself was so illustrious a Pattern.

The Parable was intended against the Voluptuaries of that Time (such as, One of the Apostles of this Day, *St. Jude*, describes throughout his Epistle;) Men, who, notwithstanding they profess'd themselves *Jews*, liv'd like *Heathens*, dissolutely, without regarding any of the Rules, or Restraints of Religion; made the best of this World, and had no Hopes, no Thoughts of Another. Sensual Wits they were, who, 'tis probable, took pleasure in ridiculing the Notion of a Life to come, and saying scornfully of it, That it was a Dark Invisible State, of which they knew nothing, and could not easily believe much, till they had some more Authentick Accounts of it, than as yet had been given them. Might they indeed receive News from thence, by
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an Hand that was to be rely'd on; would any of their old Companions in Vice, who had made the sad Experiment, be so kind as to return, and certifie them of what he had learnt; they should readily give up their Assent to so Commanding an Evidence, and suit their Practices to that Persuasion: but, till they saw somewhat of this nature done, they desir'd to be excus'd.

To confute these vain Reasonings and Pretences, our Saviour made use of that instructive and affecting Parable, which concludes with the Words I have read to you. I need not lay before you the several Circumstances of that Parable; it is sufficient, if I put you in mind, how, towards the Close of it, the Rich Man is represented, lifting up his Eyes from the Place of Punishment allotted to him in the other World, discerning *Abraham* afar off, and *Lazarus* together with him in Glory; and making this Request, among others, to the blessed Patriarch, That he would please to send *Lazarus* to his five Brethren, now alive, in order to *testify unto them, lest they also* (says he) *come into this Place of Torment.* A Request, very fitly address'd to *Abraham*, the Father of the *Jewish Nation*, on the
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Account both of his great Familiarity and Friendship* with God, which might enable him, and his known Character of Compassion and Tenderneſs, † which would incline him, to perform it. Nevertheless, *Abraham*, inſtead of indulging the Supplicant, in his Deſire of new Evidence, refers him to That, which his Brethren already had; *They have Moſes and the Prophets, let them hear them*: They have *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, whom God, for My ſake, and in Virtue of the Covenant made with Me, and my Seed, ſent to their Forefathers, and by whom he reveal'd his Own Will, and their Duty, in a more ample Manner, than it had been declar'd to any of my Descendants before them. This Standing Revelation, which They (and which none but they, and the reſt of My Seed) enjoy, was attested in the moſt Solemn, Authentic, and Credible Manner; and is ſufficient to influence their Faith and Practice, if they do but attend to it: *They have Moſes and the Prophets, let them hear Them*. Not ſatisfied with this Answer, the tormented Perſon renews his Interceſſion, with the ſame Freedom that the *Patriarch* himſelf had once us'd in behalf of the *Sodomites*; repreſenting farther to
Abra-

* 2 Chron.

xx. 7.

† If. xli. 8.

Ja. ii. 23.

Gen. xviii.

23, 26.

Abraham, That, the Means of Conviction, which his Brethren enjoy'd, tho' sufficient, yet not having prevail'd, it would be great Charity to try Others; and that the Expedient, now propos'd, could not fail of Success: *Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the Dead, they will repent.* He thought so, but *Abraham* knew otherwise; and therefore shuts up the Discourse with this full and final Resolution of the Case, That *If they heard not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the Dead.* The Meaning of which Words, when cast into a General Proposition, is, That " They, who are not
 " induc'd to Believe and Live as they
 " ought to do, by those Discoveries
 " which God hath made, and those
 " Commands which he hath given to
 " them in Scripture; would stand out
 " against any Evidence, any Applica-
 " tion whatsoever; even that of a Mes-
 " senger, sent Express from the other
 " World, to inform, and reclaim them.

This is, I confess, a very surprising Truth, and not likely to be entertain'd readily, upon the first Proposal, That I may, therefore, set it in as clear a Light
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as is possible, I shall endeavour, in what follows,

- I. To State and Limit the due Extent of it.
- II. To Confirm the Truth, so stated, by various Arguments and Reflections.
- III. To Deduce some Inferences from it.

As to the Extent of this Assertion, we may observe;

First, That it is evidently to be understood of such Persons only, as are plac'd in the same Circumstances with the *five Brethren* in the Parable; such, consequently, as have been born, where the True Religion is profess'd, and bred up in the Belief of it; have had all the early Prejudices of Education on the side of Truth, and all manner of Opportunities and Advantages towards acquainting themselves with the Grounds of it; and yet, notwithstanding all these Advantages, have shut their Eyes against it, and withstood it's Force. For, as to Others, who have liv'd under the guidance of
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I.

Reason alone, without the assistance of Supernatural Light, it is highly probable, that tho' *Moses* and the Prophets, [the Tenor of a Divine Revelation] when first propos'd to them, should not, yet Miracles, or a Message from the Dead, would persuade them; according to what is elsewhere laid down by our Saviour; That, *If the Mighty Works, which were done in Chorazin and Bethsaida, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in Sack-Cloth and Ashes.*

Mat. xi. 21.

Secondly, Neither is the Assertion to be rigorously extended to All those, who have been educated under the Influence of a Divine Revelation, and yet liv'd in Opposition to the Rules of it: for there is great Reason to believe, that there are many Persons, who, through the Heat of their Lusts and Passions, through the Contagion of Ill Example, or too deep an Immersion in the Affairs of Life, swerve exceedingly from the Rules of their Holy Faith; and yet would, upon such an extraordinary Warning as is mention'd in the Text, be brought to comply with them. But this Truth is pointed chiefly, if not solely, upon
Sin-

Sinners of the First Rate, who have cast off all Regard for Piety and Goodness; have set up for a Life of Sense, and are Wicked by Principle: for such likewise those *Five Brethren* were; they liv'd in the same Degree of Luxury and Uncharitableness, as their dead Brother had done; they *heard not Moses and the Prophets*, believ'd nothing of Religion, of it's Threatnings, or it's Promises; look'd upon all Revelation as a Cheat, and all Pretenders to it, as Impostors. Of such as these we must suppose the Text to affirm, that even a Message from the Dead would not be sufficient to reclaim them. We may observe,

Thirdly, That even of these profligate Creatures themselves it is not said, That so astonishing a Scene would make no manner of Impression, would have no present Influence upon them; but only, That it would not produce a lasting Effect, nor work an entire Conversion. It is certain, that they would be very much rous'd and awaken'd by such a Sight; but they would not, however, be convinc'd, and reform'd: *ὃ μὴ περὶθήσονται*, says the Original; an Expression of some force, which our *English* Translation doth

doth not fully reach, and which plainly signifies, that they would not so far be wrought upon, as to change their whole Mind, and Course of Life, and become New Creatures.

Regard being had to these several Restrictions, the Doctrine of the Text may, I think, be more fully represented to you after this manner: “ That, “ where Men have been brought up in “ the firm Belief of a Divine Revelation, “ and have afterwards shaken it off, “ have reason’d themselves not only into “ a Disbelief, but a Contempt of it, and “ given themselves up to *commit Iniquity* “ *with greediness*; in such a case, the “ standing Ordinary Means of Convi- “ ction failing to influence them, it is “ not to be expected, that any Extraor- “ dinary Means, of what kind soever, “ should be able to do it; no, not tho’ “ One should come from the Dead, on “ purpose to warn them of their Dan- “ ger. For, however such a Message “ might startle and amaze them at the “ first, might for a while put new “ Thoughts, new Resolutions into them; “ yet it would work no Total Change: “ They, who were absolute Infidels “ be-

“ before such a Message, would, in all
“ probability, continue Infidels still.

Which Truth, thus largely explain'd
and stated, I proceed now, under
my

Second General Head, to Confirm,
by various Arguments and Reflections.
And,

II.

First, We will suppose, that such a
Message from the Dead, as That, for
which the Rich Man here intercedes, is
really in it self an Argument of greater
strength and force to persuade a Sinner
out of the Error of his Ways, than any
Standing Revelation, how well soever
attested and confirmed: I will shew,
nevertheless, that it would not be com-
ply'd with. Because,

1st, It is not for want of Strength,
that the Standing Ordinary Ways of
Proof are rejected, but for want of Sin-
cerity and a disinterested Mind in those
to whom they are propos'd; and the
same want of Sincerity, the same adhesion
to Vice, and aversion from Goodness, will
be equally a Reason for their rejecting
any Proof whatsoever. The Evidence,
they had before, was enough, amply
enough to convince them; but they

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were resolv'd not to be convinc'd: and to Those, who are resolv'd not to be convinc'd, all Motives, all Arguments are equal. He that shuts his Eyes against a small glimmering Light, on purpose to avoid the Sight of somewhat that displeases him, would (for the same reason) shut them also against the Sun it self; and not be brought to see that, which he had no mind to see, let it be plac'd in never so clear a Light, and never so near him. The Truth is, such a Man understands by his Will; and believes a thing True, or False, meerly as it agrees, or disagrees with a violent Inclination: and, therefore, whilst that Inclination lasts in its strength, he discerns nothing of the different degrees of Evidence, nor distinguisheth at all between a Weak Motive, and a Strong one. But,

2dly, A Motive, however stronger in it self than Another, may yet make a weaker Impression, when employ'd, after that the Motive of less, tho' sufficient, strength hath been already resisted. For the Mind doth, by every degree of affected Unbelief; contract more and more of a general Indisposition towards Believing: so that such a Proof, as would
have

have been clos'd with certainly at the first, shall be set aside easily afterwards, when a Man hath been us'd to dispute himself out of plain Truths, and to go against the Light of his own Understanding. 'Tis in Infidelity, as in a vicious Course of Life; a sturdy, hardned Sinner shall advance to the utmost pitch of Impiety with less difficulty, less reluctance of Mind, than perhaps he took the first steps in Wickedness, whilst his Conscience was yet Vigilant and Tender. Should, therefore, the Evidence of one arising from the Dead, be in it self more powerful than that of the Standing Gospel-Proofs, yet, we see, it would operate as little, or less than they, upon a Person who had beforehand rejected those Proofs. Nay,

3dly, The peculiar Strength of the Motive will itself contribute to frustrate the Efficacy of it; as it makes it liable to be suspected by him to whom it is address'd. He is conscious, how little he hath deserv'd so Extraordinary a Privilege; how much rather he hath deserv'd to have the Ordinary Means of Grace withdrawn, which he hath so long baffled and defy'd: and he will, therefore,

as soon as his first Surprize is over, justly begin to wonder, how such a Favour came to be bestow'd on him; why God should, for His sake, do what was never before done, since the Foundations of the World were laid; should reverse the Laws of Nature, meerly to produce an Effect, which tends rather to spread the Interests of Irreligion, than to stop the Growth of it; which encourages Men to be as vicious as they can, in order to qualify themselves for God's greatest Indulgencies and Mercies: for that (he well knows) is His only Qualification. He will conclude, therefore, That there must have been some Mistake, or Delusion in the Matter. It might be a meer Dream, which he saw, the Imagery of a Melancholick Fancy; such as now and then presents itself to Musing, Thoughtful Men, when their Spirits are low, and the Spleen hath gotten Possession of them; and such, as they mistake at that Time for a Reality, tho' they are afterwards satisfy'd, that it had no Existence any where, but in their Own disorder'd Imagination.

Or, if he cannot help Believing, that such things he saw and heard, he may still have room to believe, That what
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this Airy Phantome said, is not absolutely to be rely'd on : for it might be one of those Ill-Natur'd Beings , who are at Enmity with Mankind , and do therefore take Pleasure in disturbing and perplexing their Minds , and filling them with Vain, and Groundless Terrors. Or it might, after all, be one of his jocund Unbelieving Acquaintance [now alive,] dress'd up in such a Form , and acting such a Part , on Purpose to get the Advantage of his Credulity, and to expose him.

But whoever, or whatever it was, 'tis not conceivable that it should be indeed that very Person, whose Shape and Voice it assum'd : for if there be any such thing as Hell, he is certainly tormented in the Flames of it. And while he is so, can it be imagin'd that he should either be enough at ease, or have Concern and Compassion enough for his surviving Friends, to contrive such Expedients for their Recovery? and by that means defeat himself of the Pleasure he may one day hope for in their Company? Damn'd Spirits do not , surely , use to entertain such Charitable Designs : They must needs be all Envy, Despair, and Rage; and have so much of a Diabolical Nature

in them, as to wish rather, that all Men should share, than endeavour that any should escape their Torments.

For these and many other Reasons, which the Evil Spirit, who is ever ready to assist Men's Doubts on these Occasions, will be sure to infuse, he'll suspend his Judgment of this strange Event a while, till he hath consider'd farther of it. In the mean time, during this Suspence, the Heat of the Impression abates, and that of his Lusts and Passions returns; and then 'tis odds but the Scale turns at last on Nature's side, and the Evidence of One or Two Senses gives way to the United Bent and Tendency of all the Five. Especially, if it be consider'd,

4thly, How far these Suspicions of his will be improv'd and heighten'd by the Raillery and Laughter, he will be sure to meet with, on this Head, from his old Friends and Companions. We may imagine, what Reception they would give to such a Story, and the Teller of it; how many pleasant and gay Things they would say on this Occasion: which will have so much the keener Edge, in the present case, because they are turn'd upon One, who, 'tis probable, hath taken
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the like Liberties before; hath himself laugh'd with them on this very Supposition as loudly, and ridicul'd such *Idle Tales* as heartily as any Man. They will be sure, therefore, to put him in mind of his own waking Thoughts, e'er these Dreams had as yet made their Impression on his Fancy, and to encounter him with those Reasonings, and that Scorn, with which he us'd to encounter others, on the like Occasions; till they have made him asham'd first to Vouch the Truth of the Relation, and afterwards even to Credit it. For, when a Man is surrounded on all sides with Opposition and Contempt for believing, what he himself would not have believ'd, upon the Relation of another; and what, for his Vices sake, he passionately wishes he may not have reason to believe; 'tis not hard to imagin, how he may be brought to give up the clearest Evidence, and suffer himself to be disputed out of his Senses. But, if all these Engines fail of doing the Work; yet,

Lastly, Time, and a Succession of other Objects will bring it about. Every day the Impression loses somewhat of it's Force, and grows weaker, till at length

it comes to ly under the same Disadvantage with the Standing Proofs of the Gospel, that is, to be distant; and, accordingly, to operate also (as those, and all other distant things do) but faintly upon careless unawaken'd Minds. They who attend sick Beds will tell you, how often they have met with Cases not unlike this; wherein Men, upon the near approach of Death, have been rouz'd up into such a lively Sense of their Guilt, such a passionate degree of Concern and Remorse, that, if ten thousand Ghosts had appear'd to them, and Hell it self had been laid open flaming to their View, they scarce could have had a fuller Conviction, or a greater Dread of their Danger: and yet, no sooner had their Distemper left them, but their good Thoughts and Resolutions began to leave them too; till they had at last, perhaps, forgotten their first Fears and Agonies as much as if they had never felt them; their solemn Vows and Promises as thoroughly, as if they had never made them. Thus, in all likelihood, would it be with a Libertine, who should have a Visit made to him from the other World: the first Horror and Astonishment it rais'd, would go off by de-

degrees, as new Thoughts, new Diversions came on; it would be driven out by Business, or Pleasure, or the various Accidents of Life that might afterwards befall him; till at last he came perhaps to reflect upon it with as much Indifference, as if it were a Story only, which he had heard, or read, and which he himself was no ways concern'd in.

Hitherto I have suppos'd, That the Evidence of One risen from the Dead hath really the Advantage, in point of Force and Efficacy, of any Standing Revelation, how well soever attested and confirm'd; and, proceeding on that Supposition, I have endeavour'd to shew, That such Evidence, however in it self forcible, would certainly not be comply'd with. But the Truth is, and, upon a fair Balance of the Advantages on either side, it will appear, That the common Standing Rules of the Gospel are a more probable and powerful Means of Conviction than any such Message, or Miracle; And that,

First, For this plain Reason, Because they include in them that very kind of Evidence, which is suppos'd to be so
pow-

powerful; and do, withal, afford us several other Additional Proofs, of great Force and Clearness.

Among many Arguments, by which the Truth of our Religion is made out to us, This is but One, That the Promulgers of it, *Jesus Christ*, and his Apostles, did that very thing which is requir'd to be done; rais'd Men and Women from the Dead, not once only, but often, in an indisputable manner, and before many Witnesses. *St. Peter* rais'd *Dorcas*: Our Saviour rais'd the Ruler's Daughter, the Widow's Son, and *Lazarus*: the first of these, when she had just expir'd; the second, as he was carried to the Grave on his Bier; and the third, after he had been some time buried. And having, by these gradual Advances, manifested his Divine Power, he at last exerted the highest, and most glorious Degree of it, and rais'd Himself also, by his Own All-quickening Virtue, and according to his Own express Prediction. We did not indeed see these things done; but we have such Authentick Accounts of them, that we can no more doubt of their having been done, than if we had actually seen them. For tho' no Evidence affects the Fancy so strong-

strongly as that of Sense; yet there is Other Evidence, which gives as full Satisfaction, and as clear a Conviction to Our Reason: so that there are some distant Matters of Fact, of the Truth of which we are as certain, as we are of what happens before our Eyes; the concurring Accounts of many such Witnesses, as were every way qualified to inform us, and could have no Interest in deceiving us, and seal'd the Truth of their Testimony with their Blood, rendring it (*Morally*, as we speak, or, as we might speak) *Absolutely* impossible, that these things should be false. And what can we say more for the Evidence that comes by the Senses? for can any thing be more certain than That, which 'tis impossible should not be true? And of this nature are many of those miraculous Facts, upon which the Truth of our Religion is founded; particularly, that most important Miracle of all, the Resurrection of our Lord: It is so convincingly attested, by such Persons, with such Circumstances, that They, who give themselves leisure to consider and weigh the Testimony, at what distance soever they are plac'd from the Fact it self, cannot help closing with it; nor can they

they entertain any more Doubt of the *Resurrection*, than they do of the *Crucifixion* of *Jesus*. And therefore, I say, if this Miracle of Christ's Rising from the Dead *heretofore* be not sufficient to convince a resolv'd Libertine; neither would the raising of one *now* from the Dead be sufficient for that Purpose; since it would only be, the doing that over again which hath been done already, and of the Truth of which (all things consider'd) we have as much reason to be satisfied, as if we our selves had stood by and seen it.

Thus far the Old Standing Proofs of the Gospel, and the New Miracle demanded are (in reality and right Reason) Equal; and should therefore (reasonably) have Equal Influence and Effect. But there are also several other Accessory Proofs, by which the Truth of the Gospel was farther demonstrated. It was attested by Miracles of all sorts, done in great Variety and Number; by the visible centring of all the Old Prophecies in the Person of Christ, and by the Completion of those Prophecies since, which He himself utter'd; by the Holy and Unblemish'd Lives, the Exemplary Sufferings and Deaths of the Publishers of this

this Religion, and by the surpassing Excellence of that Heavenly Doctrine which they publish'd; finally, by the miraculous Increase of the Professors of Christianity, without any visible Grounds and Causes, and contrary to all Human Probability and Appearance. Now, if the Proof of a Future State, by an immediate Appearance of one from the Dead be (in truth, and at the bottom) but Equal to that single Proof of Christianity, taken from our Lord's Resurrection; how much inferior must it be to these several Proofs United? And, therefore, how little Probability is there that He, who is not wrought upon by the one, would be convinc'd by the other? But I have not time to pursue this fruitful Head of Argument as far as it deserves; by displaying, first, the General Evidences of our Religion, in all their Force and Brightness, and, then, comparing them with That of a particular Apparition; and, by this means, Calculating, as it were, the several Degrees of Credibility and Conviction, by which the One surpasseth the Other. Such an Attempt would carry me beyond the Bounds of a single Discourse. I have Room only at present to suggest a
Ge-

General Reflection or two, which may contribute to illustrate this Point; and proceed therefore to observe

Secondly, Another great Advantage, which the Standing Proofs of the Gospel have over such an Extraordinary Appearance; that This hath all it's Force at once, upon the first Impression, and is ever afterwards in a declining State; so that the longer it continues upon the Mind, and the oftner it is thought of, the more it loses; whereas those, on the contrary, gain Strength and Ground upon us by Degrees, and the more they are consider'd and weigh'd, the more they are approv'd.

There is a like Difference between the ways in which these several Proofs operate, as there is between the several Impressions made upon Thoughtful Minds by the Works of Art and Nature. The Works of Art, which are most nice and curious, strike and surprize us most upon the first View; but the better we are acquainted with them, the less we wonder at them: Whereas the Works of Nature will bear a Thousand Views, and Reviews, and will still appear new to us; the more frequently and

nar-

narrowly we look into them, the more occasion we shall have to admire their fine and subtle Texture, their Beauty, and Use, and excellent Contrivance. The same we may say of the Standing Evidences of the Gospel; every time they are consider'd and enquir'd into, they gain upon sincere unbiafs'd Minds, appear still more Reasonable and Satisfactory than before, and more worthy every way of that inimitable Power and Skill which wrought them; and, on that Account, they are, doubtless, better contriv'd to work a rational, a deep, and durable Conviction in us, than those Astonishing Motives, which exert all their Force at once, upon the first Proposal. An Argument, that is some time working it's way into the Understanding, will at last take the surer hold of it; as those Trees, which have the slowest Growth, are, for that Reason, of the longest Continuance. To all which, we may add, in the

Third Place, That, let the Evidence of such a particular Miracle be never so bright and clear, yet it is still but Particular; and must, therefore, want that kind of Force, that Degree of Influence, which

which accrues to a Standing General Proof, from it's having been try'd, and approv'd, and consented to by Men of all Ranks and Capacities, of all Tempers and Interests, of all Ages and Nations. A Wise Man is then best satisfy'd with his own Reasonings and Persuasions, when he finds that Wise and Considering Men have in the like manner Reason'd, and been in like manner Persuaded; that the same Argument, which weighs with Him, hath weigh'd with Thousands, and Ten thousand times ten thousands before him; and is such as hath born down all Opposition, where-ever it hath been fairly propos'd, and calmly consider'd. Such a Reflection, tho' it carries nothing perfectly Decisive in it, yet creates a mighty Confidence in his Breast, and strengthens him much in his Opinion. Whereas, he who is to be wrought upon by a special Miracle, hath no Helps, no Advantages of this kind toward clearing his Doubts, or supporting his Assurance. All the Force of the Motive lies entirely within it self; it receives no Collateral Strength from External Considerations, it wants those degrees of Credibility that spring from Authority, and concurring Opinions: which

which is one Reason why (as I told you) a Man is capable of being disputed out of the Truth and Reality of such a Matter of Fact, tho' he saw it with his Eyes.

This, therefore, is a farther Advantage, which the Standing Proofs of a Revelation have over any Occasional Miracle; That, in the admitting such Proofs, we do but fall in with the General Sense and Persuasion of those among whom we converse: whereas we cannot affirm the Truth of such a Miracle, without incurring the Scorn and Derision; at least, not without running cross to the Belief and Apprehension of the rest of Mankind; a Difficulty, which (as hath been already shewn) a modest and good Man is scarce Able, but a Man addicted to his Vices, is neither Able, nor Willing, for the meer sake of Truth, to encounter.

Let us lay these several Reflections together, and we shall find, “ That
“ even a Message from the other World
“ is not an Argument of such invincible
“ Strength, but it would be resisted by
“ such as had beforehand resisted the
“ General Proofs of the Gospel; and
“ that

“ that our Saviour, therefore, utter'd no
 “ Paradox, but a great, a clear and
 “ certain Truth, when he said, That
 “ they, who *hear not Moses and the Pro-*
phets, will not be persuaded, though one
rose from the Dead. From which Truth
 it is now Time, as my

III. *Third* General Head directs, to deduce
 the several *Inferences*, which I intended.
 And,

First, We learn from hence, what is
 the true Use and End of Miracles: They
 are not Private, but Publick Proofs; not
 Things to be done *in a Corner*, for the
 sake of single Persons, but before Multi-
 tudes, and in the Face of the Sun. Again,
 They are Signs to those who believe not,
 not to those who believe: I mean, that
 the Great, the Chief End of them is, to
 establish the Truth of a New Revelation
 in those Countries where it was first
 promulg'd and propagated; not to Con-
 firm Men in the Belief of it, after it is
 sufficiently establish'd. Miracles are the
 immediate Act of Omnipotence, and,
 therefore, not to be employ'd, but where
 the Importance of the Occasion requires
 them: much less are they to be em-
 ploy'd, where they are neither requisite,
 nor

nor likely to succeed ; as the case is, where those, who are not convinc'd by the Old Miracles, demand New ones. It follows from hence,

Secondly, That we have great reason to look upon the high Pretensions which the *Roman Church* makes to Miracles, as groundless, and to reject her Vain and Fabulous Accounts of them. Half the Saints, which have place in her peculiar Calendar, were, if you will believe Her, converted by Miracles ; Apparitions, Visions, and Intercourses of all kind between the Dead and the Living, are the frequent and familiar Embellishments of those pious Romances, her Legends ; which exceed the Scripture it self in Wonders, and do, indeed, by that means, contradict the Doctrine and Design of it : for where *Moses* and the Prophets are receiv'd, there a continu'd Succession of Miracles is needless ; and, consequently, not to be expected, believ'd, or pretended. It may be a

Third Use of what hath been said, To take an occasion from thence of Considering, how *sure the Foundation of God standeth*, [*that Foundation of the Apostles*

and Prophets, upon which the Church is built, Jesus Christ himself being the Head Corner-Stone, as the Collect for this Day speaks;] how very strong and irrefragable the first Evidences of Christianity needs must be, since they appear (both from Reason and Revelation) to be such, as that They, who resisted them, would resist every thing besides them. But this is sufficiently understood from the whole Tenor of the preceding Argument: Which instructs us also, in the

Fourth Place, to condemn the Folly and Impiety of those Persons (for such there have been) who have oblig'd themselves to each other, to appear after Death, and give an Account of their Condition in another World; and the worse Use that hath been made of these Ill Contracts, when the surviving Party hath harden'd himself in his Wickedness, upon the Other's Failure. It is stupidly foolish, thus to venture our Salvation upon an Experiment, which we know not whether God will suffer, and which, we have all the Reason imaginable to think, he will not suffer to take place. It is highly Impious, to resolve to persist in our Unbelief, till something
more

more is done for our Conviction, than God hath thought fit should be done for the Conviction of any Man in our Circumstances. An Apostle, indeed, once said, *Except I shall see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put my Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust my Hand into his Side, I will not believe;* and God was pleas'd to stoop to his Request, and to plant Faith in his Heart by such an Experiment. But it was on the Account of the Publick Character he was to bear, as an Apostle; that is, a Witness of the Resurrection of Christ to the rest of the World; and it might, therefore, be fit that He himself should, in a very Particular and Extraordinary Way, be satisfy'd of it; not meerly for his Own sake, but for the sake of all Those who should hereafter believe in his Testimony. The manner of his Conviction was design'd, not as a peculiar Privilege to Him; but as a standing Miracle, a lasting Argument for the Conviction of Others, to the very End of the World. Besides, though slow of Belief, he was at the bottom Honest and Sincere; not led into those Doubts, which he entertain'd, by his Lusts, and Vices; not a Revolter from the Truth which he had once embrac'd:

Joh. xx.
25.

And they, therefore, have no Reason to expect to be favour'd as He was, who stand not possess'd of any One of those Qualifications that belong'd to Him, but are (generally speaking) the very Reverse of his Character.

Fifthly, From the same Truth we may also be taught to correct a Vain Thought, which we are sometimes apt to entertain; That, if it had been Our Lot to converse with Christ and his Apostles, and to be Eye-Witnesses of their Miracles; we should, by such an Advantage, have been secur'd from any Degree of Doubt or Infidelity: Whereas certain it is, that They, who at this Distance from the first Rise of the Gospel, after weighing the several Evidences of it, waver in their Faith, would have waver'd, though they had seen the first Promulgers of it work Wonders. Even that Sight itself did not hinder many, to whom the Gospel was first preach'd, from *turning it into Lasciviousness, and denying the Lord Jesus*, as St. Jude complains. Deceiv'd we are, if we think, that God hath not furnish'd every Age of the Church with sufficient Inducements to embrace the Faith; and the latest Ages, perhaps, with the

the strongest Inducements to it. Indeed, the Lustre of the Primitive Miracles is now wanting to us: but then we are freed from several Inconveniences, under which the first Christians labour'd, and we enjoy likewise several Advantages which they wanted. We have no Original Prejudices against the Gospel to subdue, as They had; for we have been educated in the Belief of it: We are not tempted, as They were, to revolt from it, by the Dread of Dangers and Death; for all manner of Encouragements attend Our Profession of it. The miraculous Success of the Apostles Preaching, and the Accomplishment of many of their Predictions, which to those early Christians were matters of Faith only, are to Us matters of Sight and Experience. And we, that live at the greatest Distance from the Age of the Apostles, have in this the Advantage of such as were much nearer to them; That even these last and worst of times have produc'd the best Apologies for our Faith, the most Accurate, and Rational, and Unanswerable Accounts of the Truth of Christianity. To apply, therefore, the Words of *Solomon* to the present case; *Say not thou,* Eccl. vii.
What is the Cause that the Former Days were 10.

better than These? for thou dost not enquire wisely of this thing.

Eccl. iii.
14.

The *Last* Inference, which the Doctrine deliver'd suggests to us, is, That we should be invited from thence to magnify and to adore the Divine Wisdom, which hath so order'd the first Proofs and Evidences of our Faith, that they will be equally satisfactory and convincing to the End of the World. *I know* (saith the Wise Man) *that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doth it that Man should fear before him.* Accordingly, he hath propos'd a Standing Revelation, so well confirm'd by Miracles, once for all, that it should be needless to recur to them ever afterwards for the Conviction of any Man who was born within the Pale of Christianity. This was the shortest, the fittest, and wisest way that could have been taken; the best suited to the Majesty of God, and to the other Methods of his Providence; and the best accommodated also to the Nature, Capacities, and Interest of Men. It had been below him, by an Immediate Interposition of his Omnipotence, to have been appealing every day to his

his Creatures for the Truth of his Religion; an Endless, and an Unbecoming Task, to be put upon offering Supernatural Proofs, for the Conviction of Impious Men, as often as their Infidelity should be pleas'd to demand them! Not so doth he proceed in the Government of the Natural World: He made it, indeed, at the first, after a Miraculous and Incomprehensible manner; but he steers and directs the Affairs of it, ever since, by standing Rules and Laws, and by the Ordinary Ministry of Second Causes. With Equal Wisdom hath he Temper'd the Conduct of the Moral World also: for, tho' he usher'd in the Mosaic and Christian Institutions, by a great Variety of amazing Signs and Wonders; yet, as soon as the Truth of those Revelations was thus illustriously manifested, and the Accounts of these things were committed to Writing, Miracles in great measure ceas'd; and the Appeal afterwards was to the Written Word [*to the Law, and to the Testimony,*] which supply'd the Room of them.

Indeed, Motives that address themselves coolly to our Reason, are fittest to be employ'd upon Reasonable Creatures: It is no ways congruous, that God should
be

be always frightening and astonishing Men into an Acknowledgment of the Truth, who were made to be wrought upon by calm Evidence, and gentle Methods of Persuasion. Should such a Miracle as that which is mention'd in the Text, be indulg'd to One, Others would think themselves equally entitled to it; and, if indulg'd to many, it would no longer have the Effect of a Miracle, it's Force and Influence would be lost by the Frequency of it. Or, supposing it to continue in it's full Strength, how often soever repeted; yet the Faith is produc'd would not be so free and voluntary an Act, as That ought to be, to which are annex'd all the Glorious and Invaluable Privileges of Believing. In a word, Good Men have no need of a Miracle; for they are convinc'd, without it: And it would be of dangerous Consequence to the Bad; for They, we find, would not, even with it, be convinc'd. And, therefore, the Allowance of such a Favour to them, would serve only to render them more Obdurate, and more Inexcusable; it would enhance their Guilt, and increase their Condemnation.

Let us then from these, and such Considerations as these, be led to reverence

rence the Infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God in all his Transactions with Men! Let us learn, not to dispute the Methods of his Providence; but humbly and implicitly to acquiesce in them, and to adore them! Let us satisfy our selves, That every thing is certainly order'd by Him after the aptest, and best, and most becoming manner, tho' our First Apprehensions should suggest otherwise to us; and that no Contrivance, no Policy, no Prudence whatsoever, can in any respect deviate from his Scheme, without leaving us in a much worse Condition than it found us! For,

*Great and Marvellous are thy Works,
Lord God Almighty! Just and True
are all thy Ways, thou King of Saints!*

To Thee (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) be render'd, as is most due, all possible Honour, Adoration, and Praise, now, and for Ever!

Hence the Father
 of God in the
 Son is born
 of his Father
 eternally
 and consubstantially
 with him
 The
 Holy Spirit
 is
 also
 eternally
 generated
 from the Father
 and the Son
 together
 and proceeds
 from them
 together
 into the world
 to dwell
 with us
 and
 to be
 glorified
 with
 the Father
 and
 the Son
 forever
 Amen

The
 Holy
 Spirit
 is
 also
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 generated
 from the Father
 and the Son
 together
 and proceeds
 from them
 together
 into the world
 to dwell
 with us
 and
 to be
 glorified
 with
 the Father
 and
 the Son
 forever
 Amen

A
SERMON

Preach'd in the
Cathedral Church of St. Paul,
At the

FUNERAL

OF

Mr. THO. BENNET.

Aug. 30. 1706.

I. CORINTH. XV. 19.

*If in this Life onely we have Hope
in Christ, we are of all Men most
miserable.*

SUCH Discourses, on such Mourn-
ful Occasions as these, were insti-
tuted, not so much in Honour of
the Dead, as for the Use of the Living:
that Opportunity may be taken from
hence.

hence to excite in Persons, attending on these Solemnities, a due Sense of the Uncertainty and Vanity of all Earthly Satisfactions; to imprint upon their Minds, by proper Arguments and Reflections, a lively Persuasion of the Certainty of a Future State, and an earnest Desire of fitting and preparing themselves for it.

There is no Season, to which such Thoughts as these are more suitable; nor any, wherein Men are likely to be more affected with them: And therefore I have chosen (not unfitly, I hope) to explain to you, at present, that great Argument for a Future State, which *S. Paul* hath couch'd, in the Words I have read to you; *If in this Life onely we have Hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable*: that is, If all the Benefits, we expect from the Christian Institution, were confin'd within the Bounds of this present Life, and we had no Hopes of a better State after this, of a great and lasting Reward in a Life to come; We Christians should be the most abandon'd and wretched of Creatures; All other Sorts and Sects of Men would evidently have the Advantage of us, and a much surer Title to Happiness than We.

This

This Concession the Apostle openly makes, and from hence he would be understood to infer (tho' the Inference be not express'd,) That, therefore, there must needs be another State, to make up the Inequalities of this, and to salve all irregular Appearances; since it is impossible to conceive that a Just and Good God should suffer the justest and best of Men (such as the best Christians certainly are) to be oftentimes the most miserable.

If St. Paul found it necessary, earnestly to press this Argument on the *Corinthians*, soon after he had planted the Gospel among them, and confirm'd it by Miracles; it cannot but be highly requisite for Us, who live at such a distance from that Age of Miracles, to support and enliven our Faith, by dwelling often on the same Considerations: and this Argument, therefore, I shall endeavour to open, and apply, in the following Discourse: wherein,

First, I shall shew the undoubted Truth of the Apostle's *Concession*; and from thence shall establish, in the

Second Place, the Truth of that *Conclusion*, which he builds upon it.

I.

II.

After

III.

After which, I shall suggest to you some *Rules and Directions*, which, if duly persu'd, will enable you to live like those, who *have their Hope in another Life*; like Men, who look upon themselves, as being only on their Passage through this State, but as belonging properly to that which is to come; on which, therefore, their Eye, their Aim, and their Hopes are altogether fix'd and employ'd.

IV.

And these General Reflections shall be follow'd (as they will very naturally be follow'd) by a just and faithful Account of that Valuable Person, whose Remains now lie before us.

I.

As to the *Concession* of the Apostle, I shall urge it somewhat farther than the Letter of the Text will carry us; proving to you, under two different Heads, That, were there no other Life but this, First, Men would really be more miserable than Beasts; and, Secondly, The best Men would be often the most miserable: I mean, as far as Happiness or Misery are to be measur'd from Pleasing, or Painful Sensations: and, supposing the Present to be the Only Life we are to lead, I see not, but that This might be esteem'd the true Measure of them.

First, Were there no Life after this, Men would be more miserable than Beasts: for in this Life, it is plain that Beasts have, in many respects, the Advantage of them; inasmuch as they enjoy greater Sensual Pleasures, and feel fewer Corporal Pains, and are utter Strangers to all those Anxious and Tormenting Thoughts which perpetually haunt and disquiet Mankind.

The Pleasures of Sense are probably relish'd by Beasts in a more exquisite degree, than they are by Men; for they taste them sincere and pure always, without mixture, or alloy; without being distracted in the Pursuit, or disquieted in the Use of them.

They follow Nature, in their Desires and Fruitions, carrying them no farther than she directs, and leaving off at the Point, at which Excess would grow Troublesome and Hazardous; so that their Appetite is not destroy'd, or dull'd, by being gratified, but returns always fresh and vigorous to its Object. Hence Their Organs are generally better dispos'd than Ours, for receiving grateful Impressions from sensible Objects; being less liable to be vitiated by Diseases, and

other Bodily Accidents, which disorder our Frame, and extreamly lessen the Complacency we have in all the good things of this Life that surround us. Nor are the Pleasures, which the Brutal part of the Creation enjoy, subject to be lessen'd any way by the Uneasiness which arises from Fancy and Opinion. They have not the Art of growing Miserable upon the View of the Happiness of others; it being the peculiar Privilege of Thinking Beings, when they are otherwise sufficiently bless'd, to create Trouble to themselves, by needless Comparisons.

They are under no Checks from Reason and Reflection, which, by representing perpetually to the Mind of Man the Meanness of all Sensual Gratifications, do, in great measure, blunt the Edge of his keenest Desires, and pall all his Enjoyments. They are not aware of a Superior Good, or of any higher End, to which they might be ordain'd. They feel no inward Reproaches for transgressing the Bounds of their Duty, and the Laws of their Nature. They have no uneasy Presages of a Future Reckoning, wherein the Pleasures they now taste, must be accounted for; and may, perhaps, be outweigh'd by the Pains, which
shall

shall then lay hold of them. None of their Satisfactions are impair'd by the Fear of losing them, by that Dread of Death, which hangs over the meer natural Man; and, like the Hand-Writing on the Wall, damps all his Mirth and Jollity; and by which he is, as the Apostle speaks, *all his Life-time subject unto Bondage*; that is, is in a mean, dejected, slavish state of Mind. In a word, they have no Concern for what is past, no uneasy Expectations of what is to come; but are ever ty'd-down to the present Moment, and to the present Enjoyment, and in that they are vigorously, and totally employ'd.

Heb.ii.15.

In these Respects, it may be truly affirm'd; That, if we had Hope in this Life only, Men would be really more miserable than Beasts; and, on the same Account,

Secondly, The best of Men would be often the most miserable. For their Principles give them not leave to taste so freely of the Pleasures of Life, as other Mens do; and expose them more to the Troubles and Dangers of it.

The Principles of good Men give them not leave to taste so freely of the Pleasures

of Life, as other Mens do: for their great and prevailing Principle is, to sit as loose from those Pleasures, and be as moderate in the use of them as they can; in order to maintain the Empire of the Mind over the Body, and keep the Appetites of the One in due Subjection to the Reasoning Powers of the Other. No small part of Virtue consists in abstaining from that, wherein Sensual Men place their Felicity; in *mortifying the Deeds of the Body, and making no Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof.* A truly good Man thinks himself oblig'd, not only to forbear those Gratifications, which are forbidden by the Rules of Reason and Religion, but even to restrain himself in unforbidden Instances, when, by allowing Himself in what is Innocent, he would either run the Risque of being farther betray'd into what is not so, or would breed matter of Offence to his weak and misjudging Neighbour. He lives not for Himself alone, but hath a regard in all his Actions to the great Community wherein he is enclos'd; and gives the Reins, therefore, to his Appetites no farther, than the indulging them is consistent with the general Good and Happiness of Society.

Rom. xiii.
14.

He

He is so far from grasping at all the Advantages and Satisfactions of this World, which are possible to be attain'd by him, that he thinks the bounding of his Desires, and Designs within the Line, which his Birth and Fortune have mark'd out, to be a great and indispensable Duty: He hath *learnt, in whatsoever State he is, therewith to be Content*; and doth not, therefore, eagerly aspire after an higher Condition of Life, is not over-solicitous to procure to himself a larger Sphere of Enjoyment.

Phil. vi.
11.

From these, and many other Considerations (which I need not mention) it is manifest, that the best of Men do generally enjoy least of the Pleasures and Satisfactions of Life: It is as manifest, that they are most expos'd to the Troubles and Dangers of it.

They are determin'd to live up to the Holy Rule, by which they have oblig'd themselves to walk, whatever may be the Consequences of it; tho' fore Evils, and great Temporal Inconveniences should sometimes attend the Discharge of their Duty. The Hypocrite hath the Art of bending his Principles, and Practice always to whatever is for his Convenience, and of falling in with the

Fashion of a Corrupt and Wicked World : but the truly upright Man, is inflexible in his Uprightness, and unalterable in his Purposes ; Nothing can make him Remiss in the Practice of his Duty, no Prospect of Interest can allure him, no Fear of Danger can dismay him.

Wisd. ii.
12, 14, 15.

It will be his Lot often, to look singular, in Loose and Licentious Times, and to become a By-Word and a Reproach on that account among the Men of Wit and Pleasure. *He is not for our turn, (will they say, as their Words are represented in the Book of Wisdom) He is clean contrary to our Doings; he was made to reprove our Thoughts; he is grievous unto us, even to behold; for his Life is not like other Men's, his Ways are of another Fashion.* And these ill Thoughts, once entertain'd, will (we may be sure,) as Occasion offers, be followed by worse Usage.

Some Christian Virtues (for Instance, Humility, and Meekness) do, as it were, invite Injuries : For it is an Encouragement to base and insolent Minds to outrage Men, when they have Hopes of doing it, without a Return. If it be a Man's known Principle, to depart from his Right in a small matter, rather than break Christian Peace; Ill Men will be tempt-

tempted to make illegal and unjust Encroachments upon him. He who resolves to walk by the Gospel-Rule of forbearing all Attempts, all Desire of Revenge, will probably have Opportunities every now and then given him to exercise his forgiving Temper.

Thus Good and Pious Persons are, by the Nature and Tendency of their Principles more expos'd to the Troubles and ill Accidents of Life, as well as greater Strangers to the Pleasures and Advantages of it, than other less Conscientious Men are : And, on both these Accounts, what the Apostle lays down in the Text, is evidently and experimentally true; That, *if in this Life onely they had Hope, they were of all Men most Miserable.*

From which Concession, which he thus openly makes, he would be understood (as I told you) to infer, tho' the Inference be not express'd, that there must, therefore, necessarily be another State, to make up the Inequalities of this, and to salve all irregular Appearances. For if God be infinitely holy, and pure, and just, and good; he must needs take delight in those of his Creatures that resemble him most in these Perfections : He cannot but love Virtue, where-ever

II.

it is, and reward it, and annex Happiness always to the Exercise of it. And yet this is so far from being the Case, that the contrary often happens in this Life; where even the greatest Saints are sometimes made the most remarkable Instances of Suffering. We may, therefore, surely conclude, that there must be a Future State, wherein these Rewards shall be bestowed, and this Love of God to good Men made to appear, and the eternal and inseparable Connexion between Virtue and Happiness manifested, in the sight of Angels and Men. It cannot consist with the Divine Attributes, that the impious Man's Joys should, upon the whole, exceed those of the Upright; or that the Beasts of the Field, which serve him not, and know him not, should yet enjoy a more entire and perfect Happiness than the Lord of this Lower Creation, Man himself, made in God's own Image, to acknowledge, and adore him: and, therefore, as certainly as God is, a time there will and must be, when all these unequal Distributions of Good and Evil shall be set right, and the Wisdom and Reasonableness of all his Transactions with all his Creatures be made as clear as the Noon-Day. And

And this, before that Revelation had enlighten'd the World, was the very best Argument for a Future State, which Mankind had to rest upon. Their Philosophical Reasonings, drawn from the nature of the Soul, and from the instincts and presages of Immortality implanted in it, were not sufficiently clear and conclusive. The only sure Foundation of Hope, which the wisest and most thoughtful Men amongst the Heathen pretended in in this Case to have, was, from the Consideration suggested in the Text: and from thence some of them reason'd without Doubt, or Hesitancy; and liv'd and dy'd in such a manner, as to shew, that they believ'd their own Reasonings.

It may suffice, thus far to have enlarg'd on that great Argument of a Future State, which is urg'd by *St. Paul* in the Words before us: “ If in this
“ Life onely we had Hope, Men would
“ really be more miserable than Beasts;
“ and the best of Men oftentimes the
“ most miserable. But it is impossible
“ to imagine, that a God of infinite Wis-
“ dom and Goodness should distribute
“ Happiness, and Misery, so unqually,
“ and absurdly: It remains, therefore,
“ that

“ that good Men have a well-grounded
 “ Hope in another Life; and are as
 “ certain of a future Recompence, as
 “ they are of the Being, and Attributes
 “ of God.

III. The best use I can make of this Comfortable Truth, thus explain'd, is, To exhort you from thence to live like those who have their Hope in another Life; like Men who look upon themselves as being upon their Passage only through this present World, but as belonging properly to that which is to come. And thus we may be said to live, if we observe the following plain Rules and Directions; which are not the less useful, because they are plain ones. Several of them will give a natural Occasion to those, who knew the deceas'd Person, of anticipating his Character in their Thoughts: for he did really in good measure (and with due Allowances made for Human Frailties) govern himself by them; and I may, for that Reason, I hope, be suffer'd to insist the more freely upon them.

Now, to live like those that have their Hope in another Life; implies,

First,

First, That we indulge our selves in the Gratifications of this present Life very sparingly; that we keep under our Appetites, and do not let them loose into the Enjoyments of Sense: but so use the good things of this World, as not abusing them; so take delight in them, as to remember that we are to part with them, and to exchange them for more excellent and durable Enjoyments, *Brethren* 1 Pet. ii. 11. (says St. Peter) *I beseech you, as Pilgrims, abstain from Fleshly Lusts*: They, who pass, through a foreign Country, towards their Native Home, do not usually give up themselves to an eager pursuit of the Pleasures of the Place; ought not to dwell long upon them, and with Greediness; but make use of them only for their Refreshment on the Way, and so, as not to be diverted from pursuing their Journey.

A good Christian must partake of those grateful Repasts of Sense, which he meets with here below, in like manner as the Jews did of their Passover, *with their Loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, eating it in haste*; that is, he must always be in a Travelling Posture, and so taste Sensual Pleasures, as one that is about to
leave

leave them, and desires to be stopp'd as little as he can by them, in his Way towards the End of his Hopes, the Salvation of his Soul. And to this Custom of the *Jews* St. Peter, in his Exhortation to Sobriety and Temperance, may be suppos'd to allude; *Wherefore* (says he) *gird up the Loins of your Mind, and be ye Sober.*

1 Pet. i.
13.

Indeed, it is impossible for a Man to have a lively Hope in another Life, and yet be deeply immers'd in the Enjoyments of this; inasmuch as the Happiness of our Future State so far exceeds all that we can propose to our selves at present, both in Degree, and Duration; that to One, firmly perswaded of the Reality of that Happiness, and earnestly desirous of obtaining it, all Earthly Satisfaction must needs look little, and grow flat and unfavoury: especially, when by Experience he finds, that too free a Participation of These, indisposes him extreamly for Those; for all the Duties that are necessary to be perform'd, and all the good Qualities that are necessary to be attain'd, in order to arrive at them. He perceives plainly that his Appetite to Spiritual Things abates, in proportion as his sensual Appetite is in-

indulg'd and encourag'd; and that Carnal Desires kill not only the Desire, but even the Power of tasting Purer Delights; and, on both these Accounts, therefore, flies too deep a Draught of all Earthly Enjoyments: *Having this Hope in him, he purifieth himself, even as He (i.e. even as the Author and Revealer of this Hope) is Pure.* A

1 Joh. iii.
3.

Second Instance, wherein we may be said to live like those who have their Hope in another Life, is, if we bear the Uneasinesses that befall us here, with Constancy and Patience; as knowing, that, tho' our Passage through this World should be rough and troublesome, yet the Trouble will be but short, and the Rest and Contentment, we shall find at the End, will be an ample Recompence for all the little Inconveniences, we meet with, in our way towards it. We must not expect, that our Journey through the several Stages of this Life should be all smooth and even; or, that we should perform it wholly without Disasters, Ill Accidents, and Hindrances. While we live in this World, where Good and Bad Men are blended together, and where there is also a Mixture of Good and
Evil

Evil wisely distributed by God, to serve the Ends of his Providence; we are not to wonder, if we are molested by the One, as well as benefited by the Other. 'Tis our present Lot and Condition, to be subject to such Casualties; which; therefore, as they ought not to surprize; so much less should they deject us: nor can they, if we look forward, and entertain our selves with the Prospect of that Happiness to which we are hastning; and at which when we arrive, even the Remembrance of the Difficulties, we now undergo, will contribute to enhaunse our Pleasure.

Indeed, while we are in the Flesh, we cannot be utterly insensible of the Afflictions that befall us: what is in it self harsh and ungrateful, must needs make harsh and ungrateful Impressions upon us. And, therefore, to pretend to be perfectly easie under any great Calamity of Life, must be the Effect either of Hypocrisy, or Stupidity. However; tho' it be not in our power to make an Affliction no Affliction; yet it is certainly in our power to take off the Edge, and lessen the Weight of it, by a full and
steady

steady View of those Divine Joys that are prepar'd for us in another State, which shall shortly begin, and never end: We may say, and think with St. Paul, *I reckon that the Sufferings of this present Life are not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory that shall be revealed.* And thus saying, and thinking, we may bear the heaviest Load, that can be laid upon us, with Contentedness, at least, if not with Chearfulness. A

Rom. viii.
18.

Third Instance of our living like those that have their Hope in another Life, is, if we always take the Account of a Future State into our Schemes and Reasonings about the Concerns of this World; and form our Judgments about the worth, or emptiness of things here, according as they are, or are not of use, in Relation to what is to come after.

He who sojourns in a foreign Country, refers what he sees and hears Abroad, to the State of things at Home; with that view he makes all his Reflections, and Enquiries; and by that measure he judges of every thing which befalls himself, or others, in his Travels. This Pattern should be our Guide, in our present state of Pilgrimage; wherein we
often

often misinterpret the Events of Providence, and make a wrong use of them, by attending to the Maxims of this Life only; and so thinking of the World, which we are now in, and of the Affairs of it, as if both That, and They, and We had no manner of Relation to another: whereas, in truth, what we see is in order only to what we do not see; and both these States, therefore, must be joyn'd, and consider'd together, if we intend to reflect wisely and justly on present Appearances: for as *no Man knoweth Love, or Hatred*; so neither can he discern Good or Evil, purely by *what is before him*.

Eccles. ix.
1.

We, perhaps, when we see Vice remarkably Prosperous, or Virtue in deep Distress; when a Man, who is, and does good to Mankind, happens to be cut off in the vigour of his Strength, and in the midst of his innocent Enjoyments; whilst *the Wicked grow Old, yea are mighty in Power*, * *and come to their Grave in a full Age, like as a shock of Corn cometh in, in his Season*: We, I say, in such Cases, are ready to cry out of an unequal Management, and to blame the Divine Administration: whereas, if we consider'd, that there is another State after
this,

* Job xxi.
7.
† Job v.
25.

this, wherein all these seeming Irregularities may be set right; and that, in the mean time they are of use to distinguish the Sound from the False Believer, to exercise the Faith of good Men; and, by that means, entitle them to a greater Reward; This one Consideration would make all our Murmurs cease, all those fancy'd Difficulties vanish.

Many other Instances, like these; there are, wherein (I say) we shall never be able to give our selves a satisfactory Account of the Divine Conduct, as it appears to us at present, without drawing our Arguments and Reflections from a future State, and forming such a Scheme of things, as shall at once take in both Time, and Eternity. We may, in the

Fourth Place, be said to live like those that place their Hope in another World; when we have in a great measure conquer'd our Dread of Death, and our unreasonable Love of Life, and are even prepar'd, and willing to be dissolv'd, and to be with Christ, as soon as ever he thinks fit to call us. Till we have wrought our selves up into this degree of Christian Indifference, we are in *Bondage*; we cannot so well be said to have our Hope, as our Fear in another Life;

C c while

A Sermon preach'd at the

while we are mighty loth and unwilling to part with This, for the sake of it.

Not, that it is in the Power of Human Nature, without extraordinary Degrees of Divine Grace, to look Death in the Face, unconcern'd; or to throw off Life with the same Ease as one doth a Garment, upon going to rest: These are Heroick heights of Virtue; attain'd but by few, and matter of strict Duty to none. However, it is possible for all of us to lessen our Natural Fears of this kind, by Religious Considerations; by a firm Belief of, and a frequent Meditation upon those Joys that shall be reveal'd, to raise our selves up into a Contempt of present Satisfactions, and into a Resolution of submitting our Selves, if not joyfully, yet meekly, and calmly, to the Sentence of Death, whenever it shall please God to inflict it upon us. This, I say, is a very practicable Degree of Christian Magnanimity and Courage; and it is both the Duty and the Interest of every good Christian to attain it. Which we shall be the better enabled to do, if, in the

Fifth and last Place, We make a proper Use of such Opportunities as these, and
of

of all other Seasons of Serious Reflection, which are afforded us, in order to fix in our Minds a lively and vigorous Sense of the things of another World. They are under the Disadvantage of being Distant; and, therefore, operate but faintly upon us. To remedy this Inconveniency, we must frequently revolve within our selves their Certainty, and great Importance; so as to bring them near, and make them familiar to us; till they become a constant and ready Principle of Action, which we can have recourse to upon all Occasions.

If we really live under the Hope of future Happiness, we shall be apt to taste it by way of Anticipation and Fore-Thought; an Image of it will meet our Minds often, and stay for some time there, as all pleasing Expectations do, and that, in proportion to the Pleasure we take in them. I appeal to you, if it be not so in your Temporal Affairs. Hath any of you a great Interest at stake in a far-distant part of the World? hath he ventur'd a good share of his Fortune thither? and may reasonably hope for a vast and exceeding Return? his Thoughts will be often employ'd on this Subject; and, the nearer the time of his expectation

Luk. xii.
34.

approacheth, the more will he think of it: for, *where his Treasure is, there will his Heart also* most certainly be. Now, our Spiritual Interests, and the great Concernments of a Future State would, doubtless, recurr as often to our Minds, and affect them as deeply, if we were but as much in earnest in our pursuit of them: and, therefore, we may take it for granted, that we are not so dispos'd as we ought to be towards them, if we can forget them for any long time, or reflect on them with Indifference and Coldness.

That this may not be the case, it will, I say, be necessary for us to take Set times of meditating on what is future, and of making it by that means, as it were, present to us: It must be our solemn Business and Endeavour, at fit Seasons, to turn the stream of our Thoughts from Earthly, towards Divine Objects; to retire from the Hurry and Noise of this World, in order to entertain our selves with the Prospect of another.

This is the proper Use we are particularly to make of the present sad Solemnity; and thus, therefore, I have endeavour'd to employ it. Nor will it be

be unsuitable to that Design, if I close these Reflections with some Account of the Person deceas'd, who really liv'd like one that had his Hope in another Life; a Life, which he hath now enter'd upon, having exchang'd Hope for Sight, Desire for Enjoyment.

I know, such Accounts are look'd upon as a Tribute, due to the Memory of those only who have mov'd in a high Sphere, and have out-shone the rest of the World by their Rank, as well as their Virtues. However, the Characters of Men plac'd in lower Stations of Life, tho' less usually insisted upon, are yet more useful; as being imitable by greater Numbers, and not so liable to be suspected of Flattery, or Design. Several of this Auditory were, perhaps, entire Strangers to the Person, whose Death we now lament; and the greatest part of you, who were not, had, for that reason, so just an Esteem of him, that it will not be unwelcome to you, I presume, to be put in mind of those good Qualities which you observ'd in him. And, therefore, I shall, in as few words as I can, comprize, what twenty years Experience hath enabled me justly to say of him.

IV.

He was a serious sincere Christian; of an Innocent, Irreproachable, nay Exemplary Life; which was led, not only at a great distance from any foul Vice, but also in the Even and Uniform Practice of many Virtues; such as were suitable to a Life of great Application and Business, such as became and adorn'd the State and Profession to which it pleas'd God to call him.

He highly valu'd, and heartily lov'd by that Church wherein he was baptiz'd, and educated; of which he gave the best Proofs, by being a constant Frequenter of it's Worship, and, in the latter part of his Life, a never-failing Monthly Communicant; I add also, and by adhering steadily to its Interest; two things, which ought never to be separated!

Nor was his Attendance on Divine Offices a matter of Formality and Custom, but of Conscience; as appear'd by his compos'd and serious Behaviour, during the Service. It was such, as shew'd him to be in earnest, and truly affected with what he was doing.

His Religion did not spend it self all in Publick, the Private Duties of the
Clo-

Closet were equally his Care; with these he began each Morning, and to these he repair'd, as often as he entred upon any Business of consequence, (I speak knowingly;) and his Family were every Evening summon'd by him to Common Devotions; and in these too, his Regard for the Publick Service of the Church appear'd; for they were express'd always in Her Language.

Indeed, he was a very singular Instance of all those Domestick Virtues, that relate to the good and discreet Government of a Family. He had great natural Prudence, which Experience had much improv'd; he was of a sweet Temper, and a mighty Lover of Regularity and Order: and, by the happy Mixture of these good Qualities, manag'd all his Affairs (particularly those within doors) with the utmost Exactness; and yet with as much Quiet and Ease to himself, and others, as was possible.

Those about him grew insensibly Active and Industrious by his Example, and Encouragement; and he had such a gentle Method of reprov'g their Faults, that they were not so much afraid, as asham'd to repeat them. He took the surest way to be obey'd, by

being lov'd, and respected: for he was free from any of those rough, ungovernable Passions, which hurry Men on, to say, and do very hard, or offensive things. He had indeed a certain Quickness of Apprehension, which inclin'd him a little to kindle into the first Motions of Anger, upon some particular Occasions: but this part of his Disposition he had so far conquer'd, that, for a long time before he dy'd, no one, who had occasion to receive his Orders, did, I believe, ever hear an intemperate, or harsh Word proceed from him; or see any thing in his Behaviour, that betray'd any misbecoming degree of inward Concern.

He took care to season the Minds of his Servants with Religious Instructions; and, for that end, did himself often read useful Discourses to them, on the Lord's Day, of which he was always a very strict and solemn Observer. And what they thus learn'd from him in One way, they did not unlearn again, in Another: for he was a Man, not only sincerely Pious, but of the nicest Sobriety and Temperance, and remarkably punctual and just in all his Dealings with others. I see many Authentick Witnesses of this particular Branch of his Character.

He

He abounded in all the trueſt Signs of an affectionate Tenderneſs towards his Wife and Children; and yet did ſo prudently moderate and temper his Paſſions of this kind, as that none of them got the better of his Reaſon, or made him wanting in any of the other Offices of Life, which it behov'd, or became him to perform: and, therefore, tho' he appear'd to reliſh theſe Bleſſings as much as any man; yet he bore the loſs of them, when it hapned, with great Compoſure and Evenneſs of Mind.

He did alſo, in a very juſt and fitting manner, proportion his Reſpects to all others that were any ways related to him, either by Blood, or Affinity; and was very obſervant of ſome of them, even where he could not be determin'd by any Views of Intereſt, and had manifeſtly no other Obligations, but thoſe of Duty and Decency, to ſway him.

In what manner he liv'd towards thoſe who were of his Neighbourhood and Acquaintance, how obliging his Carriage was to them, what kind Offices he did, and was always ready to do them, I forbear particularly to ſay; not that I judge it a ſlight, but becauſe I take it to be a confeſſ'd part of his Character, which

which even his Enemies (if there were any such) cannot but allow: for, however, in matters where his Judgment led him to oppose Men, on a Publick Account, he would do it vigorously and heartily; yet the Opposition ended there, without sowing his private Conversation; which was, (to use the Words of a great Writer) soft and easie, as his Principles were stubborn.

In a word, whether we consider him as an Husband, a Parent, a Master, Relation, or Neighbour; his Character was, in all these respects, highly fit to be recommended to Men; and, I verily think, as compleat as any that ever fell under my Observation.

And all this Religion and Virtue sat easily, naturally, and gracefully upon him; without any of that Stiffness and Constraint, any of those forbidding Appearances, which sometimes disparage the Actions of Men sincerely Pious, and hinder real Goodness from spreading its Interest far, and wide, into the Hearts of Beholders.

There was not the least Tang of Religious (which is indeed the worst sort of) Affectation in any thing he said, or did; nor any endeavour to recommend him-

himself to others, by appearing to be even what he really was: He was faulty on the other side, being led, by an Excess of Modesty, to conceal (as much as might be) some of his chief Virtues; which, therefore, were scarce known to any but those who very nearly observ'd him, tho' every day of his Life almost was a witness to the Practice of them.

I need not say, how perfect a Master he was of all the Business of that Useful Profession, wherein he had engag'd himself: You know it well; and the great Success his Endeavours met with, sufficiently proves it. Nor could the Event well be otherwise: for his natural Abilities were very good, and his Industry exceeding great, and the Evenness, and Probity of his Temper not inferior to either of them. Besides, he had one peculiar Felicity, (which carried in it some Resemblance of a great Christian Perfection) that he was entirely contented and pleas'd with his Lot; loving his Employment for its own sake (as he hath often said,) and so, as to be willing to spend the rest of his Life in it, tho' he were not to reap (if that could be suppos'd) any farther Advantages from it.

Not

Not but that the Powers of his Mind were equal to much greater Tasks ; and therefore when, in his later years, he was call'd up to some Publick Offices and Stations, he distinguish'd himself in all of them by his Penetration, and Dexterity in the Dispatch of that Business which belong'd to them, by a winning Behaviour, and some degree even of a smooth and popular Eloquence, which Nature gave him. But his own Inclinations were rather to confine himself to his own Business, and be serviceable to Religion and Learning, in the way, to which God's Providence had seem'd more particularly to direct him, and in which it had so remarkably bless'd him.

When Riches flow'd in upon him, they made no Change in his Mind, or manner of Living. This may be imputed to an eager Desire of heaping up Wealth ; but it was really owing to another Principle : He had a great Indifference to the Pleasures of Life, and an Aversion to the Poms of it ; and, therefore, his Appetites being no way increas'd by his Fortune, he had no occasion to enlarge the Scene of his Enjoyments.

He was so far from over-valuing any of the Appendages of Life, that the thoughts even of Life it self did not seem to affect him. Of its Loss he spake often, in full health, with great Unconcern; and, when his late Distemper attack'd him (which from the beginning he judg'd Fatal), after the first Surprise of that sad Stroke was over, he submitted to it with great Meekness, and Resignation, as became a good Man, and a good Christian.

Tho' he had a long Illness (considering the great Heat with which it rag'd) yet his Intervals of Sense being few, and short, left but little room for the Offices of Devotion; at which he was the less concern'd, because (as he himself then said) he had not been wanting in those Duties, while he had Strength to perform them. Indeed, on the Lord's day which immediately preceded this Illness, he had receiv'd the Sacrament; and was, therefore (we have reason to believe) *when the Master of the House* soon afterwards *came*, prepar'd and ready to receive him.

As the Blessings of God upon his honest Industry had been great, so he was not without Intentions of making suitable

able Returns to him, in Acts of Mercy and Charity. Something of this kind he hath taken care of in his Will, drawn up at a time, while his Family was as numerous as it is now, and his Circumstances not so plentiful. One part of the Benefactions, there directed, was worthy of him; being the Expression of a generous and grateful Mind towards the Persons who had most oblig'd him, and of a pious regard to the Place of his Education. More he would probably have done, had not the Disease, of which he dy'd, seiz'd him with that Violence, as to render him incapable of Executing whatever of this kind his Heart might have intended.

He is now gone, and his Works have follow'd him: let Us imitate his Example, that, when We also depart this Life, we may share his Heavenly Reward, and be as well spoken of by those who survive Us!

Now to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Majesty, Might, and Glory, now, and for ever. Amen.

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd in the

GUILD-HALL Chapel,

LONDON, *Sept.* 28. 1706.

Being the Day of the

E L E C T I O N

Of the Right Honourable the

LORD MAYOR.

To the RIGHT HONOURABLE
Sir THOMAS RAWLINSON;
Lord Mayor

OF THE
City of L O N D O N.

My LORD,

QUiet at home, and Conquest abroad, are two of the greatest Blessings that can happen to a People; and these have remarkably distinguish'd the Year of Your Lordship's Magistracy: which, as it hath been a continu'd Scene of Victories and Successes, so it began, and ended, without any of those unnatural Struggles for the Chair, which have so long and often disturb'd the Peace of this great City. That those Passions, which seem now to be somewhat calm'd, may be entirely laid asleep, and never more awaken'd, that the City may flourish in Trade, and Wealth, and all manner of outward Advantages; particularly, that it may never want such Magistrates to guide and govern it, as Your Lordship, and Your Worthy Successor, is the sincere Wish, and hearty Prayer of,

My LORD,
Your most Obedient
Humble Servant,

Fr. Atterbury.

 JOB xxix. 14.

I put on Righteousness, and it clothed me, my Judgment was as a Robe and a Diadem.

JOB's Reflections on the Flourishing Estate he had once enjoy'd, did at the same time afflict, and encourage him. Doubtless, it increas'd the Smart of his present Sufferings, to compare them with his former Happiness: and yet a remembrance of the good Use he had made of Prosperity, contributed to support his Mind under the heavy weight of Adversity which then lay upon him. He had been a Person, not only of great Opulence, but Authority; a Chief Magistrate in the Place where he dwelt; as appears from several Passages in the Book which bears his Name: and he had (it seems) executed that high Office justly and honourably; with great Satisfaction to himself, and with the Universal Applause of his Country.

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To this Consideration, therefore, he retreats, in the midst of all his Pressures, with Comfort and Confidence; in This Thought, notwithstanding the sad Afflictions with which he was overwhelm'd, he mightily exults and triumphs. For hear, how he expresses himself on this occasion, in the Verses next to that of the Text! *I delivered the Poor that cry'd, says he, the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The Blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the Widows Heart to sing for Joy. I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lame; I was a Father to the Poor, and the Cause, which I knew not, I searched out: and I brake the Jaws of the Wicked, and pluck'd the Spoil out of his Teeth.* One would imagine these to be the Expressions of a Man, bless'd with Ease, and Affluence, and Power; not of One, who had been just stripp'd of all those Advantages, and plung'd in the deepest Miseries, and was now sitting Naked, upon a Dunghil! *But the Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infirmities; the Consciousness of Integrity, the Sense of a Life spent in doing Good, will enable a Man to bear up under any Change of Circumstances; and, whatever his*

Out-

Outward Condition may be, is such an Inward Spring of Contentment and Pleasure, as cannot fail. This was that, which not only arm'd the Mind of *Job* with Firmness and Fortitude, but fill'd it also with those pleasing Reflections which the words, I have read to You, contain. Therein he particularly mentions, and values himself upon, the Compassion, and Readiness, and Zeal, with which he had apply'd himself to relieve the Injur'd and Afflicted; the Impartiality he had observ'd, the great Diligence he had us'd, and the fearless Courage he had shewn, in the Administration of Justice: He adds also, in the words of the Text; *I put on Righteousness, and it clothed me; my Judgment was as a Robe, and a Diadem;* that is, my chief Delight, my greatest Honour, and Happiness lay in thus discharging the Duties of my Station; so that, in Comparison of it, I undervalu'd all the Ensigns of Authority which belong'd to me, all the Pomp and Splendor of Life which which I was surrounded.

; The Words, therefore, will afford us a proper Occasion of considering,

- I. *First*, What a Publick Blessing a good Magistrate is: for it is on This Supposition that the Reflections, which *Job* here makes to his own Comfort and Advantage, are built.
- II. *Secondly*, The Regard that is justly paid the Magistrate, on this account, in those Outward Marks of Distinction and Honour with which he is attended. These have their Uses, with respect both to Him, and to the Community over which he presides. However, he must remember always, in the
- III. *Third Place*, That the Chief Honour of the Magistrate consists in maintaining the Dignity of his Character by suitable Actions, and in discharging the high Trust that is repos'd in him, with Integrity, Wisdom, and Courage. Then doth he appear most Venerable, and every way Valuable, when, with upright *Job*, he can truly say, *I put on Righteousness, and it clothed me; my Judgment was a Robe, and a Diadem.*

We may, I say, in the

First Place, Take Occasion from hence to consider, What a Publick Blessing a good Magistrate is. The Virtues of private Persons, how Bright and Exemplary soever, operate but on Few; on those only who are near enough to observe, and inclin'd to imitate them: their sphere of Action is narrow, and their Influence is confin'd to it. But a just and wise Magistrate, is a Blessing as extensive as the Community to which it belongs: a Blessing, which includes all other Blessings whatsoever, that relate to this Life; secures to us the Possession, and enhances the Value of all of them: which renders the Condition of the Happiest among Men still more happy, and the State of the Meanest less miserable, than it would otherwise be: and for the enjoyment of which no one Man can well envy another; because all Men, in their several Ranks, and according to their several Proportions and Degrees, do alike share in it. *As the precious Ointment upon the Head, which ran down unto the Beard of Aaron, and went down from thence even to the Skirts of his Clothing: Such, and so Universal are the Benefits which a good Ruler bestows: in like*

I.

Pfal.
cxxxiii. 2

manner are they deriv'd from Him, the Head, and gently diffus'd over the whole Body which he governs, refreshing every part of it, as they descend, from the Highest to the Lowest. I shall not attempt to prove a Point, in it self so Evident; to Us, especially of this happy Island, who have the most convincing argument for it, our own Experience; and are bless'd with a Reign, the Advantages of which are common to Prince and People, to the meanest Subjects, as well as to those of the highest Place and Dignity: All share in them, and All, therefore, have reason to bless God for them, and for the great Instrument of his Goodness, by which he bestows them.

However, as manifest a Truth as this is, it may deserve sometimes to be inculcated; because we are too apt, all of us, to forget it, and some Men have ventur'd to espouse such wild Opinions; as do, in effect, subvert and deny it.

The Benefits of a just and good Government to those who are so happy as to be under it, like Health to Vigorous Bodies, or Fruitful Seasons in Temperate Climes, are such Common and Familiar Blessings, that they are seldom either

valu'd, or relish'd, as they ought to be. We sleep over our Happiness, Great as it is, and want to be rous'd into a quick and thankful sense of it, either by an actual Change of Circumstances, or by a Comparison of our Own case with that of other Men.

Few of us consider, how much we are indebted to Government it self, because few of us can, or do represent to our selves, in lively colours, how wretched the Condition of Mankind would, and must be without it; how to *That* we owe, not only the Safety of our Persons, and the Propriety of our Possessions, but our Improvement in the several Arts and Advantages of Civil Life, and in all Knowledge, both Human, and Divine; even in the Knowledge of the Blessed Nature, and Will of God himself, and of the best ways of serving, honouring, and adoring him. We, who are us'd to see Men acting under the awe of Civil Justice, cannot readily conceive, what Wild and Salvage Creatures they would be, without it; and how much beholden, therefore, we are to that wise Contrivance, which makes use of our Fear to quell our Other Passions and Lusts, as Beasts and Birds of prey are

employ'd to hunt down those of their Kind. The Inconveniences attending all, even the best of Governments, we quickly see, and feel, and are nicely sensible of the share that we bear in them; and, tho' these be little in comparison of those mighty Advantages that redound to us from thence, yet we muse so much on the one, that we are apt altogether to to over-look, and forget the other.

Our Ingratitude, in this respect, goes farther: for Some there have been, who have disputed even against Magistracy it self, as an Unchristian Institution; or deny'd, at least, that the Power of the Sword could, on any account, be lawfully exercis'd by the Followers of a meek and suffering *Jesus*. And this hath been maintain'd, not only by warm *Enthusiasts*, but by cooler and more discerning Heads, even by some of those who stile themselves *Unitarians*, and would be thought to reason better, and see farther into the Sense of Scripture than any Men. I think, they have given no good Proof of either, in asserting this Extravagant and Pernicious Principle; for which, after all, they have no ground or colour, but a Passage or two
of

of Scripture, miserably perverted, in opposition to many express Texts, and indeed to the whole Tenor of Divine Writ. Strange it is, that They, who, in matters of Faith, reject the plainest Sense of Scripture, because it seems to disagree with what they call Reason; should, in this case, reject the plainest Reason in the World, because of a Text or two in Scripture that may be thought to clash with it. But the true reason of their flying to this strange Doctrine was, to be Even with the Magistrate; who, they found, was against *Them*; and they resolv'd, therefore, at any rate, to be against *Him*. However, this Opinion (like some others, that have been since taken up by other Sectaries) was to last no longer than they were undermost. For so the Event actually prov'd, in relation to the *German Anabaptists*: who, no sooner got the Reins into their own Hands, than they alter'd their Minds in this Point; and, tho' they held the Power of the Civil Sword to be altogether unlawful, whilst They were to be govern'd by it, yet they esteem'd it very Lawful, and very Convenient, when it came to Their turn to govern: *the Earth, now, and the fulness thereof were the Lord's,*
and

and the Meek were to inherit it. The Unitarians indeed never had, any of them, such an Opportunity of explaining themselves; should they have found one, it is very probable they would have made the same use of it. Let us leave these absurd Tenets, whenever they revive, to be confuted by that Power which they thus affront and deny; and let us proceed to the Consideration of what I observ'd from the Text, in the

II. *Second Place*, Concerning those Outward Marks of Distinction and Splendor which are allotted to the Magistrate, and which the *Robe and Diadem*, expressly here mention'd by *Job*, may be suppos'd to comprehend:

The Practice of all Ages, and all Countries (whether Christian, or Heathen; Polite, or Barbarous) hath been, in this manner to do Honour to Those, who are invested with Publick Authority. The Reasons are obvious; I shall mention some of them. It was intended, by this means,

First, To excite the Magistrate to a due degree of Vigilance, and Concern for

for the Publick Good : That He, being conscious of the true End for which these Encouragements were given, might study by all possible ways to deserve them ; and to excel the rest of Mankind as much in Worthy Deeds and Achievements, as he out-shines them in all other Advantages. The Honors, and the Burthens, of great Posts and Employments, as they were join'd together at the first, so were they design'd never to be separated. The Magistrate was not made great, in order to afford him Opportunities of indulging himself in Sloth, and Vice ; but in order to inspire him with Resolutions of living suitably to his high Profession and Calling ; that, *whatsoever things are Honest, whatsoever things are Just, whatsoever things are Lovely, whatsoever things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise*, he might be induced to *think on these things*, and to abound in the Practice of them. A

Phil. iv. 8

Second Reason of these Marks of State and Dignity, which are annex'd to Magistracy, is, for the Security of the Magistrate's Person, in which the Publick Tranquillity and Safety are always in-

involv'd. He, who will faithfully perform his Duty, in a Station of great Trust and Power, must needs incur the utter Enmity of many, and the high Displeasure of more; he must sometimes struggle with the Passions and Interests, resist the Applications, and even punish the Vices of Men potent in the Commonwealth, who will employ their ill-gotten Influence towards procuring Impunity, or extorting undue Favours, for themselves, or their Dependents. He must conquer all these Difficulties, and remove all these Hindrances out of the way that leads to Justice; must dare even to *break the Jaws of the Wicked, and to pluck the spoil out of his Teeth*; i. e. to ravish the Prey from any mighty Oppressor, when he hath seiz'd, and is just ready to devour it. He is the Guardian of the Publick Quiet; appointed to restrain Violence, to quell Seditions and Tumults, and to preserve that Order and Peace which preserves the World. It is apparent, on these, and many other accounts, what Hazards a good Magistrate runs; and, therefore, the Retinue of State, which belongs to him, is such, as may, at the same time, be his Ornament, and Defence; the Publick justly screen-

Job xxix.
17.

screening him from the Dangers which he is to incur for the sake of it. A

Third plain Reason of the Publick Honours done to the Magistrate is, that that he may not only be secure, but had also in due Estimation and Reverence by all those who are subject to him. 'Tis by Respect and Distance that Authority is upheld; and 'tis by the Outward Marks and Ensigns of Honour that Respect is secur'd; especially from Vulgar Minds, which do not enter into the true Reasons of Things, but are govern'd by Appearances. 'Tis in the Civil Government, as in the Offices of Religion; which, were they stript of all the External Decencies of Worship, would not make a due Impression on the Minds of those who assist at them. But a discreet Use of proper and becoming Ceremonies, renders the Publick Service of the Church Solemn and Affecting; awes the Unbeliever, inspirits the Sluggish, and inflames even the Devout Worshipper. In like manner, the Solemnities that encompass the Magistrate, add Dignity to all his Actions, and Weight to all his Words and Opinions; producing such Effects, as *Job*, in that Chapter
from

Job xxix.
7, 8, 21, 22,
23.

from whence my Text is taken, hath thus elegantly describ'd; *When I went out, says he, to the Gate though the City, when I prepared my Seat in the Street; the Young Men saw me and hid themselves, and the Aged arose and stood up: Unto me Men gave ear and waited, and kept silence at my Counsel; after my words they spake not again, and my speech dropped upon them: And they waited for me, as for the Rain, and open'd their Mouth wide as for the Latter Rain.*

Finally, These External Marks of Honour are therefore appropriated to the Magistrate, that he might be invited from thence to Reverence Himself: that he may be led to remember, *Whose Image and Superscription* he carries; not only that of the Community, over which he presides, and for which he acts, but the Image even of God himself, by whom *the Powers that be, are ordain'd*, and from whom they must ultimately derive their Authority. The Outward Splendor of his Office, is the Badge and Token of that Glorious and Sacred Character, which he inwardly bears: and the One of these, therefore, ought constantly to put him in mind of the Other, and excite him to act up to it, throughout the whole

whole Course of his Administration. He who thus esteems and reverences himself, will not fail to take the truest Methods towards procuring Esteem and Reverence from others; he will exercise himself with Pleasure, and without Weariness, in that God-like Employment of doing Good, which is assign'd him; and by reason of which even the Title of *God* is in Scripture bestow'd on him: He will do nothing that is beneath his high Station; nor omit doing any thing which becomes it: He will not prostitute his Power to mean and undue Ends; nor stoop to little and low Arts of courting the Favour of the People, without doing them real Service: He will stand his Ground against all the Attacks that can be made upon his Probity; no Man's Power shall scare him from doing his Duty; no Man's Importunities shall weary him, no Man's Flattery shall bribe him, no By-views of his own shall mislead him: He will arm himself perfectly in his Integrity; *Righteousness shall be the Girdle of his Loins, and Faithfulness, the Girdle of his Reins.* Es. xi. 5. He will know how to prize his Advantages, and to relish the Honours which he enjoys; as they are the Testimonies of Publick Esteem,

Esteem, and the Rewards of Merit: but he will not so far please himself with them, as to forget, what I, under my

- III. *Third*, and Last General Head, propos'd to consider; That the chief Honour of the Magistrate consists, in maintaining the Dignity of his Character by suitable Actions, and in discharging the high Trust that is repos'd in him, with Integrity, Wisdom, and Courage.

Some Magistrates are contented that their Places should adorn Them: and Some also there are, who study to adorn their Places, and to reflect back again the Lustre they receive from thence; so that we may apply to them what was said of *Simon the Son of Onias*, That, *when he put on the Robe of Honour, and was clothed with the perfection of Glory, he made the Garment of Holiness honourable.*

Ecclus. 1.
11.

To many such Worthy Magistrates as these, who have thus reputably fill'd the Chief Seats of Power in this great City, I am now addressing my Discourse: and whom, therefore, if I detain with a short account of the pressing *Obligations* of this sort which lie on the Magistrate,
and.

and of the best *Means* of discharging them; I shall not, I hope, be thought so much to prescribe Directions for the future, as to praise what is already past, and to *give Honour* to Those to whom *Honour is justly due*, for their Publick Services.

To be very desirous of a good Name, and very careful to do every thing, that we innocently and prudently may, to obtain it, is so far from being a Fault, even in Private Persons, that it is their great and indispensable Duty; but Magistrates and Ministers of Justice are in a peculiar manner oblig'd to it: for they have more Opportunities, than other Men have, of purchasing Publick Esteem by deserving well of Mankind; and such Opportunities always infer Obligations.

Reputation is the great Engine, by which those, who are possess'd of Power, must make that Power serviceable to the Ends and Uses of Government. The Rods and Axes of Princes, and their Deputies, may awe many into Obedience; but the Fame of their Goodness, and Justice, and other Virtues, will work on more; will make Men not only obedient, but willing to obey, and ready to

come into every thing that is done, or design'd, for the Publick Advantage, by Those who (they are satisfy'd) sincerely mean it.

An Establish'd Character spreads the Influence of such as move in a high Sphere, on all around, and beneath them; it reaches farther than their Own Care and Providence, or that of their Inferiour Officers can possibly do: It acts for them, when they themselves cease to act, and renders their Administration both Prosperous, and Easy.

Besides, the Actions of Men in high Stations, are all Conspicuous; and liable to be scann'd, and sifted. They cannot hide themselves from the Eyes of the World, as Private Men can: Even those, who attend on their State and Dignity, and make up their Honourable Train, are, as it were, so many Spies, plac'd upon them by the Publick, to observe them nearly, and report their Character. Praise, therefore, or Blame, being the necessary Consequence of Every thing they do, they have more reason to act always, with an immediate Regard to the Opinion of the World, than other Men have; and to resolve to make all those Actions worthy
of

of Observation; which are sure to be observ'd.

Great Places are never well fill'd, but by Great Minds; and it is as natural to a Great Mind to seek Honour by a due discharge of an high Trust, as it is to Little Men to make less Advantages of it.

On all these accounts; Reputation becomes a signal, a very peculiar Blessing to Magistrates; and their pursuit of it is not only allowable, but Laudable: so it be carried on by Methods which are every way Innocent and Justifiable, and with a View of making a good Use of a good Character when establish'd; so That be not rested in, as an End, but only employ'd as a Means of doing still farther good, and as an Encouragement to proceed in doing it; in a word, so Honour be not sought after by the Violation of Conscience, or the *Praise of Men* prefer'd, in any respect, to *the Praise of God*.

Now, tho' all the several Branches of the Magistrate's Duty, when faithfully perform'd, and all those good Qualifications of Mind, which enable him to perform it; do, in some degree, or other,

tend to create a Publick Esteem of him; yet there are some points of Duty, some Qualifications, that have a more direct and immediate Influence to this purpose: They are such as follow.

A Good Magistrate, who would endear himself to those whom he governs, must, above all things, be endu'd with a Publick Spirit, that is, with such an Excellent Temper of Mind, as sets him loose from all narrow, selfish Views, and makes him bend all his Thoughts and Endeavours towards promoting the Common Good of the Society which is committed to his Care. The Welfare of That is the Chief Point which he is to carry always in his Eye, and by which he is to govern all his Counsels, Designs, and Actions; directing his Zeal against, or for Persons and Things, in proportion as they do, or do not interfere with it. To this good End he must sacrifice his Time, his Ease, and his Private Advantages; and think all of them well spent, in obtaining it. Nothing, certainly, can better become a Person, invested with a Publick Character, than such a Publick Spirit; nor is there any thing likely to procure him larger Returns of Esteem
and

and Honour : The Common Acknowledgments of the Body will at length center in Him, who appears sincerely to aim at the Common Benefit of it. Especially, if to this be added

An Impartial Distribution of Justice, without respect of Persons, Interests, or Opinions. When Right is to be done, the good Magistrate will make no distinction of Small, or Great, Friend, or Enemy, Citizen, or Stranger, *for the* Deut.i.17. *Judgment is God's*; and he will look upon himself as pronouncing it in *his* stead, and as accountable at *his* Bar for the Equity of it. The Scripture forbids even the *Countenancing a Poor Man in his Cause*; Exo.xxiii. which is a Popular Way of perverting Justice, that some Men have dealt in; tho', without that Success, which they propos'd to themselves in it. But the truly upright Judge will always countenance Right, and discountenance Wrong, whoever be the Injurer, or the Sufferer. And he who steers his Course invariably by this Rule, takes the surest, as well as the honestest, way to make all Men praise him,

Courtesy and Condescension is another happy Quality, which never fails to make its way into the good Opinion; and into the very Hearts of those who are under the good Magistrate's Inspection: when he doth, as it were, lessen the Distance which there is between Him and Other Men, and, by that means, allay the Envy which always attends an high Station; when he is Easy of Access, Affable, Patient to hear, and *to search out the Cause that he knew not*; when, as a Roman Writer speaks*, not only his Door, but his very Countenance is open to all that have any Occasion to approach him.

Job xxix.
16.

Bounty also, and a generous Contempt of that in which too many Men place their Happiness, must come in to heighten his Character. There is scarce any Quality more truly Popular than this, or more suitable to the Public Station, in which he shines. It includes

* *Cura ut Aditus ad Te Diurni atque Nocturni pateant, neque Foribus solum Aedium tuarum, sed etiam Vultu ac Fronte, quæ est Animi Janua; quæ si significant Voluntatem abditam esse ac reclusam, parvi refert patere Ostium. Quint. Cic. de Petit. Cons. ad M. Tull. Frat.*

Hospitality to the better Sort, and Charity to the Poor; two Virtues, that are never exercis'd so gracefully and well, as when they accompany Each other. Hospitality sometimes Degenerates into Profuseness, and ends in Madness and Folly When it doth so, it ill deserves the Name of a Vertue: even Parsimony it self, which fits but ill upon Persons of a Publick Figure, is yet the more pardonable Excess of the two. It is as little the sign of a Wise, as of a Good Man, to suffer the Bounds of Temperance to be transgress'd, in order to purchase the false (tho' fashionable) Repute of a Generous Entertainer. But, in the Offices of Charity there is no danger of Excess; the Exercise of them is always well-pleasing to God, and honourable among Men. *He hath dispers'd, saith the Psalmist, he hath given to the Poor; his Horn shall be exalted with Honour.*

*Psal. cx.
9.*

But of all good Qualities, That, which recommends and adorns the Magistrate most, is his Care of Religion; which, as it is the most valuable thing in the World, so it gives the truest Value to Them, who promote the Esteem and Practice of it, by their Example, Authority, Influence, and Encouragement: for *them*

1 Sam. ii. *that honour me, says God, will I honour; as*
 30. *on the other hand, they that despise me, shall be*
lightly esteem'd. This is the Magistrate's
 peculiar Province, his most Glorious
 Employment; to give Countenance to
 Piety and Vertue, and to rebuke Vice
 and Prophaneness; to put the Laws of
 Men in Execution against such as tram-
 ple on the Laws of God; and to protect
 Religion, and All that belongs to it,
 from the daring Insults of those who *sit*
in the Seat of the Scorners. And (give me
 leave to say, that) there never was a
 time, when the Interposition of the
 Magistrate was more necessary to secure
 the Honour of Religion, and uphold the
 Authority of those great Principles of it,
 by which his Own Authority is best up-
 held. For we live in Evil Days, when
 the most important and confess'd Truths,
 such as by the Wisest and Best Men in
 all Ages have been rever'd, are by Licen-
 tious Tongues question'd, argued against,
 derided; and these things not only whis-
 per'd in Corners, but *proclaim'd upon the*
House tops; own'd and publish'd, in
 Defiance of the Common Persuasion,
 the Common Reason, and the Com-
 mon Interest of Mankind, and of
 All Authority, both Sacred, and Civil.

Liber-

Libertinism hath erected its Standard, hath declared War against Religion, and openly list'd Men of its Side and Party: a general Loosness of Principles, and Manners, hath seiz'd on us like a Pestilence; *a Pestilence that walketh not in* Psal. xci. 5 *Darkness, but wasteth at Noon-Day;* The Contagion of which hath spread itself through all Ranks and Degrees of Men; hath infected both the Camp, and the Congregation: Who knows, what the Zeal and Courage of a good Magistrate might do towards stopping it? *Let Phi-* Ps. cvi. 30 *nelias stand up and execute Judgment, that so this Plague may be stay'd!*

God hath, indeed, bless'd the Arms of the best of Queens, taken up in Defence of the best of Causes, with unparallel'd Successes abroad: may She be alike Victorious at home, over Lewdness and Infidelity! over such as reverence not the Altars of God, and scorn those who minister at them! That so the Felicities of her Wonderful Reign may be compleat, and we may have nothing left to wish for on Earth but the Continuance of it; nor have any thing more to fear from the ill Influence of our Vices, than

we have now (God be thanked) from
the Attempts of our Enemies!

*Now to God the Father, the Son, and the
Holy Spirit, be all Praise and Glory
ascrib'd, from henceforth for evermore.
Amen.*

A
SERMON

Preach'd at St. PAUL'S,

Before the Right Honourable

The Lord Mayor,

AND

The Court of Aldermen,

On *Wednesday, April 9. 1707.*

Being a Day of

Publick Humiliation,

Appointed by Authority.



PSALM XXX. 6, 7, 8.

In my Prosperity I said, I shall never be moved: Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my Mountain to stand strong. Thou didst hide thy Face, and I was troubled. I cried unto Thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made my Supplication.

Or, as it is in the Translation, now used in our Church:

In my Prosperity I said, I shall not be removed: Thou, Lord, of thy Goodness hast made my Hill so strong. Thou didst turn thy Face from me, and I was troubled. Then cried I unto Thee, O Lord, and gat me to my Lord right humbly.

T H E Collection of *Psalms*, which make a part of the Daily Service of the Church, is, on no account, more valuable

valuable than this, that therein the Heart of Holy David, (*the Man after God's own Heart*) is laid open and naked before us: The several Postures of his Devout Soul in all Conditions and Circumstances of Life; his Hopes and Fears, his Desires and Aversions, his Joys and Grievs are there display'd with great Simplicity and Freedom: All his Infirmities and Defects, are distinctly register'd, the false Judgments he made of things are own'd, and the Methods pointed out by which he rectify'd them. And these Accounts of himself are very Instructive and Useful to all such as seriously peruse and study them, and are desirous of improving themselves in Piety and Vertue, by the means of so admirable a Pattern.

One great Instance of this kind we have in the Words of the Text; wherein the good Psalmist acknowledges and condemns the foolish Thoughts, which a Reflexion on the prosperous State of his Affairs had sometimes occasion'd in him: *In my Prosperity I said, (that is, vainly said) I shall never be moved; Thou, Lord, in thy Goodness, hast made my Hill so strong!* or, according to the Reading of the lxx. which seems more significant; *hast added*

added Strength to my Dignity! He proceeds to shew, how God began to punish this vain Elation of Mind, by withdrawing his Favours: *Thou didst turn thy Face from me, and I was troubled:* And then, how he entituled himself to the continuance of the Divine Protection and Goodness, by *Humiliation and Prayer:* *I cried unto Thee, O Lord, and gat me to my Lord, right humbly.*

Our *Successes* have been very great and surprizing, and our *Hearts*, I fear, have been but too much *lifted up* by the means of them: So that we have reason to *humble* our selves before God (as we now do) by *Fasting and Prayer*; lest he should punish our misuse of his Mercies, by *stopping* the *Course* of them.

I shall speak therefore not unsuitably, either to the Design of these Words, or to the Occasion of this Assembly; if I consider,

I. what *Ill Effects* great *Prosperity* usually hath on the Minds of a People; tempting them to say within themselves, as the Psalmist did, in the like Case; *We shall never be moved; Thou, Lord, of thy Goodness hast made our Hill so strong.*

II. How

II. II. How *Vain*, and *Sinful*, these *Imaginations* are : For holy *David*, by his way of mentioning, plainly condemns them.

III. III. What the *Consequence* of them often is : They provoke God to *stop* the *Current* of his *Goodness* towards us : *He hideth his Face, and we are troubled.*

IV. IV. In what manner we are to behave our selves, in order to *secure* the *Continuance* of the *Divine Favour* and *Protection* : We must *cry unto the Lord, and get our selves to our God right humbly.*

I. I. Good Men know very well, that we are here in a State of Discipline and Tryal ; that we are to pass thro' things Temporal to things Eternal, and that nothing therefore can be reckon'd Good or Bad to us in this Life, any farther than it prepares, or indisposes us for the Enjoyments of another. And yet they overlook this great Truth in the Judgments they generally pass on the several States of Adversity and Prosperity. The Temptations and Difficulties, that attend the Former of these, they can easily see, and dread at a Distance ; but they have no Apprehensions, no Suspicions of the Dangerous Consequences of the Latter. And yet it is certain, that the Temptations of Prosperity

Prosperity are the most mischievous and fatal of the two; insinuating themselves after a gentle, but very powerful manner; so that we are but little aware of them, and less able to withstand them. Wise *Agur*, therefore, equally directs his Petition against both these Extreams: *Give me* (says he) *neither Poverty, nor Riches; lest* (on the one side) *I be Poor and steal*, or (on the other) *I be Full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?* And, according to this Pattern, hath our Church taught us to pray, that God would, not only in all time of our *Tribulation*, but in all time of our *Wealth* also, be pleas'd to deliver us.

Indeed, a State of great Prosperity and Abundance, as it exposes us to various Temptations, and furnishes us with all manner of Opportunities and Encouragements to Sin, so it is often prejudicial to us, on this account (particularly mention'd in the Text); that it swells the Mind with undue Thoughts and Opinions, renders us Secure and Careless, Proud, Vain, Self-sufficient; banishes from our Thoughts a lively Sense of Religion, and of our dependence on God; and puts us upon so eager a pursuit of the advantages of Life that are within our

reach, or view, as to leave us neither room, nor inclination to reflect on the great Author and Bestower of them. We do then, more than at any other time, lie open to the Impressions of Flattery; which we admit, without Scruple, because we think we deserve it; and, that we may be sure not to want it, we take care to flatter our selves with Imaginary Scenes and Prospects of future Happiness: We like our present Circumstances well, and dream of no Change but for the better; not doubting but that *to Morrow shall be as this Day, and much more abundant.* We say, *we shall die in our Nests, and multiply our Days as the Sand; that we shall never be removed, God in his Goodness having made our Hill so strong!*

Psal. lvi.
12.
Job xxix.
38.

And this enchanting Power which Prosperity hath over the Minds of private Persons, is more remarkable in Relation to great States and Kingdoms; where all Ranks and Orders of Men being equally concern'd in Publick Blessings, equally join in spreading the Infection that attends them; and they mutually teach, and are taught, that Lesson of vain Confidence and Security, which our Corrupt Nature, unencourag'd by Example, is of it self but too apt to learn. A very prosperous

prosperous People, flush'd with great Victories and Successes, are rarely known to confine their Joys within the Bounds of Moderation and Innocence; are seldom so Pious, so Humble, so Just, or so Provident as they ought to be, in order to perpetuate and increase their Happiness: Their Manners wax generally more and more Corrupt, in proportion as their Blessings abound; till their Vices perhaps give back all those Advantages which their Victories procur'd, and Prosperity it self becomes their Ruin.

Of this the People of *Israel* were a very signal and Instructive Instance. As never any Nation upon Earth was bless'd with more frequent and visible Interpositions of Divine Providence in its behalf; so none ever made a worse Use of them: For no sooner were they at any time deliver'd out of the Hand of their Enemies, and establish'd in Peace and Plenty, but they grew Careless, Dissolute, and Prophane; and, by misemploying the Advantages, which God had thrown into their Lap, provok'd him (as far as in them lay) forthwith to withdraw them. *Jeshurun waxed Fat, and kicked: Then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation.* And therefore

Deut.
xxxii. 15

Moses, who had observ'd the Backslidings of this wanton People for Forty Years together in the Wilderness, when they were come to the Borders of the promis'd Land, and were now going to possess it, warns them, with the greatest Earnestness, of those Dangerous Temptations to which Prosperity (he knew) would expose them. Beware (says he) *lest when thou hast Eaten, and art Full, and hast built goodly Houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy Herds and thy Flocks multiply, and thy Silver and thy Gold is multiplied, and all thou hast is multiplied: Then thine Heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, that brought thee forth out of the Land of Ægypt, from the House of Bondage; and thou say in thine Heart, my Power, and the Might of my Hand hath gotten me this Wealth.* This was one perverse Effect of their sitting Safe and at Ease under their Vines and their Fig-trees; that they began to forget, from whence that Ease and Safety came, and to transfer all the Honour of it upon themselves, by *sacrificing unto their own Nets, and burning Incense unto their Drags; a sort of Idolatry, as hateful to God as any other whatsoever.*

Dent. ix.
12, 13,
14, 17.

Hab. i. 15.

Or, if they vouchsafed to give God the
praise

praise of his Goodness; yet they did it only in order to boast the Interest they had in him: They were the peculiar Care of Heaven, the Nation which above all Nations he delighted to honour; their *Mountain was strong, and should not be removed, no Harm should come nigh their Dwellings.*

What secret Imaginations of this kind we have fondly entertain'd, upon our Successes, is best known to God and our own Hearts: Only this is apparent, that we have not since so behav'd our selves towards God, as if we preserv'd upon our Minds a grateful remembrance of his Mercies; that we have scarce manifested our Sense of them any otherwise than by the Formalities of a Thanksgiving; that, whatever Ground we may have gotten upon our Enemies, we have gotten none upon our Vices, the worst Enemies of the two; but are even subdu'd and led Captive by the one, while we triumph so gloriously over the others. The Life and Power of Religion decays apace here at home, while we are spreading the Honour of our Arms far and wide through foreign Nations: To second Causes we seem to trust, without depending (at least without expressing so devoutly as

Deut. iv.
6.
Isa. xxvi.
5.

we ought to do our Dependence) on the First. It is sufficient that *this great Nation is a wise and understanding People*; that *we have Counsel and Strength for the War*; and where Counsel and Strength is, how can they choose but prevail? In a word, we so live, and so act, as if we thought our present Prosperity founded on such a Rock as could no ways be shaken; as if we were perfectly secure of the final Issue and Event of things, however we may behave our selves; and had no longer any occasion for the special Providence of God *to watch over us for good*, to direct all our Steps, and bless our Endeavours. How Vain and Sinful such Imaginations are, is what I propos'd, in the

II. Place, to shew. Two things there are, that lie at the Bottom of this false Confidence: We think, that our Successes are a plain Indication of the Divine Favour towards us; and that, because we have succeeded hitherto, we shall succeed always, even until our Eye hath seen its Desire upon our Enemies.

May the Event every way answer our Expectation! However, we shall not be e're the less likely to meet with Success, if we do not expect it too Confidently; and therefore

therefore it may be of some use to us to consider, whether, and how far we may from the present prosperous State of our Affairs conclude that *God is with us of a truth*, and will go on still to heap greater Blessings upon us, how little care soever we have taken, or shall take to deserve them.

Military Successes do, above all others, elevate the Minds of a People that are bless'd with them; because the Providence of God is thought to be more immediately concern'd in producing them. Indeed, there are no Events, which do either confess a Divine Interposition so evidently, or deserve it so well, as those of *Battel*: which, as they are of the utmost Consequence, and have sometimes decided, not only the Fate of particular Provinces, or Kingdoms, but the Empire of the whole World; so do they depend often on such remote and seemingly disproportion'd Causes, turn on such little unheeded Accidents, as it is not in the power of the most sagacious and experienc'd among the Sons of Men to prevent, or foresee. War is a direct Appeal to God, for the Decision of some Dispute, which can by no other means be possibly determined:

and, therefore, there is reason to believe that the Issues of it may, in a peculiar manner, be directed, and over-ru'd by Providence: upon which account God is Styl'd so often in Scripture *the Lord of Hosts, the God of the Armies of Israel, the God mighty in Battel*; and he is said there to have sent his Angels, on some Extraordinary Occasions, to fight for his People; and the discomfiture and slaughter of great Hosts is expressly attributed to their unseen assistance.

However, tho' Warlike Successes carry in them often the Evidences of a *Divine Interposition*, yet are they no sure marks of the *Divine Favour*. If they were, the *Goths*, and *Saracens*, and other Savage Nations, which over-ran *Europe*, and *Asia*, would have entitl'd themselves to the Favour of God, by their Bloody and Barbarous Conquests: and even that *most Christian Enemy* with whom we contend, must, on the account of those Inhuman Ravages, which he so long committed, with Equal Injustice and Success, have been accounted the Darling of Providence. No, such Conquerors as these are not the Favourites, but *Scourges* of God, as One of them styl'd himself; the Instruments of that Vengeance which Heaven
hatl

hath determin'd to pour out on such Nations, as have fill'd up the Measure of their Iniquities, and are grown ripe for Excision: and as soon, therefore, as that Sentence is executed, these Rods, these Instruments of Divine Displeasure, are themselves thrown into the Fire. From mere Success, therefore, nothing can be concluded, in favour of any Nation, upon whom it is bestowed. That Point can only be determin'd by considering, Whether the *Cause*, for which they are engag'd, be just, and the *Means* also just, which they employ towards supporting it; but, above all, whether the *Moral Deserts* of a People be such, that their Successes may be look'd upon as the just reward of their Virtues. To the two first of these Advantages we may, I think, fairly lay claim; I wish, we had as good a Title to the latter, and then our Confidence would not be ill grounded.

Our Successes have indeed been the Consequences of a Just and Honourable, nay Necessary War; in which we engag'd, not out of Ambition, Revnge, or any other unjustifiable Motive, but for the Defence of all that was dear to us,

A Fast Sermon Preach'd

in respect either to this World, or another. The Haughty Monarch, whose Heart God at last by our means hath humbled, was grasping at Universal Empire, preparing Chains for the Necks of free States and Princes, and laying Schemes for suppressing the ancient Liberties, and removing the Antient Boundaries of Kingdoms. Nor was he satisfy'd in subduing Men's Bodies, unless he enslav'd their Souls also, and made the pure profession of the Gospel give way to Superstition and Idolatry, wherever he had power enough to expel the one, and establish the other. Nay, he pretended to give Laws even to our Succession here at home, and to impose a Prince upon us, who should execute the designs he had form'd against our Civil and Religious Liberties. It was high time, therefore, to appeal once more to the Decision of the Sword, which, as it was justly drawn by us, so can it scarce safely be sheath'd, till the *Thumbs and great Toes of Adonibezek be cut off*; I mean, till the Power of the great Troubler of our Peace be so far par'd and reduc'd, as that we may be under no Apprehensions of it for the future.

Nor

Nor have the *Means*, which we have made use of to attain this great and good End, been any ways unsuitable to it. A Just and Righteous War may be prosecuted after a very unjust and unrighteous manner; by perfidious Breaches of our Word, by such Treacherous Practices as the Law of Arms it self (loose as it is) condemns; by inhuman Cruelties, by Assassinations; by Tyrannical Methods of forcing Money into our Coffers, and Men into our Service. These are the dishonourable ways, which *He*, who formerly profess'd to fight for *his Glory*, hath not of late disdain'd to make use of. Thanks be to God, that, as we have had no need, so neither doth it appear that we had any Inclination to try them! In every step of this long and Bloody Dispute, we have shew'd our selves fair, nay good natur'd and generous Adversaries; and have carried on even our Hostilities with all the Humanity and Mercy of which they are capable. We have spilt no Blood but in the heat of the Battel, or the Chase; and have made Captivity it self as easie to the unfortunate as was possible. We have been firm and faithful to our Allies, without declining any Difficulties, or Dangers, any Expencc of Blood, or
Treasure

A Fast Sermon Preach'd

Treasure, to which we had engag'd our selves; and we have even exceeded our Engagements. We have not made use of Rapine and Oppression at home, to support the Burthen of the War abroad, but have carried it on by the free Gifts of a Willing People; nor can it be said, that the Publick Service hath been robb'd of any part of those Supplies which were intended for it. We have not pillag'd those Rich Neighbouring Provinces which we rescu'd: Victory it self hath not made us Insolent Masters, or Friends; nor have we taken advantage from thence to enlarge either our Territories, or our Pretensions, or to gain any thing to our selves beyond the Honour of restoring Quiet to the World, and every ones Rights to their Just Owners.

And thus far, therefore we have reason to look upon our Successes, as the Blessings of God upon the good *Methods* we have taken to support a good *Cause*, and as Declarations of Heaven in our Favour. However, they cannot be entirely depended on as such, till we have farther consider'd, whether our Piety and Virtue have born a due proportion to our Successes, and laid the foundation for them: for, unless this be the case, tho' God

God hath blest'd a Righteous Cause, yet he hath not blessed it for the *sake* of those who are concern'd in it; and the Blessings which are not imparted to us for our *own Sake*, can be no Evidences of the Divine Favour towards us.

Let us then lay our Hands upon our Hearts, and impartially enquire, What good Qualities we had to recommend our selves to the Favour of God, at our Entrance on this long War, and how we have behav'd our selves throughout the Course of it.

No sooner was our Deliverance from the illegal Attempts of a late Reign completed, but we forgot our Danger and our Duty; *forsook the God* that had preserv'd us, *and lightly esteem'd the Rock of our Salvation*. That Spirit of Religion and Seriousness, by which we had just before distinguish'd our selves, vanish'd all at once; and a Spirit of Levity and Libertinism, of Infidelity and Profaneness started up in the room of it: Our Churches, that a little while before had been crowded, were now in great measure deserted; our Sacraments, which had been frequented with so much Zeal, were approach'd more sparingly; the Dispensers of holy Things, which, for their Work's sake, had

Deut.
xxxii. 15.

had been so highly regarded and reverenc'd, were made a By-word and a Re-
 i Cor. ix. 13. proach, *as the filth of the World, and the off-
 scouring of all things.* Nor could their
 immortal Labours against Popery, by
 which they had contributed to the com-
 mon Security, as much at least as any other
 Order of Men in the Kingdom, screen them
 from that Contempt, which was then so
 liberally pour'd upon them. In propor-
 tion as our Zeal for Religion decay'd,
 Our Corruptions and Vices increas'd; an
 universal Dissolution of Manners began
 to prevail, a profess'd Disregard to all
 fix'd Principles, whether in Matters Di-
 vine, or Humane.

At the same time we were crumbled in-
 to various Factions, and Parties; all aiming
 at By-interests, without any sincere regard
 for the Publick Good : Odious Names of
 Distinction, which had slept, while the
 Dread of Popery hung over us, were re-
 viv'd; and our private Quarrels were
 carried on against each other with as
 great Bitterness and Malice, as if we had
 now no common Enemy to unite and
 employ us.

With this Temper of Mind we entred
 into the War ; were we alter'd any way
 for the better, during the Course of it ?

Did

Did the Vicissitudes of good and bad Fortune, which we then experienc'd, affect us with due Degrees of Humility, or Thankfulness? Could God prevail with us by all the sorts of Experiments, which he try'd, to forsake our Sins and our Follies? Could he awe us by his Rod, or melt us by his Goodness into Repentance? Alas! instead of that, we wax'd worse and and worse every Day, both as to Religion, and Morals; till we left off even to study the outward Appearances of Piety and Vertue; and were not contented merely *to be*, but affected even to *be thought*, Loose and Lawless. Edicts against Immorality and Profaneness issu'd, Laws against Oaths and Execrations were fram'd; and we trampled both upon the one and the other, with Contempt and Impunity. Whilst a foreign War devour'd our Strength, and drain'd our Treasures, still Luxury and the Expences of Life increas'd at home; nor were they check'd even by our Disgraces and Misfortunes. Our National Humiliations were ridicul'd by impious *Mock-feasts*; wherein the execrable Murther of our Martyr'd Sovereign was annually commemorated with Circumstances of so much Indignity and Scorn, as cannot be spoken of with Decency,

Decency, or reflected on without Horror. *When we wept, on this occasion, and chastened our Souls with Fasting, that was to our Reproach, : They that sat in the Gate, (some even of the Men of Greatness, and Business, and Gravity) spake against us ; and we were the Song of the Drunkards, of vain, idle, dissolute Companions. The House of God it self hath been prophan'd by Riots ; abominable Impurities, not to be mention'd, have been openly and daringly practis'd : We have declared our Sin, as Sodom, and have not hid it. We have talk'd much of reforming Men's Manners ; pray God, we meant it ! If any step of that kind hath been taken, it is only what the Zeal of some private Persons suggested ; the Execution of that glorious Design hath not been put into the Hands of Those, who should be best inclin'd, as they are most concern'd, to promote it.*

Psal. lxiix.
10 12.

Isa. iii. 9.

The Fundamental Articles of our Faith have been oppugn'd from the Press; Mysteries have been derided; the Immortality of the Soul hath been denied; the Christian Priesthood set at naught and vilified; and even the *High Priest of our Profession*, the Blessed *Jesus* himself, treated by

by a Blasphemous Pen * with as much Scorn and Malice, as when he appear'd before the Bar of Pilate. *Hath a Nation so used their Gods, which are yet no Gods †?* or so vilify'd the Persons that belong'd to their Worship and Service?

* See a Passage, in the *Ax laid to the Root of Christianity*, cited from a Book, entitled, *The History of the Growth of Deism.*

† Jer. ii. 11.

Since these are some of the Methods, by which we qualify'd our selves for our Successes, these some of the Returns which we made to God, after obtaining them; can we reasonably presume, that we are in the Favour of God on the Account of them? Can we justly promise our selves, that, because we have succeeded *hitherto*, in spite of all our Sins, and Provocations, we shall Succeed *always*? or rest secure, that the Mercies we have receiv'd, great as they are, were meant only as Earnests and Pledges of still greater, which are to follow?

Thus indeed we seem to think, and thus the present happy Prospect of our Affairs, humanly speaking, may seem to promise. And yet the sudden and surprizing Turns, we our selves have felt, or seen, should not, methinks, suffer us too forwardly to admit such Thoughts;

which may indeed, (if God should be tempted from thence to rebuke our Vanity) contribute to blast the fairest Hopes, but can be of no use towards rendring them effectual. Too great a Confidence in Success is the likeliest way to prevent it; because it hinders us from exerting our Strength to the utmost, and making the best use of the Advantages which we enjoy. It renders us indulgent to our Lusts and Vices, careless of approving and recommending our selves to God by Religious Duties, and, by that means, securing the Continuance of his Goodness to us. It is like the Conceit about Absolute Election to Eternal Life; which some Enthusiasts entertaining, have been thereby made more remiss in the Practice of those Virtues which alone could secure their Title to Heaven.

Let us then lay aside these *vain and sinful Imaginations*, lest the *Consequence* of them should be in *Our* case, what it was in *King David's*; *God did hide his Face, and he was troubled.*

III. This is the *Third* Point, to which I propos'd to speak. But 'tis an unwelcome Task, a Subject which I care not
much

much to insist on; and which, after all, I trust in God, we may not be concern'd in; because it is (I am sure) still in our power to secure to our selves an Interest in the Divine Mercies that are yet to come, and to lengthen the Course of our Present Prosperity; if we do but in good earnest betake our selves to the use of those means which are prescrib'd in the Text, *Humiliation, and Prayer. Then cryed I unto Thee, O Lord, and gat me to my God right humbly.*

IV. These are the *Duties*, which we profess, on this Solemn Day, to perform: If with a true Christian Lowliness of heart, and a devout fervency of Soul we perform them: we shall find, that they will turn to a greater account to us, than all the Warlike Preparations in which we trust, than the Alliances of our Potent Friends, or even the Fears of our Disheartned Enemies; that *they will fight for us better than a mighty Shield, and strong Spear.* If we do, indeed, humble our selves before God, this day, not merely by the Outward Solemnities of a Fast, but by *afflicting our Souls* (as well as Bodies) *for our Sins*; by emptying our Hearts of all those Vain and Swelling

IV.

Ecclus.
xxix. 13.

Thoughts, which Prosperity hath infused into them; by acknowledging our selves unworthy of the least of God's Mercies, at the same time that we enjoy the greatest; by ascribing to *Him* all the Glory of what is past, and by renouncing all reliance on the Arm of Flesh for the future; by deploring the mighty Guilt of our Transgressions, and renewing sincere Vows of Obedience: If, I say, we do in this manner *sanctify* the present *Fast*, if we *seek unto God* thus *betimes*, and make our *Supplication to the Almighty*; surely he will now awake for us, and make the habitation of our Righteousness prosperous; and, tho' our beginning hath not been small, yet our latter End shall greatly increase. No sight is so pleasing to God, no Service is so acceptable to him, as the Publick Humiliations of a thankful People, in the midst of their Successes and Victories. Mighty is the Efficacy of such Solemn Intercessions, even to avert Judgments that are already denounc'd, (as appears from the case of the *Ninevites*): how much more available then must they be, to secure the Continuance of Blessings, and to confirm and establish the Prosperity which God hath already given us?

Job. viii.
6.7.

Lactantius and *St. Austin* are not afraid to confirm by their Suffrage the Observation made by Heathen * *Polybius, Cicero* * Writers *, that the flourishing Estate of the *Roman* Empire was owing to the Religious Disposition of that People; by which they ascrib'd all their Successes to the Heavenly Powers they Worship'd, and still advanc'd in their Regard for Religion, as they advanc'd in Greatness. *Diis Te minorem quòd geris imperas* said a *Roman* to his Country-men, at that point of time, when their Affairs were most prosperous: It was, because they carried themselves with a due Submission to the Gods, that Mankind was made Subject to them. Hath the Revelation of the Gospel of Christ made any Change in the Methods of God's dealing with Kingdoms and Nations? If not --- and the Reverence which these Heathens express'd towards their false Deities, was so highly rewarded, may not We Christians, when we thus offer up our Devotions to the true God, expect also a Blessing upon them? We certainly may; if they come, not from the Lips, but the Heart; from an Heart fill'd with a grateful Sense of Mercies receiv'd, and firmly resolv'd

to

to do every thing in it's Power toward deserving New ones : from an Heart, so affected as good *David's* was (not when he said, *In my Prosperity I shall never be moved*, but) when he had learnt to secure, and increase his Prosperity, by an humble Behaviour towards God, and a dutiful Relyance on his Providence; and did, under these Convictions compose the following Hymn, to be us'd (as it should seem) in the Publick Service of the Church, on some solemn

† Ps. cxxxii. Day of Humiliation. † *Lord* (saith he) *my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I exercise my self in great matters, or in things too high for me.* As mighty things as thou hast done for me, I have not been exalted, either in Heart, or Look, on that account; nor have busied my self in searching out the secret reasons of thy distributing Prosperity and Adversity in such a manner as best pleaseth thee. *Surely I have behaved and quieted my self, as a Child that is weaned of his Mother*; I have imitated the Humble, Modest, and Tractable Temper of the Infant-State; *Yea, my Soul is even as a weaned Child*, it is as resign'd to thy Guidance, as entirely dependent on thy Care and Goodness. Upon which it

very

very naturally follows — *Let Israel* (that is, every *Israelite indeed*, who can thus truly say of himself) *trust in the Lord, from henceforth, and for ever!* for there can be no surer way to Success, than by disclaiming all Confidence in our selves, and referring the Events of things to God with an Implicit Affiance.

Come on then, let as many of us, as have not been Tempted by our Prosperity to entertain vain Thoughts, or are now resolv'd to dismiss them, bow our selves before God, both publickly and privately, imploring the Continuance of his Blessings on that Righteous Cause wherein we are engag'd, and on Those who by their Counsels, Courage, or Conduct uphold and strengthen it; especially on our most Gracious *QUEEN*, whose Exemplary Piety and Virtues are its greatest Ornament and Advantage, it's chief Support and Stay: Who, as She hath had the Successes of *David*, so hath She receiv'd them with the same Religious Humility He did; and hath, by that means, we trust, laid a Foundation for more; which (if our Vices hinder not) He in due time will bestow, *who regardeth the Lowlyneſs of his Handmaiden, but scattereth the Proud in the Imagination*
of

*of their hearts: Who putteth down the
Mighty from their Seat; but hath exalted,
(and will exalt) the Humble and Meek.*

*To him, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be ascrib'd all Dominion and Praise,
Now, and for Evermore. Amen!*

F I N I S.

