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THE

IMPERFECTION

OF THE

CREATURE,

AND THE

EXCELLENCY of the DIVINE

COMMANDMENT;

ILLUSTRATED

In Nine SERMONS on Pſal. CXIX. 96.

By JOHN BARNARD, A. M.
Paſtor of a Church in *Marblehead.*

This I pray, that your Love may abound yet more and more, in Knowledge, and in all Judgment, that ye may approve Things that are excellent; that ye may be ſincere, and without Offence, 'till the Day of CHRIST. Phil. I. 9, 10.

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The Author's Abſence from the Preſs has occaſioned ſome Errors which need correcting, as well as ſome Neglects in pointing which may be born with.

ERRATA.

Page 19. Line 20. for *has*, read *have*. p. 29. *l.* 30. r. *ſuited*. p. 31. *l.* 21. dele, *Affinity*. p. 35. *l.* 17. r. *Mannors*. *l.* 21. after *Variety*, add. *and*, p. 45. *l.* 30. r. *ſuited*. p. 46. *l.* 29. r. *ſuited*. p. 51. *l.* 19. after *Earth*, add, a *Semicolon*. p. 67. *l. ult.* r. *ſitteth*. p. 82. *l.* 23. *f. Will.* r. *Wit*. p. 86. *l.* 22. after *Power*, add a *Semicolon*. p. 87. *l.* 19. after *of*, add, *the*. p. 105. *l.* 12, *f. make*, r. *made*. p. 116. *l.* 27. after *Apoſtles*, add, *a Comma*. p. 133. *l.* 3. *f. theſe*, r. *the*. p. 136. *l.* 4. f. *into*, r. *to*. *l.* 27. r. *ſuited*. p. 144. *l.* 25. at the Beginning, add, 2. *l.* 27. r. *leads* p. 155. *l.* 35. at the Beginning, add, 2. p. 156. *l.* 27. r. *Prediction*. p. 175. *l.* 28. af. *is*. add, *our*. p. 183. *l.* 11. r. *Rule* p. 185. *l.* 8. f. *falſe*. r. *ſafe*. p. 209. *l.* 20. after *in*, add a *Comma*. p. 210. *l.* 1. for *and*, r. *to*. p. 220. *l.* 2. f. *from*, r. *upon*. p. 227. *l.* 24. before *Hence*, add, 7. p. 235. *l.* 34. f. *what*, r. *that*. p. 236. *l.* 4. f. *may*, r. *muſt*.

In the Margin.

P. 5. r. *Gen.* i. p. 7. r. 14. p. 13. r. ii. *Tim.* p. 16. r. *Eccl.* ii. p. 17. r. *Jam.* ii. p. 37. *l.* 2, f. 42. r. 46. p. 58. r. *Job.* xiv. p. 70. r. *Cor.* vi. p. 100. *l.* 2. r. 1 *Theſ.* iv. p. 112. f. 7. r. 8. p. 129. *l.* 2. r. *Joh.* xvii. p. 142. r. *Gal.* vi. 4. p. 147. r. 1. *Joh.* p. 148. *l.* 1. f. 17. r. 27. p. 157. *l.* 1. f. 14. r. 24. p. 213. r. *Rom.* iii. 20.

THE

Imperfection

OF THE

CREATURE.

SERMON I.

PSALM CXIX. 96.

I have seen an End of all Perfection; but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

THIS *Psalm* gives us a fair, and beautiful, Idea of exalted Piety; every *Verse* of it breathes the deepeſt Devotion, and expreſſes, in bright Characters, the *Pſalmiſt*'s high Guſt, and Reliſh for the Divine Law. How deeply is it engraven upon his Heart? while his continual Meditation upon it is ſweet, and his utmoſt Care is to regulate himſelf, in his whole Conduct, by it, as the perfect Rule of Life. How does it dwell upon his Tongue? while he triumphs in

the Praise of it, and recommends it to us, as most worthy of our highest Regards, by the most alluring Arguments, of its own native Excellency, and the blessed Advantages that ever accompany a sincere and hearty Observation of it; and as transcendently illustrious, when compared with the utmost Perfection, and Dignity, the whole Creation can pretend unto.

It is by Way of Comparison, that, in the Words I have read, he raises his own Value, and Esteem of it; and urges it upon us, as challenging our most prevailing Affection, and vigorous Endeavours to conform our selves to the holy Rules of it: *I have seen an End of all Perfection; but Thy Commandment is exceeding broad.* In which Words, there is evidently a Comparison made, between the *Perfection of the Creatures*, or all the Excellency that is to be found upon the Things of this World, and the *Excellency of the Divine Commandment*; and the holy *Psalmist*, who had a just Acquaintance with all that is excellent in the Creature, as being *King in Jeshurun*, and a large Experience of the Sweetness of the Commandment of GOD, as being a Favourite of Heaven, and so a proper Judge in the Case, (besides his being under the Influence of the Divine Spiration) plainly declaring in Favour of the Law of God, and assuring us, that, tho' there is an *End to all the Perfection* that is to be found upon the Creatures, yet the *Commandment of God is exceeding broad*; the Excellency of it far surpasses that of the Creatures, both in Extent, and Duration.

I have seen an End of all Perfection, or I have seen to the End of all the Perfection the whole World can boast of. When I examine the Beauties, and Excellencies, of the Creatures, I need not to travel far, in the Search, before I come to their

their utmoſt Limits, and ſee their culminating Point; they fall within the Compaſs of my Underſtanding, and, at moſt, are to be meaſured by finite Reaſon and View. I have ſeen too, by Experience, that all created Perfection is as finite in its Duration, as limited in its Nature; and however fair, and promiſing, it appear'd to me, while at a Diſtance, yet, when it came within my Reach, and I was ready to flatter my ſelf with a long Series of Happineſs in the Enjoyment of it, I was ſoon convinced of my wild Miſtake, for it winged it ſelf away from me. So the greateſt Luſtre here, not only has its dark Spots, but performs its ſtated, and ſhort, Revolutions, and then ſets in Obſcurity. The Glory of this World is tranſient and fading, and the faireſt Lilly will ſoon wither away. So have I ſeen an *End of all Perfection* in the Creature; all the Things of this World, which Men value and eſteem at ſo high a Rate, their Wiſdom and Knowledge, their Strength and Fortitude, their Beauty and Gaiety, their Wealth and Furniture, their ſhowy Trapings and Marks of Honour, their Greatneſs and Magnificence, the Excellency of it all is limited in its Meaſure, and finite in its Duration.

But, Thy Commandment is exceeding broad. The Excellency, and Perfection, of thy Commandment vaſtly tranſcends, both in Meaſure, and Duration, all that is to be found upon the Creature. This is an unmeaſurable Field; the further I travel in it, the more indeed I ſee of its large Extent; but yet, I am never the nearer to the End of it. Here lies the ſuperior Excellency of thy Commandment, that, view it which Way I will, I ſee it all bright and illuſtrious, without the leaſt Spot to ſhade its Glory; and the more I examine the Beauties of it, the more I behold the Wonders out of thy Law, but

yet there remains an inſcrutable Depth behind, which I am not able to fathom. The higher I climb this ſteep Aſcent, I am the more raiſed above the loftieſt Pinnacle of created Perfection, but the Excellency of thy Commandment maintains a continued Elevation, and is forever above my Reach, and View. So is it, *too broad at Bottom, and at Top too high*, for the utmoſt Stretch of finite Underſtanding.

Beſides, 'tis forever ſettled, and made faſt in Heaven: that, when the Perfection of the Creature ſhall fail, and all it's Excellency periſh, in the Ruins of Time, the Luſtre of thy Law ſhall forever flouriſh, nor ſhall the longeſt Duration be able to corrode it, or duſt it's Glory. Thus *I have ſeen an End of all Perfection; but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.*

Having given this general Diſcant upon the Words, I am now, more particularly, to diſcourſe on the ſeveral Parts of them, under theſe two Doctrines, which are evidently contained in them: viz.

Doc. I. That the Perfection of the Creature is limited, and finite.

Doc. II. That the Commandment of God is exceeding broad.

I ſhall begin with the firſt of theſe Doctrines.

Doc. I. That the Perfection of the Creature is limited, and finite; limited in it's Meaſure, and finite in it's Duration.

In diſcourſing on this Head, I ſhall endeavour to evidence theſe two Things.

I. That the Perfection of the Creature is limited in it's Nature and Meaſure.

II. That the Perfection of the Creature is finite in it's Duration.

I. The

I. The first Thing I have to do is, to shew, that the Perfection of the Creature is limited in it's Nature and Measure. And this will sufficiently appear, if we take a View of the Creature abstractedly, and by it's self, or in it's Relation.

1. Let us take a View of the Creatures, abstractedly, and by themselves, and we shall plainly see an End of all Perfection. For there is nothing, within the Compass of created Nature, so exalted in its Form, and Endowments, as to lay Claim unto the high and honourable Title of Perfection. There is, indeed, a Sort of Perfection belonging unto all the Creatures, namely, a *Perfection of Being*; that is, that they are Creatures of that Rank, and Order, which the great and wise Creator designed them for; so they are perfect in their Kind, and want nothing to render them as compleat, in their Natures, as they were originally intended to be. And therefore when the Infinite Mind surveyed the Works of His Hand, after He had finished the Six Days Creation, He said of them all, (*a.*) *they are very good:* that is, prefect in their Kind; and as they all were made what they were intended for; so they shall all answer the several wise Ends for which they were created, and all conspire to this ultimate End of their Being, the shewing forth of their Maker's Praise. But though the Creatures can boast of this Perfection of Being, or Kind, which agrees to the meanest Insect; as well as to the highest Angel, yet this hinders not, but that we may see to the End of all Perfection upon the Creatures, as to the real Nature, Measure, and Degree thereof. For this Perfection of Being is but improperly called Perfection. Perfection, properly speaking, comprehends in it all possible Excellencies,

(*a.*) *Gen.* 3. 31.

and in the utmoſt poſſible Degree of theſe Excellencies. And there is no Man can imagine, but that the great Creator could, if He had pleaſed, have furniſhed any of His Creatures with ſome Excellencies which they are now deſtitute of, or have endowed them, with thoſe Excellencies they are poſſeſſed of in a higher Degree; though yet it is no Argument that they are not perfect in their Kind, that more, and greater, Excellencies are not conferred upon them, than their Nature required: and to find Fault that the Creatures have not that Perfection which any of them might have had, is to complain of the Creator for His making ſuch a Variety of Creatures, or, indeed, for His making any Creature at all, for the very beſt does and cannot but fall ſhort of Perfection, becauſe it is a Creature. So that we may plainly ſee an End of all Perfection in the Creatures, in that,

1. There are none of the Creatures that can pretend to be poſſeſſed of all poſſible Excellencies. God has furniſhed His ſeveral Creatures with a very great Variety of Excellencies ſuited to their particular Natures, to ſome more, and ſome leſs, but there is none of them all can boaſt, I have all, and can have no more added to me: But, to allude to the *Apoſtle's* Expreſſion, (b) *There are celeſtial Bodies, and Bodies terreſtial; but the Glory of the celeſtial is one, and the Glory of the terreſtial is another: There is one Glory of the Sun, and another Glory of the Moon, and another Glory of the Stars; yea, and one Star differeth from another Star in Glory.* So the alwiſe Creator hath diſtributed to the ſeveral Creatures their various, and particular, Excellencies; and while one prides himſelf in his Beauty, another triumphs in his Strength, and a third glorieth in his Wiſdom and

(b) 1 *Cor.* xv. 40, 41.

Underſtanding;

Understanding; but none of them can say, I am possessed of all Excellencies, and need no more to attain unto compleat Perfection. The most penetrating Eye cannot say to the active Hand, I have no Need of thee; nor the exalted Head to the depressed Feet, I have no Need of you. There may be some Excellencies, in the lower Order of Beings, which, perhaps, the higher are without; and there are other Excellencies which are altogether incompatible unto any mere Creature, even the highest; such are the incommunicable Perfections of the supream Deity, whose Prerogative alone it is, to say, *I am that I am.* (c) Besides,

2. There is no Excellency possess'd by any of the Creatures in the utmost possible Degree of that Excellency. There are not only several Excellencies, which are peculiar to this or that Creature, which others are destitute of, but even those, among the Creatures, which have the largest Share in the Divine Bounty, yet are not Owners of any one Excellency, no not that which they most glory in, in its proper Perfection. For where there is proper Perfection, there is an Infinity of that Excellency, and there cannot be any possible higher Degrees of it. But if the particular Excellency, any Creature is possessed of, will admit any further, or higher, Degrees of the same to be yet added to it, 'tis then very evident, that that Excellency is not possessed in its utmost Fulness, and that therefore it wants of proper Perfection: And to suppose, that any one Creature, even the brightest among all the Sons of the Morning, should be Owner of any one Excellency, in the utmost possible Degree thereof, is to suppose that Creature to be equal with GOD; than

(c) *Exod.* iii. 24.

which what can imply a greater Contradiction? The Diſtance between Finite, and Infinite, is too great to admit of any Gradation, ſo that there is no paſſing from the one to the other: 'Tis utterly impoſſible, that a Creature, which is, by the Law of his make, of the lower Order of Being, ſhould ever riſe to the higheſt, as he muſt do to be inveſted with any one Excellency in a proper Infinitude; becauſe it can never ceaſe to be a Creature; as it neceſſarily muſt do to be Infinite. Where there is true Perfection, there is all; all in Kind, and all in Degree, and This is no where to be found but in the great Creator, who is *all Perfect*, to whom nothing can be added, nor from whom any Thing ſubſtracted, in whom is every real Excellency, and in the moſt tranſcendent Meaſure, and Degree, beyond all that we can ſpeak, or think of. All the Excellencies of the Creatures are derived from GOD, the immenſe Fountain of Perfection, the *Father of Lights from whom comes every good and perfect Gift*; and the Streams, which any of the Creatures partake of, neceſſarily fall ſhort of, and are, in Degree, below, that Fulneſs which is in the Fountain, that conſtantly ſupplies them, where all Excellencies centre, and are in their higheſt Exaltation. Therefore GOD juſtly challenges His People, in that Strain, of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, (d) *To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal; and compare me, that we may be like?* To which I might add,

3. That the higheſt Degree of Perfection in the Creature may be ſcanned, examined, and compaſſed, by an intelligent finite Mind. Though we may not be able to underſtand all the Excellencies that are in ſome of the Creatures, yet this

(d) *Iſa.* xlvi. 5.

may

may be, not the Want of Capacity in us to comprehend them, but, the Want of their lying open to our Search and Enquiry. There are Intelligences, of a higher Order than our ſelves, that excel in Wiſdom and Knowledge, who may have a juſt Underſtanding of their own Excellencies, and of the Creatures below them. Yea, we our ſelves are able to conceive of much greater Excellencies, greater Degrees of Perfection, than are to be found upon any of the Creatures; as the infinite Perfections of GOD. So that a finite and bounded Capacity may reach to the utmoſt Extent of created Excellency; which ſhews that the Perfection of the Creature is limited as to its Nature, Meaſure, and Degree, if we conſider it abſtractedly, and by it ſelf. And now,

2. Let us take a View of the Creature in its Relation, and we ſhall plainly ſee an End of all Perfection. The Excellencies of the Creatures will ſhine in their greateſt Luſtre, if we conſider them, in their Relation to one another; becauſe there is an exact Symmetry, and Proportion, in the ſeveral Parts of the Creation, and the Excellency, each Part is endowed with, exactly correſponds to that Symmetry, and is wonderfully adapted to ſecure the Order, and promote the common Good, of the whole by a relative Serviceableneſs of one Thing unto another. So that we might well cry out, with the Pſalmiſt, † *O Lord, how manifold are thy Works; in Wiſdom haſt thou made them all!* My Buſineſs here is not to Philoſophiſe, and therefore I ſhall forbear ſuch a Diſcourſe upon the Relation, Dependance, and Uſefulneſs, of the ſeveral Parts of the Creation, to one another, as my Subject would naturally enough lead me to, and confine my Thoughts to the Aſpect which the

† *Pſalm* civ. 24.

Creature

Creature has, in its Relation to Man, the moſt noble of the viſible Creation; and conſequently, in its Relation to whom, its Excellencies will ſhine with the brighteſt Rays.

Now, There are two Rules by which we may examine the Perfection of the Creature, in its Relation to us, which ſeem to me to be determinative in the Caſe, viz. as it is perfective of our Nature, or compleative of our Happineſs: And if, upon Examination, we find the Nature, Meaſure, and Degree of Excellency in the Creature, fall ſhort of coming up to theſe Rules, it will be a plain Conviction to us, that *there is an End of all Perfection.*

I. Firſt then; Let us examine whether the Creature is perfective of our Nature. And in Order to paſs a true Judgment, it will be neceſſary, firſt, to ſay wherein the Perfection of our Nature lies; for if we are not determined in this, we ſhall in vain enquire, how far the Creature is able to anſwer this End.

Now I take it that the Perfection of our Nature conſiſts in its moral Rectitude, or the Harmony of the Soul, in the Actings of all its Powers, in Subordination to right Reaſon, and pure and undefiled Religion: Becauſe then only do we act like our ſelves, and preſerve the Dignity, and End, of our Make, when right Reaſon preſides, and has the full Government of us, in all the inward Operations of the Mind, as well as the outward Actions of the Body, ſo as to preſerve us from the Tumult of the Paſſions, and Uſurpation of the Senſes, and to direct all that we do to the ultimate End of ſerving and glorifying our Maker, and ſupream Lord. And however any, ſunk under the Power of a depraved Mind, and the Government of their Senſes, may be ready to imagine, that

that the Perfection of their Nature consisteth in the Health, and Strength, of their Bodies, and the full Enjoyment of their sensual Gratifications, yet a little Observation will convince them, that there may be all of this, while they enjoy only the Perfection of the Brute, and not of the Man. For certainly, the Perfection of the humane Nature must lie, in its Likeness unto GOD, who is all perfect. The moral Perfections of the Deity are the truest Glory of the divine Nature. *GOD is glorious in Holiness. (e)* The nearer we resemble GOD herein, the nearer we arrive unto true Perfection, being *perfect as our Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect. (f)*

Now we find, to our Sorrow, if we take a serious View of ourselves, that, as we come into this World, and walk according to the Course of it, there is a perpetual Jarr and Discord in our Souls, the Actings of our Understanding, and Will, often interfere, and our Passions clash among themselves, and the Senses ride in State, so that there is nothing but Irregularity and Disorder in us; and as the Heighth of this Mischief upon us, to *do Good we have no Knowledge, while to do Evil is present with us: (g)* So true is what the inspired Prophet tells us, *(h) The whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart is faint; from the Sole of the Foot, even unto the Head, there is no Soundness, but Wounds, and Bruises, and putrifying Sores.* That is, the humane Nature is vitiated by Sin, so that *there is not a just Man upon Earth that doth Good and sinneth not*; and *if we say we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us*; as the sacred Oracles teach us. Doubtless, this is the Weakness, and Imperfection of our Nature; not

(e) Exod. xv. 11. *(f) Matth.* v. 48. *(g) Jer.* iv. 22. *Rom.* vii. 21. *(h) Isa.* i. 5, 6.

what

what we received from our Maker, but what we have contracted to our ſelves, by our Apoſtacy from Him; and therefore the Perfection of our Nature conſiſteth, in having all theſe Maladies cured, theſe Wounds healed, theſe Diſorders rectified, and in having the Soul brought into ſuch a Conſtitution, and Temper, as to be able to act by the Rules of right Reaſon, and live up to the Heighth of its noble Endowments, in a religious glorifying of its Maker, and ſerving its Fellow-Creatures: That is to ſay, in being *renewed in the Spirit of our Mind, and having on the new Man, which, after GOD, is created in Righteouſneſs, and true Holineſs.* (*i*)

Now, if we conſult the whole Circle of created Beings, and examine the higheſt Advantages they are capable, of themſelves, of affording us, upon this Account, in their neareſt Relation to us, we ſhall find, that they are not, nor can they be, thus perfective of our Nature. If it were in their Power to anſwer this great and noble End, it would be either in the Knowledge of them, or the Enjoyment of them, or the Improvement of them; but in all of theſe they are greatly defective, and leave us as they find us. Let us view over theſe Particulars.

1. The Creatures are not perfective of our Nature in the Knowledge of them. It is true, when we conſider Man only as rational, or capable of underſtanding, the more advanced any are in Knowledge, the truer Inſight they may have into the Nature of Things, the better Acquaintance they gain with the Reaſon of the Connexion, Dependance, and Operation, of Cauſes, and Effects, and the further Diſcoveries they make into the *Arcana* of Nature, they are ſo much the more

(*i*) *Eph.* iv. 23, 24.

raiſed

raiſed above the Level of thoſe meaner Souls, who know, ſcarce, nothing, but that they are. This enlarged Knowledge may brighten a Man, enoble his Mind, and ſet him above his Neighbours, as being furniſhed with what is really a very great Excellency, too high for them to attain unto; but yet all the Knowledge, in Nature, any Man can attain unto, will leave him at as great a Diſtance from moral Rectitude, as the Devils themſelves are.

The brighteſt Character of our perfected Nature is Religion; and the Knowledge which is ſerviceable to that End is, the *Knowledge of the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST, whom He hath ſent (k)*; that is a ſpiritual Wiſdom, and Underſtanding, in the Myſteries of GOD, and our holy Religion, which is ever productive of a renewed Mind, and a vertuous and religious Converſation, and is therefore called a being *wiſe unto Salvation. (l)* Now if the bare Knowledge of the Creatures had this good Effect upon the Minds of Men, we might rationally expect to find, that thoſe who are of the acuteſt Judgment, the cleareſt Reaſoning, the politeſt Learning, and have the greateſt Acquaintance with the Myſteries of Nature, and Art, ſhould always be Men of the greateſt Religion, the deepeſt Devotion, and the pureſt Morals. Theſe certainly, if any, ſhould be the Men, who are the moſt God-like in their Temper, and Behaviour, who have the Divine Image ſtamped upon them, in whom old Things are done away, and all Things are become new: Theſe, of all Mankind, ſhould be the Men of the greateſt Vertue, and Probity; who have the beſt Government of their Appetites and Paſſions, and moſt ſteadily preſerve a Decorum in all their Actions;

(k) John xvii. 3. *(l)* 1 *Tim.* iii. 15.

who

who are leaſt offenſive to their Maker, and injurious to their Neighbours; who are moſt conſtant, and regular, in their Acknowledgments to the ſupream Being, and their Beneficence to Man. But, alas! we often ſee the very Reverſe of all this! Daily Experience convinces us, that the moſt advanced Knowledge in the hidden Things of Nature, and of Art, does not correct the Exceſſes, and inordinate Appetites, of a depraved Mind; but the wiſeſt of Men, for worldly Wiſdom, are often the greateſt Fools, with Reſpect to that Wiſdom that is from above, and are utter Strangers to a Life of true Religion. Thus the *Apoſtle* minds us, (*m*) that *not many wiſe Men, after the Fleſh, are called.*

There have, indeed, through the ſovereign Grace of GOD, been ſome of the great, and wiſe, and learned, Men, of the World, effectually called off from their Subjection, and Slavery, to vile Luſts, as well as from heatheniſh Idolatry, to the Knowledge, Love, and Service of the only true GOD, and His Son JESUS CHRIST; but there have not been many ſuch. The Men of the greateſt Knowledge, and Learning, have generally been too haughty, and opinionated of themſelves, and fond of their own Parts, to ſubmit their Underſtandings to the Government of Divine Revelation, and credit thoſe Doctrines which they looked upon as no better than Fooliſhneſs, becauſe they could not underſtand the Myſteries contained in them; and too ſtubborn to comply with thoſe holy Rules which interfered with their gratifying their carnal Appetites, and purſuing their ſecular Intereſts. More generally, they have been Men of lower Parts, and Attainments, who have applied themſelves leſs to Speculations, and more to Practice,

(*m*) 1 *Cor.* i. 26.

that

that have received the Dictates of Divine Wisdom, and corrected the Disorders of their Nature, by a conscientious Regard to the holy Rules of the Gospel. Our blessed Saviour therefore said, (*n*) *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven, and Earth, because thou hast hid these Things from the wise, and prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes.* The greatest Masters of Reason, in our *Saviour*'s, and the *Apostle*'s Days, as the Scribes, and Pharisees, among the *Jews*, and the learned Philosophers, among the *Gentiles*, were the greatest Enemies to this Perfection of our Nature, and the most violent Opposers of that Divine Philosophy, those heavenly Doctrines, which the Son of GOD came to instruct the World in: And it were well if there were not too many such in our Days also.

This is the Argument the royal Preacher pursues. He lays this down as the Sum of the Matter, (*o*) *Fear GOD, and keep His Commandments, for this is the whole of Man:* And having examined how far Wisdom, and Knowledge, that which is natural and humane, would conduce to this high and noble End, he found, upon Trial, that it all fell vastly short, and therefore inscribes Vanity upon it. *I gave my self*, says he, (*p*) *to seek, and to search out, by Wisdom, concerning all Things that are done under Heaven;—I have seen all the Works that are done under the Sun, and behold all is Vanity.* So again, (*q*) *I applied mine Heart to know and search, and to seek out, Wisdom, and the Reason of Things;—and lo, this only have I found, that GOD made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions.* This Knowledge, and Wisdom, has been abused by them, and instead of purifying their Hearts, and rectifying their Lives, and per-

(*n*) *Matth.* xi. 25. (*o*) *Eccl.* xii. 13. (*p*) *Eccl.* i. 13, 14. (*q*) *Ch.* vii. 25, 29.

fecting

fecting their Natures, it has been misimproved, by them, to the nourishing of their Lusts, to Profaneness, and Contempt of GOD, and Religion, to insult, and oppress their Fellow Creature; and thus GOD has been the more dishonoured, and humane Society the greater Sufferers, by them. So that the Knowledge of the Creature is not perfective of our Nature:

2. Nor are the Creatures perfective of our Nature in the Enjoyment of them. This also *Solomon*, (than whom no Man had greater Opportunities to know,) assures us, from his own Experience, (r) *I gathered me*, says he, *Silver and Gold, and the peculiar Treasure of Kings, and of the Provinces; I gat me Men Singers, and Women Singers, and the Delights of the Sons of Men, as musical Instruments, and that of all Sorts; so I was great, and increased more than all that were before me, in Jerusalem;—and whatsoever mine Eyes desired, I kept not back from them; I withheld not my Heart from any Joy: for my Heart rejoiced in all my Labour;—then I looked on all the Works that my Hands had wrought, and on the Labour that I had laboured*, [that is, to see what was the Produce of it all, what Influence it had upon my fearing GOD, and keeping of His Commandments,] *and behold all was Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit, and there was no Profit under the Sun.* That is, I plainly saw, it had no Tendency to rectify the Vitiosity of my depraved Nature.

And, accordingly, we see, that Men of the greatest worldly Possessions, surrounded with the Affluence of earthly good Things, who have more than Heart could wish for, are not, ordinarily, the meek, and humble, the temperate,

(r) *Eccl.* xi. 8, 11.

and

and ſober, the truly vertuous and religious Perſons. Did the Enjoyment of the Creature perfect our Nature, then the more a Man poſſeſſed, the more regular would he be, in the Actings of his Mind, and in his outward Behaviour; and none but the worldly Poor would be the Servants of Luſt and Paſſions. Were Men to excell in Vertue, and Holineſs, proportionable to the Difference of their Temporal Accomodations, what mighty Heroes ſhould we ſee? what angelic Creatures ſhould we converſe with? Whereas, though the wealthy and great may affect, what is called a more genteel, and polite Carriage, and, in their general Conduct, be leſs rough, and boiſterous, yet we may eaſily obſerve, that they are, many of them, never the leſs under the Dominion of various Luſts, and Paſſions, and ordinarily give a greater Scope to them, though with more of Caution, than other mean Men. Hence the Apoſtle *James* ſays, (*s*) *Do not rich Men oppreſs you, and draw you before the Judgment Seat? Do not they blaſpheme that worthy Name, by the which ye are called?* What is there more common, than to ſee thoſe that are increaſed in Goods, living in Contempt, and Defiance, of that GOD who beſtoweth all upon them; and grievouſly oppreſſing their poor Neighbour, with burdenſome, needleſs, and often unjuſt Law Suits; by hard Uſage, and cruel Gripings, in their Dealings with him; by Delays of Payment, when they have it by them, and making him to dance Attendance as much almoſt as his Debt is worth, and at laſt putting him off with near a Third leſs than his Dues, by an exorbitant Demand upon their Goods beyond what they could have been purchaſed with

(*s*) *James* xi. 6, 7.

his Money; and all this while the rich Man wipes his Mouth, and cries I am Innocent, and do no Harm, I must live by my Business, and make the best of my Wares: thus his Abundance but encreases his Thirst, blinds his Eyes, and deludes his Judgment, and leads him into some of the most enormous Crimes. Yea, *I saw under the Sun, the Place of Judgment, that Wickedness was there; and the Place of Righteousness, that Iniquity was there*, said the *Preacher* *. Thus their worldly Enjoyments do but make many to become devouring Wolves to their more innocent Neighbours, instead of subduing their various Lusts and Passions: the Multiplicity of their Possessions increases their Appetites, and, when these are uppermost, no Wonder Reason and Religion, are trampled on.

Worldly Possessions have no Tendency to make a Man truly vertuous, and give him the Mastery over himself: and, indeed, how should they? When the Enjoyments of this World are so peculiarly adapted to the carnal and sensual Part of the Man, and have no Affinity with a spiritual and immortal Soul, and so can have no natural Influence to bring that unto Perfection, by rectifying it's Disorders, and pruducing in it the highest Acts of Reason, and Religion; but rather the directly contrary Tendency, to keep the Soul in it's imperfect State, and under the Power of it's natural Depravity, by blinding the Eyes, biasing the Will, and pre engaging of the Affections, with the Glitter of Riches, and Honour, Grandeur, and Magnificence, and the like.

For, besides the present Union of the Soul to the Body, and consequently the Communication from the Senses to the intellectual Powers, by which Means the Soul becomes affected with what

* *Eccl.* iii. 16.

affects

affects the Body, that is to say, is pleased, or pained, as Things are agreeable, or disagreeable, unto the Body, and so is inclined to will, and embrace, what is pleasurable, and reject, and fly from, what is painful to the Senses; I say, besides this, the natural Depravity which the Soul labours under, has sunk it so much below its original Dignity, that instead of its being the Guide and Director of our Senses, and wise Governor of our Appetites, it is fallen under the Power and Dominion of them, and its Volition and Choice is now governed, by the greedy Desires of Sense, and her mean and low Joys arises only from sensual Gratifications: Thus the Mind is become *carnal, fleshly*, subject to *fleshly Lusts*, and *minding the Things of the Flesh*. And hence the Enjoyment of the Creature, which so exactly corresponds with our vitiated Appetites, instead of exalting the Soul, by freeing it from the superior Influence the Senses has over it, and restoring it to its primitive Rectitude, and Dominion, does but so much the more debase it, and enslave it to the Delights of the animal Life: For these Enjoyments, affording such Delight and Pleasure to the animal Spirits, please the vitiated Soul also, and hence urges her upon breaking through all the Boundaries of Reason, and Religion, rather than go without them.

A Sense of this made *Agur* put up that Petition, (*t*) *Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the LORD? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the Name of my GOD in vain.* And hence 'tis, that the Apostle says, (*u*) *They that will be rich, fall into Temptation, and a Snare, and many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition.* Thus much also our blessed Saviour hath taught

(*t*) *Prov.* xxx. 8, 9. (*u*) 1 *Tim.* vi. 9.

us, when He ſaid, (*w*) *Verily, a rich Man ſhall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Which, at leaſt, ſuppoſes thus much, that their Riches, and Abundance, is ſo far from promoting their real Vertue, that they rather tend greatly to hinder it; and ſo render it the more difficult, for thoſe that enjoy them, to withſtand their Temptations, and get ſafe to Heaven at laſt.

So that we ſee, that neither the Knowledge, nor the Enjoyment of the Creature, is, of its ſelf, perfective of our Nature.

3. Nor will the higheſt Improvement, we can, of our ſelves, make of the Creature, have this bleſſed Effect upon us, the Perfection of our Nature. This is the laſt Reſult, and here we may ſee the utmoſt Advantage the Creatures can be unto us, in the Improvement which may be made of them.

And now, if upon Examination, the Creatures are not found to be perfective of our Nature, by the higheſt Improvement we can make of them, we may then juſtly write upon them all, *I have ſeen an End of all Perfection*; and yet, alas, here they all fail us!

For, ſuppoſe a Man to make the greateſt Advantage of the Creatures, that he poſſibly can; 'tis evident, that his Eating, and Drinking, of the moſt delicious, and in the greateſt Abundance, his moſt gorgeous Apparel, and ſumptuous Buildings, and the moſt eager Purſuit of his Sports, and Paſtimes, and the utmoſt Indulgence of the Pleaſures of Senſe, have not the leaſt Look towards the refining, and perfecting of his Nature. Suppoſe him then, to think ſoberly, and make Uſe of the Creatures as Topicks, and Heads of Argument, for the Confirmation of the Truth of

(*w*) *Matth.* xix. 23.

our

our holy Religion, which I think is the higheſt Improvement the Man, in the Exerciſe of his Reaſon only, can make of them; yet, will this change his Heart? Will this bring him to a proper religious Acknowledgment of GOD? or ſtamp the Divine Image upon him? Certainly, it will not. Even this noble Advantage the Creatures are improvable unto, has nothing of a truly religious Aſpect, in the natural Man, but only tends to the Advancement of his ſpeculative Knowledge; and 'tis much, if, at the ſame Time, it does not the more nouriſh his Pride and Haughtineſs, which will but throw him at a greater Diſtance from GOD, and Goodneſs.

For, what Improvement can unſanctified Nature make of any Thing, but what is agreeable unto its ſelf, and ſerves to promote its ſenſual Gratifications? And this is ſo far from curing the Irregularities of the lapſed Soul, that, as I have already ſhewed, it does but ſo much the more debaſe, and pollute it. It will be but *a Proviſion for the Fleſh, to fulfil the Luſts thereof.* Hence the Apoſtle gives this as a Reaſon, why carnal Minds receive not the Things they pray for, *(x) Ye aſk, and receive not, becauſe ye aſk amiſs, that ye may conſume it upon your Luſts.* The feeding, and nouriſhing of his Luſts, are the great Ends, the carnal Man, who walks after the Fleſh, aims at, in all that he does; and therefore the promoting of theſe Ends is the utmoſt Advantage he can improve any Thing for.

Though a ſanctify'd Heart receives his Enjoyments, as the Bounty of his heavenly Father unto him, is thankful for them, and endeavours to improve them to the Honour of his gracious Benefactor; yet, one under the Power of his original

(x) Jam. iv. 3.

Apoſtacy has no ſuch vertuous, and holy Principles in him, no ſuch high and noble Ends to aim at; and therefore, inſtead of ſacrificing to the living JEHOVAH, we can expect no other from him, than that he ſhould take *his Corn, and Wine, and Oil, and Silver, and Gold, and burn Incenſe unto Baal* therewith, as GOD complains His People of old did. *(y)* And the more his Enjoyments are, we may reaſonably fear a more exalted Degree of Wickedneſs, unleſs the common reſtraining Grace of GOD prevent it; becauſe he will now have the fairer Opportunity in his Hands, and the ſtronger Enticements, to comply with his carnal Deſires, and follow after his Luſts with Greedineſs.

There is nothing in the Creature that has any natural Tendency to recover us from our lapſed Condition, and therefore it is not improvable by us, from any Vertue in it ſelf, or any Power in us, to this glorious End. And though GOD, by His Almighty Power, and the Operation of His Divine Spirit, may make Uſe of any Creature, as Means, to recover us to a holy and religious Converſation, and improve His Embaſſadors, as Inſtruments, in the converting of a Sinner from the Error of his Ways, and award unto them a proportionable Crown of Glory for their Serviceableneſs therein, yet the unconverted Soul has no Power and Ability, of himſelf, to make this good Improvement even of them.

In ſhort; it is a ſupernatural Work of Grace, wrought in the Soul, by the Almighty Power of GOD Himſelf, that alone is ſufficient to *quicken us, who by Nature are dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*, to recover the Soul from the Confuſions our Apoſtacy has brought upon it, and reſtore our vitiated Minds to

(y) Hoſ. ii. 8.

their

their original Perfection; and it is not in the Power of all created Nature, improved by finite Skill, and Strength, to the utmoſt Advantage, to accompliſh this glorious Work, becauſe it is ſupernatural. Nay, if we could converſe with Angels, and had the ſame Opportunity of making Advantages from them, that we have of good and holy Men, among whom we dwell, we ſhould find that, though they have Vertue enough for themſelves, yet they have none to ſpare to us, and therefore, in vain ſhould we expect any from them, nor could they be ſo much as inſtrumental to work this Change in us, without the Co-operation of GOD, *whoſe Workmanſhip we are, created, in CHRIST JESUS, unto good Works.* (z) And if our beſt Improvement of the pure and holy Spirits, would not perfect our Nature, much leſs, I am ſure, would any Thing in the viſible Creation, be able to reſtore us to a Participation of the Divine Nature, and bring us to live the Divine Life, in our Conformity to the Holineſs and Purity, the Righteouſneſs, Mercy, and Truth of GOD; becauſe this beautiful and glorious Image, is not any Ways inherent in, or neceſſarily connected to, any of them, as an eſſential Property of their Nature, nor indeed is any Ways applicable to the moſt of them; and they cannot be ſuppoſed to produce an Effect, ſo infinitely more noble and glorious, than any Thing they have in themſelves.

Thus we *ſee an End of all Perfection*, in the Creatures, in that they are not, nor can they be, of themſelves, perfective of our Nature, neither in the Knowledge, the Enjoyment, nor the Improvement of them.

(z) *Eph.* ii. 10.

SERMON II.

PSALM CXIX. 96.

I have seen an End of all Perfection; but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

I Have obſerved theſe two doctrinal Truths, as plainly contained in thoſe Words of the royal Pſalmiſt which I have read; *viz.*

Doc. I. The Perfection of the Creature is limited and finite.

Doc. II. The Commandment of GOD is exceeding broad.

I entered upon the Conſideration of the firſt of theſe the laſt Opportunity, namely,

Doc. I. The Perfection of the Creature is limited and finite.

In diſcourſing upon this Subject, I propoſed to evidence theſe two Things:

I. The Perfection of the Creature is limited in its Nature, and Meaſure. And

II. The Perfection of the Creature is finite in its Duration. I have already offered ſomething to the firſt of theſe Heads, and ſhewed you, that

1. Upon

1. Upon a more abſtracted View of the Creature, we ſhall evidently ſee its Perfection limited; foraſmuch as there are none of the Creatures that can pretend to the Poſſeſſion of all poſſible Excellencies, nor of any one Excellency in the utmoſt poſſible Degree thereof, but the higheſt Degree of their Perfection falls within the Compaſs of a finite Mind. I have alſo entred upon the Conſideration of the Creature,

2. In its Relation, more eſpecially to Man: and to evidence the Imperfection of it, I propoſed theſe two Arguments, as clear Proofs of it, *viz.* That it cannot be perfective of our Nature; neither is it compleative of our Happineſs. I have ſhewed,

I. The Creature is not perfective of our Nature: And that neither in the Knowledge of it, the Enjoyment of it, nor in the beſt Improvement we can make of it. I now proceed to conſider the Force of the ſecond Argument, *viz.*

II. The Creature cannot be compleative of our Happineſs. Theſe are the two Rules, by which, I ſaid, we are to examine and try the Perfection of the Creature, in its Relation to us, *viz.* As it is perfective of our Nature, and compleative of our Happineſs; for nothing can be truly and fully perfect, reſpecting us, but what is able to anſwer both theſe great Ends. I have examined the Excellency of the Creature, by the firſt of theſe Rules, and it is found wanting; we plainly ſee that it is too mean, and low, to reſtore us to our primitive Integrity, Uprightneſs, and Perfection; and this affords us full Conviction, that, ſo far, the Perfection of the Creature is limited in its Nature and Meaſure.

I am now to examine the Excellencies of the Creature, by the ſecond Rule, and ſee whether it will

will compleat our Happineſs; and if it fail in this alſo, we may be ſure that *there is an End of all Perfection.*

Now, beſides the Conſideration that our Happineſs cannot be compleat, while as yet our Nature is not perfected; becauſe there will be ſomething, wanting, in our very Temper, and Diſpoſition, to give us the true Guſt, and Reliſh, of Happineſs; and ſomething, inwrought into our Temper, that would render us unhappy; I ſay, beſides this, it muſt be remembred, that our Happineſs lieth, in the true, and full Enjoyment of a Good, foreign to us, that is every Way exactly proportionable to us.

For the very Make, and State, of the humane Nature neceſſitates it, that a Man look around him for ſome foreign Aid, in the Enjoyment whereof he may be happy. If we examine the Make and Conſtitution of the humane Nature, we ſhall plainly ſee, that, with Reſpect to both its conſtituent Parts, Soul, and Body, Man is a dependant Creature, which derived his Being from another, and is beholden to ſomething out of himſelf for his Powers, and Capacities, his Support, and Comfort; and his Happineſs can no more ariſe from himſelf than his Being could: So that, ſeeing he is not ſelf-ſufficient, let his Felicity conſiſt in what it will, it muſt neceſſarily originate from ſome other Cauſe than himſelf. This was the Caſe even of innocent Man, in Paradiſe, who, though his Powers were much more bright and healthy, than any of his natural Deſcendents, yet, was a Creature that derived his Being from another, and was ſubordinate to, and wholly dependent upon, that Cauſe from whence he received his Being; and conſequently all the true Happineſs he could expect, or graſp, muſt be derivative. But if we take a View of Man's preſent

preſent State, ſince the Fall, it will appear, in the cleareſt Light, that we are inſufficient for our own Happineſs, and are beholden to another for it, if ever we attain thereto; becauſe our preſent State is evidently a State of very great Weakneſſes, and Deficiencies, and that both of Body, and Mind. So that nothing can be more evident, than, that a Man muſt ſeek abroad, and look around him, for ſome Object, in the Poſſeſſion whereof, to delight himſelf, and be truly happy. It is the Prerogative of GOD alone to be ſelf-ſufficient; and 'till any Man can boaſt of equal eſſential Excellencies, Perfections, and Glories, with thoſe of the ſelf-exiſtent, independent Deity, he will remain in a State of Dependance, Craving, and Want, and need ſomething, out of himſelf, and foreign to him, to compleat his real Happineſs.

Now, this foreign Good, which is ſufficient to render a rational, and immortal Creature happy, muſt neceſſarily be, every Way, proportioned to us; becauſe no Object can have any, the leaſt, Tendency to advance our Happineſs, any farther than as it is agreeable to us, in one Reſpect, or other; and that which pretends to render us compleatly happy, muſt be every Way exactly agreable, without the leaſt Deficiency in its Correſpondency to us; otherwiſe the Diſagreement between Us, and That, will everlaſtingly cramp all the Happineſs which elſe might ariſe therefrom, and give us a painful Uneaſineſs. For what is Miſery? but ſomething or other diſagreeable to us; and the Degrees of Miſery, are more, or leſs, proportionable to the Diſagreement of the Object to us. But then, upon Suppoſition of a Good proportionable to us, it muſt be truly, and fully enjoyed by us, or there cannot poſſibly be any Happineſs derived from it, to us. For if the greateſt Good

Good is not applied to us, how can we receive any Benefit from it? The moſt Miſerable may know that there is ſuch a Thing as compleat Happineſs, and in what it conſiſteth, and yet, without a ſutable Application of it unto themſelves, that is, without their Enjoyment of it, be nevertheleſs miſerable; yea, their Knowledge of it will be ſo far from abating their Miſery, as that it will but ſo much the more encreaſe it upon them. Our bleſſed Saviour therefore acquaints us, that it will be a very great Addition to the Miſery of the Wicked, that they ſhall be able to diſcern ſomething of the Happineſs of the Righteous, which they themſelves ſhall have no Part and Share in; ſaying, (in *Luke*'s Goſpel,) *There ſhall be weeping, and gnaſhing of Teeth, when ye ſhall ſee Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, in the Kingdom of GOD, and you yourſelves thruſt out.*† If therefore the Creature fail in both, or either, of theſe Reſpects, it can never compleat our Happineſs. This then is what I have to do, to ſhew, that the Creature is neither a proportionable Good, nor truly enjoyed by us, and therefore cannot compleat our Happineſs.

1. The Creature is not a proportionable Good, and therefore cannot compleat our Happineſs. In order to a Good's being proportionable to us, it muſt exactly correſpond with our Nature, be ſuited to our various Wants, and Deſires, and be durable, or continue as long as we ſhall have any Being, or Occaſion for it; for if it fail in any of theſe Regards, if it ſhould be jarring with our Nature, or unable to ſatisfy us, or to continue with us, it is very certain, that then it holds no Proportion with us, and therefore can be no ſure Foundation for our Happineſs; and yet in all theſe Regards

† *Luke* xiii. 28.

the

the Creature is disproportionable to us. As, briefly to hint,

1. The Creature is not proportionable to our Nature. For the humane Nature is not entirely made up of Flesh and Sense, but has a spiritual and immortal Part essentially belonging to it, which is more excellent than our Bodies, and greatly to be preferred before them. Our Thinking, our Reasoning, and our Reflection, besides our Capacity for compleat Happiness, and our Desires after it, are evident Proofs, that our Nature consists of, what we call Spirit, as well as Body. For mere Matter, according to all its known Properties, and the Laws of Motion, will never be able to produce one Thought, so that That Part of us, which thinketh, is very different from our Bodies, having none of the same Properties belonging to it, and therefore is Immaterial, or Spirit. And accordingly we find the Apostle *Paul* distributes the Nature of Man into *Spirit*, *Soul*, *and Body*. *(a)* The *Body* is the gross Substance, made up of Flesh, and Blood, and Bones, and is the Object of Sense; the *Soul*, I take it, means the animal Life, with its vegetative, nutritive, and procreative Powers; and by the *Spirit* is intended the proper immaterial Substance, the intellectual Mind, that spiritual and immortal Part, which we generally call the Soul.

Now, though the Creature may be, in a very great Measure, suted unto the Body, and to the Support, and Comfort, of the animal Life, yet, 'till the true intellectual spiritual Part in us, has its rectified, (not disordered,) Nature gratified, with a Good every Way answerable unto it, the Man can never be happy, let the Enjoyments adapted to the Body be what they will; because the pure

(a) 1 *Thess.* v. 23.

Spirit,

Spirit, being the more noble and exalted Part of the Man, will remain deſtitute, and uneaſy, whatever be the Dreams of Happineſs, in the fulleſt Gratifications of the lower Appetites, while this diſtinguiſhing Part of us is left unprovided of ſuitable Entertainments. For ſince that Part of us which we call Spirit, is ſo very different in its Nature from our Bodies, as that none of the eſſential Properties of the Latter are to be found in the Former, it follows, that ſomething very different in its Nature from that which is accommodated to our Bodies, (that is, ſomething, more peculiarly adapted to the Nature of our Spirits than any of the Enjoyments of this World,) muſt be found out, before we can ſuppoſe any Man to be happy in the exact Correſpondency of his Nature to the Thing objected to him: Therefore the *Preacher* obſerves, * *Seeing there are many Things that increaſe Vanity*, (he means all the Things of this World, which are adapted to our Senſes, all of which tend to increaſe our Vanity, and to diſappoint us with their Vanity,) *what is Man the better?* How will theſe things, which hold no Proportion to his ſpiritual Nature, add one Grain to his true and real Happineſs: *For what hath a Man of all his Labour, and of the Vexation of his Heart, wherein he hath laboured under the Sun?* † Should the Man enjoy all the Creatures, which yet he cannot, he would ſtill want Something that ſhould bear a Correſpondence with the Nature of his Spirit, which the Objects of Senſe do not. The material World, and an immaterial Spirit, are ſo widely different, in their Nature, that the former can never be a Foundation for the Happineſs of the latter. *Nebuchadnezzar's* grazing among the Beaſts was a more exalted Degree of Happineſs,

* *Eccl.* vi. 11. † *Eccl.* ii. 22.

to

to the Body, even of a mighty Monarch, than the fulleſt Enjoyment of the brighteſt of the Creatures, can poſſibly afford to an intellectual Spirit.

In ſhort; Happineſs ever ariſes from a Likeneſs, in the Nature of the Thing enjoyed, to the Nature of the Poſſeſſor. There muſt be an Agreement in Sounds to produce an Harmony, and a Proportion in Parts to conſtitute a Beauty; and ſo there muſt be an Agreement in Nature, with the poſſeſſed Object, to create that Harmony and Beauty, in the Soul, which we call Happineſs. Even GOD Himſelf cannot render a reaſonable Creature happy, until He has firſt formed him, in ſome meaſure, after His own Likeneſs. Now, what we generally call the Soul being a pure Spirit, breathed into us by the Almighty, (*for there is a Spirit in Man, and the Inſpiration of the Almighty hath given him Underſtanding* (*b*),) and the whole viſible Creation being formed of the Duſt of the Ground, as may be ſeen in the inſpired Account of the Creation (*c*); theſe Two have no Likeneſs, Affinity, and therefore can have no ſuch good Agreement between them, as is neceſſary, in Order to the Enjoyment of the Creature's being capable of compleating the Happineſs of the Soul.

2. Nor is the Creature proportionable to the Wants of the Soul. The Soul muſt be poſſeſſed of a Good, anſwerable to to it's preſent, and future Circumſtances, as well as its Nature, or it can never be happy; becauſe if the Spirit, or ſuperiour Part in us, is not accommodated with what is every Way agreeable unto it's Circumſtances, and ſufficient to anſwer it's Neceſſities, it will remain in a State of Want; and no Man can ſuppoſe that Happineſs, and Indigences, can meet in the ſame Beaſt, at the ſame Time. There may, indeed, be the want of a

(*b*) *Job.* xxxii. 8. (*c*) *Gen.* Ch. i.

Leſſer

Leſſer Good, while the Poſſeſſion of the Greater renders us truly comfortable and far from Miſery; ſo the Good Man has his Degrees of Happineſs, in the Favour of GOD, in the midſt of all the Afflictions of the preſent Life; and if *the Fig-Tree ſhould not bloſom, neither ſhould Fruit be in the Vine; if the Labour of the Olive ſhould fail, and the Fields yeild no Meat; if the Flocks ſhould be cut off from the Fold, and there ſhould be no Herd in the Stall*; yet he can *rejoice in the LORD, and joy in the GOD of his Salvation (d).* But to compleat Happineſs, there is requiſite ſuch a full Poſſeſſion of every needful Good, as that there ſhall remain no Want unſupplied. For if there be any one Appetite unſatisfied, the Man will be in a State of Indigency, and this will neceſſarily excite Uneaſineſs, and interrupt his Felicity. *Haman*, ſurrounded with all the Honours and Glories of the *Perſian Court*, was far from Happineſs, while his wicked Soul thirſted after the Blood of poor *Mordecai*, ſo that he cryed out, * *All this availeth me nothing, ſo long as I ſee* Mordecai *ſetting at the King's Gate.* And how much more reſtleſs and uneaſy muſt the Soul be, if it's regular Deſires remain unſatisfied.

Now let us but conſider what the known Wants of the Soul, or ſupream Spirit in Man, are, and this will afford us a convincing Proof, how diſproportionable all the Things of this World are to us. As now,

The Soul, as ſinful and polluted, wants to be relieved from the vile Subjection which it is in to Fleſh and Senſe, and to be reinſtated on the Throne of Liberty, and put into a Capacity of acting freely for itſelf, and it's greateſt Intereſt; and the Creature is ſo far from lending an helping Hand

(d) *Hab.* iii. 17, 18. * *Eſt.* v. 13.

here,

here, that it treacherously assists in putting the Chains on, and so much the more subjects the Soul under the basest Tokens of Bondage and Slavery. Hence is that Caution of our Saviour, * *Take Heed, and beware of Covetousness.* The greedy Desires of the Things of this World enslave the Soul to them; and so does the heedless and immoderate use of them: hence is that Caution, † *Take Heed to your selves lest at any time your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting,* &c.

The Soul wants to be freed from that Guilt, and Horror, she has contracted, by her Fall, and her vicious and sinful Actions; and the *Blood of Bulls and of Goats, Thousands of Rams, and Ten Thousand of Rivers of Oil, and the Fruit of the Body*, added to them, will not be sufficient to make Expiation for the Sin of the Soul (*e*): but instead thereof they are greatly instrumental to multiply her Crimes, and increase her Guilt: as the Love of the World, and the ill Improvement of it debases the Soul, so do they load the Soul with Remorse, and Guilt, by withdrawing it from the Love of GOD, and Delight in his Commandments.

The Soul wants to be delivered from the Sentence of eternal Condemnation, and rescued from everlasting Burnings, the just Desert, and Wages, of her Crimes; but so precious is the Soul that the Redemption thereof ceaseth for ever, as to any Thing among the mere Creature being a sufficient Ransom therefor; for *we are not redeemed with corruptible Things, as Silver, and Gold,— but with the precious Blood of CHRIST* (*f*): and the Creature, by tempting, and drawing the Soul into Sin,

* *Luke* xii. 15. † *Luke* xxi. 34. (*e*) *Mic.* vi. 7. (*f*) 1. *Pet.* i. 18, 19.

does but so much the more bring it under the condemning Power of the Law, and doom it to suffer the divine Vengeance.

The Soul wants a suitable Place for it's eternal Residence, that, when it shall be uncloathed of its earthly Tabernacle, it may not be left naked, and destitute, but may put on Immortality and possess a Building of God, an House, not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens, accommodated with all possible Delights and Satisfactions; and what is there in this World, among all the Treasures of it, that can purchase such an happy Seat for her: all the Objects of Sense can neither form such a glorious Mansion for her, nor are fit to give in Exchange therefor, nor can any Way, of themselves, convey her to that blessed Abode: for *eternal Life is the Gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord* (*g*.)

In short, as all created Nature cannot buy off the Punishment due to the sinful Soul, so neither can it afford the least Support and Comfort to her, under her Wants, which would be her eternal Torment. Mountains of *peruvian* Gold, and Rocks of Diamond, would be looked upon with Horror and Anguish, should they present themselves in the Day of the LORD's Visitation, and but add Oil to the Flames that surround the unhappy Soul; nay, so far would all Creatures be from affording any Relief to the poor miserable Soul, that they would stand aloof off, as mocking at her Torment, and not a single *Drop of Water* would move to *cool her enflamed Tongue*. (*b*) So that by no Means would any, or all, of the Creatures be able to supply the Wants of the Soul, and therefore could not render her happy.

(*g*) *Rom.* vi. 23. (*b*) *Luke* xvi. 24.

3. Nor

3. Nor is the Creature proportionable to the Desires and Cravings of the Soul. This necessarily follows upon the former Head. For if the Creature is not answerable unto the Wants of the Soul, it cannot possibly fulfil its Desires; because it will necessarily crave to have its Wants supplied. There is a Sort of Infinity, and Boundlessness, in the Appetites of an intelligent immortal Spirit, which finite Nature, alone, can never satisfy. We see something of the unwearied Restlessness of the Mind of Man, in their perpetual Search and Inquiry into the hidden Mysteries of Nature, and Art, in the constant Labours of Men after the Profits, Pleasures, and Honours of this World; in their Thirst after perpetual Existence, and their Endeavours to out-live the Grave, in their Name, Manners, and Offspring; and yet, after they have done all, they are as unsatisfied as ever. Who ever found their most enlarged Stores, the greatest Variety, Degrees, of sensual Gratifications, or the most numerous and glittering Honours they were encircled withal, have been able to set Bounds to their Appetites, that they had, no farther Desires after them: This restless State of the Mind of Man, the *Preacher* elegantly describeth, by a lively Metaphor fetched from the Sun; *(i) The Sun*, (saith he,) *also ariseth, and the Sun goeth down, and hasteth to the Place where he arose*; in his daily Motion from *East*, to *West*, he cometh to the same Point again: So the *Sun* (for of this he continueth his Speech, the *Wind* not being in the Original, †) *goeth towards the South*, (to the Southern Tropic,) *and turned about to the North*, (then returns to the Northern Tropic,) *it whirleth about continually*, (in it's annual Motion,)

(*i*) Eccl. i. 5, 6. † See *Mr. Pool.*

and returneth again according to the Circuits : it cometh to the ſame Point again, after all it's Revolutions. And as Reſtleſs is Man in every Condition of Life, ever ſeeking to alter his preſent State, as he thinketh for the better ; yet, after all, he is juſt where he was, as to any real Reſt and Satisfaction, to his Mind, he hath gained by all his Changes. Therefore the *Preacher* obſerveth, (*k*) *The Eye is not ſatisfied with ſeeing, nor the Ear filled with hearing* ; for, (as the Royal Inſtructor had, in the *Verſe* before, elegantly expreſſed the Unſatisfactorineſs, of all Things here below, to the Soul,) *All the Rivers run into the Sea, yet the Sea is not full.* The Sea has already more in it ſelf than the Rivers can ſupply it with, and its Capacity vaſtly exceeds all that the Rivers can communicate, and therefore it can never be filled by all the Streams that run into it.

Beſides, theſe Things being different in their Nature from what the Soul thirſts after, can never yeild any true Satisfaction, and fill her Appetites. 'Till theſe Temporal Things can change their Nature, and riſe up to Spiritual, and Eternal, the Soul can caſt them all, unworthy of her Care, or lodge them in a narrow Corner, and never reſt ſatisfied, until the infinite ALL, ſhe bears ſome Likeneſs to in her Spirituality, and Immortality, and ſtill has ſome faint Reaches after, even in this her imperfect State, comes, and fills her, with everlaſting Satisfaction.

4. *Finally* ; The Creature is not proportionable to the Soul in Duration. That the Soul is immortal, or endleſs in Duration, may be fairly argued from the general Sentiments of Mankind, and their natural Deſires of Immortality, and from the Powers of Reaſon, Judgment, and Reflection

(*k*) Ver. 8.

&c.

&c. which evidently belong to the humane Nature, and are as evidently different from all the known Properties of Matter, howſoever diſpoſed and moved; and from our Conſciouſneſs of our own Actions, and the Judgment we paſs upon them, which ſheweth that we are capable of rendering an Account to our ſupream Ruler and Judge: But after all, the ſacred Scripture affords us the fulleſt Evidences of the Soul's Immortality, *Life and Immortality being brought to Light by the Goſpel.* There we are told, (*l*) *They, that kill the Body, are not able to kill the Soul*; that, when the Body dies, *the Spirit goeth to GOD who gave it* (*m*); and we may obſerve that, throughout the *New-Teſtament* eſpecially, the Soul is treated as an immortal Being, in the conſtant Propoſal of future eternal Rewards and Puniſhments; and the Aſſurance it gives us, That, at the Death of their Bodies, the Souls of good Men go to (*n*) *Paradiſe*, to (*o*) *Heaven*, to (*p*) *eternal Life*, to (*q*) *be ever with the LORD*; and that the Souls of wicked Men go to (*r*) *Priſon*, to (*ſ*) *Hell*, to the *Place of Torment*, to (*t*) *everlaſting Puniſhment*: All of which clearly evinces the Immortality of the Soul, or, that it exiſteth forever.

Suppoſe, now, that the Creature was ever ſo well adjuſted to the Nature of the Soul, being ſpiritual as that is, and were moſt admirably ſuited to its preſent Wants, and Cravings; yet, if after all, it falls ſhort of the Nature of the Soul in Duration, This, alone would render it utterly impoſſible that it ſhould ever compleat our Happineſs.

For, whenever the Creature ſhall run out the

(*l*) *Matth.* x. 28. (*m*) *Eccl.* xii. 7. (*n*) *Luke* xxiii. 43.
(*o*) *Luke* vi. 23. (*p*) *Mat.* xxv. 42. (*q*) 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 17.
(*r*) 1 *Pet.* iii. 19. (*ſ*) *Luke* xvi. 23. (*t*) 2 *Theſſ.* i. 9.

Line of its Continuance, and come to its End, (as I shall shew under another Head, it certainly will) there will then be no Room left for the least Pretensions to Happiness in the Enjoyment of it; because it will then have no Existence. And, as, in the mean while, the Fears of losing, what, we know, will anon cease to have any Being, would so distress the Soul, in the Midst of her Enjoyments, as to leave her unhappy in the fullest Possessions, so the total ceasing of it, would render her Condition the more miserable, from a Reflection upon her former comfortable State, while she was in Possession of it.

Thus we see, that upon Supposition of a true Enjoyment of the Creature, it cannot compleat our Happiness, because of the vast Disproportion there is between all the Objects of Sense, and a spiritual and immortal Soul: For the Things of this World are proportionable neither to the Nature, the Wants, the Desires, nor the Duration of the Soul.

I proceed now to say,

2. We do not truly and fully enjoy the Creature, and therefore it cannot possibly compleat our Happiness. What I have said under the former Head, of the Disproportion of the Creature to us, holds good upon Supposition of our fullest Enjoyment of it, and I now argue the Insufficiency of the Creature to compleat our Happiness, were it otherwise ever so proportionable to us, in that we have not the true, and full Enjoyment of it.

For, after all our Pretentions to Enjoyment, and the pleasant Dreams of Happiness we flatter and delude ourselves with, in the Possession of it, if our Title be challenged, we shall find that we have no true Right to it, and so do not truly and fully enjoy it. For barely to have in our Hands, and keeping,

keeping, this or the other desirable Good, is not properly, and fully, to enjoy that Good; as the Keeper of the Crown is not properly said to enjoy the Crown; the Fee, and Right, must be in us, and in us solely, to constitute a full Enjoyment, otherwise, our present Possession is dependant, and precarious. Now it is certain, that, whatever our Claim may be, we are not to look upon ourselves as the Lord's Proprietors of what we have, but only Stewards at Will: *the Earth is the LORD's with the Fullness thereof, the World, and they that dwell therein (k).* GOD alone is the rightful Proprietor of all the Creatures; and because HE is the *great Creator*, therefore is HE also *the most high Possessor* of Heaven and Earth: and this His Right He has not alienated, nor will He devolve it upon another. 'Tis impossible any One of the Creatures should enjoy all the rest; and those that we have in our Hands cannot render us happy, because we have no true Propriety in them.

With Respect unto Men, our Fellow-Creatures, we may be the sole Owners of this, or that, and they may be guilty of Injustice, and Oppression, by their forcible or crafty invading our Right; but our Title will not hold good should we attempt to contest it with the Most High. Yea, so far are we from a full Possession of any thing, as that we ourselves are not our own, but belong to, and are dependant upon, that GOD, who hath made us, and formed us for Himself, and in whom we live, and move, and have our being; so that He has a Right to us, and all that we have.

Nor will our present Possession, such as it is, or our holding any of the Creatures in our Hands, make good our Claim, and Propriety in them, against the Demands of the Almighty; because we hold all

(k) *Ps.* xxiv. 1.

upon good Pleasure only: so that we are but Stewards to our great Lord and Master, who has committed to our Trust, as pleaseth Him, to some *two*, to others *five*, and to others *ten Talents*, and commanded us to *occupy until He come*, and to improve all in his Service, and to the Honour of His Name; and to whom, e'er long, we must account for our Stewardship, how we have traded, and what we have gained; and receive our Rewards according to that we have done *(l)*. Since we are but Stewards, therefore what is put into our present Possession, is not alienated and made over, to us as our own, but our sovereign LORD reserveth unto Himself an unquestionable and full Right, as to the Interest, so to the Principal, of all our Talents, and the Power to take from us what He has lent us, or deposited in our Hands, when it shall seem good unto Him.

Hence it will follow, that the Creature is not, nor can it be, compleative of our Happiness, because we cannot properly call it our own. For, upon Supposition that it were in it's own Nature, ever so perfect in Kinds and Degrees of Excellency, and so were capable of rendring us happy, yet since it is not our own, and we have no unalienable Right and Property in it, what will it signify to us, how good and excellent it is in itself, or how agreeable it might be to us? Unless there be a Contact, or Union, between the Subject and the Object, there can no delightful Sensations be handed to the Soul: and this Union is founded in Possession and Propriety. We may see That in the Possession of our Neighbour, which, if we could call it our Own, might go a great Way towards the satisfying of our present Wants and Desires, and afford us

(l) See *Mat.* xxv. *from* ver. 14 — 28. and *Luke* xix. 12—27.

abundance

abundance of Delight and Pleaſure, in the Agreeableneſs of it to us; but ſince it is another's, and not ours, though we ought to rejoice in the Welfare of our Neighbour, yet, all the Satisfaction we might propoſe to ourſelves, from the Enjoyment of it drops of Courſe. The all-perfect *Deity* affords no Happineſs to a rational Mind, 'till it can ſay of this GOD, He is OUR OWN GOD; but the Want of this is the Miſery of the damned who are ſufficiently acquainted with the Perfections of GOD, to know that there is enough in Him to compleat the Happineſs of any, or all, of His Creatures, but yet find themſelves miſerable in their Separation from Him, or want of an Union to Him as their GOD, and Portion.

Thus, becauſe we have no true Right, and Propriety, in the Creature, 'tis vain for us to expect Happineſs from it; and though we ought to be contented with the preſent Portion our bountiful Maſter has aſſigned us, and be thankful to Him for it, becauſe the leaſt we have the Improvement of, is more than we deſerve, yet, we cannot think ſeriouſly of the Weakneſs of our Title to it, and at how uncertain a Tenour we hold it, but it marrs all the fine Schemes of Happineſs a ſenſual Mind may be apt to propoſe to himſelf from it.

So that we ſee an End of all Perfection, in the Creature; it's greateſt Excellency is limited in it's Nature and Meaſure, whether we conſider it abſtractedly by itſelf, or in it's Relation to us.

I am now,

2. In the ſecond Place, to ſhow, that the Perfection of the Creature is finite in it's Duration. There will be an End to all worldly Perfection.

I hinted at this before, in ſhewing that the Creature is not proportionable to the Soul in Duration, and the daily Experience we have of this renders it leſs neceſſary to inſiſt largely upon this Head: I ſhall therefore but briefly run it over, and ſhew, that if there were a Perfection of Number, and Degrees, of Excellencies in the Creature, yet it would fall ſhort of proper Perfection, for Want of Duration. True Perfection admits of no Limits in Duration, any more than in Degrees; for that which is finite in its Duration, wants a very eſſential Ingredient in Perfection, namely Continuance, or conſtant Exiſtence: though it have an Exiſtence at preſent, yet if, by and by, it ſhall have none, this ſhews that there is wanting to it that which is neceſſary to it's very Being, and that which wanteth cannot be perfect. And this is the Caſe with the Creature, with all the Things of this lower World, we converſe with, they are finite in their Duration. For,

1. The Creature it ſelf will have an End, and then the Excellency of it ceaſeth, and is no more. As this World had a Beginning, ſo it will have an End, and ſhall not continue always. Whether Matter periſhes, or any, the leaſt, Part thereof be utterly deſtroyed, or no, is not at all material to us, becauſe the Form is all we are converſant about, in Objects of Senſe; Though I ſee no Abſurdity in the abſolute Corruptibility of Matter, which once had no Being. However, ſince the Form gives Being to every Object of Senſe, and the Exiſtence of Matter ſtrip'd of all Form, (if ſuch a Thing can be,) would be utterly imperceptible to us, therefore when ever the Creature puts off its preſent Form, with Reſpect unto us, it then comes to an End. Thus the

the Apoſtle tells us (*m*) *the Faſhion of this World paſſeth away*; by which he means ſo to affect us with the Conſideration of the fading, periſhing, Nature of the Things of this World, as to draw us off from that over-fond Opinion we are ſo prone to entertain of the Objects of Senſe, that we may not have our Hearts too much ſet upon them. And we may plainly ſee, that all Things about us are haſtening on to the Change of their preſent Poſture, and Relation, and the Time is coming, *in the which the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great Noiſe, the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat, and the Earth, with the Works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up*: as the Apoſtle *Peter* acquaints us (*n*). Decay is written, in indelible Characters, upon all the Beauty, and Excellency, of this viſible World, and we ſee it daily making Advances upon all Things about us. The very *Heavens wax old as doth a Garment* (*o*), and a little Time often puts a Period to the brighteſt Luſtre of this World. What is become of the flouriſhing States, and Kingdoms, the magnificent Structures, and the applauded Heroes, which, ſome few Ages ago ſtruck the World with Wonder and Admiration? They have all ſunk in the Ruins of Time. Where are our dear Friends, and valuable Relations, that, a little while ago, we took Comfort in? alaſs; they are buried under the Clods of the Valley! and their Excellency, which they once had, has periſhed with them. So does the Perfection of this World, like *Riches, make to itſelf Wings, and flee away, as an Eagle towards Heaven*, with a ſwift, and almoſt imperceptible Motion.

But then,

2. We ourſelves ſhall, e'er long, come to the

(*m*) 1. *Cor.* vii. 31. (*n*) 2 *Pet.* iii. 10. (*o*) *Pſal.* cii. 26.

End

End of our Continuance in this World. For we cannot live here always; 'tis but a little while we can remain in the delightful Poſſeſſion of our preſent worldly good Things; our Houſes, and Lands, our Riches, and Honours, our Friends, and Acquaintance, we muſt quickly take our final Leave of them all, and the Eye that hath ſeen us ſhall ſee us no more and the Places that have known us ſhall know us no more. *Our Days on Earth are as a Shadow, and there is none abiding* (*p*). *What is your Life? It is even a Vapour, that appeareth a little while, and then vaniſheth away* (*q*). Even while we are here, the Excellency which we pretend to, as giving us the Precedency to the Creatures around us, often decays, and fades away; and a Man of Wiſdom, and Strength, in a few Years becomes as a Child in Weakneſs, and Folly; and a Man of Wealth, and Honour, may, anon, be as poor as *Job*, and deſpiſed as *Lazarus*. But however, it will not be long before Death will put a final Period to our Abode on Earth, and we ſhall lie down in the ſilent Grave, and the Worms feed ſweetly upon us, and then, *the Beauty which we have ſhall conſume away in the rotting Grave* (*r*). And when we go down to the dark Vault, the Houſe appointed for all the living, we ſhall then have no further Occaſion for any of the Enjoyments of this World, nor reap any Advantage from them; for, *we can carry Nothing out of this World with us, nor will our Glory deſcend after us* (*s*); but as *we came naked into this World*, without bringing any of the Accommodations of it with us, ſo *naked ſhall we return* (*t*): The Thought of which made *Solomon* inſcribe Vanity upon all

(*p*) 1 *Chr.* xxix. 15. (*q*) *Jam.* iv. 14. (*r*) *Pſ.* xlix. 14. (*s*) *Pſ.* xlix. 17. (*t*) *Job.* i. 21.

Things

Things under the Sun; *Yea, I hated my Labour,* (ſays he,) *becauſe I ſhould leave it unto the Man that ſhould come after me* (*v*). And of what Avail will all the Profits, Pleaſures, or Honours, of this World be to us, when we are at laſt forced to take our Leave of them? Ah! vain World! Whoſe greateſt Excellency, as in a Moment, vaniſheth from us, or dies with us!

Thus I have finiſhed the Firſt Doctrine, That the Perfection of the Creature is limited and finite; it is not proper Perfection, nor can it continue; and ſo we ſee an End of all Perfection.

Before I proceed to the Second Doctrine, it will be proper to make ſome Improvement of this, and apply it unto ourſelves, for our Inſtruction, Correction, and Exhortation.

Use I. This Doctrine may be improved for our Inſtruction, and Information, in ſeveral Things. To name one at preſent, and conclude.

1. Hence we may learn, what Reaſon we have to mourn over our Apoſtacy from GOD, as the grand Cauſe of very much of the Imperfection of the Creature. For it is certain, that very much of the Imperfection of the Creature is accidental to it, and has been procured, originally, by our Sin and Fall from GOD. As the Creature, with us, firſt came out of the Hands of our Maker, it was ſuted to our pure and innocent Nature, ſo far as Man could, then, have any Deſires about it, and would have been abundantly more advantageous, and ſerviceable, to him, in his Integrity, than it can be to us, now, in our lapſed State: and we find it a Part of the Curſe, which the great GOD denounc-

(*v*) *Eccl.* ii. 18.

ed

ed in the Day of our Apoſtacy, (w) *Curſed is the Ground, for thy Sake; in Sorrow ſhalt thou Eat of it, all the Days of thy Life: Thorns alſo and Thiſtles ſhall it bring forth unto thee,—in the Sweat of thy Face ſhalt thou eat Bread, 'till thou return unto the Ground; for out of it waſt thou taken; for Duſt thou art, and unto Duſt ſhalt thou return.* By Means of this Curſe there is a Sort of Variance put between Man and the Creature, and this Vanity is conſequent upon it, that our Appetites and Deſires are irregularly carried out after it, and there is nothing in it ſufficient to ſatisfy them; and after we have walked in a vain Shew, for a little while, we muſt bid Adieu to all ſublunary Enjoyments, without ſo much as allowing us Room to hope that they will ever be any further ſerviceable to us.

The Earth was a Paradiſe to Man, in Innocency, a Garden of Delight, and Pleaſure, becauſe every Way ſuited to all that he could want from it, and anſwerable to all the Deſires he could have about it, and becauſe of the high Propriety which he had in it. For innocent Man was not ſubject to many of thoſe Wants, which now diſtreſs us, nor could he have any of thoſe irregular Appetites after the Objects of Senſe, which now are the Reproach of our Reaſon, nor have any Expectations from the World but what it was able to anſwer; and therefore there was a proper Agreement between them, and the Creature ſo far perfectly ſuted his rational and religious Thoughts of it, and was improvable by him to the nobleſt Ends and Purpoſes. Beſides, what rendered the Creature more perfect to him was, the true Propriety which he had in it. For, as he ſaw and adored GOD in the Creature, ſo he enjoyed it in GOD, and GOD in it; thus the Creator, and the Creature,

(w) *Gen.* iii. 17, 18, 19.

ever

ever came together, in his View, and Enjoyment; and while there was a close Union between GOD, and the Works of His Hand, a Union not yet broken by Sin, as Man, then, had a Propriety in GOD, as his own GOD, so had he in the Creature also.

But, now, our Fall from GOD hath broken this Union, has separated between GOD and the Creature, has strip'd the Creature of much of its Excellency, and filled us with Desires, and Expectations, which it can never answer, and so has turned the Blessing into a Curse. 'Tis This that has rendred this World a Wilderness of Briars and Thorns, and filled it with Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit: So that the *Creature was made subject to Vanity, not willingly*, (not by any natural Propensity) *but by the Will of Him who hath subjected the same*, (though) *in Hope*, as the Punishment of Sin; the *Creature being in the Bondage of Corruption*; *to be delivered* from which, *the Creation groaneth and travaileth in Pain until now* (*x*).

This then shews us, what Reason we have to mourn over our Apostacy and Rebellion against GOD, which have procured so much of the Imperfection of the Creature, and rendred it so unprofitable, and ensnaring, to us. It should make us to cry out, *Oh! that our Head were Water, and our Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that we might weep Day and Night*, for the Offence offered unto GOD, the Injury done unto the Creature, and the Damage brought upon ourselves, by our very great Folly, in refusing to obey the Divine Commandment. This ought to be Matter of perpetual, and deep Humiliation to us, as often as we see the Weakness, the Insufficiency, and Instability, of the Creature, that it groans under the

(*x*) *Rom.* viii. 20, 21, 22.

Curse

Curſe we have brought upon it, and that we ourſelves ſo conſtantly feel the ſad Effects of it. 'Tis this that furniſhes every Thing we converſe with, with the Sting that pierces and wounds us. 'Tis This is the Root of Bitterneſs, the baneful Tincture whereof has turned all our Enjoyments into Gall and Wormwood. The Creature was full of Beauty, and Honour, glittered with the Sparkles of divine Light upon it, would have afforded us wonderful Refreſhment, and Satisfaction, and was an Enjoyment with which GOD might have been abundantly glorified, as well as we ourſelves greatly delighted, but our Sin has ſtained the Glory of the Divine Workmanſhip, robbed GOD of His Due, the Creature of its Excellency, and our ſelves of Comfort; and it ought therefore forever to humble and abaſe us, and fill us with Brokenneſs of Soul, to think of our high Crime, in defiling our Nature, and throwing the whole Creation into Diſorder and Confuſion. Well therefore may we cry out, (y) *The Crown is fallen from our Head*; *wo unto us that we have ſinned.*

(y) *Lam.* v. 16.

SERMON

SERMON III.

PSALM CXIX. 96.

I have seen an End of all Perfection; but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

TWO Doctrines have been raised from these Words, as evidently contained in them, viz.

Doc. I. The Perfection of the Creature is limited and finite.

Doc. II. The Commandment of GOD is exceeding broad.

The first of these has been already spoken to, and I have shewed you,

I. The Perfection of the Creature is limited in its Nature and Measure; if we view the Creature abstractedly, we shall see that no One possesses all possible Excellencies, nor any one Excellency in every possible Degree, and a finite Mind may comprehend the utmost of Creature-Perfection; or if we examine the Creature in its Relative Excellency, especially to Man, we shall find that it cannot perfect our Nature, neither in the Knowledge, Enjoyment, or Improvement of it; nor is

it capable of compleating our Happineſs ; becauſe it is not proportionable to us, neither to our Nature, nor to our Wants, nor to our Deſires, nor to our Duration ; nor do we truly and fully enjoy the Creature, but hold it only at the Pleaſure of another, to whom it originally belongeth, and in whoſe Right it remaineth. I have alſo,

II. Shewed you, That the Perfection of the Creature is finite in its Duration. For the Creation it ſelf will anon come to an End, and its Excellency flee away ; and we ourſelves ſhall quickly come to the End of our Continuance in this World. Having thus proved this Doctrine, I told you it was improvable to our Inſtruction, Correction, and Exhortation ; and under the firſt of theſe I have inferred, what Reaſon we have to mourn over our Apoſtacy from GOD, as the grand Cauſe of very much of the Imperfection of the Creature : And now I proceed to improve this Doctrine to our further Inſtruction,

Wherefore,

2. Hence we may learn, that we ought not to be chiefly concerned about the Things of this World. If we may ſee an End of all Perfection, as to the Creature ; if it will neither perfect our Nature, nor make us truly happy, nor abide with us ; then certainly the Things of this World have not a Sufficiency of Worth, and Value in them, to demand all our Expence, and Labour, nor ought they to have the chief of our Thought, and Care, employed about them. It is enough that our Thought, and Labour, are employed about theſe Things, according as our daily Taſk is, that we be diligent in our Buſineſs, and not Drones in the Common-Wealth, who live upon the Labour of others ; that we have our Minds ſo far engaged about

about our temporal Affairs, as is conſiſtent with our Eye ſteadily fixed upon our main Buſineſs; and thus ſerve GOD, and promote our ſpiritual Intereſt, while we are at work about our particular Calling: Thus (*i*) *ſufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof*, and we need not to make the Evil greater, by ſuffering our ſelves to be wholly, or chiefly, concerned for the Body, and the Things thereof; much leſs, what ſhall be on the Morrow. We ſee, indeed, a very great Part of Mankind ſo entirely charmed with the Objects of Senſe, and devoted to their Service, that all their Love, and Joy, all their Care, and Concern, center in them; and while the Men of a lower Figure are in a perpetual Hurry and Buſtle to raiſe their Fortune, and ſcarce afford themſelves Time to eat, or ſleep, and will not boggle at any Methods to increaſe their Stock, that they may make them a Name, and a Family in the Earth, the Men of the moſt elevated Figure, are often, at the ſame Time, immerſing themſelves in a continual Succeſſion of ſenſual Pleaſures, torturing themſelves for the Invention of new and freſher Ones, and racking themſelves with the Fears leſt another ſhould enjoy more than they do, or ſhould get a Step before them in the Race of worldly Honour: So that the Cares of this World, and deceitful Riches, take up the Thought, Labour, and Time, of the Generality of Men, as if they were made for nothing elſe. But how mean, and fooliſh, is this? How much below, and unbecoming the Dignity of our Nature is it? For certainly, as rational Creatures, we ought to give the Preference to that which is of moſt Value in itſelf, and of the greateſt Conſequence to us; and therefore to be conſtantly reaching after a State of Perfection, both of Purity and Happineſs, to be

(*i*) *Matth.* vi. 34.

moſt thoughtful and concerned how, and in what Way this may be attained by us.

If, indeed, the Perfection of our Nature, and our State, were to be gained, purely, by the Enjoyments of this World, there would be ſomething to be ſaid, for the Reaſon of Men's preſent Conduct; but ſince we ſee to the End of all Perfection, in Things here below, we plainly diſcern that they are limited both in their Meaſure and Duration, and we experience that neither the Knowledge, the Enjoyment, nor the Improvement of them, will lead us unto true Perfection, but leave us as far from true Rectitude, and real Felicity, as ever; we ought therefore to have but a more tranſient Regard to them, and keep Things, that are of greater Worth and Moment, chiefly in our View, and make the leſſer Concerns of the Objects of Senſe ſubſervient unto them. Hence the *Apoſtle* gives us that wholſome Advice, couched in the Repreſentation of his own Practice, *(y) We look not at the Things which are ſeen, but at the Things which are not ſeen; for the Things that are ſeen, are Temporal, but the Things that are not ſeen are Eternal.* Temporal Things hold no Proportion with Eternal ones; and becauſe the Things of this World, which we are apt moſtly to concern our ſelves about, are but Temporal, and this Imperfection ever attends them, that *the Grace of the Faſhion thereof paſſeth away*, therefore 'tis highly reaſonable that we ſhould not fix our Minds upon them, and make them the Mark and Scope we aim at in all that we do. For what will ſignify all our Attainments and Poſſeſſions, our acquired Endowments, our increaſed Riches, and advanced Honours? If this be all the Portion we have laid up for our ſelves; if we have nothing elſe to truſt to,

(y) 2 *Cor.* iv. 18.

and

and depend upon, for our Comfort, when we are about to depart out of this World, into the invisible World, we shall find our selves miserably provided for at last; and, when our eternal State comes on, there will not be left to us so much as One of all the Delights of Sense, to administer to our Necessities, and afford us any Relief.

'Tis very great Meanness and Folly, therefore, in Persons, to have no higher Views than their Bodies, and the Things that relate to the present Life; it is greatly beneath them, as rational Beings, and reduces them upon a Level with the Brute Creatures, who are wholly governed by their Senses, and follow the Motions of their Appetites, without any higher Principle to direct them; and it is very great Folly, because when they have done all, and raised themselves to the utmost Heighth of temporal Enjoyments, they are really never the better for them, while they possess them; neither will their irregular Appetites be cured, nor their Desires satisfied, by them; and, for all that they can tell, they may, within a very little While, be striped of them all: and then what Pleasure will they afford them? Were we advanced to the higheſt Pitch of Grandeur, and become the Darlings of the admiring Croud; could we heap up Stores, 'till we were able to purchase the *Indies*; and were we daily entertained with all the Delights created Nature could yield us; yet the native and relative Imperfection of all would still leave the Soul unsatisfied, and in a State of Want and Uneasiness; the Result of all would be that, (z) *He that loveth Silver, shall not be satisfied with Silver; nor he that loveth Abundance, with Increase.* Then certainly we

(z) *Eccl.* v. 10.

ought to be leſs ſedulous and careful about ſuch empty and periſhing Enjoyments, and have our Minds more ſeriouſly concerned about Things of greater Conſequence to us, about our never-dying Souls, and our eternal Intereſt; for theſe are Things of the greateſt and neareſt Importance to us, in which all that is dear to us is enwrapped, on which our eternal Well-Being turns; and therefore we cannot be too much in earneſt to ſave our Souls, and get to Heaven, by making our Peace with GOD, through Faith in CHRIST, and a Life of Obedience; but it is vain to laviſh away all, or the chief of our Care and Induſtry, to ſo little Purpoſe, as the beſt Accommodations in this World, and, at the ſame Time, fooliſhly neglect eternal Things, which are of everlaſting Importance to us. The *Apoſtle* therefore directs us, *(a)* to *ſeek thoſe Things which are above, where CHRIST ſitteth at the right Hand of GOD; to ſet our Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth.*

This ſhould put us upon the moſt earneſt Endeavours, and unweary'd Prayers, to the GOD and Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that we may obtain the Graces of the Divine Spirit in our Hearts, and to make ſure of an heavenly Inheritance, as our Portion forever; becauſe theſe will heal the Diſorders of our Souls, and afford us abundant Satisfaction here, and render us compleatly happy hereafter. Hence we have that Advice of our Saviour, *(b) Lay not up for yourſelves Treaſures upon Earth, where Moth and Ruſt doth corrupt; and where Thieves break through, and ſteal; but lay up for your ſelves Treaſure in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through, nor ſteal:*

(*a*) *Col.* iii. 1, 2. (*b*) *Matth.* vi. 19, 20, 33.

Seek

— Seek first the Kingdom of GOD, and His Righteousness, and all these Things shall be added unto you.

3. Hence we may see, what little Reason we have to put our Trust in the Creature. It was the Injunction laid upon *Timothy*, by the Apostle *Paul, (c) Charge them that are rich in this World, that they trust not in uncertain Riches, but in the living GOD.* GOD only, and not the Creature, is the proper Object of our Trust and Dependance. And yet we are prone to imagine that there is an higher Degree of Excellency in the Creature, than, upon Examination, we shall find, and thence are foolishly led to put our Trust in it, and look for great Things from it. But, may we see an End of all Perfection? Then certainly this World, and the Things of it, are unworthy of our Trust and Dependance, because they will certainly deceive us. Indeed, *every Creature of GOD is good, and ought to be received, by us, with Thanksgiving*; nevertheless, we have very little Reason to trust in what is not truly excellent in it self, and so is unworthy our Dependance, and what is much more relatively imperfect, and therefore but a sandy Foundation for us to build our Hopes upon. *Put not your Trust in Princes, nor in the Son of Man, in whom there is no Help: His Breath goeth forth, he returneth to his Earth; that very Day his Thoughts perish.** Let us descend a little into Particulars.

1. The Creature will not support us under the various Troubles we meet withal while we are in this World: No not our outward ones. We find, by sad Experience, that, as our Days on Earth are but few, so, they are full of Trouble. The World we live in is full of Changes, and many

(c) 1 *Tim.* vi. 17. * *Ps.* cxlvi. 3, 4.

are the Sorrows we meet with which the moſt excellent of the Creatures cannot prevent; and how little a Way do they go towards the keeping of our Hearts from fainting, in the Day of Adverſity? *Their Silver, and their Gold ſhall not be able to deliver them, in the Day of the Wrath of the* LORD; *they ſhall not ſatisfy their Souls, neither fill their Bowels*, ſaid the Prophet *Ezekiel* (*d*). We often find the Things of the World are the Cauſes, and Occaſions, of our being in Heavineſs, and filled with weeping and mourning: The Hardſhips, and Toil we are put to, in our Purſuit after them, the Anguiſh they give us, when our Affairs are perplexed and embarraſſed, the Anxiety of our Minds how to keep them, and the exquiſite Pain they bring upon us, in our parting with them, plainly ſhew us, that the greateſt Part of the Afflictions that befal us ariſe from the Objects of Senſe; but how ſeldom do we find any of them ſtepping in to our Relief, when we are ready to ſink under our Burdens. So that if our Hope were only from theſe Things, our Condition would be truly miſerable, notwithſtanding all the Help we could have from them.

But then, alas! what will all theſe Things avail us under the Convictions of an awakened Conſcience, and that inward, and Soul-Trouble, which ariſes from a quick Senſe of our Sin and Guilt. And yet ſomething of this we have felt, or muſt feel, as ever we hope to obtain the Forgiveneſs of our Sins, and to be brought to that true Repentance, which is unto Salvation. The wiſe Man informs us, (*e*) That *the Spirit of a Man will ſuſtain his Infirmity*; *but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* The Vigour and Chearfulneſs of the Mind will enable a Man to bear up, pretty well, under

(*d*) *Ezek.* vii. 19. (*e*) *Prov.* xviii. 14.

the

the common Calamities, and Accidents, of the preſent Life; but when once the Strength, and Vigour of the Mind is broke in upon, and the quick Senſe of Guilt has deprived it of its inward Peace, and Comfort, it is not in the Power of all the gaudy Honours, the deceitful Riches, nor the enticing Pleaſures of this World, to ſooth and calm the Soul, and reſtore ſolid Joy and Quietneſs unto it. No; nothing can quiet ſuch a Soul, but either a ſinking into a perfect Stupidity, which will raiſe a greater Storm in the End, or elſe ſome probable Hopes of the pardoning Mercy of GOD, through the Merits of JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

2. *Again*; How little will all theſe Things avail us in the Day of Death? When the Harbingers of Death appear before us, we are very ready to betake our ſelves to the Creature for Help; (and we do well to make Uſe of the beſt Means we can, that, if poſſibly, we may ward off the coming Blow) but if the Sentence is paſſed, and we find our Life draws nigh to the Edges of the Grave, our Strength is failing us, our Breath is departing from us, and our Feet are ſtumbling upon the dark Mountains; will the Creature then be able to ſave us from falling, or pluck us back from the Gates of the Grave? No certainly; they will all then be miſerable Comforters, Phyſicians of no Value to us, and vain will be all our Expectations from them. For, as the *Pſalmiſt* obſerves, *(f) They that truſt in their Wealth, and boaſt themſelves in the Multitude of their Riches; none of them can, by any Means, redeem his Brother,---- that he ſhould ſtill live forever, and not ſee Corruption: for he ſeeth that wiſe Men die, likewiſe the Fool, and the brutiſh Perſon, periſh, and leave their Wealth*

(*f*) *Pſ.* xlix. 6,---- 19.

to

to others: ---- like Sheep they are laid in the Grave, Death ſhall feed upon them, ---- and their Beauty ſhall conſume in the Grave. ---- Though whilſt he lived, he bleſſed his Soul: and Men will praiſe thee when thou doſt well to thyſelf: he ſhall go to the Generation of his Fathers, they ſhall never ſee Light. The moſt fervent Affection, and tender Embraces, of the deareſt Friends, will not be able to ſcreen us, nor their moſt importunate Entreaties obtain a Releaſe for us; Death will be hardened againſt all their Fondneſs, and deaf to all their Cries; the ableſt Phyſicians, and the richeſt Cordials, will have no Power to retain our flying Spirits; nor will our Bags of Silver, and Gold, and our ſparkling Jewels, be ſufficient to bribe the grim Officer, nor the whole Creation to ſave us from the Arreſt of the King of Terrors. Nothing will exempt us from paying the laſt Debt to Nature, *neither is there any Diſcharge in this War (g).* There is not one of us all but what muſt take our Turn, to fall down ſlain in this War, as innumerable have done before us. *Man dieth, and waſteth away; yea, Man giveth up the Ghoſt, and where is he? As the Waters fail from the Sea, and the Flood decayeth, and drieth up; ſo Man lieth down, and riſeth not till the Heavens be no more. (h)*

3. *Once more*; How inſignificant will the Creature be to him in the Day of Judgment? When the Man comes to ſtand a Trial, before the awful Tribunal of the great GOD, the ſupream Judge of all, as, e'er long, he certainly muſt, which of all the Creatures will then riſe up, and appear on his Behalf, and effectually plead his Cauſe, and ſecure him from all Harm? Yea, will his boon Companions, the Partners of his Crimes, then have the Face to plead, in Excuſe for him, ſuch Things

(g) *Eccl.* viii. 8. (h) *Job* xvi. 10, 11, 12.

as

as they now think to be very witty and unanſwerable; or to turn off the Judge with an unmannerly Sneer, as they now can their vertuous Reprover? Alaſs! thoſe mighty Hectors will be ſeized with an unuſual Trembling, and Aſtoniſhment take hold upon them, for Fear of their own Puniſhment, which they can ſee no Way of eſcaping. Or will the Man's worldly Poſſeſſions interpoſe, and ſcreen him from the Reſentments of his Judge? Alas! Thoſe Trifles have no Place in that awful Preſence. Or can any Man fetch a Plea, from the Creature, ſufficient to wipe off his Guilt, to acquit him from Condemnation, and render him acceptable unto his Judge? Alas! they will all fail him, and ſay it is not in me. For, *Riches profit not in the Day of Wrath*, (*i*). Our moſt profound Learning, and piercing Wit, will not be ſufficient to palliate and cover our Crimes from the View of our Judge, or to find a Non-Suit in our Caſe, or bring us off by challenging the Juriſdiction of the Court. And though we ſhould be able to ſay, and prove it, that we have heretofore been accounted the Great Ones of the Earth, and have ſat at the Head of Nations and Kingdoms, have worn the Badges of Honour, and Enſigns of Power, and have poſſeſſed a very large Share of the Enjoyments of the preſent Life, and glittered in gaudy Accoutrements, in Embroideries of Gold, beſpangled with Diamonds; yet all of this will procure no Reſpect to our Perſons, before the righteous Tribunal of that GOD, with whom the Prince and the Beggar are alike, as to their Perſons, and differ only according to their Works. For *the Father, without Reſpect of Perſons, judgeth according to every Man's Work.* (*k*)

(*i*) *Prov.* xi. 4. (*k*) 1 *Pet.* i. 17.

4. *Finally*;

4. *Finally*; What Relief can the Creature afford to the Soul, under the Impreſſions of the Wrath of an angry GOD, in the Place of Torment? Will any of the Excellencies of the Creature then ſtep in, and ſupport a miſerable Soul, weltering under the Horrors of an enraged Conſcience, and the inſupportable Weight of the Divine Anger, and render his Condition eaſy to him? Will their united Force be able to reſcue him from the ſtrong Hands of incenſed Juſtice, or pluck him out of the Midſt of devouring Flames? Or can they poſſibly fill his Mouth with Songs, and his Heart with Rejoicing, while the never-dying Worm gnaws, and everlaſting Burning preys upon him? To which of all the Creatures will he turn, and ſay, This ſame ſhall comfort me? Or will it be any thing of Comfort, to ſuch an one, to call to mind his former State of Grandeur, of Affluence, and Eaſe; that he wallowed in Pleaſures, while People and Nations bowed down at his Feet: Nay! will it not be ſaid to him, as a Part of his Puniſhment, as *Abraham* to *Dives*? (*l*) *Son, Remember that, in thy Life-time, thou hadſt thy good Things; but now thou art tormented!* A ſad Remembrance indeed! The very Reflection upon his former Enjoyments will increaſe his Miſery upon him, and the more, when he ſhall bethink himſelf, how he came by them, and what Improvement he made of them; yea, his Torment will be ſo much the greater, by how much, in his Life-time, he truſted in them, and now, to his Coſt, he finds they are utterly unable to help him.

II. The ſecond Uſe of this Doctrine may be for Conviction and Reproof, to all ſuch as ſeek for

(*l*) *Luke* xvi. 25.

Happineſs

Happineſs in the Creature, or that abuſe the Creature to ill Intents and Purpoſes.

1. This affords Conviction and Reproof to thoſe who ſeek for Happineſs in the Creature. And how many are there that fall under Rebuke, who live, in this World, as if Perfection and Happineſs were no where elſe to be attained, but in the Enjoyment of the Creature? This preſent World, they think, has a ſufficient Fulneſs in it to render them truly happy; and here, therefore, they fix their Affections, and level their Aims, and look for no higher Degrees of Felicity, than what the Things about them can yield to them. Hence they turn every Stone, riſe early, and ſit up late, and are ever hunting, with an eager Chace, after the Enjoyments of Senſe; and, while they are in the hot Purſuit, often leap over the Boundaries of Religion, and even Humanity, and ſtick at nothing, how mean and baſe and diſhonourable ſoever it may be, ſo that they can but ſeize the Prey, and get what they account enough of the World. And there are, eſpecially, two Sorts of Perſons, who yet agree in one, the Covetous and the Unrighteous, that evidently place their Happineſs in Things here below, who fall under Rebuke.

1. The covetous Worldling has ſet his Heart upon the Creature, and looks for his Happineſs in the Enjoyment of it. Why elſe has the World his Heart? Why does he mind nothing but earthly Things? but becauſe he has made the World his God. He has no Love to the Father, becauſe the Love of the World bears the Sway in him, and leaves no Room for GOD, and RELIGION, in his Heart and Actions; ſo that he can part with his Soul, with Heaven, and with GOD himſelf, for the Sake of the World. He finds that he cannot

cannot ſerve two Maſters, and he is for cleaving to the Objects of Senſe, which ſeem to him to bring a preſent Reward with them, and ſlights the inviſible GOD, whoſe Rewards, he thinks, if any, are out of Sight. Hence we ſee the covetous Man, from the Fondneſs of his Affections to the World, ſometimes even begrutching himſelf the moderate Uſe of what he poſſeſſes, that though *he wanteth nothing for his Soul of all that he deſireth, yet GOD giveth him not Power to eat thereof* (*m*): So *there is one alone, and there is not a Second*; *yea, he hath neither Child, nor Brother, yet is there no End of all his Labour, neither is his Eye ſatisfied with Riches, neither ſaith he, for whom do I labour, and bereave my Soul of Good* * ? And yet if any Thing be demanded of him, for the Service of GOD, or his Neighbour, in Works of Piety and Charity, it is like pouring out of his Heart's Blood for him to part with it. His Thought, and Time, are ſo taken up about thoſe Things that are on the Earth, that he can find no Leiſure to attend upon the Duties he owes to GOD, and his own Soul; he can't find Time to go alone, and read the Word of GOD, and pray to him; he has no ſpare Minutes to worſhip the Lord in his Family; and it is with Regret that he is forced to lay aſide the World, and wait upon GOD, in his Houſe, upon his holy Day. Hence the Calls and Offers of the Goſpel *are made light of* by him, becauſe of the Cares *of the Farm, and the Merchandiſe* (*n*). Yea, his Covetouſneſs will put him upon ſelling of his Maſter, as *Judas* did, for a little Pelf, and a worldly Spirit in him is often the Parent of the moſt horrid and unnatural Crimes; *For the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil*, (*o*) " and the overvaluing of it

(*m*) *Eccl.* vi. 2. * *Eccl.* iv. 8. (*n*) *Matth.* xxii. 5. (*o*) 1 *Tim.* vi. 10.

" makes

" makes People haughty and barbarous, and falſe " both to GOD and Man :" And thus, for the Sake of the World, he loſes his Soul and Heaven for ever. 'Tis evident that this Man ſeeks for Happineſs in the Creature, becauſe his Heart is entirely ſet upon it ; for *where a Man's Treaſure*, his Happineſs, *is*, *there his Heart will be alſo* *. And is this indeed to act the Part of a Man ? Doſt thou glory in thy Reaſon, as diſtinguiſhing of thee from the Brute, and yet wilt thou herd among them, and be led and governed by Senſe, as they are, and be concerned for no higher Degrees of Felicity than what ariſes from ſenſible Objects ? How juſt is it in GOD to ſay to thee, *Be it as thou wilt*, and aſſign thee thy Portion where thou haſt ſought it, and put thee off with the mean low Gratifications of the animal Life, and ſeclude thee forever from the pure, refined, ſublime Joys of the heavenly State, which thou haſt no Deſires after, nor Reliſh for ? Verily, *No covetous Perſon ſhall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.* (*p*)

2. The unrighteous Perſon places his Happineſs in the Creature. It is very evident that he ſeeks for Perfection and Happineſs in worldly Enjoyments, becauſe he can willingly riſk every Thing elſe for the Sake of them ; and therefore can allow himſelf to violate the Laws of GOD, which forfeits his real Happineſs, by his dealing unrighteouſly with his Neighbour, that he may gain the World. Hence we often ſee the unrighteous Perſon can pleaſe himſelf in being guilty of the moſt violent Oppreſſion upon his Neighbour ; and forcibly rend from him, what, he cannot but know, notwithſtanding all his falſe Claims, he has no juſt Right to ; and, though he pretends a

* *Mat.* vi. 21. (*p*) 1 *Cor.* vi. 10.

mighty

mighty Regard to Juſtice, yet he can pervert the Law it ſelf, by taking the Advantage of ſome little Form and Modality of it, to trick another out of his Intereſt, to his manifeſt Hurt and Damage. Hence the unrighteous Perſon can allow himſelf in Extortion, by griping Uſury, by impoſing upon the Ignorance, Weakneſs, or Neceſſity of his Neighbour, to make a greater Gain of him than he ought to do. Hence, he ſometimes openly, and otherwhiles ſecretly, robs and ſteals from his Neighbour, and deals treacherouſly and deceitfully, with falſe Weights and Meaſures, and falſe Accounts, and makes no Bones of breaking his Word and Promiſe, falſifying the Truſt repoſed in him: And ſometimes proceeds even to murder his Neighbour, that he may ſecure his Money. All of theſe Ways of Unrighteouſneſs, are the ſad Fruits and Effects of the prevailing Influence which the World has over Men. 'Tis becauſe the Man thinks, that all his Happineſs lies in his having an Abundance of theſe Things, that he has ſo little Regard to Right, or Wrong, to Juſtice or Injuſtice, ſo he may but enrich himſelf with them; though ſuch often find it ſadly verify'd upon them, that what they thought to be the neareſt Way to enrich themſelves, has in Reality proved the furtheſt from it: So the Curſe of GOD is fulfilled upon them, (*q*) *He that oppreſſeth the Poor, to increaſe his Riches, ſhall ſurely come to want:* And the flying Roll *ſhall enter into the Houſe of the Thief, and it ſhall remain in the midſt of his Houſe, and ſhall conſume it, with the Timber thereof, and the Stones thereof (r)*; a ſecret Blaſt from GOD, upon their Undertakings and Labours, conſumes their Subſtance, and they are poor, and low, and deſpiſed, after all.

(*q*) *Prov.* xxii. 16. (*r*) *Zach.* v. 2, 4.

Certainly

Certainly then, their Sin and Folly is to be reproved. For if we may *see an End of all Perfection*, then all those, who so place their Happiness in the Creature, will, sooner, or later, find themselves to have been greatly imposed upon, and that they have themselves been accessory to the Cheat, by looking for that in the Creature, which was not in it. All their Possessions are, at best, but *uncertain Riches*, and whoever aims at Perfection and Happiness, in the Enjoyment of them, will in the Conclusion, experience to his Sorrow, that he has made use of a deceitful Bow, which has carried his Shafts vastly wide of the Mark, and disappointed his Expectation; though they look ever so fair and promising, while we view them at a Distance, yet, to those that trust in them, and found their Hopes upon them, they will only prove, like the tempting Apple to our Grandmother *Eve*, hurtful and destructive: they will, not only as certainly baulk their Hopes, but, leave them as miserable, in the End, as they did the rich Fool, in the Gospel, (*s.*) who said unto himself, *Soul, take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry, thou hast Goods laid up for many Years*, when *GOD said to him, Thou Fool, this Night thy Soul shall be required of thee; and then whose shall all these Things be which thou hast provided?* For, *as the Partridge setteth upon Eggs, and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth Riches, and not by Right, shall leave them in the Midst of his Days, and at his End shall be a Fool* (*t*). As his Folly is great, so is his Sin, in seeking for Happiness in the Things of this World, because this is no other than to set up the Creature in the Throne of GOD, and so to be guilty of that *Covetousness, which*

(*s*) *Luk.* xii. 19, 20. (*t*) *Jer.* xvii. 11.

is Idolatry (*v*), which will bring a Damnation that ſlumbereth not.

2. This affords Conviction and Reproof to all ſuch as make an ill Uſe of, and abuſe, the Creature. Though the Creature is not, of itſelf, perfective of our Nature, nor compleative of our Happineſs, yet, by the Bleſſing of GOD, it may be improved by us, as a Mean, to further theſe great Ends, by leading of us, from the Streams, to the Fountain Head: and this is what, as rational Agents, we ſhould ever have in our View, and make our principal Deſign, in our Uſe of the Good Things of this Life. But while we abuſe the Creature, and make an ill Uſe of it, we pervert this grand Intention, and do but ſo much the more blemiſh and degrade our Nature, and fix it under its greateſt Imperfections; and ſo become guilty of very great Sin and Folly in abuſing the Creature, and ourſelves with it. And ſo do all they, who improve what they have of the World to no higher End and Purpoſe than the indulging of their Luſts, and complying with their ſenſual Appetites: Theſe diſhonour the Name of GOD, which is manifeſted in, and by, His Creatures; and greatly hurt and injure themſelves, by pampering their carnal and fleſhly Luſts with them, and therefore are to be reproved as guilty before GOD. The Apoſtolical Rule is, that (*w*), *They that uſe the World*, ſhould be *as not abuſing it*: *for the Faſhion of the World paſſeth away*. And yet, we often ſee Perſons act ſo unreaſonable a Part, as to abuſe theſe ſhort-lived Enjoyments to their own Detriment; ſo *Riches are kept for the Owners thereof to their Hurt* (*x*). Thus, particularly, there are two Sorts of Perſons that abuſe the Creature, namely, ſuch as nouriſh

(*v*) *Col.* iii. 5. (*w.*) 1. *Cor.* vii. 31. (*x.*) *Eccl.* v. 13.

their

their Pride, and such as indulge their Intemperance with them.

1. Such as nourish their Pride with their worldly Enjoyments. Thus many often abuse the Creature, to enflame their Minds, and blow up their Vanity, and so *fall into the Condemnation of the Devil* (*y*). If they possess a little more of this World than some of their Neighbours, they grow haughty, and supercilious, upon it; and, as if they were raised to some lofty Eminence, look down with Contempt upon those they see below them; and very often their Hearts are lifted up in them against GOD Himself, that they can neither stoop to own their Dependance on Him, and His Goodness to them, but think it beneath them to petition for their daily Bread, or render GOD Thanks for what they enjoy; nor to submit themselves to the Government of His Laws, or the Conduct of His Providence. Thus 'tis said (*z*.) *Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked,—then he forsook the GOD that made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation.*

But what hast thou, O vain Man, to be proud of? What! but an imperfect fading World! Art thou proud of thy Beauty, thy comely Stature, thy exact Proportion, thy bright Complexion, thy sprightly Air? Why, in how little a while will all thy Lustre and Charms, be consumed away, and the Beauty which thou hast be turned into loathsome Putrefaction, in the rotting Grave? if they fade not long before thou descendest to that dark and cold Abode. Or doest thou pride thy self in thy great Estate, the Number of thy Acres, thy Bags of Gold, and thy splendid Train? Why, thou art but the more loaded with thick Clay, which, at present, sit heavy upon thee, and is a

(*y*.) 1. *Tim.* iii. 6. (*z*.) *Deut.* xxxii. 15.

Cumber about thee, and hereafter will enflame thy Reckoning, as it encreaſed thy Debt; and beſide will anon wing itſelf away from thee, or thou muſt leave it all behind thee. Or art thou proud of thy ſwelling Titles, and high Poſts of Honour? Why, do not theſe all periſh in the uſing? Is not the Ground thou ſtandeſt on the more ſlippery? and may not the popular Blaſt be turned againſt thee to Morrow? Or will any of thy Glory deſcend after thee? But what art thou really the better for any, or all, of theſe things? 'Tis true, there is a civil Reſpect due to Men, upon the Account of their raiſed Station, and large Poſſeſſions, which it is fitting, for others to give, and for them to receive, though it be not for them to challenge; but yet, what little Reaſon has any Man to be proud of them? when they, all of them, cannot rectify the Diſorders of his vitiated Soul, and ſtamp the bright Characters of moral Goodneſs upon him; but rather place his Weakneſſes in a ſtronger Light, expoſe him more to View, and draw upon him a more general Contempt. So that after all the humble Saint, in his loweſt Poverty, when weighed in a juſt Ballance, will turn the Beam againſt the wealthieſt *Cræſus*, with all his Poſſeſſions thrown in for Advantage: For *Pride goth before Deſtruction, and an haughty Spirit before a Fall* (*a*).

2. They abuſe the Creature who improve it to indulge their Intemperance. GOD allows us to take the Comfort of the good Things, which, in His Providence, He beſtows upon us; ſo that we may not only feed ourſelves for our neceſſary Support, and cloath ourſelves to defend our Bodies from the Injuries of the Weather, but we may, as our Circumſtances will admit, ſometimes, pleaſe our Palates, by feeding more deliciouſly, and drink

(*a*.) *Prov.* xvi. 18.

to

to the cheering of our Spirits, and make a gayer Appearance than usual; therefore the Preacher says, (*b*) *Go thy Way, eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart, for GOD now accepteth thy Work.* But then GOD does not allow us to make use of the Creature to Luxury, Gluttony, and Drunkenness; no; this is a vile Abuse of the good Creatures of GOD, and a vile Abuse of ourselves with them. For a Man to suffer his Appetite to ride Post with him, and be always upon the Switch and Spur, after the finest, and the best, the richest, and the strongest, as if his whole Soul had taken up it's intire Residence in his Palate; and never to be contented till he has gorged down enough to intoxicate himself; that is, to be excessive in his Craving, and go beyond the Bounds of Moderation, in the Quality, and Quantity, of his Meats, and Drinks, and Apparrel, in the common Use of them; this is such an intemperate Use of the Creature as the Soul of the Lord abhors; and therefore He has pronounced His *Wo upon them that chant to the Sound of the Viol, that drink Wine in Bowls; that rise up early in the Morning, that they may follow strong Drink, that continue until Night, till Wine inflame them* (*c*). And our Saviour straitly charges, all that would be His Disciples, to guard against such an intemperate Use of the Creature, saying to them, (*d*) *Take heed to yourselves, lest, at any Time, your Hearts be over charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness.* Such an ill Use of the Creature GOD complains of, in His People of old, and therefore threatens to recover all out of their Hand, (*e*) *She knew not that I gave her Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, and multiplyed her Silver, and Gold, which they prepared for Baal; therefore I will return, and*

(*b*) *Eccl.* ix. 7. (*c*) *Am.* vi. 5, 6. (*d*) *Luke* xxi. 34.
(*e*) *Hos.* ii. 8, 9.

take away my Corn in the Time thereof, and my Wine in the Time thereof &c. Such an intemperate Use of the Creature, is exceeding great Sin, and Folly, as it impairs, and debauches, the Reason, vitiates the Blood, and wounds and distempers the Body, and often blasteth a Man's Name, and lays his Reputation in the Dust, and reduces him to Penury and Want; and 'tis a vile perverting of what the Bounty of GOD bestows upon Persons, with Design that they may honour the Lord with their Substance, and do Good in their Generation, by Acts of Piety and Charity, and not squander them away upon the nourishing and increasing their Lusts; and it effectually shuts out of Heaven at last, for, *no Drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of GOD (f).*

III. The third and last Use of this Doctrine may be for Exhortation, to prevail with us to behave our selves wisely in our Regards to the Creature. Need have we to act a wise and prudent Part, and weigh Things in an even Balance, and think seriously and closely, upon the Nature of sublunary Enjoyments, and the Consequence of our doting upon them, before we give a Loose to our Appetites, and suffer our selves to be run away with by them. For we are in exceeding great Danger of being imposed upon, by the external Lustre of Things about us, their easy Access to us, and the forcible Impression they make upon our Senses, and the powerful Attractive of the general Conduct of Mankind concerning them; and if we suffer our selves to be led away by the gay Cheat, our Disappointment will be to our unspeakable Damage, in the Loss of all that would truly render us happy, as well as of that which we vainly

(f) 1 Cor. iv. 10.

thought

thought would do so; and this will be no other than to leave us finally, and for ever miserable. Let us then be perswaded, seasonably, to correct the Mistake, and since we may *see an End of all Perfection*, in the Creature, be so wise as to govern our selves in our Conduct, with Respect to the Things of this World, as those that are fully convinced, that they are not able, by any Excellency in them, to perfect our Nature, nor compleat our Happiness, and, if they were ever so perfect in themselves, cannot continue long with us.

And therefore,

1. Let us be careful not to raise our Expectations too high, and look for more in the Creature than it can yield us. We are very apt to run into this great Mistake, to augment and magnify the Creature, while we view it at a Distance, through false Glasses; and hence we are ready to flatter our selves with the Expectation of great Things from it, and thence enlarge our Desires after it: but when we bring it near to us, like some coarse Paintings, which are beautiful at their proper Distance, all its Glory vanishes, and we then see it in all it's real Imperfections. When once *Eve* had got a Conceit, that the Tree was good to make one wise, and she should be as Gods, this greatly enflamed her Desire after it; and there is but a short Step between enflamed Desire and actual Transgression: He that looks for that in the Creature which it has not, may *enlarge his Desire as Hell, and not be satisfied*, and then no Wonder if *that rise suddenly which shall bite him, and awake that shall vex him.* We must therefore learn to maintain a low Opinion of worldly Enjoyments, and always remember, that it is an imperfect World we converse with; that we may not fix our Thoughts too much upon it, nor be hurried

into too great an Eagerneſs in our Purſuit after it, nor be thrown into Uneaſineſs at the having of our Views and Deſigns fruſtrated by it. This was the Apoſtle's Advice, *(g) Let them that weep be, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not.*

2. Let us be very moderate in our Regards to the Things of this World. Let it be our Care to bring our Appetites, and Deſires, under a good Regulation, that we may not be carried away by the Vehemence of our own Cravings; and let our Labours after the World be directed by the Moderation of our Deſires. We are to be diligent and induſtrious in the Buſineſs of our particular Calling, but yet we muſt not be ſo immoderately eager, and laborious, as to neglect the Concerns of another World, which, of all Things, are of the greateſt Conſequence unto us. Therefore, as the *Apoſtle* directs, *(h) Let your Moderation be known unto all Men:* That is, let it evidently appear unto all Men, that you are not the Men of this World, who have their Portion in this Life, by your being moderate in your Affections, in your Cares, and Labours, after Creature-Enjoyments. For the immoderate Cares of the World very much tend to eat out the Heart of Religion, and, like the abounding of ill Weeds, choak the good Seed that is ſown in us.

3. Be not impatient under the Loſs of any Thing here below. The GOD from whom we receive our Being, and all that we have, is our Sovereign LORD, and has a Right to take from us whatſoever he has lent us. Our Impatience, and Murmuring, under Loſſes and Diſappoint-

(g) 1 Cor. vii. 30. *(h)* Phil. iv. 5.

ments,

ments, or that our Condition is no better, will be an Affront unto the Divine Supremacy, and Government, and argue that the World has got too ſtrong Poſſeſſion of our Hearts, or we ſhould not ſo call in Queſtion His Authority, His Wiſdom, and Goodneſs. We ſhould not therefore be as Bullocks unaccuſtomed unto the Yoke, but learn to behave as weaned Children to all Things here below, that we may be able to ſupport our Minds, under our Bereavements, with a ſteady Calmneſs and Compoſure of Soul, and may take with Contentedneſs, if not with Joy, the ſpoiling of our Goods. Thus ſays the *Apoſtle*, (*i*) *Be content with ſuch Things as ye have.* For, why ſhould our Souls be diſquieted within us, when we are obliged to part with what we know to be an imperfect Creature? This Thought ſhould teach us to inure ourſelves to Patience, that it may have its perfect Work in us, though we ſhould be croſſed in our greateſt worldly Intereſts, or be ſpoiled of our deareſt Enjoyments; *Thou O LORD haſt done it.*

4. Let us endeavour, as much as we can, to retrieve the Creature from its Imperfection. This would be the nobleſt Improvement of it, both reſpecting the Creature, and our ſelves. And therefore, to hint;

1. Let us endeavour to get the Creature ſanctified. When the Curſe, which is brought upon the Creature, by our Sin, is removed, then will it be recovered from much of its Imperfection; it will then become a ſanctify'd Creature, and truly profitable to us. For, nothing is unclean of itſelf, *but every Creature of GOD is good,— for it is ſanctified by the Word of GOD, and Prayer.* (*k*) Let this then be our conſtant Care to get the

(*i*) *Heb.* xiii. 5. (*k*) 1 *Tim.* iv. 4, 5,

Creature

Creature ſanctified by the Word of GOD, that it may become a good Creature to us. Therefore attend the Rules preſcribed in the Word of GOD, in all our Deſires, and Labours, after it, and in our Uſe, and Improvement of it; that the Word of Bleſſing may accompany it, and we may receive it, in the Promiſe, as Part of our Covenant-Portion, ſuited to our outward Support in the Houſe of our Pilgrimage; and receive CHRIST, the LORD, in and with it; ſo ſhall we have a Propriety in it, and *CHRIST being ours, all will be ours alſo.* (*l*)

And get the Creature ſanctified by Prayer; by an earneſt imploring the Divine Guidance, and Aſſiſtance, in all our juſt and laudable Deſigns and Undertakings, and the Bleſſing of GOD upon all that we enjoy. For, how can any expect that the Providence of GOD ſhould interpoſe, to lead them in a right Way, to ſucceed their Enterprizes, and bleſs what they have, and make it comfortable unto them, if they will not ſo much as pray for it? And then, thankfully acknowledge the Goodneſs of GOD to you, in beſtowing ſo much of the Comforts of this World upon you, when the leaſt is more than you deſerve. So *in every Thing, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, let your Requeſt be made known unto GOD.* (*m*)

2. Improve the Creature to the beſt Ends and Purpoſes. See GOD, in the Creature, ſhining in His unſearchable Power, and Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, and diſplaying His Glory in all the Works of his Hands; and be led by the View and Enjoyment of ſenſible Objects, to juſt Contemplations on the Divine Being and Perfections, and ſuitable Acknowledgments unto the great GOD, the firſt

(*l*) 1 *Cor.* iii. 21, 22. (*m*) *Phil.* iv. 6.

Cauſe

Cauſe of all Things. So you find the *Pſalmiſt* ſaying, (*n*) *O LORD, our LORD, How excellent is thy Name in all the Earth! who haſt ſet thy Glory above the Heavens! When I conſider Thy Heavens, the Work of Thy Fingers, the Moon, and the Stars, which Thou haſt ordained; what is Man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the Son of Man, that Thou viſiteſt him?*

And improve the Creature to an univerſal Fruitfulneſs in Good Works; in Works of Piety, ſerving the LORD with our Subſtance, by ſupporting the Honour of His Name, and the Ordinances of his Houſe, and Worſhip. So we are commanded, and ſo GOD has graciouſly promiſed, (*o*) *Honour the LORD, with thy Subſtance, and with the firſt Fruits of thine Increaſe; ſo ſhall thy Barns be filled with Plenty, and thy Preſſes ſhall burſt out with new Wine.* And to the ſame Purpoſe ſays the Prophet, (*p*) *Bring ye all the Tythes into the Store-Houſe, that there may be Meat in my Houſe, and prove Me now herewith, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, if I will not open the Windows of Heaven, and pour you out a Bleſſing, that there ſhall not be Room enough to receive it.*

Improve the Creature alſo in Works of Charity, readily diſtributing a Portion, as we are able, to the Relief of the Poor and Needy, *doing Good unto all Men, eſpecially unto the Houſhold of Faith.* (*q*) *Give Alms of ſuch Things as ye have, and behold all Things are clean unto you.* (*r*) And our Saviour hath aſſured us, (*s*) *Whoſoever ſhall give to drink, unto one of theſe little Ones, a Cup of cold Water only, in the Name of a Diſciple, verily, I ſay unto you, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his Reward.*

(*n*) *Pſ.* viii. 1, 3, 4. (*o*) *Prov.* iii. 9, 10. (*p*) *Mal.* iii. 10. (*q*) *Gal.* vi. 10. (*r*) *Luke* xi. 41. (*s*) *Matth.* x. 42.

Thus

Thus let us make to our ſelves Friends with the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs, that when the imperfect Creature ſhall fail us, They may receive us into everlaſting Habitations. This will be the Way for us to retrieve the Creature from very much of its Imperfection, and make it relatively ſerviceable to us, in carrying on the Divine Workmanſhip in our Souls, in glorifying of GOD upon Earth, and laying up for our ſelves a good Foundation againſt the Time to come; and then, when Time ſhall be no more with us, and we ſhall have no further Occaſion for the Objects of Senſe, we ſhall go to partake of the ineffable Delights above, in the Poſſeſſion of which our Nature will be perfected, and our Happineſs for ever compleat.

SERMON

The Excellency of the Divine Commandment.

SERMON IV.

PSALM CXIX. 96.

I have seen an End of all Perfection; but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

I Have named two Doctrines, as plainly contained in these Words, viz.

I. That the Perfection of the Creature is limited and finite.

II. That the Commandment of GOD is exceeding broad.

I have already discoursed to you upon the First of these, and shewed you, that the Perfection of the Creature is limited in its Nature and Measure, whether we consider it abstractedly, for so there is no mere Creature that is possessed of all Excellencies, nor, any of them, of any One Excellency in the highest Degree; or whether we consider the Creature in its Relation, especially unto ourselves, for so it is neither perfective of our Nature, nor

nor our Happineſs; and beſides there will be an End of all worldly Perfection, either the Objects of Senſe, we ſo much delight in, will be taken from us, or we from them: Which ſhews the ſad Effect of our Apoſtacy, and the Folly of being chiefly concerned about, or truſting in, the Creature, of looking for Happineſs in it, and making a wrong Improvement of it; and ſhould prevail with us all to be very careful to behave our ſelves wiſely in our Conduct reſpecting the Things of this World, that we don't look for too much from them, nor be immoderate in our Deſires and Labours after them, nor impatient under the Loſs of them, but endeavour to retrieve the Creature from its Imperfection, by getting it ſanctified to us, and by improving of it to the beſt Ends and Purpoſes, in Works of Piety and Charity.

I proceed now to the Second Doctrine, namely,

Doc. II. That the Commandment of GOD is exceeding broad.

By the Commandment of GOD here, I underſtand, the whole Will of GOD, made known to us, relating to His rational Agents, eſpecially reſpecting Mankind, as including in it our whole Duty, both as to Knowledge and Practice; or what ought to be our Apprehenſions and Conceptions of the Divine Being; and what the Homage, and Obedience, are, which we owe unto Him; and what ſhould be our Government of our ſelves, and Behaviour to our Fellow-Creatures; and what GOD will do for us, in Caſe of Fidelity in our Allegiance to Him: All of which is comprehended in the Divine Commandment.

And

And it is to be remembred, that the *Pſalmiſt* is here making a Compariſon between the Commandment of GOD, and the Creature, and the exceeding Breadth of the divine Commandment is oppoſed to the Finiteneſs of the Creature, or the limited Perfection of all the Things of this World; and he plainly declares, that the Commandment of GOD contains an Excellency and Perfection in it, vaſtly ſuperior unto all that is to be found upon the Creature; it tranſcends all other Things, which Men are apt to be fond of, and is of much greater Conſequence to them, being able to make them holy and happy, in Time, and throughout Eternity, and therefore ought more to be regarded by us than all this World.

What therefore I have to do under this Doctrine, is to ſet before you ſomething of the ſuperior Excellency of the Divine Commandment; and this will ſufficiently appear, if we conſider the Commandment in its Riſe and Original, the Subject-Matter of it, the Extent of it objectively, the great End and Deſign of it, and it's Duration. I ſhall offer ſomething to each of theſe in their Order.

I. The Commandment of GOD will appear exceeding broad, and very excellent, if we conſider it in it's Riſe and Original. It is the Commandment of GOD: *Thy Commandment*, ſays the *Pſalmiſt*. And agreeably, all over the ſacred Pages, it is called the Word, Law, Statutes, Precepts and Commandment of GOD. Though Men have been the Inſtruments of the Promulgation of it, in Part, and of tranſmitting of it, in Writing, to ſucceeding Generations, yet it takes it's Original, not from Man, or any meer Creature, but from GOD only, who by his Spirit taught, influenced and directed the firſt Publiſhers, and Pen-Men, of the holy

holy Writings : *For the Prophecy came not at old Time, by the Will of Man ; but holy Men of GOD ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt (a).*

There are ſuch evident Teſtimonials of its being the Word of GOD, from the profound Myſteries contained in it, far ſurpaſſing the utmoſt Stretch of humane Underſtanding ; from the Loftineſs and Majeſty of it's Sentiments ; from the Holineſs and Purity of its Documents ; beſides the moſt convincing Credentials, which thoſe who delivered the divine Commandment to the World, brought with them, in the Miracles which they wrought, plainly declaring that they were ſent from GOD ; as leave no Room for any reaſonable Heſitancy, or Doubt, about it : and therefore we may receive it as the *Theſſalonians* did, (*b*) *not as the Word of Man, but (as it is in Truth) the Word of GOD.*

For if the divine Commandment, or what we call the Word of GOD, contained in our Bibles, be not a Revelation from GOD, and ſo truly his Commandment, then there is no Religion in the World that is a Revelation from GOD ; for no other but the Chriſtian Religion, as contained in the holy Scriptures, can at this Day, make any Pretenſions to be the Religion which GOD requires of Man : and if there be no Revelation from GOD of his Mind and Will concerning us, and our Duty and Intereſt, or in what Way we are to ſerve GOD acceptably, and enjoy him as our Portion and Happineſs, then all Mankind muſt unavoidably periſh in their Sin ; becauſe they know no poſſible Way, by which they may pacify the Divine Anger, and obtain the Divine Favour ; which is ſuch a State of Unhappineſs as

(*a*) 2 *Pet.* i. 21. (*b*) 1 *Theſſ.* ii. 13.

no

no Man, in the Exercise of his Reason, can wish for, but must wish, and hope, that it might be otherwise. And, blessed be GOD, this is not the lamentable and helpless Condition of the World, nor ever was; but from the very Beginning there was a certain, though more obscure, or rather partial Revelation, directing Man what he must do to escape the Punishment of his Sin, and be happy forever, made more immediately by GOD Himself, at first to *Adam*, and by him handed down to his Posterity by oral Tradition; 'till it pleased GOD, in after Times, gradually to open the Counsels of His Will more clearly, by *Moses*, and the *Prophets*, and finally compleat the Revelation of His Will, in the fullest Light, by His *only begotten Son*, whom He sent into the World, and by His inspired *Apostles*; which Revelation has been committed to Writing, and handed down unto us, with all imaginable Strength of Evidence of its being a Revelation from GOD, and with the fullest Assurances of our Bible's containing that Revelation, without any material Error, or Mistake.

If we consider the Divine Commandment, with Respect unto the several Laws, and Rules, of Life, and Manners, which it prescribes unto us, we shall plainly see, That all moral Duties are wrought up to their Height, and most compendiously, and yet plainly, and distinctly, contained in the Sacred Volumn; and thereby we are more fully, and effectually, taught the Knowledge of the Holy, and what that Love, and Reverence, is, which we owe to the supream Being; and are instructed in the Government of ourselves, and how to subdue our Appetites, and Passions, to the Dictates of Right Reason; and after what Manner to treat our Fellow-Creatures, so as never to injure them, in Thought, Word, or Deed, but, on the contrary, to do all the

Good we can to all about us, so as that we may be truly Blessings in our several Relations; and at the same Time it requireth us to believe nothing that is Contradictory to our Reason, though many Things that our Reason cannot comprehend; and enforces our Duty with the strongest Encouragments, from the infinite Mercy of GOD, a glorious Mediator having appeared for us, and an almighty Spirit ready to help us; and the most powerful Motives, fetched from the everlasting Rewards or Punishments of the other World; and all of this much beyond what has ever been taught in the Schools of the ablest Philosophers; so that we may well esteem the Holy Bible as containing the best Body of Laws that ever were contrived, for the Honour of GOD, and the good Government of Mankind; I say, when we closely consider these Things, we cannot but rationally conclude, that these are plain Signatures, and evident Characters, of the Deity, upon that holy Book; and that because it is every Way so conducive to the Happiness of Mankind, and so highly worthy of a GOD, excelling all that the utmost Will of the greatest of Men have been able to reach, therefore it is truly a Revelation from GOD, and not the Invention of Men.

But then, when we add this further Consideration, That the great Author of our holy Religion has given the most clear positive Testimony to the Truth of His Divine Mission, by the many Miracles which He wrought, in His healing the Sick, raising the Dead, casting out Devils, stilling the Violence of the Wind and Sea, and all by a Word's speaking; and that His Miracles were wrought in such an open, and publick Manner, and before so many Witnesses, (and owned by His very Enemies,) as renders the Facts certain, and

and the Miracles unſuſpected; and further, that His Miracles were numerous, and never confronted, much leſs controuled, by any ſuperior Power: and moreover, that the *Apoſtles* of our Lord wrought many Miracles, in Confirmation of their being divinely inſpired in the Doctrine which they taught, and that they ſealed the Truth of their Teſtimony to the Facts which they relate, with their own Blood: upon theſe Conſiderations, there ſeemeth to me not ſo much as the leaſt Room left for any Man, reaſonably, to call in Queſtion the Truth of the Divine Commandment, but there is all the Evidence, of it's being a Revelation from GOD, that can poſſibly be deſired, or that the Nature of the Thing will admit of. And as the *Apoſtles* of our Lord were evidently under the Guidance of the Divine Spirit, in what they committed to Writing, either with their own Hands, or by their *Amanuenſes*, ſo, That their Writings have been handed down to us uncorrupt, and without any material Error, or Miſtake, is apparent, from the numerous Copies of their Writings, early tranſlated into the ſeveral Languages, where the Goſpel prevailed, whereby an Opportunity was given to many Nations to have diſcovered the Miſtakes of Tranſcribers, if there were any; from the great Care the Primitive Church took in examining what they admitted to be the authentick Writings of the *Apoſtles*; by the many Quotations, of all Sorts of Writers, in all Ages, of the more material Paſſages, out of the *Apoſtolick* Books; by the very Adverſaries of Chriſtianity, and undeſignedly, giving their Teſtimony to the Truth of theſe Records in what they quote from them; and by the general Collation, and Comparing, of all Sorts of Copies, from the earlieſt Ages until this Time: ſo that the Writings of the *Apoſtles* have been handed down to us,

through the several Ages since, by the great Care of the Church, pure, and uncorrupt. And now, upon the whole, I may well affirm, That we have all the Reason in the World to rest entirely satisfied in it, as an indisputable Truth, That our holy Bible containeth in it the Divine Commandment, as being a sure and certain Revelation from GOD Himself.

And because it is the Commandment of GOD, therefore it must necessarily be a most perfect Law, and partake of an Excellency adequate unto its Divine Author, and greatly transcend all the Excellency that is to be found upon the Creature. Were it the Commandment of the wisest, and best of Men only, we could reasonably expect no higher Degrees of Excellency in it, than are to be found in them, and therefore it would, doubtless, be, in many Things, defective, and share in the Imperfections of its Author, and not be exceeding broad, or transcendently Excellent; because there is no mere Man so wise, and good, but what, with all his Wisdom, and Probity, is fallible, and liable to many Mistakes. But because it is the Commandment of GOD, therefore we may justly conclude that it partakes of the Divine Excellencies, and is perfect, like GOD Himself.

Though it be true, that all the Creatures, as well as the Commandment, derive their Original from GOD, the Fountain of Being, who *spake and it was done, who commanded and they were created*, yet they are vastly different in their Rise, and as different in their Degrees of Excellency. For the Creatures originate solely from, and are purely dependent upon, the Will of GOD, for *whose Pleasure they are, and were created* (*c*);

(*c*) *Rev.* iv. 11.

who,

who, as the *Apoſtle* informs us, *(d) worketh all Things according to the Counſel of His own Will*; though His infinite Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, as well as His Power, accompanied his Will in the Formation of them: But, upon Suppoſition of a moral Agent, capable of Obedience, the Divine Commandment neceſſarily reſults from the Nature of GOD itſelf, conſidered in all His adorable Perfections, and not from the Will of GOD only. GOD could have choſe whether He would have made a World of Creatures, or no; there was nothing, out of Himſelf, to move Him thereunto; it was the pure Act of His Will; and it was dependent upon his Will, of what Order and Kind of Beings, to make them, and what Capacities, Powers and Virtues, to furniſh them withal: But, when he had made a Number of rational Agents, it was not ſolely dependent upon His Will, and Pleaſure, whether This, or That ſhould be His Commandment, or no; (I mean now, more eſpecially, the Moral Precepts;) becauſe, it naturally, and neceſſarily, flows from the eſſential Holineſs, Juſtice, Truth, Goodneſs, &c. of the Divine Nature, that if there be a Creature capable of yielding a rational Homage and Service to the Supream Being, the Divine Commandment muſt neceſſarily be what it is. So that the Commandment neceſſarily partakes of all the Divine moral Excellencies and Perfections, and in the higheſt Degree, and is no other than the Divine Mind manifeſted to us in His Word, or GOD Himſelf ſubſiſting in His Law.

As the Commands of a Man, were he always true to himſelf, (which GOD ever is) would be the faireſt Image of the intellectual Part of the Man, and let us ſee his Excellencies and Defects,

(d) Eph. i. 11.

much more truly, and clearly, than any of the Operations of his Hands; so the Commandment of GOD is the highest, unbegotten Image of the Divine Nature, because the essential Veracity of GOD necessitates, that the Commandment give us a true Representation of the Divine Mind, and be like GOD Himself, excellent as He is; so that the Characters of the Deity are more deeply engraven upon His Law, than upon all the Creatures. Hence it is that the Commandment is said to *be Holy, Just and Good,* (*e*) as partaking of the Divine Holiness, Justice, Goodness; (as well as requiring them of us) that is, as partaking of the Divine Nature. Though *the invisible Things of GOD are clearly seen from the Creation of the World, being understood by the Things that are made, even His eternal Power, and Godhead*; (*f*) that is, the Works of Creation plainly manifest that there is some First Cause, who gave Being unto all Things, and therefore existed before all Things, and so is eternal, and who is uncontroulable in Power, though this Eternity, and Omnipotence of the Divine Being, clearly appears from the Things that are made, yet, in the Commandment of GOD, we have a clear and full Discovery, not only of the Existence of GOD, but of the Nature, Excellencies and Perfections, of this GOD, so far as our finite Minds can make any Discoveries of that which is Infinite: and by this 'tis that we plainly see that He is an ALL-PERFECT ONE. Thus the Commandment, being the bright Image of the supream Intellect, is it self perfect like Him; so that here it is that, *as in a Glass, we all with open Face*, or in the fullest Light, *behold the Glory of the Lord*, as the *Apostle* expresses it. (*g*)

(*e*) *Rom.* vii. 12. (*f*) *Rom.* i. 20. (*g*) 2 *Cor.* iii. 18.

I

I am ſenſible that there is what we call moral Good and Evil, reſulting, as we ſay, from the Nature of Things, or rather from the Relation, and Dependance, of rational Creatures; and that there is no Poſſibility of altering, and changing, the moral Nature of them, but they are ſo ſtubborn and inflexible, as that, That which is morally Good, always was, and always will be, Good, and that which is morally Evil, ever was, and will be, Evil: But then I can by no Means ſuppoſe, that moral Good, and Evil, are any diſtinct Things independent on GOD, His Nature, and Will, and, as ſuch, have an Influence upon the Divine Will, in determining this ſhall, or ſhall not, be a Law unto rational Creatures; becauſe this would be to ſuppoſe ſomething antecedent to, ſeparate from, and having the Supremacy over, the Divine Being. I conceive, rather, that moral Good, and Evil, are founded in the Purity of divine Nature, and, when conſidered in the Creature, are no other than the Parity, or Diſparity of the Actions of rational Agents, (ſo and ſo related) to the divine Nature, or their Agreement or Diſagreement, to the Holineſs and Purity of GOD; which Agreement is what the holy GOD ever willeth concerning them. And therefore when we conſider moral Good and Evil, for the Direction of our Actions, that we may ſhun the one, and chooſe the other, it will not be ſo proper for us to ſay, that This is morally Good, and therefore GOD cannot but will it, as that GOD hath willed This, therefore it is morally Good; becauſe it is much eaſier for us to look into the plain divine Commandment, and ſee what agreeth with it, than to look into the unſearchable divine Nature, and compare all Things, that fall under our Conſideration, therewith, and ſee how far they agree, or diſagree, with it: ſo that, to us, GOD's willing

of a thing rendereth it morally Good, and His prohibiting of it, morally Evil. The intrinſick moral Goodneſs, or Evil, of Actions, is from the eternal Law of Nature; as they expreſs it, who ſeem to aim at ſetting up ſomething, diſtinct from GOD Himſelf, to give Law to the Firſt Cauſe. But I would aſk, what is this eternal Law of Nature? What, after all our Search, but the Will of GOD, reſulting from His Nature? or, the Law of the GOD of Nature? A Law flowing directly, and upon Suppoſition of moral Agents, neceſſarily, from the Nature, and Perfections, of the Deity; and therefore is the faireſt Tranſcript, the cleareſt Character, and brighteſt Manifeſtation of the Divine moral Perfections.

Thus becauſe the Commandment has GOD for it's Author, and originates from Him, in another, and more excellent Manner, than the Creatures do, neceſſarily flowing from the Perfections of the Divine Nature, and not purely from the Will of GOD, therefore it partakes of His glorious Excellencies; and whilſt the Perfection of the Creature is limited and finite, the divine Commandment is exceeding broad.

II. The Commandment of GOD will appear exceeding broad, and very excellent, if we conſider the Nature of it, the Subject-Matter of it, or what this Commandment is. And there are ſeveral Things, reſpecting the Nature, and Subject-Matter of the divine Commandment, which greatly diſcover to us the tranſcendent Excellency of it; as, the Aſpect it has upon the Honour of the Lawgiver, and the Welfare of the obedient Subject, the Suitableneſs of it to the Capacity of Man, and its comprehending the whole of our Duty in it.

1. It

1. It shews the exceeding Breadth of the divine Commandment, that it is most perfectly adjusted both to the Lawgiver, and the obedient Subject, to advance the Honour of the One, and promote the Welfare of the other. Thus it is most perfectly calculated to advance the Honour of GOD, the supream Lawgiver, to raise in our Minds the most august and honourable Thoughts of Him, and lead us to the most reverend, and profound Submission, and Obedience, to Him; that GOD, in all Things, may be glorified by us. In what sublime Majesty does He appear, when *GOD said, Let there be Light; and there was Light? (h)* With what Awe and Reverence does it strike us, when He prefaces His Law, saying, *(i) I am the LORD thy GOD?* Can we hear Him saying, *(k) Thus saith the LORD that created the Heavens, GOD Himself that formed the Earth, and made it,—— I am the LORD, and there is none else?* or read His Name, *The great, the mighty, and the terrible GOD (l)*, and not be filled with admiring, and adoring Thoughts of Him? This indeed is the great and ultimate End of all the divine Revelations to us, to impress our Minds with the Awe of GOD, and excite us to praise and honour, to obey and serve Him: And, subordinate hereunto, it consults the true Interest of the humane Nature, and aims at our Welfare, considered in publick Societies, and in our private Capacity, both in this World, and for ever in the next: As we shall see afterward more fully under some of the following Heads.

Here humane Laws often fail, and a *Licurgus*, or a *Solon*, have not been able to give such a well

(h) Gen. i. 3. *(i) Exod.* xx. 2. *(k) Isa.* xly. 18. *(l) Neh.* ix. 32.

digested

digeſted Body of Laws, as fully to anſwer all the Ends of Government; but, after all their Care, there has been left ſome wide Chaſms, through which, the Sovereign's Honour, on the one Hand, or the Subjects Good, on the other, have been ſtruck at, and deeply wounded. Whereas the Commandment, conſidered as the Law of GOD, is every Way perfect and compleat, ſo that it wants not the leaſt Iota to render it an abſolutely perfect Body of Laws, moſt wiſely adjuſted to thoſe great Ends of Government I have named, and the leaſt Derivation from it, or Addition to it, would marr the Perfection of the whole. Hence 'tis, that, in the Concluſion of the ſacred Volumn, we are told, (*m*) *If any Man ſhall add unto theſe things, GOD ſhall add unto him the Plagues that are written in this Book; and if any Man ſhall take away from the Words of the Book of this Prophecy*, (which may well be underſtood of the whole ſacred Revelation, as truly as of that by *John*,) *GOD ſhall take away his Part out of the Book of Life*. Becauſe this would be a Man's preſumptuous calling in Queſtion the Perfections of GOD, and an arrogating unto himſelf the Honour of being able to give a more perfect Body of Laws.

2. The Excellency of the divine Commandment appears, in it's being exactly ſuited to the Nature, and Capacity, of thoſe who owe Obedience to it. Thus it treats the intelligent Creature in a Way ſuitable to his rational Nature, and requires nothing of him but what his own Reaſon and Underſtanding, under a due Improvement, readily conſents to, and approves of, as juſt, and equitable; and what the Relation, which, as ſuch a Creature, he ſtands in unto, and the Dependance he has upon, GOD, the great Creator, neceſſarily demands of

(*m*) *Rev.* xxii. 18, 19.

him.

him. Hence we find the Almighty making His Appeal to the Reaſon of Mankind, in all that He requires of them, (*n*) *Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord; ceaſe to do Evil, and learn to do well.* And what can be more rational than that we ſhould do no Evil, but learn to do well? And this is the Sum of what all the divine Commandment requireth of us. Thus alſo GOD addreſſed His People of old, to call them off from the Service of Idols, that they might cleave to Him alone, (*o*) *Remember this, and ſhew your ſelves Men:* as if He had ſaid, do but act the Part which becomes you, as rational Agents; I require no more of you; *bring it again to Mind*, think cloſely, *O ye Tranſgreſſors:* Is it reaſonable you ſhould rebel againſt your Maker, and your Sovereign? And ſo you find the Apoſtle, *Paul*, ſtiles the whole of our Duty to GOD but a reaſonable Service, (*p*) *I beſeech you, Brethren, by the Mercies of GOD, that ye preſent your Bodies, a living Sacrifice, holy, and acceptable, which is your reaſonable Service.* That is, a Service fitting and becoming you as reaſonable Creatures, and what, in the Exerciſe of your Reaſon, you cannot refuſe; you muſt act contrary unto your very Nature, as rational Beings, to deny unto GOD that which is His Due: So admirably is His Commandment adjuſted to your very Nature. So excellent is the divine Commandment, in this Regard, that if the whole Body of intelligent Creatures were to ſit in Council, upon the framing ſuch Laws as ſhould be beſt adapted to their Nature and Capacity, they would be able, under the utmoſt Improvement of the moſt rectified Underſtanding, to give us but ſome faint Sketches, (for it would be no more) of this well contrived, and thorowly di-

(*n*) *Iſa.* i. 18. (*o*) *Iſa.* xlvi. 8. (*p*) *Rom.* xii. 1.

geſted

geſted Commandment, which GOD has given us in its Perfection.

Beſides, the divine Commandment requires no more than what the reaſonable Creature has a Sufficiency of Power to perform. While Man was in his State of Innocency, his Powers were every Way adequate and proportionable to the Service required of him, nor did his ſovereign Lord expect more from him than he was able to do; and he might have maintained his Integrity, under all the Allurements of Senſe, and Suggeſtions of the Devil, if he had not choſen rather to hearken to, and comply with, the Voice of the Tempter. And though it be granted, That, ſince the original Apoſtacy, and Lapſe of the humane Nature, there is no Man but what has his Powers ſo very much weakened, as that, of himſelf, he is not able to perform his Duty to GOD; (though his reaſonable Mind may ſtill, in ſome Meaſure, conſent to the Law of GOD, that it is good, yet he finds not in the Might of his Hands to perform that which is good;) and there is no Reaſon that the Law ſhould be changed, in Compliance with the Weakneſs of a Creature, who, by his own Default, has brought upon himſelf an Incapacity to keep it, in its preſent Form; nevertheleſs, the Grace of GOD, according to the grand Intention of reſcuing the Creature from his Sin, and Miſery, by a glorious Mediator, has provided ſufficient Strength for him, to enable him, in ſome Meaſure, to will, and to do, the Things that are holy, juſt, and good. Therefore we are told, (*q*) *It is GOD which worketh in you, both to will, and to do.* And ſince there is Proviſion of ſupernatural Strength for him, that, by the Grace of GOD, he may be enabled to keep the divine Command-

(*q*) *Phil.* ii. 13.

ment,

ment, and walk in the Path of Life, if, after all, he will not improve the Advantage he has, it will be intirely his own Fault; and he can have no juſt Cauſe to complain, that there is any Iniquity in GOD, that his Ways are not equal, or that He is an hard Maſter, who gathers where he has not ſtrawed, and reaps where He has not ſowed; nor will he have Room to mutter, that he would have done his Duty, but was not able; when GOD Himſelf offers to aſſiſt him by His Holy Spirit. So that ſtill the divine Commandment is adapted to the Capacity of the obedient Subject, whether that Capacity be natural, or adventitious to him; whether what GOD furniſhed him with at his firſt Make, or what He offers to beſtow upon him afterwards. And this is a neceſſary Part of the Excellency of the divine Commandment, to be thus ſuited to the Nature, and Capacity, of the Subject, ſo as to be but a reaſonable Service, and what he is ſome Way or other able to perform.

But then,

3. Here lies very much of the exceeding Breadth of the divine Commandment, that it requires the whole of our Duty, and that both to GOD and Man. Were it defective in any Part of our Duty, either to our Creator, or our Fellow-Creatures, as all humane Laws are, in many Inſtances, it would not be exceeding broad; but ſince *He hath ſhewed thee, O Man, what doth the Lord thy GOD require of thee*, and there is no Part of thy Duty, but what is fully contained in the Commandment, therefore it is a moſt excellent, and perfect Law. Particularly,

1. What can be more excellent, and perfect, than the divine Commandment is, as it includes the whole of our Duty reſpecting GOD Himſelf? This ſhews us what we are to believe concerning GOD,

GOD, what is the Duty we owe to Him, and how this Duty is to be performed by us.

First; This shew us what we are to believe concerning GOD. The divine Being was very much hid and obscured from the natural Reason of Mankind, under the Power of the Apostacy; and therefore the Heathen World, what ever were their Sentiments of the Existence of a GOD, had little or no Knowledge of the One, True, supream Deity; their Ignorance of whom laid the Foundations of that Disposition, which we ever find in them, to Idolatry; and yet much less Acquaintance had they with the Nature, and Perfections, of the true and living GOD. But the divine Commandment hath revealed to the World, to the *Jewish* Nation first, and then unto the *Gentiles*, so much of the Nature and Perfections of the One-True-GOD as was necessary for them to know. Not that this Revelation hath made such full Discoveries of the divine Nature to us, as are commensurate to what GOD is in Himself, this Knowledge is too high and wonderful for us, neither have we any Powers capable of receiving it; for thus GOD *dwelleth in Light which no Man can approach unto, whom no Man hath seen, or can see* (*r*). They are only the *Back Parts* of Himself, which GOD hath manifested to us, which yet afford us such a true Representation, and Resemblance, of his Nature and Glory, as is more equal to our Capacity, and sufficient to influence us to pay our Homage and Adoration to Him. And thus, by this most excellent Commandment, GOD hath shewed us something of the Glories, and the Wonders, of His Nature, the Perfections He is everlastingly possessed of, and the mysterious Subsistence of the Godhead in Three Divine Persons,

(*r*) 1 *Tim.* vi. 16.

or

or that this One GOD is, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST; the *Second* of which is *GOD manifeſt in FLESH*, having aſſumed the Nature of Man into a perſonal Union with Himſelf. Hence it is that we are told, (*s*) *There are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt.*

Some tell us, that this *Verſe* is not to be found in a very ancient Copy. Be it ſo. Certainly it is more reaſonable to ſuppoſe that it was an Omiſſion in the Tranſcriber, than to imagine that it was interpolated by Tranſcribers in all other Copies; as it is more reaſonable to correct a ſingle Copy or two, by the general Run of Copies, than to correct all the Reſt by a ſingle One; eſpecially in an Inſtance where the Generality of Copies agree in the ſame Sentiments, fully expreſſed in other Parts of the Writings; which is the Caſe here. For if this Text were not to be found in any of our Bibles, yet there are ſo many others that aſſert, that there is but One GOD, and that this GOD is, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, equally the Object of our religious Worſhip, equally poſſeſſed of the divine incommunicable Perfections, and yet diſtinct in their Operations, that we may with a very good Warrant aſſert a TRINITY in UNITY: nor know I of any Diſadvantage, that can juſtly be ſuppoſed to ariſe, from our calling the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghoſt*, three diſtinct Perſons, when, at the ſame Time, we ſo plainly declare againſt a Plurality of Eſſences, and aſſert the Unity of the Godhead: eſpecially ſeeing we have no Word in our Language that will convey to our Minds the Diſtinction, that the ſacred Scriptures give us, between the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, ſo

(*s*) 1 *Joh.* v. 7.

well

well as the Word *Perſon* does; though yet we do not conceive of it, when applied to a divine *Perſon*, in that Latitude in which we underſtand it when it is uſed about an *humane* Perſon.

But to go on; as the Word of GOD ſets before us the one GOD, as *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, ſo it acquaints us with GOD the SON His condeſcending to take upon Him our Nature, that He might accompliſh the great Work of a Mediator, which He had undertaken for us. Therefore we read, *(t) The Word was made Fleſh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father.* Both the Excellencies of the divine Nature, and the Myſteries relating thereto, had forever lain beyond our View, if divine Revelation had not made them known unto us: ſo that we may ſay of them, (as CHRIST ſaid to *Peter*, when he made that glorious Confeſſion of him, *Thou art CHRIST, the SON of the living GOD,*) *(u) Fleſh and Blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven.* Thus by the divine Commandment, or Word, we are taught, that *GOD is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek Him*, that He is *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, in His Being, Wiſdom, Power, Holineſs, Juſtice, Goodneſs, and Truth. With Reſpect hereto GOD ſaid to His People of old, *(w) Ye are my Witneſſes, ſaith the Lord,——that ye may know, and believe me, and underſtand that I am He: Before me there was no GOD formed, neither ſhall there be after me; I, even I am the Lord, and beſide me there is no Saviour; I have declared, —and have*

(t) Joh. i. 14. *(u) Matth.* xvi. 17. *(w) Iſa.* xliii. 10, 11, 12.

ſhewed,

ſhewed,—therefore ye are my Witneſſes, ſaith the Lord, that I am GOD. And thus ſaid *John* the Divine, (*x*) *Theſe Things are written that ye might believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the SON of GOD.* And I may add, that This leads us into the Faith, that *GOD framed the Worlds by His Word, ſo that Things which are ſeen were not made of Things which do appear*; and that this GOD upholds, and governs, the World of Creatures, which He has made, and directs, and influences them, in all their Actions; and that, to Him, we, and all rational Creatures, muſt be accountable, as to our Judge, and receive our final Rewards from Him.

Secondly; This ſhews us what is the Duty we owe to this GOD. The Commandment not only ſhews us what ought to be our Conceptions of the divine Majeſty, but what is the Homage, Service, and Allegiance, which naturally reſults from the Perfections of the Deity, and His Threefold Relations, as well as from the divine Will. I ſay Relations, not as reſpecting us only, but as they are founded in the divine Nature, as the *Father* relates to the *Son*, and the *Son* unto the *Father*, &c. which neceſſarily implies a Diſtinction in thoſe that ſtand ſo related, ſo that the one is not the other, in the Senſe in the which they are related, and yet the Relation hinders not the Unity of the divine Eſſence. Here we learn that this GOD is to be loved by us ſupreamly, and to be feared before all that are called Gods; that He is to be acknowledged by us, as our GOD, by our daily fervent Supplications, and our hearty and thankful Praiſes; that His Law is to be obſerved by us as the Rule of our Life, and His governing Providence to be entirely and humbly

(*x*) *John* xx. 31.

ſubmitted unto; that we are to reverence His Name, and Word, and Ordinances, ſanctify His Day, and obſerve His Inſtitutions; and that He, and He only, is to be religiouſly worſhiped and adored by us.

This teaches us, that the *Firſt* Perſon in the adorable Trinity, is to be acknowledged by us as the *Father* of all Things, the Author and Contriver of the whole Method of our Salvation; and as ſuch our Offerings are to be brought unto His Altar, our Bodies and our Spirits are to be devoted to His Service, and His holy Name is forever to be praiſed by us: that the *Second* glorious Subſiſtence in the Deity, united to our Nature, and, in it, working out everlaſting Righteouſneſs for us, is firmly to be believed in, as the promiſed *Meſſiah*, the *Son of GOD*, ſincerely choſen by us as our Surety, and Days-Man, unfeignedly accepted of as our Saviour, heartily beloved by us as our great Reconciler, and humbly adored as the Purchaſer of all our Happineſs: that the *Third* Perſon in GOD, even the *Holy Ghoſt*, is to be glorified by us, by our earneſt ſeeking to Him for His Gifts, and Graces, His Comforts and Joys, by ſubmitting to His Teaching, and Conduct, and by our cheriſhing all His holy Motions in our Souls, and to be worſhiped as making Application of eternal Redemption, and all the bleſſed Benefits thereof, unto us.

Thirdly; The exceeding Breadth of the divine Commandment is ſeen, in the Manner of our Performance of our Duty and Homage unto GOD; in that it requires, that all our Worſhip, and Obedience, be performed in the higheſt, ſublimeſt, and moſt ſpiritual Manner, that poſſibly can be: that we not only offer unto GOD the Calves of our Lips, and ſerve him with *bodily Exerciſe*, *which* alone

alone *profiteth but little*, but that we offer to him our very Hearts, and Souls, which must be seriously engaged in every religious Duty we attend upon. For CHRIST himself hath told us, (*y*) *The true Worshipers shall worship the Father, in Spirit, and in Truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him: GOD is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit, and in Truth.*

Besides; the Duty required of us forever exceeds the utmost Exactness of our Performance. Though, through the perfect Obedience of One Man many are made righteous, and our sincere, but imperfect, Services, are acceptable unto GOD, through JESUS CHRIST, yet we are not able to see to the whole of our Duty, much less to perform it; for we *know but in Part*, and therefore can *do* but in Part. We may, in Part, know what is our present Duty, but the more exact we are in our Obedience to the divine Commandment, we shall but the more plainly see, that there is still wanting a more perfect Conformity to it, e'er we can fully answer it: So that it is ever an Heighth, which, when we have gradually ascended as high as we can reach, in our present State of Imperfection, we shall still be vastly below the Top of. Hence it is, that Christians are commanded *to grow in Grace* (*z*) for there is perpetually Room, and Occasion, for their Growth; and no Man is so Good, but he may, and ought to be Better. Thus after our greatest Progress towards Perfection, in the Duties of the Christian Life, we must never come to a Stand, and think *that we have already attained* all that is required of us, but *forgetting those things which are behind, we must still reach forward, unto those things which are be-*

(*y*) *Joh.* iv. 23, 24. (*z*) 2 *Pet.* iii. 18.

fore, preſſing towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling, which is of GOD, in Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord (*a*).

2. How exceeding broad is the divine Commandment, as it includes the whole of our Duty reſpecting Man? For it requires all poſſible Duty from us, both reſpecting ourſelves, and our Fellow-Creatures, in the private, and ſocial Life; without omitting the leaſt Inſtance, wherein we could conduct ourſelves with greater Prudence, and Advantage to our own Comfort, or with greater Decency, and Uſefulneſs, unto humane Society. The ſacred Volume is full of Rules, Laws, and Orders, for the Regimen and Government of ourſelves, our Appetites, and Paſſions, and for our regular Behaviour towards one another; and requires of us, that *we deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and live ſoberly, and righteouſly, as well as godly, in this preſent World* (*b*): that we *mortify our Members which are upon the Earth, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiſcence, and Covetouſneſs* (*c*): that *no Man go beyond and defraud his Brother, in any Matter* (*d*): that we *put away Lying, and ſpeak the Truth every Man with his Neighbour*; that *we be angry and ſin not, nor let the Sun go down upon our Wrath*; that *he that ſtole ſteal no more*; that *no corrupt Communication proceed out of our Mouth*; that *all Bitterneſs, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil Speaking, be put away from us, with all Malice* (*e*): that *we put on, as the Elect of GOD, Bowels of Mercies, Kindneſs, Humbleneſs of Mind, Meekneſs, Longſuffering*; *forbearing one another, and forgiving one another*; — that *above all, we put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectneſs* (*f*): that we *recompenſe no Man*

(*a*) *Phil.* iii. 13, 14. (*b*) *Tit.* ii. 12. (*c*) *Col.* iii. 5. (*d*) 1 *Theſſ.* iii. 6. (*e*) *Eph.* iv. 25—31. (*f*) *Col.* iii. 12, 13, 14.

Evil

Evil for Evil; but, *if it be poſſible, as much as in us lieth, to live peaceably with all Men* (*g*).

But it would be to tranſcribe a very great Part of our Bible to enumerate all the Rules of Sobriety, and Meekneſs, of Juſtice, and Temperance, Benevolence and Charity, and the Duties of our ſeveral Relations, in the Church, in the State, and in the Family, which the divine Commandment lays before us; I ſhall therefore omit any further mentioning of them; and only obſerve, that,

The Commandment of GOD challenges the Superiority, and Precedence to all other Laws, upon this Account, in that it requires all that is neceſſary to our own perſonal Benefit, and the Welfare of the Community. Hence it is ſtiled *good and perfect* (*h*). The Laws of Men have no Tendency to this End, any further than they are founded upon the divine Law: And all the Laws which the ableſt Politicians have enacted, can't anſwer this End a Thouſandth Part ſo well as the Laws of GOD; as is plainly ſeen, in that the better Chriſtian any Man is, (*cæteris paribus*) the more worthy Member is he of the Commonwealth.

Thus the Commandment, which ſhews us the whole of our Duty, that we *do juſtly, love Mercy, and walk humbly with our GOD*, appears, in its Nature, and Subject-Matter of it, to be exceeding broad.

III. The Commandment of GOD will appear to be exceeding broad, if we conſider the Extent of its Object. We ſee that it is a moſt excellent Law ſubjectively conſidered, or what is the Subject-Matter of it, namely, the whole of our Duty, both to GOD, and Man, and no leſs excellent

(*g*) *Rom.* xii. 17, 18. (*h*) *Rom.* xii. 2.

will it appear if we view it objectively, as it reaches to every Individual among the Children of Men, and to all of Man. There is no Man but what owes Obedience to it, and no Part of Man but what is under the Obligation thereof.

1. The divine Commandment extends to every individual Perſon, among the Children of Men. However humane Laws may make a Difference between Man and Man, and be too much like the Spider's Web, which catches the leſſer Flies, while the greater eaſily break through, it is certain the divine Commandment has no Reſpect unto Perſons, but is equally calculated for, and enjoined upon, all Mankind, under like Circumſtances, and includes every individual Perſon under the Bonds of it. Hear the *Concluſion of the whole Matter*, the Sum of all that hath been heard from the ſacred Code, *Fear GOD, and keep His Commandments; for this is the whole of Man* (*i*). 'Tis the whole of every Man, or what every Man, even the whole Race, or Body of Mankind, ſtand bound unto; the whole of their Duty, and their whole Happineſs, is laid up in it. The Monarch, who ſits upon his Throne, ſwaying his Sceptre, and gives forth his Orders, and governs his Subjects by his Nod, is equally obliged to bow down his Head, and ſubmit himſelf to the Authority of the great GOD, the ſupream Ruler of the Univerſe, as the meaneſt Vaſſal that attends his Footſtool. *Be wiſe now therefore, O ye Kings, be inſtructed, ye Judges of the Earth; ſerve ye the LORD with Fear, rejoice with Trembling* (*k*). There is no Man ſo great, but GOD is infinitely greater; and He that is higher than the higheſt demands Obedience from them, and will call them

(*i*) *Eccl.* xii. 13. (*k*) *Pſ.* ii. 10, 11.

to

to an Account. Men of the politeſt Learning, and ſtrongeſt Reaſoning, are required, to give this as the greateſt Proof of their Wiſdom and Knowledge, to reverence, and obey their Maker. Nor are the Ignorant and Unlearned, excuſed from their Obedience to their high Sovereign; for even they know enough of the divine Commandment to ſtop their Mouth, in the Day of Retribution, if they do it not. Some, indeed, have clearer, and fuller, Diſcoveries made to them, of the divine Will concerning them, than others; and whilſt ſome grope in the dark, feeling out their Way, by the Uſe of their natural Powers, others have ſuperadded thereunto the Light of Revelation, which, like the Sun ſhining in its Strength, renders it clear Day with them; ſo that theſe have the Advantage, doubtleſs, of knowing more of the divine Will, than thoſe can reach unto by the higheſt Improvement of their natural Reaſon: nevertheleſs, all Men are alike under Obligations to obey the Commandment of GOD, ſo far as they know it to be his Commandment; nor will any Man ever be faulted for not yielding Obedience to a Command which he was wholly, and unavoidably, ignorant of; becauſe it can be no Law to him, not, that will not, but, that cannot, know it, for (*k*) *where there is no Law there is no Tranſgreſſion.* Thoſe, that have only their natural Reaſon to direct them, owe Obedience to the divine Commandment, ſo far as they are able to find out what is the divine Will concerning them; and thoſe, that enjoy Revelation, are under Obligations to a further Obedience to all that That Revelation requires of them. Hence it is, that where the Revelation of the divine Mind is enjoyed, *GOD hath now commanded all Men every where to repent* (*l*);

(*k*) *Rom.* iv. 15. (*l*) *Act.* xvii. 30.

and that while they have the *Light*, *they ſhould believe in the Light* (*m*); and *that all Men ſhould honour the Son as they honour the Father* (*n*). So that this is the Homage, and grateful Sacrifice, which *Kings of the Earth*, *and all People*, *Princes*, *and all Judges of the Earth*, *Young Men*, *and Maidens*, *Old Men*, *and Children* (*o*), owe to their great Creator, and his Law alike extends to them all.

2. The divine Commandment extends to all of Man, to our whole Nature, and to all our Powers, and Capacities. It reaches the Body of Man, and aims at the Government of every Member, and every Power belonging to it; that we do *not yield our Members Inſtruments of Unrighteouſneſs unto Sin*, *but yield ourſelves unto GOD*, *and our Members as Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs unto GOD* (*p*). It extends to all our ſecular Intereſts, Poſſeſſions, Employments, and Recreations, and directs us in our Purſuit, Enjoyment, and Improvement, of them. And it reaches to the very Soul, and requires the Obedience of the inner Man of the Heart, and means to direct, and influence, us, in all our ſpiritual, and eternal Intereſts. Thus it calls upon us, (*q*) *glorify GOD*, *in your Body*, *and in your Spirit*, *which are GOD's*.

And here lies very much of the Excellency of the Commandment of GOD, that it is obligatory upon the Conſcience, which no humane Laws can be, only as they evidently accord with the divine; and then, not becauſe they are eſtabliſhed by the Authority of Man, but, becauſe they derive their Authority from the ſupream Lord of all. So that whatever Laws may be enacted by the civil Power, which, to our Reaſon and

(*m*) *Joh.* xii. 36. (*n*) *Joh.* v. 23. (*o*) *Pſ.* cxlviii. 11, 12.
(*p*) *Rom.* vi. 13. (*q*) 1 *Cor.* vi. 20.

Underſtanding,

Underſtanding, improved and regulated, by an humble, modeſt, diligent Search into the Word of GOD, appear to have ſuch a Diſagreement with the divine Law, as renders it ſinful, in our Apprehenſion, for us to comply with them, we may, by no Means, ſo yield up our Conſciences to the Wills of Men, as to ſubmit our ſelves to them, but muſt chuſe, rather, to obey GOD, than Man, let the Event be what it will. Therefore when the holy *Apoſtles* were enjoined, by humane Authority, to do what claſhed with the divine Command, they boldly make a Stand, in the very Face of the Civil, as well as Eccleſiaſtical Rulers, and made an Appeal to their own Conſciences too, ſaying, (*r*) *whether it be right in the Sight of GOD, to hearken unto you, more than unto GOD, Judge ye.* And one would think, that there were no great Difficulty in determining, whether we ought to obey GOD, or Man.

And, becauſe all acceptable religious Worſhip is appointed by GOD alone, who only knows what is grateful and pleaſing to himſelf, therefore, any Modes, and Forms, of Worſhip, not directly appointed by him, or not deducible, by plain and natural Conſequence, from the general Rules he has preſcribed, I ſay, all ſuch Rites, and Modes, not founded upon the divine Commandment, ought to be rejected by us, whatever be the humane Authority that enjoyns them, or the Pretenſions to Order, and Decency, in the obſerving of them. Hence we may obſerve, that the inſpired *Apoſtle* blames the *Coloſſians*, for their Fondneſs for either *Jewiſh*, or *Pagan* Traditions, after their Converſion to the Chriſtian Faith: (*s*) *If ye be dead with CHRIST*, ſays he,—*Why are ye ſubject to Ordi-*

(*r*) *Act.* iv. 19. (*s*) *Col.* ii. 20, 22.

nances,—

nances, — after the Commandment, and Doctrines of Men?

For Man has not, nor can he have, any Power over the Conſciences, what ever he may have over the Bodies, of Men: but God's Commandments direct and govern the Conſciences of all his rational Creatures. And though from the Dulneſs of our Underſtandings, we may not be able, always, to ſee the Reaſon of what is commanded us, yet, it is ſufficient for us, that we know it to be the Will of GOD concerning us; here our Reaſon ought to be ſuperceeded by our Faith; and the Commandment, from a Conſciouſneſs of the divine Supremacy, ought forever to be obeyed by us.

I might add; that the Command of GOD extends to the perfected Spirits above, and the glorious Angels bow down before it, even that Part of it which relates to us, ſo far as it is ſuited to their Nature; they are *his Angels, that do his Commandment, hearkening to the Voice of his Word* (*t*). The Excellency of the Commandment ſhines forth in it's Luſtre in it's being ſo admirably adapted to the Natures of Men, and Angels, that while a poor infirm Worm of the Duſt is capable, in ſome Meaſure, by divine Aſſiſtance, of yielding Obedience unto it, yet, it is ſo ſublime, and lofty, as to exerciſe the Obedience of the higheſt Angels in Heaven.

(*t*) *Pſ.* ciii. 20.

SERMON

SERMON V.

PSALM CXIX. 96.

I have ſeen an End of all Perfection; but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

THERE have been two Doctrines propoſed to be ſpoken to from theſe Words, namely,

Doc. I. The Perfection of the Creature is limited, and finite.

Doc. II. The Commandment of GOD is exceeding broad.

The laſt Opportunity I made ſome Entrance upon the Second of theſe Doctrines; and having obſerved, that, by the Commandment, I underſtand, the whole revealed Will of GOD, I propoſed to ſhew the Excellency thereof, beyond any Thing

Thing that is to be found upon the Creature, by conſidering,

I. The Original of it.
II. The Subject-Matter of it.
III. The Extent of it objectively.
IV. The great End and Deſign of it.
And
V. Its Duration.

Under the firſt of theſe, viz.

I. The Original of the Commandment, I have conſidered our Bible, as containing a ſure Revelation of the Mind of GOD; and this Mind of GOD, ſo made known to us, does not reſult, purely, from the divine Will and Pleaſure, as the Exiſtence of all Creatures does, but from the Perfections of the divine Nature, and therefore in this Regard, partakes of thoſe divine Excellencies far above what is to be found upon any mere Creature. Under the Second Head, viz.

II. The Subject-Matter of the Commandment; I have conſidered the Excellency of it, as perfectly adjuſted to the Divine Lawgiver, and to the obedient Subject; as being exactly ſuited to the Nature and Capacity of thoſe that owe Obedience to it; and as it requires the whole of our Duty, both to GOD, and Man. Under the Third,

III. The Extent of the Commandment objectively, I have ſhewed its Excellency in that it reaches to every individual Perſon without Exception, and to our whole Nature, Body, and Spirit. And I proceed to the Conſideration of the Fourth Head propoſed, viz.

IV.

IV. The Commandment of GOD will appear exceeding broad, if we consider the great and glorious End and Design of it; what GOD intends it for, and what it is improvable unto. The great Excellency and Perfection of all Laws, and Commandments, are to be seen, chiefly, in the End which they aim at, and the direct Tendency, Influence, and Power, which they have for the Attainment of this End. Now, the divine Commandment aims at the highest, and noblest End, that possibly can be, namely, the Glory of GOD, and our best Good, both in this World, and in that which is to come, in Time, and throughout Eternity: this is what GOD designs it for, what it is improvable unto, and what it has a direct Tendency to promote.

I shall not, here, enter into a distinct Consideration of this great and noble End, the Glory of GOD, because I have already spoken something to it, under a former Head, and because this is ever answered, in the Accomplishment of the great Design respecting Man; the Purity, and Happiness of Mankind, being so closely connected to the Glory of GOD, that in what Way soever the First is brought about, by the same Means, and in the same Method, the divine Glory is also displayed, and made to shine forth in it's greatest Lustre. I shall therefore confine myself unto such Thoughts, as shew us the original Intention, and peculiar Adaptedness, of the divine Commandment, to perfect our Nature, and render us compleatly happy; wherein it infinitely transcends all the Excellency that is to be found upon the Creatures, which every Way fall short of this End; as I have already proved. And I shall take a View of the excellent Design of the divine Commandment, under these Three Heads,

1. To

1. To make us truly Wise.
2. To make us really Good.
3. To make us compleatly Happy.

1. One great End and Design of the divine Commandment is, to make us truly wise. The Commandment has a very great Influence upon the making of us wise for the Things of this World, and therefore may well be looked upon as excellent by us; because, as we value ourselves upon our Reason, which raises us above the Level of the Brute, so our Wisdom is the highest natural Exercise of our Reason, and is that which gives any Man the Preference to his Neighbours. That the divine Commandment is of this Advantage to us, is apparent, in that it tends to brighten our Understandings, and recover them from those Prejudices, with which our Lusts and Passions very much cloud, and darken the Mind; by which Means, it renders our Apprehensions, and Conceptions, of Things more clear, and distinct, that we may be enabled to see them in a better Light, and discern them more thorowly: Thus it enobles our rational Powers, and assists them to chuse out a right Way for us. For while the Word of GOD is, *a Lamp unto our Feet, and a Light unto our Path*, we shall not only take the more Heed to our Ways, and walk with Caution and Circumspection, and so be among the *well-advised, with whom is Wisdom*, but we shall have a more full and plain Discernment of the Path of Understanding, and clear Discovery of the Way, in the which we should go; and thus be assisted to act like rational, and prudent Creatures, who are not led blindfold, by Passions, and Prejudices, but, govern themselves by the Dictates of right Reason. Hence, when *Moses* had set the

the Law of GOD before the Children of *Iſrael*, ſaid he, (*u*) *Keep, therefore, and do them; for this is your Wiſdom, and Underſtanding, in the Sight of the Nations, which ſhall hear all theſe Statutes, and ſay, ſurely this great Nation is a wiſe, and underſtanding People.* This alſo made the *Pſalmiſt* ſay, (*w*) *Thou, through thy Commandment, haſt made me wiſer than mine Enemies; for they are ever with me: I have more Underſtanding than all my Teachers; for thy Teſtimonies are my Meditation: I underſtand more than the Ancients; becauſe I keep thy Precepts.* Thus a due Regard to the Commandment will influence us to walk wiſely, and ſurely, and help us to ſhun many Inconveniencies, which we ſhould be apt, otherwiſe, to run ourſelves into, through the Prevalency of our too eager Paſſions, and unbridled ſenſual Appetites.

But however; The great End of the divine Commandment is, to make us ſpiritually wiſe, which is the trueſt, and higheſt, Wiſdom, and which, when all is done, will be found to be moſt ſerviceable unto us. We are therefore told, (*x*) *The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom; a good Underſtanding have all they that do his Commandment.* For no Man begins to be truly wiſe, until, by the Fear of GOD prevailing in his Heart, he is influenced unto a conſcientious Regard to the divine Commandment, the Path-way whereof is pleaſant, and the End Peace. *If thou beeſt wiſe, thou ſhalt be wiſe for thy ſelf*, ſaid *Solomon* (*y*). This is true Wiſdom, for a Man to be wiſe for himſelf, for his beſt Intereſt, and his latter End; and all Pretenſions to Wiſdom, ſhort of this, is but acting for a wrong End, and to no good Purpoſe, the Folly of which will appear, in the

(*u*) *Deut.* iv. 6. (*w*) *Pſ.* cxix. 98, 99, 100. (*x*) *Pſ.* cxi. 10. (*y*) *Prov.* ix. 12.

Diſappointment,

Disappointment, and Confusion, which will be the certain Issue of it. For let a Man be ever so wise, in his Projections, and the Methods which he takes, to promote some little Interest, that has no Relation to him, he will be found, to be but a Fool, in the Conclusion, for his Neglect of himself, and suffering his main Interest to run to Ruin, for want of his seasonable, and prudent, Care about it: or, let him provide, for his present Comfort, with the finest Schemes, and most diligent Application, yet, if he has been wholly negligent of Futurity, and must remain, the latter Part of his Existence, utterly destitute of every thing that would be comfortable to him, he will find, at his End, that he has been a Fool. Now, the Design of the divine Commandment is, to correct this Folly; and it has a very powerful Influence to cure us hereof, by acquainting us, where our true Interest lies, and what are the best Methods to promote it; by making us considerate, and thoughtful, about our own State and Condition, and how it will fare with us in the End of Days; and by exciting of us dilligently to improve the Means, that are necessary to secure what is of the greatest Consequence to us, that it may not only be well with us for the present, but that our latter End may be Peace. The Commandment is therefore said, to be *pure*, *enlightening the Eyes*, (*z*). That is, the Eyes of the Mind, which are naturally obscured, and clouded, by the thick Mists, which our Fondness for Lust, and the World, cast before them, so that they have no clear, and distinct, Perception of our ultimate End, and the Way to it. *The Commandment is a Lamp, and the Law is Light, and Reproofs of Instruction are the Way of Life*; said the wise Man (*a*); because by these we are taught our

(*z*) *Ps.* xix. 7. (*a*) *Prov.* vi. 23.

Duty,

Duty, and Intereſt, and are led in the Path of Life.

The divine Commandment affords us the Knowledge of ſpiritual and divine Things, which are the moſt excellent in their Nature, and moſt beneficial unto us. What is there ſo full, ſo lofty, ſo glorious, as the LORD our GOD is? Whoſe Nature infinitely tranſcends all the Objects of Senſe, in true Excellency, and contains a Beauty, Reality, and Truth, in it, beyond all other Things that are knowable by us; and therefore ſo much the more enlarges our Minds, and elevates our Conceptions, in the Knowledge of Him: and inaſmuch as this GOD is the Fountain of all Good, therefore alſo the Mind in Cloſing with him, by our practical Knowledge of Him, enjoys unſpeakable Delight and Satisfaction in Him, and becomes ſecured of His Favour; and thus reaps the higheſt Benefit, from this moſt excellent Object, that our Nature is capable of. For by this Means, we have taken all the Care of ourſelves that we can do, have eſtabliſhed our main Intereſt upon a ſure Foundation, and are provided with all that is neceſſary for our future Well-being, yea, throughout an endleſs Eternity: and this is true Wiſdom, and Underſtanding, ſuch Wiſdom as is not to be attained unto, by the Force of our own Powers, but by the divine Commandment. For *the natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of GOD, for they are Fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned; how be it, we ſpeak Wiſdom, yet not the Wiſdom of this World; but we ſpeak the Wiſdom of GOD in a Myſtery: — but GOD hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit* (*b*). They are the Things of GOD, his glorious Perfections, his deep Counſels, his

(*b*) 1 *Cor.* ii. 6, 7, 10, 14.

merciful Designs, with all the Wonders of redeeming Love, and Grace, which lie very much out of the Reach of our natural Powers, but the Spirit of GOD hath revealed them unto us; and it is the Design of the divine Commandment, to acquaint us with those glorious Truths, and give us a just View of the things of our Peace, and so *fill us with the Knowledge of his Will, in all Spiritual Wisdom, and Understanding*; and it has an happy Tendency, and Aptitude, so to impress our Minds with them, as that we may ourselves receive the Benefit of them.

Hence, it presents us with the melancholy Prospect of our own miserable State, and Condition, by Nature; how enslaved we are unto diverse Lusts, and Passions, captivated by Devils, included under Guilt, and liable unto Punishment, in this World, and the next, great, and endless; and shews us, what absolute Need there is of a Saviour, to deliver us from all of this Infelicity, and directs us unto JESUS CHRIST, the only *Hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof.*

Hence, it opens unto us the whole Method of Salvation by CHRIST, unfolds the Mysteries of our holy Religion to us, tells us what we must do to be saved, and offers divine Assistance to us, to enable us to walk in that Way which leadeth unto true Life and Happiness.

Hence, it sets before us, the strong and alluring Arguments, and most powerful Motives, fetched from the future, unseen, and eternal World; it presents us with the View of the Crown of unfading Glory, which awaits the humble and obedient Soul; and gives us a distant Sight of the Place of Torment, the inexpressible Pain, Horror, and Anguish, which is reserved as the endless Portion of

of the impenitent, and disobedient; and all to move us to act wisely, and walk safely.

Thus *Life, and Immortality, is brought to Light, through the Gospel* (*c*); and by this Means we come to *know the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST, whom he hath sent*; and so *are made wise unto Salvation* (*d*). This is the great End and Design of the divine Commandment, what GOD intends it for, and what, if it be not our own Fault, we may improve it to. This is the great Design of preaching the Word of GOD unto the World; as the *Apostle* tells us it was the End of his Ministry, and equally is of ours, (*e*) *to open Men's Eyes, and turn them from Darkness to Light*: and hence, when it was prophesied of *CHRIST*, (*f*) *I the Lord have called Thee in Righteousness, and will give Thee for a Covenant of the People, for a Light of the Gentiles*, it is particularly taken Notice of, that one of the great Ends, and blessed Benefits, of that Designation, is *to open the blind Eyes*. And give me me Leave to add upon it, agreably to what our Saviour remarked, when he read the Lesson, out of *Isaiah* unto his Hearers, Oh! that, by our wise Improvement of it, it may be said of us, (*g*) *This Day is this Scripture fulfilled* among us. Thus, the Commandment of God appears to be exceeding broad, in this noble and glorious Design of it, to make us truly wise; to furnish us with the Knowledge of the best Things, and direct our Feet in the Path of Understanding, to the securing of our Selves, and our great and lasting Interest; which is such a Wisdom as highly becometh us, as rational Creatures, and compared with which, all the Wisdom of this World is but meer Foolishness.

(*c*) 2 *Tim.* i. 10. (*d*) 2 *Tim.* iii. 15. (*e*) *Act.* xxvi. 18. (*f*) *Isa.* xlii. 6, 7. (*g*) *Luke* iv. 21.

I now proceed, to the Second Thing propoſed, namely,

2. The glorious End and Deſign of the divine Commandment is, to make us really Good. The infinitely wiſe GOD has given us his Commandment, not only to inform our Judgment, and make us wiſe to know, but, to regulate our Practice, that our Wiſdom may evidence itſelf, by the proper genuine Fruits of it, in our Hearts, and Lives. For all our Knowledge will be but to our Diſadvantage, and render us ſo much the more unhappy, if we are not careful to govern ourſelves, in our Practice, according to it: and therefore the Commandment aims, at the rectifying of our Nature, and curing the Irregularities of our Behaviour, and ſo, to make us really good Men. When Mankind had univerſally ſunk into Infidelity, and Immorality, and were utterly deſtitute of the divine Life, then it pleaſed GOD to make a Revelation of himſelf, and his Mind and Will unto the World, gradually opening the Myſteries of the Kingdom of GOD, from the calling of *Abraham* out of *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, until, in the Fulneſs of Time, the Light ſhone with the greateſt Clearneſs, by the Appearing of the SON of GOD in Fleſh, to inſtruct the World, perſonally, and by his Apoſtles that Mankind might be recovered, in the Exerciſe of their Faith and Vertue, to a God-like Temper and Diſpoſition: which abundantly ſhews the ſuperiour Excellency of the divine Commandment. Thus, particularly, it aims, at the begetting in us Faith in GOD, and in his Son JESUS CHRIST, the converting of us from the Error of our Ways, and to ſanctify, and make us holy.

(1) The Deſign of the divine Commandment is, to work true Faith in us; that we may live a Life

Life of Faith in GOD, and in his Son JESUS CHRIST. Faith in GOD, as the Maker, Ruler, and Judge, of the World, and in his Son, JESUS CHRIST, as the only Redeemer of loſt Mankind, and ours in particular, is the very Root and Principle, of all Evangelical Goodneſs; without which, we can neither ſerve GOD, nor find Acceptance with him. The Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* therefore aſſures us, (*a*) *without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe GOD; for he that cometh unto GOD*, (ſo as to find Acceptance with him,) *muſt believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* And CHRIST ſaid to his Diſciples, and ſo to all that mean to receive any Benefit by him, (*b*) *Ye believe in GOD, believe alſo in ME.* For he that does not believe that there is a GOD, and that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of GOD, and Saviour of the World, cannot poſſibly live religiouſly; becauſe all Religion turns upon the Belief of a GOD, and That Religion only, which is acceptable and pleaſing to GOD, is founded in the Belief of JESUS CHRIST his being the promiſed *Meſſiah*, the Son of GOD, and Saviour of the World; this being the only Way in which GOD hath revealed Himſelf unto the World, and in which he will be worſhiped, namely, by his Son, JESUS CHRIST; which occaſioned the *Apoſtle's* ſaying (*c*) *Theſe Things are written, that ye might believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of GOD.*

Whatever Difficulties any may imagine they find in believing JESUS CHRIST to be the Son of GOD, in ſuch a proper Senſe of the Phraſe as imports his partaking of the ſame Nature with the eternal Father, becauſe they cannot compre-

(*a*) *Heb.* xi. 6. (*b*) *Joh.* xiv. 1. (*c*) *Joh.* xx. 31.

hend the Manner of the divine Filiation, it is juſtly to be feared that the great Bar which lies in their Way is, the Haughtineſs, and Pride, of the Hearts of Men, who cannot ſtoop to reſign up their Underſtandings to the divine Mind, as they muſt do, to credit a Report which contains Myſteries in it which they are not able to unriddle; and that therefore it is they refuſe to believe what they cannot ſee through. For, after all, there is no ſuch Abſurdity in believing Myſteries, or, believing ſuch Doctrines as contain Myſteries in them, as ſome Men would perſwade us; becauſe we are even forced to do ſo, in Nature, and in Arts, whether we will or no. And, truly, I know of no more Difficulty, in believing the Truth of a Propoſition, clearly, and diſtinctly, expreſſed, (that is, in ſuch plain Terms as I fully underſtand,) when it is handed to me by divine Revelation, (which Propoſition, nevertheleſs, contains a Doctrine that couches Myſteries in it, which I do not underſtand) than there is in believing a clear Propoſition, concerning any Thing in Nature, handed to me by my Fellow Creature, when yet the Subject of that Propoſition, or the Thing ſpoken of, contains ſuch Myſteries in it, as neither I, nor any Man living, are able to explain. As, for Inſtance, *all Bodies are endowed with a Power of Gravitation*: or, if you deſire a more familiar one, *The Sun gives Light.*

Now, this is what the divine Commandment aims at, to produce this Faith in us, in GOD, and CHRIST, as the vital Principle of all ſpiritual Life, and the Spring of all our acceptable Obedience. Hence it declares to us the Being, Perfections, Works, Dominion, and Will of GOD: Hence it ſets JESUS CHRIST before us, in all his amiable Excellencies, and altogether lovely, in the

the high Concern he has expreſſed for our Welfare, and the wonderful Methods he has taken to manifeſt his prevailing Love to us; it ſhews him to us, in all the Charms, and Endearments, of a *GOD incarnate*, wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, bruiſed for our Iniquities, and as having freely laid down his Life for us miſerable Sinners. Hence the Commandment ſo often urges this upon us, as our indiſpenſible Duty, that we believe in JESUS CHRIST, (*d*) *This is his Commandment, that ye believe on the Name of his Son JESUS CHRIST.* Hence it uſes the moſt powerful Motives, the weightieſt Conſiderations, to accompliſh a Work of Faith in us. It gives us the fulleſt Evidence, the moſt inconteſtible Teſtimony, of the Truth of the whole Goſpel of CHRIST, and his own Miſſion from the Father, as *confirmed unto us by them that heard Him*, (aſſert his Miſſion, and deliver his Doctrines) *GOD alſo bearing them Witneſs, both with Signs, and Wonders, with diverſe Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt* (*e*). So that there is no Room for us reaſonably to doubt the Certainty of his Miſſion from GOD, or, conſequently, to ſuſpect the Truth of the Doctrines, and Precepts, which he has taught. It gives us full Proof of JESUS CHRIST his being the ancient promiſed *Meſſiah*, the Son of GOD, the Prince of Peace, in the exact Agreement of all the Characteriſticks, ſpoken of in the old Teſtament, unto him, and him only; as, the Time of his appearing in the World, the Circumſtances of his Appearance, the Deſcription of his Perſon, by the particular Events befalling him, the Contempt that ſhould be poured upon him, the Death he ſhould ſubmit to, his Triumphs over the Grave, the Extent, and Glory, of his

(*d*) 1 *Joh.* iii. 23. (*e*) *Heb.* ii. 3, 4.

Kingdom; these, with many other Predictions concerning him, having their exact Accomplishment in JESUS CHRIST, and in him only, are an unquestionable Evidence of his being the true *Messiah*. And if CHRIST be the true *Messiah*, and sent from GOD, we may be sure he has told us the Truth, however sublime, and exceeding our Comprehension, the Doctrines he has taught us may be. Because GOD, who perfectly knows all things, would send none upon his Errand, and under the Character of HIS SON, especially, in so important an Affair, wherein his own Glory, and the Happiness of Mankind, are so nearly concerned, but such an One as would keep exactly to his Instructions, and publish the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth. And all of this full, and clear Evidence, which the Word of GOD affords us, of the Messiahship, and Mission, of CHRIST is, to prevail upon us to credit the Report of the Gospel, and submit ourselves unto the Government of it.

In short; without the Commandment, or revealed Will, of GOD, there can be nothing of this Faith, which is so necessary to the religious and Christian Life; and consequently, the Life of Man, here, would be little better than that of the Brutes, and his Condition, hereafter, that of Devils: for, as the *Apostle* well argues, (*f*) *how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher? — So then Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of GOD*: which clearly evidences it to be the Design of the Commandment, to beget Faith in us, that we may not remain in Infidelity, and Unbelief of GOD, and his Son JESUS CHRIST, and so be destitute of the first moving Principle of all real

(*f*) *Rom.* x. 14, 17.

Goodness.

Goodneſs. Hence alſo, the ſame *Apoſtle* elſewhere obſerves, *(g) if our Goſpel be hid, it is hid unto them that are loſt:* becauſe they are deſtitute of the ordinary, and proper Means, appointed by GOD, by which a true and ſaving Faith is wrought in them. How far the Faith of the one ſupream GOD, reſulting from the Works of his Hands, with a correſpondent Care to pleaſe him, according to a Man's natural Light, may avail to Acceptance with him, through the Mediation of his Son, we are not able poſitively to determine; but we are led by Revelation to ſuſpend all Hope concerning ſuch, as well as from the general View of the World; the wiſe Man aſſuring us, *where there is no Viſion the People periſh* *.

(2.) The Deſign of the Divine Commandment is to convert the Soul. The omnipotent, and wiſe Creator made all his Creatures Good, and therefore Man, a moral Agent, morally Good; for it was impoſſible that his Creator ſhould make him vicious, without being himſelf either weak, or depraved, both of which are Blaſphemies of too high a Degree to be imputed to the infinitely Great, and Holy GOD. But though GOD, at firſt, made Man morally good, and free from all irregular Appetites, and Paſſions, yet he made him capable of being invaded by them, and brought into Subjection to them: And accordingly, we ſee that humane Nature, which once had the beautiful Image of GOD ſhining full upon it in Knowledge, Righteouſneſs, and Holineſs, now greatly ſtained and polluted; ſo that it may be ſaid of all Men, whether *Jew*, or *Gentile*, as the *Apoſtle* ſpeaks, *(h) All have ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of GOD.* The firſt Sin, of the firſt Man, was what we call the Fall, the Fall of the

(g) 2 *Cor.* iv. 3. * *Prov.* xxix. 18. *(h) Rom.* iii. 23.

humane

humane Nature from its GOD, and Happineſs. I know there are ſome who admit of the Fall of the firſt Man, according to the Account we have thereof, in the Beginning of our Bibles, but imagine, and I think vainly, that all the Hurt done to the humane Nature thereby is, that the Body hath received ſome Damage, is weakened, and become liable to Mortality. But I ſhould look upon it as much more agreeable to Reaſon, as well as Revelation, that the Soul, or Mind, the chief Agent in Sinning, ſhould be the chief Sufferer, in the Effects of it; and, as one Act of Sin hath turned Angels into Devils, ſo the Sin of the firſt Man hath brought an univerſal Diſorder upon the whole humane Nature. By this Fall from GOD, the Man has fallen from his Perfection, and greatly enfeebled, and debaſed his Nature, and brought a Stain and Blemiſh upon it, by his Soul's being ſunk under the Power of corrupt, and vain Affections, and Luſts; by which Means, he has loſt the Image of his Maker, which was at firſt put upon him, and has contracted the Likeneſs of the impure, the falſe, the malicious, and revengeful Spirit; and ſo is become unfit, both, for the Service of the pure and holy GOD, and the Enjoyment of him, until there is a bleſſed Change wrought in him, *tranſlating of him, out of the Kingdom of Satan, into the Kingdom of GOD's dear Son.*

For, that Heart which is naturally full of Sin, and Enmity againſt GOD, and wholly bent to tranſgreſs his holy Law, muſt be firſt altered, changed, renewed, by the Workmanſhip of the divine Spirit upon it, before it can poſſibly be in a State of Friendſhip with GOD, or take Delight in doing his Will; the Tree muſt be made Good, that the Fruit may be Good: And therefore

fore it is we are told, *They that are in the Flesh, cannot please GOD* (*h*); and, *Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* (*i*)

Now the great End and Design of the divine Commandment is, to accomplish this beautiful, and glorious Change in the Soul of a Sinner, to recover him from the Empire of Sin, and Satan, over him, to free him from the Dominion of his sordid Lusts, and Passions, and vindicate him into the Liberties of the Sons of GOD, that is, to make a new Creature of him, and restore him to that Perfection, and Integrity, which he lost. The *Psalmist* therefore takes Notice of this, as the End of the Commandment, and what stamps a peculiar Excellency upon it; ‖ *The Law of the LORD is perfect, converting the Soul.*

This convinces the Sinner that he is so, and shews him the vile, and odious, Nature of Sin, and what a mean and despicable Creature it renders him, prepostrous in his Views, irrational in his Actions, a Slave to more than brutish Appetites, ever acting below himself, ever hurting and wounding himself, and bringing Reproach, and Shame, upon himself; of all which, until he has a thorow Sight and Sense, and feels something of the Smart and Pain, in the Uneasiness of his Mind, at his Condition, he is never like to be a true Convert. The first Thing in Conversion is, to bring the Sinner to a suitable Conviction of his present wretched, miserable, Condition, by Reason of Sin. For the *Whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick* (*k*). While a Man thinketh himself to be whole, be he ever so sick, he is not apprehensive of his Danger, and

(*h*) *Rom.* viii. 8. (*i*) *Matth.* xviii. 3. ‖ *Psal.* xix. 7. (*k*) *Matth.* ix. 12,

therefore

therefore is at no Pains to ſeek out for Help; but when once he comes ſo much to himſelf, as, to feel himſelf ſick, then a Phyſician will be welcome to him, and he will be in earneſt in ſeeking Help from him, and in following his Directions, in Hope of a Cure. So the Soul muſt firſt feel, perceive, and be thorowly ſenſible, of its own ſick, and dangerous, Condition; that is, it muſt be thorowly convinced of its own Sinfulneſs, and the infinite Evil of Sin, that the *Wrath of GOD cometh upon the Children of Diſobedience*; that is, it muſt ſee it ſelf *dead*, and *damned*, in the Eye of the Law, by Reaſon of Sin, before it will look to CHRIST for Help, or take any Pains to alter its preſent Temper and Courſe. And this Conviction 'tis the Deſign of the divine Commandment to bring the Sinner to.

Therefore you find the holy Apoſtle *Paul*, from his own Experience, aſſuring of us, *(k)* That *he was alive without the Law once*; that is, in his own Apprehenſion, all was well with him, ſo ſtupidly ignorant was he of the Diſorders of his own Heart, and inſenſible of the Irregularity of his Actions, and what all would end in, as that he knew nothing amiſs in himſelf, and feared no Danger: *But* (ſays he) *when the Commandment came, Sin revived, and I died:* That is, when the exceeding broad Commandment was brought home to him, and appeared in its true Light, and full Extent, then he ſaw the Life and Power of Sin in him, and what a baſe and unreaſonable Part he had been acting all his Life long, in tranſgreſſing that holy and good Commandment; and he ſaw what was the Fruit, and Wages, of Sin, that it expoſed him to the Wrath and Curſe of Almighty GOD; and this was a full Con-

(k) Rom. vii. 9.

viction

viction to him, that he needed a Change both, in the Temper of his Mind, and in his State, otherwise he was a dead Man, dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, and under a Sentence of Condemnation, as the juſt Puniſhment of all his Folly.

Beſides; the Commandment means not only, to give us a Sight of our Weakneſs, and Diſorder, but, effectually to recover us from under the Power of them; to convince us of our Sin, and ſubdue it in us, to break us off from our Love to, and Delight in, Vanity, and convert us from the Error of our Ways. Therefore it publiſhes to us what is the poſitive Will and Pleaſure of our high Sovereign, that we may know what our Lord and Maſter requires of us; that *GOD hath commanded all Men every where now to repent* (*l*); *caſt away from you all your Tranſgreſſions, whereby ye have tranſgreſſed, and make you a new Heart, and a new Spirit* (*m*): And again, *Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the Evil of your Doings, from before mine Eyes; ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well.* (*n*) Thus does the divine Commandment poſitively enjoin Repentance, and Renovation of Heart, and Life, upon us: And, that it might carry the greater Force with it, and work us into a Compliance with what it demands of us, it preſſes our Duty upon us with the moſt moving Conſiderations, with the Hopes of Pardon, and Mercy, from a gracious GOD, if we ſincerely repent, and turn, from our evil Ways; (*o*) *Let the Wicked forſake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy on him, and to our GOD, for he will abundantly pardon:* And it threatens the

(*l*) *Acts* xvii. 30. (*m*) *Ezek.* xviii. 31. (*n*) *Iſa.* i. 16, 17. (*o*) *Iſa.* lv. 7.

moſt

most terrible Punishment, the most amazing Misery, in Case we refuse to hearken to the Demand, and chuse to go on in our Sins; (*p*) That *GOD will render Indignation, and Wrath, Tribulation, and Anguish, to every Soul of Man that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.* And that the Threatning might not lose its Force, by our vainly imagining, that a good GOD will not be so severe upon us, but will be better to us than his Word, he has let us know what he has already done unto sinning Angels, though a more noble Order of Beings than our selves: That *He hath reserved them, in everlasting Chains, under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the great Day.* (*q*)

Yea further; Through the Assistance of the divine Spirit, the Commandment becomes effectual for the Conversion of the Sinner. Accordingly, the *Apostle* says, (*r*) *The Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through GOD, to the pulling down of strong Holds, casting down Imaginations, and every high Thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledge of GOD, and bringing into Captivity, every Thought, to the Obedience of Christ.* And when GOD gives Men up to reprobate Minds, that the Word shall have no Power upon them to convert them, it is *by making their Hearts fat, and their Ears heavy, and by shutting their Eyes, lest they see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and should understand with their Hearts, and should be converted.* (*s*)

And GOD has been pleased to honour his own Commandment, by making use of the preaching of the Word, as the ordinary Means by which Sinners have been converted; which made the

(*p*) *Rom.* ii. 6, 9. (*q*) *Jude* ver. 6. (*r*) 2 *Cor.* x. 4. (*s*) *Isa.* vi. 10.

Apostle

Apoſtle ſay, (*t*) *I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of CHRIST; for it is the Power of GOD unto Salvation, unto every one that believeth.* Thus by the Preaching of *Peter*, and the other *Apoſtles*, at Pentecoſt, (*u*) *about three Thouſand were pricked at the Heart, and ſaid, Men, and Brethren, what ſhall we do? and they gladly received the Word, and were baptiſed.* Thus alſo, by the preaching of *Paul*, (*w*) *the Lord opened the Heart of Lydia*: that is, ſhe became a real Convert, whoſe Heart received the Word, and ſubmitted to it. And this is ever the gracious Deſign of the Word, wherever it comes, to turn Men from Darkneſs, to Light, and from the Power of Satan, unto GOD, that they may be made really good Men. Wherefore,

(3.) The Deſign of the divine Commandment is, to ſanctify us, and make us holy; to make us Partakers of the divine Nature, and influence us to live the divine Life. *Whereby is given unto us exceeding great and precious Promiſes, that by theſe you might be Partakers of the divine Nature* (*x*). Holineſs is the Glory of the divine Nature; (*y*) *GOD is glorious in Holineſs.* Holineſs, in us, is our Conformity unto the Image of GOD, in Righteouſneſs, Mercy, and Truth &c, and in our Love to all that is good, and Hatred of all that is evil; and this is to be *perfect, as our Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect.* This is that which the divine Commandment aims at, and what it has a direct Tendency to produce in us. It does not mean to convert us from Sin, and leave us in a State of Indifferency, or to make us only negatively holy, but it's Deſign is, to make us poſitively holy, in the Stamp, and

(*t*) *Rom.* i. 16. (*u*) *Act.* ii. 37, 41. (*w*) *Act.* xvi. 14. (*x*) 2 *Pet.* i. 4. (*y*) *Exod.* xv. 11.

Characters

Characters of the divine Likeneſs, renewed upon our Souls, and in our living in the Exerciſe of thoſe Vertues, and Graces, which are required of us; that is, That we improve the Grace conferred upon us in our firſt Converſion, and make Progreſs in mortifying of our corrupt Part, and living more in Conformity unto the Will of GOD: and it is our own Fault, if we do not improve the Commandment ſo as to anſwer the good End which GOD aims at, in giving it unto us.

Hence it enjoyns Holineſs upon us, in the general; (*z*) *As he who hath called you is holy, ſo be ye holy, in all Manner of Converſation; becauſe it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy.* And it directs us to the particular Vertues of which Holineſs conſiſts: That (*a*) *whatſoever Things are true, whatſoever Things are honeſt, whatſoever Things are juſt, whatſoever Things are pure, whatſoever Things are lovely, whatſoever Things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praiſe, think on theſe Things.* (*b*) *Add to your Faith, Vertue; and to Vertue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godlineſs; and to Godlineſs, Brotherly-Kindneſs; and to Brotherly-Kindneſs, Charity.*

Hence alſo, it ſets before us, the excellent Example of the moſt holy Life of the bleſſed JESUS, his Piety, Devotion, and Reverence, to GOD; his Temperance, Patience, and Humility, in the Government of himſelf; and his Righteouſneſs, Meekneſs, Benevolence, and Charity, in his Behaviour towards Man; and all to raiſe our Ambition, that we may go and do likewiſe: And it entertains us with the Lives of the *Prophets*, and *Apoſtles*, and other Men of GOD, who were ſub-

(*z*) 1 *Pet.* i. 15, 16. (*a*) *Phil.* iv. 8. (*b*) 2 *Pet.* i. 5, 6, 7.

ject

ject unto like Paſſions with our ſelves, that we may learn to ſhun their Errors, and imitate their Excellencies, and ſo be Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience, inherit the Promiſes.

This is the natural Effect, and genuine Produce, of that Law which is itſelf holy, and requires Holineſs of us; which has an holy GOD, for its Author, and leads to a holy JESUS. The Commandment ſhines full, and clear, with this beautiful Aſpect upon it, *Even our Sanctification*, for *this is the Will of GOD concerning us.* (*c*) It tends to beget in us all the Graces of the Holy Spirit, *Love*, *Joy*, *Peace*, *Long-ſuffering*, *Gentleneſs*, *Goodneſs*, *Faith*, *Meekneſs*, *Temperance.* 'Tis the good Seed, which, ſown in good Ground, ſpringeth up, in the Fruits of Holineſs, unto eternal Life. 'Tis *the incorruptible and immortal Seed* (*d*), by which we are begotten again, unto GOD, and have the Diſpoſition of our heavenly Father ruling in us, and his Image ſhining upon us. The Apoſtle *James* therefore ſays, (*e*) *Of his own Will begat he us, by his Word of Truth*: And the Apoſtle *Paul* glories in his being inſtrumental, through GOD, by the preaching of the Goſpel, for the Sanctification of the *Corinthians*, (*e*) *Though you have ten Thouſand Inſtructors in Chriſt, yet have ye not many Fathers*; *for, in Chriſt Jeſus, I have begotten you through the Goſpel.* And to add no more, hence our bleſſed Saviour, in his devout Prayer for his Diſciples, informs us, what is the End and Deſign of the Commandment, in that Petition, (*g*) *Sanctify them through thy Truth, thy Word is Truth.*

(*c*) 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 3. (*d*) 1 *Pet.* i. 23. (*e*) *Jam.* i. 18. (*f*) 1 *Cor.* iv. 15. (*g*) *Joh.* xviii. 17.

This sufficiently shews us, that the noble Design of the divine Commandment is, the making of us good Men; and that the Goodness which it aims at, and accomplisheth in all the People of GOD, far surpasses all the Excellency and Goodness which the greatest meer Moralist could boast of. Though the Commandment of GOD strictly requires Morality, without which there can be no Likeness to GOD, nor Acceptance with him; yet this is not all that is expected from us; but there is something more in being a *Christian*. An Heathen may glory in his Morality; and, indeed, considering the mighty Disadvantages he labours under, a moral Heathen is a very great Attainment; but it is justly required of the *Christian*, who enjoys a clearer Light, stronger Motives, and a more powerful Assistance, that he be, and do, *more than others* (*b*), who are not favoured with the like excellent Means; that he has more noble Principles to act and govern him, that he walks by a more exact Rule, and that he be possessed of more excellent Virtues, than ever lodged in the Breast of a meer Moralist: In short, that he has the Grace of GOD, a vital Principle of spiritual and divine Life produced in him, by the quickening and enlivening Influences of the divine Word, and Commandment, accompanied with the prevailing Operations of the Holy Spirit of GOD; and that is a more exalted and refined Vertue, and Goodness, than a *Seneca*, or a *Plato*, were ever Masters of.

Thus, under these two Heads, of making us wise, and good, I have endeavoured to shew you, that the divine Commandment is exceeding broad, and has such an Excellency and Perfection in it, as is not to be found in all the Creatures; for

(*b*) *Matth.* v. 47.

thus

thus it becomes *perfective of our Nature, renewing of us in Knowledge, and Righteousness*, by regulating of our Powers, and curing the Disorders of our Souls, by recovering of us to a God-like Temper, and Behaviour, and rendering of us universally Beneficent; which blessed Privilege, under the first Doctrine, I shew'd you, the Creature was not able to convey to us.

SERMON VI.

PSALM CXIX. 96.

I have seen an End of all Perfection; but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

I AM upon the Second Doctrine contained in these Words, *viz.*

Doc. II. The Commandment of GOD is exceeding broad.

I proposed to evidence the Excellency of the Divine Commandment, by discoursing on,

I. The Original of it.
II. The Subject-Matter of it.
III. The Extent of it objectively.
IV. The great End and Design of it.
And
V. The Duration of it. All of which will help to shew us the Excellency of the divine Commandment, beyond what is to be seen upon the Creatures.

Under

Under the Fourth of these Heads, namely,

IV. The great End and Design of these Commandment of GOD, I proposed to take a View of its Excellency, as the manifest Design thereof, is to make us,

1. Truly Wise :
2. Really Good : And
3. Compleatly Happy.

I have discoursed on the first of these, *viz.*

1. The Design of the divine Commandment is to make us truly wise ; as it affords us the best Means to be wise for the Things of this World, but much more as it tends to make us wise to Salvation.

I have also shewed,

2. The great Design of the divine Commandment is to make us really Good. And this is apparent, in that it is admirably calculated, to beget Faith in us, in GOD, his Being, and adorable Perfections, and in JESUS CHRIST as our only Saviour ; as also to convert the Soul, by convincing the Sinner of his Sinfulness, and Misery, and turning him from the Error of his Ways ; and to sanctify and make us holy, and God-like, giving us the most holy Laws, and setting before us the most holy Example ; and by this Means to make us really Good.

I proceed to say,

3. The great End and Design of the divine Commandment is, to make us compleatly Happy. You see I keep in my View the two Rules, I

formerly laid down, by which to make Trial of the Perfection of any Thing, as it relates to us; and, when we examine the divine Commandment by them, we find there is an exact Agreement between them, which is a full Proof of the exceeding Breadth, the transcendent Excellency of it. We have seen, under the foregoing Heads, that it is perfective of our Nature, and now if we take a View of the Aspect it has upon our Happiness, we shall see, that the glorious Design of the Commandment, what GOD intends by privileging of us with it, and what it has a direct Tendency to, is, to bring us unto true, compleat, and endless Happiness: It means to afford us all the Happiness, Joy, and Comfort, we are capable of here, and bring us to compleat and endless Happiness hereafter.

1. The exceeding Breadth of the divine Commandment is seen, in that Comfort, and Joy, of Soul, which it aims at, in us, while we are here in the present World. We are very prone to be mistaken in our Notions of Comfort, Joy, and Pleasure, and think that they all are to be found, in the Possession of, what we call, a Fulness, and Sufficiency of earthly Delights, as Silver, and Gold, Houses, and Lands, and Children, and Friends, and the like; or in the Abundance of the Pleasures of Sense, and that there is no Joy like the noisy Mirth of Fools, reveling over their Cups, and sporting themselves with Vanity, or in the gratifying of some fleshly Appetites: Whereas, if we do but consider Things a little closely, we may easily discern the Truth of what our Saviour tells us, (*i*) *A Man's Life*, (much more the Comfort of it) *does not consist in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth.* The fullest Pos-

(*i*) *Luke* xii. 15.

sessions

seſſions are often the Companions of an uneaſy, diſturbed Mind, and the greateſt noiſy Mirth and Jollity is very conſiſtent with inward Perplexity; for *even in Laughter the Heart is ſorrowful, and the End of that Mirth is Heavineſs*; as the wiſe Man obſerves (*k*). But there is a ſpiritual Solace, and Joy of Soul, which is peculiarly the Entertainment, and Satisfaction, of the Saint: An heavenly Delight it is! Which even the holy Soul himſelf experiences, not always, but only when he is under the Influence of the more vigorous and lively Exerciſe of his Graces, and as it pleaſes his heavenly Father ſovereignly to diſpenſe his ſpecial Favours to his Children: And this is a Joy too bright, and pure, for the carnal Heart, in its dark, and polluted State, to have the leaſt Sight, or Taſte of. This is a Joy which *a Stranger intermeddleth not with.* Doubtleſs, the holy and good Man will have his uneaſy Senſations, as well as other Men, produced, by the Wounds that may be given to his Body, Name, Family, or Intereſt, which he is liable unto, in common with others, while he is in a World of Sin, and Sorrow: But yet, if, at the ſame Time, he has that to comfort him, which is an Over-balance unto all his Pains, and is ſufficient to afford him inward Peace and Joy, he may well be ſaid to be an happy Man, notwithſtanding all the adverſe Circumſtances that attend him. And this is the Caſe of every truly good Man, he not only has enough to keep him from ſinking under his preſent Difficulties, but to cauſe him to *rejoice in Tribulation.* (*l*)

Now, this ſpiritual Delight and Joy is all of it adminiſtred unto the Soul, by the divine Commandment, as the great Inſtrument the holy Spirit

(*k*) *Prov.* xiv. 13. (*l*) 2 *Cor.* vii. 4.

makes Use of, to irradiate, and comfort, the renewed Mind. 'Tis this makes us the capable Subjects of this Joy; this hands the Comfort out into the Soul; this leads the Soul to the Fountain, to drink of the pure River of Pleasures, and take in of the Fulness of Joys. Hence our blessed Lord, in that heavenly Discourse he made to his Disciples, a little before his Death, says to them, (*m*) *These Things have I spoken unto you, that my Joy might remain in you, and that your Joy might be full.* And so the beloved Disciple of our Lord tells us, in his first *Epistle*, (*n*) *That which was from the Beginning, which we have heard— of the Word of Life;— these Things write we unto you, that your Joy might be full.* Here I shall take Notice of two Things in particular,

1. The Commandment administers Support and Comfort to the holy Soul under all his present Afflictions. We know, that *through much Tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of GOD,** and that *many are the Afflictions of the Righteous*; † yet, nevertheless, our heavenly Father, in his tender Compassion to us, hath laid in a sufficient Stock of Comfort for us, in his holy Word, in the many Encouragements, and precious Promises therein set before us, suted to our present Condition, be it what it will.

Not only are we directed thereby, so to govern, and behave ourselves, as that we do not, by our Sloth and Negligence, our Impatience and Peevishness, our Rashness and Inconsiderateness, our Intemperance and Wantonness, our Falseness and Injuriousness, and many other foolish Ways, bring upon ourselves those many Distresses and Perplexi-

(*m*) *Joh.* xv. 11. (*n*) 1 *Joh.* i. 1, 4. * *Acts* xiv. 22. † *Psal.* xxxiv. 19.

ties,

ties, which the ungodly World involve themſelves in; but when our heavenly Father ſees it meet, in His holy Sovereignty, to lay any kind of Affliction and Sorrow upon us, He alſo, for our Encouragement and Support, gives us herein His gracious Promiſe *to be with us* (*t*), and *never to leave us nor forſake us* (*u*), *to uphold us from falling* (*w*), and prevent our Burdens from being too heavy for us, and upon our earneſt and fiducial Calling upon Him, to *deliver us out of them*, (*x*) *if he ſees it beſt*; and, in the mean while, that we may be enabled, patiently, and chearfully, to bear what He appointeth for us, He aſſureth us, in His Word, of His Fatherly Love, and Compaſſion, to us, under all, and that He meaneth all for our real Benefit and Advantage; that we may be more weaned from a vain and thorny World, by our too fond Regards to which we often hurt and wound ourſelves, and may be more at Liberty to mind, and ſecure, our ſpiritual and eternal Intereſt; to work upon our Corruptions, and purge away the Remainder of our Filth, that we may be more pure and Godlike; to ſearch and try us, and diſcover the Reality, and Strength, of our Faith and Vertue, to ourſelves, that we may rejoice in the Proſpect, and to others, that they may be allured unto real Godlineſs; and, finally, to be the Means to promote and encreaſe, our future Crown of Glory. And who can think ſeriouſly of theſe mighty Advantages from the divine Commandment, or have any Perception of them, without ſeeing, that here is enough, not only to keep him from ſinking into Diſpondency, in the Day of Affliction, but, to enable him to count it all Joy when he falls into diverſe Temptations?

(*t*) *Pſ.* xci. 15. (*u*) *Héb.* xiii. 5. (*w*) *Iſa.* xli. 10. (*x*) *Job.* v. 19.

Thus,

Thus, under all our outward, and worldly Sorrows, we may repair to the divine Commandment, and find a Word peculiarly adapted to our Circumſtances, from which, by a due Improvment of it, we may fetch in ſo much of Light and Joy, as ſhall raiſe us above the Impreſſions, which our Afflictions would, otherwiſe, make upon us. Thus, when we meet with any heavy Loſſes, and Bereavements, and we find the periſhing Creature wings itſelf away from us, we have this to ſupport, and comfort us, under all, (*o*) *There is no Want to them that fear the Lord*; *the young Lions do lack, and ſuffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord ſhall want no good thing*: And that, (*p*) there is *a good Part, which ſhall not be taken away.* Thus, under bodily Sickneſs, Pains, and Infirmities, we are told, for our Comfort, (*q*) *Whom the Lord loveth, he chaſteneth*; *and ſcourgeth every Son, whom he receiveth: if ye endure chaſtening, GOD dealeth with you, as with Sons: he chaſteneth us for our Profit, to make us Partakers of his Holineſs.* And that, (*r*) *Our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and Eternal Weight of Glory.* Should Poverty invade us, and bring us low in the World? we have this for our *Viaticum*, and Refreſhment, (*s*) *Bleſſed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven:* And that, (*t*) *GOD hath choſen the poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom.* Or, are we reproached, and reviled, and have Contempt, and Ignominy, poured upon us, by the ſlanderous Tongues of thoſe, whoſe Mouths are as an open Sepulchre? What a Word of Comfort have we,

(*o*) *Pſal.* xxxiv. 9, 10. (*p*) *Luke* x. 42. (*q*) *Heb.* xii. 6, 7, 10. (*r*) 2 *Cor.* iv. 17. (*s*) *Matth.* v. 3. (*t*) *Jam.* ii. 5.

in

in that of our Saviour? *(u) Bleſſed are ye, when Men ſhall revile you, and ſay all Manner of Evil of you, falſly, for my Sake; rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven.* So that if we are careful not to *ſuffer as Evil-Doers*, but *endure Grief, and ſuffer wrongfully, for Conſcience towards GOD, this is Thankworthy.*

And thus, when we are exerciſed with any inward, and ſpiritual Trouble, ariſing, either, from a deep Senſe of our own Guilt, and daily Imperfections, there is enough in the Commandment to revive, and comfort us; as that, *(w) Who is a GOD, like unto our GOD? that pardoneth Iniquity, and paſſeth by the Tranſgreſſion of the Remnant of his Heritage; he retaineth not his Anger for ever, becauſe he delighteth in Mercy.* And that, *(x) Like as a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him*: And that, *(y) Where Sin abounded, Grace did much more abound*: Or, for Fear of the Malice, and Temptations of the wicked One, whom we find continually buffetting of us, and caſting his fiery Darts at us; this is our Encouragement, *(z) GOD is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the Temptation alſo make a Way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it*; and that, *(a) for in that he himſelf hath ſuffered, being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted*; and that, *(b) My Grace ſhall be ſufficient for you*: Or, from the Withdraw of the divine Favour, and the Hidings of the Light of the divine Countenance from us; yet even in this ſore Diſtreſs we are not left comfortleſs, but may ſtill repair to the Name

(u) *Matth.* v. 11, 12. (w) *Mic.* vii. 18. (x) *Pſ.* ciii. 13. (y) *Rom.* v. 20. (z) 1 *Cor.* x. 13. (a) *Heb.* ii. 18. (b) 2 *Cor.* xii. 9.

of

of the Lord, the ſtrong Tower whereto the Righteous run and are ſafe; for he hath ſaid, (*c*) *Come, my People, enter into thy Chambers, and ſhut thy Doors about thee; hide thyſelf, as it were, for a little Moment, until the Indignation be overpaſt*: And, (*d*) *for a ſmall Moment have I forſaken thee, but with great Mercies will I gather thee; in a little Wrath, I hid my Face from thee, for a Moment, but with everlaſting Kindneſs will I have Mercy on thee, ſaith the Lord, thy Redeemer.*

Thus the exceeding broad Commandment affords Relief, and Comfort to us, under all the Difficulties, and Sorrows, whether outward, or inward, which any of the People of GOD, are liable to, in the preſent World; and that ſuch Support, ſo great, ſo ſolid, ſo joyous, as is not to be met withal in any, nor all, of the Creatures: A Senſe of which made the *Pſalmiſt* ſay, (*e*) *Unleſs thy Law had been my Delight, I ſhould then have periſhed in mine Affliction.* And it is with a peculiar Reference unto the Advantages which he reaped from the Commandment, when the whole Creation would not ſupport him, under the fierce Trials which he met withal, that he ſays, in the Words of my Text, *I have ſeen an End of all Perfection, but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.*

2. Another thing I would obſerve is, That the natural Produce, and Effect, of our keeping the Commandment is, a true, inward, ſpiritual Joy, and Satisfaction of Mind. Surely, there is nothing more delightful, and pleaſant, to a rational Creature, than the inward Peace, and Satisfaction, of his own Mind; that this be calm, and quiet, and have nothing to diſturb it. "This has been "the utmoſt Aim of Philoſophy, and the great

(*c*) *Iſa.* xxvi. 20. (*d*) *Iſa.* liv. 7, 8. (*e*) *Pſ.* cxix. 92.

"Search

" Search of wiſe Men has been how to attain it: but after all their Enquiry, it will be found, that there are no Methods, any can fix upon, which will ſo naturally, and certainly, afford this inward Satisfaction, as a ſteady, and conſtant, Obſervation of the divine Commandment, as a firm Belief of all the Doctrines, and a conſcientious Regard to all the Precepts, contained in that ſacred Revelation, will. Hence are thoſe Texts, (*f*) *The Statutes of the Lord are right rejoicing the Heart.* (*g*) *Great Peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them.* (*h*) *Her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.* (*i*) *The Work of Righteouſneſs ſhall be Peace, and the Effect of Righteouſneſs, Quietneſs, and Aſſurance forever.*

For, let but any Man ſeriouſly weigh the natural, and mighty Influence it will have upon his Mind, to preſerve it calm and ſteady, compoſed and eaſy, chearful and pleaſed with himſelf, for him to uphold a conſtant Reverence to the divine Majeſty, and worſhip him in Spirit and Truth, freely to approach to him with his humble Supplications for all that he ſtands in Need of, and return him the Praiſe of all that he receives from him; and to live in the univerſal Practice of Righteouſneſs, Truth, and Charity, injuring no Man, but being ready to put up Injuries, and paſs by Offences, and extend his Beneficence to all about him; and to reſtrain his Appetites, and Paſſions, by the Rules of Sobriety, Patience, Temperance, and Contentment in his Station, and Condition; and to have his humble Dependance on the boundleſs Mercy of GOD, and his firm Reliance upon the infinite Merits and prevailing

(*f*) *Pſ.* xix. 8. (*g*) *Pſ.* cxix. 165. (*h*) *Prov.* iii. 17. (*i*) *Iſa.* xxxii. 17.

Interceſſion

Interceſſion of JESUS CHRIST, our only Mediator, for Acceptance, when he has done all; all of which the Divine Commandment teaches, and requireth of us; I ſay, let any Man thorowly conſider, and weigh, theſe Things, in his own Mind, and he will plainly ſee, and be forced to own, That no Man can poſſibly take a wiſer Courſe, to preſerve his Mind in perfect Peace, and enjoy that inward Satisfaction, and Self-pleaſing Delight, which all the Rules of the wiſeſt Philoſophers could never attain to, than to pay a ſtrict, and conſtant Regard to the Divine Commandment.

This, then, is the Solamen of the gracious Soul! and it is ſuch a Satisfaction, and Joy, to him, as the greateſt Fulneſs of the Profits, the Pleaſures, and the Honours, of this World, cannot yeild him, nor can the various worldly Sorrows, he may meet with, deprive him of it: and this is but the genuine Effect of GOD's Commandment: for, (*k*) *let but every Man prove his own Work*, (bring it to the Touchſtone of the divine Oracles, and ſee that it agreeth with that ſacred Rule,) *and then he ſhall have Rejoicing in himſelf alone.* For what can ruffle the Soul, and make it uneaſy, while the Man is conſcious to himſelf, that he walks in the Ways of Wiſdom, and acts as becometh a rational, and religious, Creature? This takes off the Offence he would, otherwiſe, conceive againſt himſelf, for doing a Wrong, or baſe Thing, and makes him pleaſed with himſelf, and his own Actions, and gains him the Plaudite of his own Conſcience, which is more to a wiſe Man, and lays a ſurer Foundation for his inward, ſecret, but yet very powerful, Joy, and Pleaſure, than the Approbation of all the Men in the World,

(*k*) 2 *Cor.* i. 2.

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without it. This made the inſpired *Apoſtle* break forth, in that Tranſport of Joy, (*k*) *This is our Rejoicing, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in Simplicity, and godly Sincerity, not by fleſhly Wiſdom, but by the Grace of GOD, we have had our Converſation in the World.* Certainly, the Goings of ſuch a Man muſt need be pleaſant; and let the World frown, and things about him be thrown into great Confuſion, let Friends treat him unkindly, Enemies inſult him, and Nature fail him, yet his Path-Way, when he retires within himſelf, and takes a Survey of himſelf, and his Actions, affords him true Peace, and Serenity of Mind. Hence we read, (*l*) of *all Joy in believing*: and, (*m*) of *rejoicing with Joy unſpeakable, and full of Glory.* For now the holy Soul can ſay, "I "have an advocate with the Father, JESUS "CHRIST the righteous, who is a Propitiati-"on for my Sins: and if any thing can yield true Joy, and Peace, to the Soul, certainly a Senſe of GOD's being, in CHRIST, reconciled to us, and, for His Sake, overlooking our Infirmities, and fully pardoning all our Iniquities, and delivering of us from the Curſe, and entituling of us to the promiſed Bleſſing, will.

Hence alſo we read, of *the Comforts of the Holy Ghoſt* (*n*). For when that Holy Spirit brings home the Soul unto GOD, and enableth it to yield a hearty, ſincere, and univerſal, Obedience to the Divine Commandment, He takes up his Reſidence in that Soul, and ſheds abroad his holy and heavenly, Influences in it, by which it is that the Soul is made willing, and obedient; and wherever He dwells, we may reaſonably expect that, there will be true ſolid Joy and Comfort;

(*k*) 2 *Cor.* i. 12. (*l*) *Rom.* xv. 13. (*m*) 1 *Pet.* i. 8. (*n*) *Act.* ix. 31.

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becauſe it is His proper Office, as the Divine *Paraclete*, to adminiſter Joy, as well as to ſanctify; and therefore is He ſtiled (*o*) *the Comforter*; *who witneſſeth with our Spirits, that we are the Children of GOD, and Heirs of Salvation.*

Thus, the natural Produce of the divine Commandment is, the bright Rays of divine Light, and Joy. This is the *Joy of the Lord*, (*p*) and the *Peace of GOD which paſſeth all Underſtanding* (*q*)! This Comfort, and Joy, is the Saints peculiar Priviledge, and is the higheſt Degree of Happineſs he is capable of in this World; and is to him the Earneſt, and Foretaſte of the Heavenly State. This the Wicked, who live in Diſobedience to the Commandment of GOD, and have no Delight in his Word, know nothing of: but *the Wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe Waters caſt up Mire, and Dirt*; *there is no Peace, ſaith my GOD, unto the Wicked* †: *Waſting, and Deſtruction, are in their Paths, the Way of Peace they know not*; *they have made them crooked Paths, whoſoever goeth therein ſhall not know Peace* *.

The exceeding Breadth of the divine Commandment is ſeen, in that full, compleat, and endleſs Happineſs, which it lead to, in the World that is to come. That *no Man is truly happy, until he arrives at his End*, has been an old Obſervation. For, however it may fare with any Man at preſent, we know not what may befall him hereafter; He that is now in the moſt afflicted Condition, may, poſſibly, anon, have ſuch an happy Turn given to his Circumſtances, as that he ſhall never more know any thing that would

(*o*) *John* xiv. 26. (*p*) *Phil.* iv. 4. (*q*) *Ver.* 7. † *Iſai.* lvii. 20, 21. * *Iſai.* lix. 7, 8.

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be burdenſome to him, but ever dwell at Reſt, in the quiet Poſſeſſion of all that is delightful and pleaſant to him: or, however agreeable and ſatisfactory a Man's preſent Circumſtances may be to him, we can't tell, but, that within a little while, he may undergo ſuch a Change, in his Condition, as to be ſtriped of all that was joyous to him, and, inſtead thereof, to have a continued Succeſſion of Pain, and Anguiſh, tormenting of him. And no Man, that thinks calmly, will ſuppoſe, that a preſent State of Affluence, and Delight, will render that Perſon Happy, who muſt by and by change the Scene, and paſs into a final State, and of longer in Duration, of the extreameſt Want, and the moſt exquiſite Pain. No; He is the truly happy Man, who ends happily; who, whatever be his preſent Circumſtances, ſhall anon poſſeſs all that is agreeable to him, without any Mixture of Uneaſineſs, or Fear of his ever altering his Condition for the worſe.

Now, it is the bleſſed Deſign of the divine Commandment, to lead us unto this happy End, to render our final, and laſt, State in which we ſhall exiſt longeſt, and from which we ſhall know no Alteration, a State of true Pleaſure, and endleſs Satisfactions, to us. 'Tis this that informs us of a State of ſupream, and endleſs, Glory, and Happineſs, to be enjoyed in the future World, after a Period is put to the preſent Life; without which Information we ſhould have had no juſt Conceptions about it. *(r) Our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, who hath aboliſhed Death, hath brought Life, and Immortality, to Light, through the Goſpel.* *(s) The Hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, whereof ye heard before in the Word of the Truth of the Goſpel.*

(r) 2. *Tim.* i. 10. *(s) Col.* i. 5.

This ſhew us how, and by what means, this happy State is procured for us, namely, by JESUS CHRIST, who, (*t*) *forasmuch as the Children are Partakers of Fleſh and Blood, Himſelf alſo likewiſe took part of the ſame, that, thro' Death, he might deſtroy him that had the Power of Death, that is the Devil*: by whoſe *Blood we have Boldneſs to enter into the Holieſt* (*u*), *by a new, and living Way He hath conſecrated for us, thro' the Vail, that is to ſay, His Fleſh*: *who*, (*w*) *as our Fore-Runner, is for us entred within the Vail*, and (*x*) *will come again, and receive us unto himſelf, that where He is, there we may be alſo.*

This ſhews us the Path Way leading unto Life, and acquaints us with thoſe Terms, which GOD hath preſcribed, to be complied with by us, in Order to our ſafe Arrival at this happy State; that (*y*) *He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved*; *and he that believeth not ſhall be damned*: that, (*z*) *they that hear His Voice, and follow Him, He will give unto them eternal Life, and they ſhall never periſh*; that, (*a*) *it is by patient Continuance in the Way of Well-doing that we are to ſeek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality*, and ſhall obtain *Eternal Life.*

'Tis this alſo that qualifies us for the Enjoyment of the promiſed Felicity, by pourtraying the Lineaments, and Characters, of the Divine Image upon our Souls, and making of us like to GOD, and meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; thus 'tis *the Word of Truth, the Goſpel of our Salvation* (*b*); 'tis (*c*) *the Light of the Glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, that ſhineth*

(*t*) *Heb.* ii. 14. (*u*) *Heb.* x. 19, 20. (*w*) *Heb.* vi. 20. (*x*) *Joh.* xiv. 3. (*y*) *Mar.* xvi. 16. (*z*) *Joh.* x. 27, 28. (*a*) *Rom.* ii. 7. (*b*) *Eph.* i. 13. (*c*) 2 *Cor.* iv. 4, 6.

into

into our Hearts, to give us the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of GOD in the Face of Jesus Christ; and (*d*) *we are made Partakers of His Promise in Christ, by the Gospel.*

And finally, it is this that assures, and confirms, this Happiness to us, and according to which we shall receive our future Reward; (*e*) *This is the Promise He hath promised us, even eternal Life*; (*f*) *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*: and, (*g*) *GOD shall judge the Secrets of Men, by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel.* The whole Gospel is a clear Demonstration that this is the great End and Design of the Commandment, to bring us to the full Enjoyment of true and compleat Happiness; and therefore is it said, (*h*) *to be a Word able to save your Souls.*

Thus, the Commandment appears to be exceeding broad, in that it leads to compleat Happiness, in the World to come; and its Perfection will be more fully seen, by considering the Suitableness, the Fulness, and the Durableness, of this Happiness to us.

1. The Suitableness of this Happiness, 'Tis a Felicity every way adapted to our Nature, and to our Condition.

'Tis suitable to our Natures, spiritual as we are; and this renders it an happy State, indeed, because therein is possessed what is most agreeable unto us; so that there is no Jar between our Nature, and the Objects from whence our Happiness resulteth. It consisteth in spiritual Enjoyments, GOD, and CHRIST, and holy Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect: for we shall then, *come to the City of the living*

(*d*) *Eph.* iii. 6. (*e*) *Joh.* ii. 25. (*f*) *Joh.* xiii. 17. (*g*) *Rom.* ii. 16. (*h*) *Jam.* i. 21.

GOD, to the heavenly Jeruſalem, to the Spirits of Juſt Men made perfect, to the innumerable Company of Angels, to the general Aſſembly, and Church of the Firſt-born, and to GOD the Judge of all, and to JESUS the Mediator (*i*). The Pleaſure, Satisfaction, and Joy, are all the moſt ſpiritual, as are, in ſome Meaſure, the leſſer Degrees of it, which the Saint experiences here: our Bodies themſelves will then be ſpiritualiſed, and be no more capable of the carnal Joys which now affect them. The Services, and Employments, of Heaven are ſpiritual alſo; Hallelujahs, and Praiſe, and the higheſt Devotion, being the Work of Saints, and Angels, throughout an endleſs Eternity.

'Tis an Happineſs ſuited to our Condition and Circumſtances, and contains in it a perfect Deliverance from all Evil, both of Sin, and of Puniſhment. For, there entreth into the holy City above, *nothing that defileth, or worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lye* (*k*). The holy Soul will carry no Remainders of Corruption with him there, to diſcompoſe, or pollute, his Mind, and marr the Pleaſancy of his Society, and Converſe; nor ſhall any tempting Devil there invade him, but there is perfect Harmony, and perfect Purity.

There no Sorrow ſhall diſturb us, but (*l*) *GOD ſhall wipe away all Tears from our Eyes; and there ſhall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither ſhall there be any more Pain.* We ſhall then be ſubject to none of thoſe afflictive Evils, which our Lives here are often imbittered with; nor ſhall the *Second Death have any Power over us* (*m*).

(*i*) *Heb.* xii. 22. 24. (*k*) *Rev.* xxi. 17. (*l*) *Rev.* xxi. 4. (*m*) *Rev.* xx. 6.

This

This happy State consisteth in the Possession of a suitable Good, what a rational, and immortal, Soul craves after, and is delighted in. Then GOD shall be all in all unto the Soul; and the Possession of him, who is the Perfection of Beauty, will be such an agreeable Happiness, that the Soul can wish for nothing in Heaven besides him. Then the dear Object of our Affection, who hath so loved us as to give himself for us, to wash away our Sins in his own Blood, will forever appear before us, not, as on Earth, with a Crown of Thorns, and his Visage marr'd more than any Man's, but, in all the radiant Lustre of an enthroned Redeemer, surrounded with the glorious Retinue of the heavenly Host, shouting their loud *Hosannahs* to the incarnate Son of GOD; and the Sight, and Enjoyment of him, whom here we have not seen, but loved, will be the continual Satisfaction, and Delight, of the holy Soul; whose devout Breathings now are, like that of the *Psalmist*, (*n*) *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is nothing on Earth that I desire besides thee.*

2. This Happiness is most full and sufficient, answerable to our Wants, and our most enlarged Desires. 'Tis not only suitable unto our Nature, but there is enough of it, and to spare. There is such a Fulness, in the Happiness of Heaven, that the Soul cannot possibly need any thing more, to render it possessed of true and unspeakable Felicity, and that far beyond what are it's present most raised Expectations, and earnest Cravings. For, (*o*) *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive, how great things GOD hath laid up for them that love him.*

(*n*) *Ps.* lxxiii. 25. (*o*) 1 *Cor.* ii. 9.

Fulneſs, and Sufficiency, are very neceſſary Ingredients in true Happineſs. For, let a Man's Poſſeſſions be what they will, yet, if they are not, equal to his Deſires, he is miſerable, in the Midſt of his greateſt Abundance; becauſe *his Deſires, of what he has not, and cannot have, will be a continual Torment to him.* But here, in the Happineſs of the future World, there is an immenſe Fulneſs; not Streams only, but *Rivers of Pleaſure*, not Abundance only, but *Fulneſs of Joys, which are at GOD's Right Hand (p).* 'Tis a ſatisfying Fulneſs, which compleatly fills every Appetite of the Soul; and more; the holy Soul *enters into the Joy of his Lord (q).* He is ſwallowed up with ineffable Delights and Satisfactions.

In ſhort; There is enough in GOD, and CHRIST, and Heaven, to ſatisfy all the Appetites of the innumerable Hoſts of Heaven; and, whilſt each particular Believer ſhall have as much as he can contain, there remains an infinite Ocean of Delights behind, from whence all the glorified Angels derive their unutterable Joys, and yet, there is no more of an Abatement, and lowering, of the Fountain, than if there were none of thoſe Miriads of Streams continually iſſuing from it, which everlaſtingly delight thoſe happy Spirits.

3. Laſtly; to render this Happineſs truly compleat, it ſhall never have an End. The Happineſs, which the divine Commandment leads us to, not only ſucceeds to that mixed Condition which attends us while we are in this World, and is our laſt Stage, after which we ſhall know no other State, but it will abide, and continue, with us, throughout an endleſs Duration; and this renders

(p) *Pſ.* xvi. 11. (q) *Matth.* xxv. 21.

it

it a State of Happineſs indeed. A ſhort Fit of Eaſe, following upon a much longer one of Pain, is exceeding pleaſant; and how greatly would the Pleaſure be enhanſed, could we beſure the Pain would return no more upon us? What then will the long, the uninterrupted, the endleſs Delights, and Pleaſures, of Eternity be? How Raviſhing! how Tranſporting! muſt it be, for the Soul to feel itſelf in the full Poſſeſſion of perfect Tranquility, encircled with all that is entertaining, and delightful to it, and to be able to look Forward, and be aſſured, that this State will continue forever and ever? This is the Condition of the happy Spirits in the heavenly World. The Rivers of Pleaſures at GOD's Right Hand continue to flow, and will do ſo forever and ever. Nothing ſhall be able to dam up the flowing Stream; no Duration will be ſufficient to run it dry; but, throughout an endleſs Eternity, the Happineſs will remain, and increaſe, upon the obedient Soul; and the more he receives, the more capable will the enlarged Mind be of advanced Degrees of it, and be perpetually as filled, as it is extended, without ever being cloyed, or the leaſt Diminution of the Felicity.

The great Author, and Object, of this Happineſs is, *from everlaſting to everlaſting* (*r*); and this Felicity can no more ceaſe to flow from him, upon Suppoſition of a Subject capable of receiving it, than He can ceaſe to have a Being.

The joyful Partakers of this Happineſs are purified, immortal Spirits (*s*), and immortal Bodies (*t*) alſo, and conſequently the Happineſs itſelf muſt needs be everlaſting.

(*r*) *Pſ.* xc. 2. (*s*) *Matth.* x. 28. (*t*) 1 *Cor.* xv. 53.

Hence the Seat of this Bleſſedneſs is ſtiled, *an everlaſting Habitation* (*u*), *an Houſe, not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens* (*w*) ; and the bleſſed State is termed, *eternal Life* (*x*).

Thus we ſee that the Happineſs of the future World is perfect and compleat, being ſuitable, full, and endleſs ; and that it is the great, and noble End, and Deſign, of the Divine Commandment, to bring us to all of this Happineſs, and fix us in it : hence ſaid our Saviour, (*y*) *I have not ſpoken of myſelf, but the Father which ſent me, He gave Me a Commandment, what I ſhould ſay, and what I ſhould ſpeak ; and I know that his Commandment is Life everlaſting.*

Theſe Things ſhew us, that the Divine Commandment is exceeding broad, conſidered as to its gracious End and Deſign, which, we ſee, is to perfect our Nature, and compleat our Happineſs ; which none, nor all, of the Creatures are able to Effect. There remaineth one Head more to be ſpoken to, which I ſhall more briefly go over, and conclude the doctrinal handling of theſe Words. viz.

V. The Commandment of GOD will appear exceeding broad, if we conſider its Duration, that it forever abideth. Duration addeth greatly to the Worth and Excellency of Things which are otherwiſe valuable. 'Tis This that renders Gold the moſt precious of Metals, in the Eſtimation of Mankind, that it is leſs Subject to Corruption, and Loſs, by Ruſt, or to Deſtruction, by the ſevereſt Trial the Fire can make upon it, and ſo is of a more durable Nature, than any other. And this ſtamps a peculiar Excellency, and Dignity, upon the Commandment, Law, or Word

(*u*) *Luk.* xvi. 9. (*w*) 2 *Cor.* v. 1. (*x*) *Rom.* vi. 22. (*y*) *Joh.* xii. 49, 50.

of

of GOD, that, when all the Objects of Senſe are fading, and periſhing, in their Nature, yet That remaineth fixed, permanent, and abiding, and continueth ſtedfaſt forever: for, who ſhall change what the infinitely great and wiſe GOD has determined; or, alter the Thing that hath gone out of His Mouth? (z) *All Fleſh is Graſs, and the Goodlineſs thereof as the Flower of Graſs;---the Graſs withereth, the Flower fadeth, but the Word of our GOD ſhall ſtand forever.* Particularly,

1. It may not be improper to obſerve, the permanent Duration of that excellent Book, which containeth the Commandment of GOD, and handeth to us the Revelation of the Divine Mind and Will unto the World. However the firſt Ages of the World, under the Advantage of the Longevity of the Patriarchs, might have the Knowledge of what GOD had revealed, handed down from Father to Son, in a traditionary Way, ſufficiently certain, to guide them in their Conduct; Yet as thoſe Revelations multiplied, and the Life of Man was ſhortened, the divine Wiſdom ſaw it neceſſary, to direct to a Collection of theſe Revelations, (as far as there was Occaſion,) and committing them to Writing, by Men under the Inſpiration and Guidance of the divine Spirit; that there might be a more certain Conveyance of the various Truths, and Duties, neceſſary to be believed, and practiſed, to ſucceeding Generations, than the Brevity of Life, Defects of Memory, and ſiniſter Deſigns of multiplied Nations of Men, would admit of; and accordingly, all that GOD has ſeen meet to reveal, and thought proper to preſerve, through the Series of the Old-Teſtament, and the New, until the ſacred

(z) *Iſa.* xl. 6, 8.

Canon,

Canon, the Rule of our Faith, and Manners, was compleated, and there was no Occaſion for any New Revelation, has been, at different Times, collected, and put into Writing, and is contained in that Book we call THE BIBLE, the Book of Books.

Now, it is a Matter well worthy of our Obſervation, for us to conſider, after what a wonderful Manner, this holy Book, containing the Commandment, Law, and Word, of our GOD, has been preſerved, and handed down to us, through ſo many Generations; notwithſtanding all the Malice and Spite, the Rage and Fury, of the World againſt it. When *Moſes* beheld a Buſh burning with Fire, and yet not conſumed, it filled him with Wonder; and he ſaid upon it, (*a*) *I will now turn aſide, and ſee this great Sight, why the Buſh is not burnt.* That the Word of GOD has continued to this Day, after having endured ſo many Ages fiery Trial; and all the Flames, which the Luſts of Men, and Rage of Devils, have kindled againſt it, have not been able to conſume it, is little leſs wonderful and ſurpriſing. For it is very certain, that there is no Book in the World ſo directly contrary to the Kingdom, and Intereſt, of the Devil, as our *Bible* is; no Book ſo diametrically oppoſite to the carnal Views, and ſenſual Pleaſures, of Mankind, that gives ſuch a Check to their moſt violent Inclinations, that ſo pungently touches them in the moſt tender Point, by thwarting and diſturbing, of them, in their moſt pleaſing Gratifications, as this Book does, by the ſtrict Holineſs, and Purity of its Doctrines, and Laws; and therefore it would be no ſtrange Thing, but what might be expected, that Earth and Hell

(*a*) *Exod.* iii. 3.

ſhould

ſhould combine together, in their utmoſt Endeavours, to deſtroy this holy Book from off the Face of the Earth, that there may be no more a Remembrance of it among Men. And accordingly, the Enemy have made their fierce Aſſaults upon the *Bible*; there have been publick Orders, and vigorous Attempts, from the ruling Powers of the Earth, to call in, and burn, and deſtroy, all the Copies of this Book of GOD; and yet it has outlived all the Spite, and Fury, of its perſecuting Adverſaries; and has been tranſlated into moſt Languages, and ſpread over many and mighty Nations. While innumerable Writings, of merely humane Compoſition, though greatly valued by the World, have been eaten out, and totally devoured by the Iron Teeth of Time, theſe ſacred Writings, though the firſt born of Writings, have remained firm, and ſecure, through all Ages, to this Day; and no Attempts of Hereticks to corrupt them, have been able to prevail againſt them, but the Impoſture has ſoon been diſcovered, and the canonical Books preſerved pure, and uncorrupt, in every material Article, to our Times: though probably there may be ſome literal, and leſs material Errors, through the Miſtakes of Tranſcribers, and Typographers, eaſily diſcerned and corrected. So the Word of GOD abideth forever, and ſhall do ſo as long as the World laſteth. And it is no weak Argument of the divine Original of our *Holy Bible*, that ſuch a peculiar Care of divine Providence has been ſo evidently manifeſted in the Preſervation of it, as has baffled all Endeavours to ſuppreſs, and deſtroy it.

If we take a View of the ſeveral Matters contained in our *holy Bible*, we ſhall ſee that they are permanent and durable, I do not mean now the

the hiſtorical Part of the Bible, (tho' even that, being once true, remaineth forever ſo,) but I intend thoſe Parts of the Bible which refer to our Duty, and our Happineſs: and, leaving the moral Part to be conſidered by itſelf, I ſhall here only touch upon ſome other Heads.

Thus, if we conſider the ſeveral Revelations contained in the ſacred Oracles, we ſhall find, that, however they may, many of them, compriſe ſuch deep and myſterious Doctrines in them, as the greateſt Search of the humane Underſtanding is not able to comprehend, yet, they are ſuch ſure and certain Truths, as will remain forever immutably the ſame: ſo that we may ſay upon them all, (*b*) *Thy Word is true from the Beginning, and every one of thy righteous Judgments endureth forever.*

Or, if we conſider the Predictions of the holy Writings, they will all of them appear to be infallibly certain, and, as many of them have been already exactly fulfilled, ſo, they all ſhall, in their due Time, without failing in the leaſt Point, receive their full Accompliſhment; and, when they are finally accompliſhed, it will remain an eternal Truth, that they were Predictions of ſuch, and ſuch, future Events, and that the Event exactly correſponded with the Production. Therefore the Prophet *Iſaiah* introduces GOD Himſelf ſaying (*c*) *I am GOD, and there is none elſe; I am GOD, and there is none like Me; declaring the End from the Beginning, and, from ancient Times, the Things that are not yet done; ſaying my Counſel ſhall ſtand, and I will do all my Pleaſure.*

Or, if we conſider the Promiſes contained in the Word of GOD, we ſhall find, that they

(*b*) *Pſal.* cxix. 160. (*c*) *Iſai.* xlvi. 9, 10.

are

are not *Yea*, and *Nay*, uncertain, and indeterminate, looſe, and changable, but they are all of them *Yea*, and *Amen*, ſure, and infallible, firmer than Mountains of Braſs, and ſhall all of them, without Exception, in due Time, and in the proper Manner, be fulfilled unto them who are intituled unto them; being founded upon the immutable Nature of GOD, which admitteth of no Variation, or Shadow of turning; and when they are once fulfilled are made good forever. Hence the Pſalmiſt ſaid, (*d*) *Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is ſettled in Heaven*; Thy Word of Promiſe is ratifyed and confirmed in Heaven; *Thy Faithfulneſs is unto all Generations.*

So the Religion, taught us in the Word of GOD, abideth forever. Whatever have been the Alterations in the external Modes, Rites, and Ceremonies, of the true Religion, which came down from Heaven, yet, as to the Subſtance thereof, it has been, and ever will be, invariably the ſame; therefore it is called, (*e*) *the Way everlaſting*, and (*f*) *an everlaſting Covenant.* For there never was, nor ever will be, any, from amongſt the ſinful Children of Men, received into the Favour of GOD, but through a Mediator, making himſelf an Offering, and Sacrifice for Sin; and by a ſincere turning from all Wickedneſs, and patient Continuance in the Way of Well-doing. The Terms of Bleſſedneſs are forever the ſame.

I may add, the Bleſſed Effect of the Word of GOD, upon the hearts of Men, is permanent and abiding. That divine Work wrought upon the Soul of a Sinner, whereby he is be-

(*d*) *Pſal.* cxix. 89. (*e*) *Pſal.* cxxxix. 14. (*f*) 1 *Chron.* xvi. 17.

gotten

gotten with the Word of Truth, and has the divine Image, and Likeneſs, renewed upon him, in a real thorow Converſion to GOD, ſhall never periſh and come to nothing, but be perfected unto the Day of CHRIST; He that hath begun the good Work, will take care of the Compleating of it; and the divine Life, introduced into the Soul, here, by the *Vehiculum Spiritus*, the Chariot of Salvation, ſhall paſs over into eternal Glory. However frail the Believer may be in himſelf, and ſubject to many Weakneſſes, and Falls, yet, the divine Power which has taken Poſſeſſion of him, will not be forced to let go it's Hold, but, will uphold, and preſerve him; and none ſhall be able to pluck him out of the Redeemer's Hands. The Seeds of divine Grace, planted in the renewed Soul, are incorruptible, immortal, and ſhall never die, but flouriſh forever and ever. Hence we read (*g*) of, *being born again, not of corruptible Seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of GOD, which liveth and abideth forever.*

3. The preceptive Part of the divine Commandment is of Everlaſting Duration. I mean the moral Part of GOD's Law. For, though poſitive Precepts, depending upon the Will of the Lawgiver, and the variable Circumſtances of the Subject, are alterable, at Pleaſure, and as thoſe Circumſtances are changed, yet, the moral Precepts, which flow from the immutable Nature of GOD, and the conſtant Nature, and Relation, of Man, remain forever invariable. So the Divine Commandment was a Commandment unto *Adam*, a Law unto *Iſrael*, and is ſo to us *Gentiles*, ſince, through the tender Mercy of the moſt High, *the Light of Iſrael is riſen upon us.* So that the

(*g*) 1 *Pet.* 1. 23.

divine

divine Commandment endureth throughout all Ages, as well as extendeth to all Perſons. Hence the *Pſalmiſt* ſaid, (*h*) *concerning thy Teſtimonies, I have known of old, that thou haſt founded them forever*: they are deſigned to endure forever, and are infinitely more unchangable than the Laws of the *Medes* and *Perſians*.

Yea, the Divine Commandment is eternal Verity, founded upon the infinite Perfections of the Divine Nature, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be wanting, and therefore, like the divine Nature itſelf, ſhall endure throughout all Generations, and to an endleſs Eternity. Hence ſaid our Saviour, (*i*) *Till Heaven and Earth paſs away, one Jot, or one Tittle, ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the Law.* "The moral Law is unchangable, immutable; ſooner "ſhall Heaven and Earth be aboliſhed, than the "Authority, and Obligation, of the moral Law "be diſſolved †. For though the Believer, when he ſhall arrive at his happy Seat, may no longer be a Subject capable of yielding Obedience to this, or that, Part of the Commandment; (which was adapted unto him, while he was on Earth,) yet, this argueth no Alteration in the Commandment itſelf, much leſs a nullifying of it; the Commandment abideth ſtill, and forever, the ſame; becauſe the natural, and neceſſary, Reſult of thoſe Perfections which eternally centre in GOD; ſo that if there were, through an whole Eternity, a capable Subject, every Part of the Commandment, including Moral Duty, would forever remain in Force; but it only argueth a Change in the Subject, and that, becauſe of his, then, advanced State, and Condition, this, or that, Part of the

(*h*) *Pſ.* cxix. 152. (*i*) *Matth.* v. 18. † *Mr. Burkit.*

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Commandment would have no Relation to him.

To give an Inſtance, in that Repentance, and Sorrow of Soul for Sin, which, here, is the great Duty of every Chriſtian: Theſe are the natural Reſult of the Perfections of GOD, conſidered in Relation to a ſinful Creature, as yet a capable Subject of Mercy; and therefore they forever remain good, in themſelves, though, in Heaven, there is no Sinner to yield Obedience to them, nor, in Hell, any that are the capable Subjects of Mercy. Though there may be an Alteration in the Capacity, and Relation, of the Subject, by which Means he is no longer held under Obligation to perform ſuch, or ſuch a Duty; that is, is not under Obligations to obey a Law which was not made for him; yet there can be no Alteration, ſtrictly ſpeaking, in the Nature of the Divine Commandment; which is unchangeable, as GOD himſelf is. So that there is an eternal Excellency in the Divine Commandment.

Thus, I have ſhewed you, the Commandment of GOD is exceeding broad, conſidered in the Excellency of its Original; it's Nature; and the Extent of it, to every Man, and to our whole Duty; in it's great End and Deſign, to perfect our Nature, and make us compleatly happy; and in it's eternal Duration; And, upon the Whole, we ſee, with what good Reaſon the *Pſalmiſt* ſaid, *I have ſeen an End of all Perfection, but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.*

I muſt now leave the Improvement of theſe things to a farther Opportunity, GOD willing; *Conſider what you have now heard, (or read,) and the LORD give you Underſtanding in all Things.*

SERMON.

SERMON VII.

PSALM CXIX. 96.

I have seen an End of all Perfection; but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

THE last Opportunity I had of discoursing to you from these Words, I finished what I had to say upon the Second Doctrine; viz. That the *Commandment of GOD is exceeding broad*: under which I have shewed the exceeding Breadth, or very great Excellency, of the Divine Commandment, in its Original, the Subject-Matter of it, it's Extent, the noble End and Design of it, and in its Duration: and I shall now proceed to make some suitable Improvement of what has been said.

Use I. And the first Use of this Doctrine may by Way of Information, to instruct and teach us, and that in several things. As,

1. This Doctrine may serve to teach us, the wonderful Goodness, Mercy, and Compassion, of GOD to a miserable World. The exceeding Breadth of the Divine Commandment,

we have seen, lies very much in the gracious Ends and Designs of it, which are to correct the Disorders of our Nature, and to make happy Creatures of us; and since these are the excellent Designs of the Divine Commandment, what GOD aims at by it; and what it is admirably adapted unto, we have from hence a clear Conviction of the abundant Mercy, Goodness, and Compassion, of GOD, to fallen miserable Sinners, in so highly favouring of us, as to make such a Revelation of his Mind and Will to us, as may happily recover us from our lapsed Condition, the Sinfulness, and the Misery of it. GOD might, if He had so pleased, have left us in the Condition of fallen Angels, to whom He has made no such new Discoveries of his Mind and Will, as affords any Direction, and Encouragement, unto them, to return to their Duty to Him, with the Assurance, of their being forgiven their past Offences, and received into his special Favour, in Case they do so: whereas he has been pleased to deal quite otherwise with us, and has given us His Word, his Commandment, the Revelation of his Will concerning us, that hereby we might be directed in the whole of our Duty, both as to Faith, and Manners, and that we might have all imaginable Encouragement, to return to him, and carefully attend our Duty, from the fullest Assurances, that, through the Mediation of his dear Son, He is most ready to admit us into his Friendship, and bestow upon us all the Happiness we are capable of receiving. What Obligations could the divine Majesty be under to Creatures that had lost their Rectitude, and forfeited his Favour, by the Act of their own Will, to entertain

tertain one kind Thought of recovering them from that Death, and Hell, which was their juſt Due, and to give Light and Inſtruction to them, to guide their Feet into the Way of Peace? And what is there to move the infinitely great GOD, who needs us not, neither can be benefited by us, thus to diſtinguiſh us with his kind Regards to us? What, but the pure Goodneſs of his Nature, his free and rich Mercy, and Compaſſion? 'Tis becauſe *he delighteth in Mercy* (*a*), that he hath given us his Commandment, without which our Condition had been unavoidably miſerable, nor could we have known any poſſible Way of helping ourſelves.

It is true, if we had been left wholly to the Light of Nature, without a divine Revelation, we might have ſpelled out ſo much of our Duty to GOD, and our Neighbours, as would have rendred us altogether inexcuſable in the Neglect of it: for *the Work of the Law is written in the Hearts of them, who have not the written Law, ſo that they are a Law unto themſelves*, as the Apoſtle diſcourſes (*b*); and ſo much *of the inviſible things of GOD is clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the Things that are made*, (*c*) as would have forever condemned us, if we *ſhould not have glorified him as GOD*: yet this natural Light, alone, would never have been able to have anſwered the great Deſigns, of perfecting our Nature, and compleating our Happineſs; yea, I doubt not to ſay, it would have left us far ſhort of moral Rectitude, and altogether in the dark about the Way of Salvation. For, this inbred Law is ſo dimmed,

(*a*) *Mic.* vii. 18. (*b*) *Rom.* ii. 14, 15. (*c*) *ch.* i. 20.

and obſcured, by the Corruption, and Depravity, which, we certainly find by ſad Experience, attends our Nature, (howſoever we firſt came by it,) that we ſhould not have been able, by the Light of it, to have read the whole of our Duty, nor to have ſeen where our true Intereſt lay; as is very evident if we conſider the Condition of that Part of the World, in any Age of it, which has been left wholly without a divine Revelation. We very much miſtake the Force of natural Light, when we imagine, that all we find agreeable to the Sentiments of our own Minds, now that we have the Advantage of Revelation, might have been ſufficiently diſcovered to us by the ordinary Improvement of our rational Powers; whereas this only teaches us, how highly reaſonable the divine Revelation is; that the Duty GOD therein requires of us cannot be ſet before us, in it's proper Light, but our Reaſon immediately ſees the Equity of it, and acknowledges it to be good; and not what we ſhould have been able to have ſeen, by the Strength of our own Reaſon, without Revelation. It no more infers the Capacity of our natural Reaſon, to diſcover the Duties revealed to us, becauſe, by the Help of ſuch a Revelation, we can trace the Reaſonableneſs, and Equity, of the Duty, than our plain beholding *Jupiter*'s Satelletes, or *Saturn's* Ring, by the Help of a *Teleſcope*, or the *Animalcula* in a Drop of Water, by the Help of a Microſcope, infers the Capacity of our Eyes, by their natural Strength, and without thoſe Aſſiſtances, to behold them. The beſt Evidence of the Power of Nature is to be fetched from thoſe Nations, and People who never had any Thing but natural Light to guide

guide them; and there we see, not only among the more barbarous Nations, but even the most civilized, and greatly improved in humane Learning, that the Generality of the People were destitute of the Knowledge of many moral Vertues, and their most learned Men were Ignorant of some, and that they were all absolute Strangers to true Happiness; they knew not the only true GOD, the Way of serving of Him acceptably, nor how to enjoy his Favour: And hence we find the greatest, and best, of their Philosophers, as *Socrates*, and *Plato*, expressing their Sense of the Want, and their Hope, of a future, divine Revelation. There are, indeed, some moral Duties which do, as it were, lie uppermost in the humane Mind; Reason easily, and without much Search, discerns them; and there are some others which, probably, our natural Light might find out, by close Attention, and diligent Application. But the Bulk of Mankind are not very capable of so industrious an Enquiry, nor have they Leisure for it, if they were capable of it: and after all, the great and wonderful Discoveries which *Athens*, and *Rome*, have made of moral Vertue, left us in the Writings of their most learned Men, I am apt to think, that, upon a due Enquiry, it will be found, they owed it, not to the Force of their natural Powers, which some of them greatly improved, but to the Light they received from the Jewish Writings, with which they were undoubtedly conversant, which contained a Revelation from GOD, of what Nature would never have taught them. Since such was the Condition of Mankind, that, of themselves, they could not have come at the Knowledge of those things which were necessary

for them to know, therefore GOD, in his great Goodneſs, and Compaſſion, has condeſcended to our Weakneſs, and Infirmity, in giving to us his written Law, firſtly made known by Revelation from himſelf, wherein the whole of our Duty is fully, and clearly, ſet before us, and the only Way to true and endleſs Happineſs is plainly diſcovered to us.

As the Caſe ſtands with us, at preſent, we can neither be recovered from the Imperfection of our Nature, nor our State, without a Mediator, a Redeemer, appearing on our behalf, becoming a Surety for us, obeying the Law, and undergoing the Penalty of it; that is to ſay, bearing the Curſe for us, that we might not fall under the Malediction of the Law, which we have broken. This natural Reaſon would never have diſcovered to us, but we ſhould forever have wandered, as even the moſt polite Parts of *Athens*, and *Rome*, did, in Search after ſome certain Method, by which to appeaſe the Anger of the Deity, whom, natural Conſcience, from a Senſe of our own manifold Miſcarriages, would have told us, we had offended: and ſo we ſhould have endleſly remained in the dark about the Way of Salvation, if GOD had not, in his great Compaſſion to us, given us a full, and clear Revelation thereof, in his holy Word.

Thus, we may ſee the Goodneſs of GOD to us, both in adjuſting his Commandment to our rational Nature, requiring of us only a reaſonable Service, a Service which, when we view it in the true Beauty of it, we cannot but acknowledge to be juſt, and equitable; a Service which enobles our Minds, rectifies our Manners, ſweetens our Relations, endears our Society,

Society, and is every Way advantageous to us, and, at the ſame Time, making known to us thereby *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, or the true Way unto Life, and Happineſs. For he has told us, in his Word, that he has provided a Redeemer for us, even the Lord JESUS CHRIST, his only begotten Son, the dearly Beloved of the Father, *whom he hath ſet forth for a Propitiation for our Sin, thro' Faith in his Blood (d)*; He has aſſured us of the Fulneſs, and Sufficiency, of the Merits of his Obedience, and Suffering, by *his Reſurrection from the Dead*, of which he has given Aſſurance to all Men, where the Goſpel is preached; and he graciouſly invites the greateſt Sinner of us all to come to the Bleſſed JESUS, and yield the Obedience of Faith to him, and live. Thus *is GOD, in CHRIST, reconciling a guilty World unto himſelf, not imputing their Treſpaſſes unto them (e)*. And if it had not pleaſed GOD thus to reveal his Deſigns of Grace and Favour to us, in his holy Word, we ſhould, doubtleſs, have periſhed among thoſe that are loſt. Hence it is that his Commandment is called *(f) the Word of his Grace:* not only becauſe, by it, he worketh Grace in our Souls, but in that it is an Act of free Grace, and rich Goodneſs, in GOD, to priviledge us with a Divine Revelation.

The divine Commandment aims at the Recovery of us from all the ſad Effects of our Apoſtacy, and to bring us unto GOD, and Happineſs: and however natural Light was ſufficient unto innocent Man, while as yet there was nothing to blind his Mind, and bias his Will, and Affections, ſo that he might have ſeen his

(d) *Rom.* iii. 25. (e) 2 *Cor.* v. 19. (f) *Act.* xx. 32.

Duty clearly, and, poſſibly, have performed it fully, and ſo have ſecured the Favour of GOD, and his own uninterrupted and endleſs Happineſs; yet Sin has ſo obſcured the Underſtandings of Men, and prejudiced the Powers of their Souls, in Favour of what is agreeable to the Senſes, and the lower Appetites, and againſt what would any Ways abridge them of the Gratifications of Senſe, that under the Influence of natural Light, alone, we ſhould never be able to diſcover every Myſtery of Iniquity, nor be ſufficiently moved to part with our beloved Luſts; and, of Conſequence, we ſhould never be recovered from the ſad Effects of our Fall, to the Grace and Favour of our GOD. Hence the Apoſtle ſays, (*g*) *The natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of GOD; for they are Fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* And our Saviour obſerves, (*h*) *if the Light that is in thee be Darkneſs, how great is that Darkneſs?* So that I cannot ſufficiently wonder at it, that Men of Learning, and Thought, and ſuch as ſet themſelves up for a polite Way of thinking, and reaſoning, ſhould be ſo fond of their natural Light, as, for the Sake thereof, to diſcard divine Revelation; when it is apparent, not only, that they are beholden to Revelation for their Maſter Thoughts, but, without it, they would be deſtitute of the cleareſt Light, and the ſtrongeſt Arguments, that can have any moral Influence upon a reaſonable Creature, to a conſtant and diligent attendance upon even moral Duties: that is they would be deſtitute of the beſt Means, to live like GOD, and to enjoy his Favour forever.

(*g*) 1 *Cor.* ii. 14. (*h*) *Math.* vi. 23.

But,

But, bleſſed be GOD ; we are advantaged with a divine Revelation : and as this was the peculiar Profit of the *Jewiſh* Nation, above all People, *that unto them were committed the Oracles of GOD* (*i*) ; ſo now is it our ſpecial Advantage, ſince, through the tender Mercy of the moſt High, the Day-Star has riſen, and ſhined, upon us *Gentiles*, and CHRIST has been given for a *Light, to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as to be *the Glory of his People Iſrael.* And as they did of old, ſo ought we to ſee, and own, the Goodneſs of GOD to us herein, and ſing his Praiſe : (*k*) *He hath ſhewed his Word unto Jacob, his Statutes and Judgments unto Iſrael ; He hath not dealt ſo with any Nation, as for his Judgments they have not known them : Praiſe ye the LORD.* And indeed our Obligations to Gratitude, and Thankfulneſs, are ſo much the greater, by how much the Light of the Goſpel hath ſhined more full, and clear, upon us, in the more abundant Diſcoveries of the Perſon, Nature, Offices, and Benefits, of the *Meſſiah*, and in the more evident Teſtimony, and Aſſurances, of Life and Immortality, than it did upon them ; and GOD has been graciouſly pleaſed to ſpeak plainly unto us, whereas he ſpake very much in Parables, Types, and Shadows unto them.

O how great is his Goodneſs ! That thus *the Bleſſing of Abraham ſhould come upon us Gentiles*, and unto *us*, *now*, *pertaineth the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenant, and the giving the Law, and the Service of GOD, and the Promiſes* ; that now *unto us is this Grace given, that, among us Gentiles, the unſearchable Riches of CHRIST are preached* ; *to the intent, that*

(*i*) *Rom.* iii. 1, 2. (*k*) *Pſ.* cxlviii. 19, 20.

now

now unto Principalities, and Powers, in heavenly Places, might be known, by the Church, the manifold Wisdom, and Goodness, of GOD : to use the Language of the inspired *Apostle* (*l*).

2. Is the Commandment of GOD exceeding broad ? then we may, from hence, learn the indispensable Obligation we are under to keep it ; that we ought always to keep, and do, all that the Lord our GOD hath commanded us : that we ought to be obedient, universally, and forever obedient.

Particularly,

(1.) From hence we learn our Obligation to keep the Commandments of GOD. The divine Original, the excellent Nature, and the blessed Design of the Commandment plainly, and strongly, infers this.

1. Our Obligation to a due Respect to the divine Commandment is plainly inferrable from the divine Original of it. For, if the GOD that made us, and all the World, and to whom we must finally be accountable, hath made known his Mind and Will to us, and shewed us what He requires of us, it is very certain, that then we are under all possible Tyes, and Engagements, to remember and do as he hath commanded us. Since it is the Commandment of GOD, and derives from the eternal Deity, we ought to give a suitable Entertainment to it, and believe all that he has made known to us, as Articles of our Faith, and obey all that is required of us, as Matter of our Practice.

Thus, we learn, from the divine Original of the Commandment, that we ought firmly to

(*l*) *Gal.* iii. 14. *Rom.* ix. 4. *Eph.* iii. 8, 10.

believe

believe it: becauſe every Word, which GOD hath ſpoken, is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation by us. For *GOD is not a Man, that He ſhould lie (m)*; yea, *it is impoſſible for GOD to lie (n)*, for *the Lord is a GOD of Truth, Juſt, and Right, is He (o)*. When therefore it can be ſaid to us, thus ſaith *He that is holy, He that is true*, there is no Room for us to heſitate whether we ought to believe what is ſpoken, or no. Our own Reaſon tells us, that infallible Truth ought to be believed; and we cannot poſſibly withhold our Aſſent from what we know to be infallibly true, without putting a Force upon ourſelves, and doing Violence to our own Underſtanding. 'It is 'not to be wondered at, that they, who are 'poſſeſſed with the firm Perſwaſion of an in-'fallible Chair, upon Earth, ſhould ſwallow the 'groſſeſt Abſurdities, when they are dictated 'from that Chair, by an implicit Faith; but 'the greateſt Wonder is, that any Men ſhould 'have ſo little Reaſon, as to imagine, that In-'fallibility is to be found in a fallible Crea-'ture. But that GOD is infallible, is moſt evident to our Reaſon, becauſe he is infinite in Underſtanding, and therefore cannot poſſibly be impoſed upon; and infinitely pure, and Good, and therefore cannot deceive any, by giving them a falſe Account of Perſons, or Things; There are no natural, or moral, Imperfections in GOD, to render His Word ſuſpicious, precarious, and fallible; and hence it plainly follows, that whatever he makes known to us, is infallibly true, and therefore to be credited, by us, purely upon His Word, whether we are

(*m*) *Num.* xxiii. 19. (*n*) *Heb.* vi. 18. (*o*) *Deut.* xxxii. 4.

able

able to underſtand all that is contained in what He has ſpoken, or no. For the Supream Being, who has furniſhed us with Underſtanding, never meant to give us the Power to arraign his Veracity before the Barr of our Reaſon, nor may we aſſume it to ourſelves to ſit in Judgment upon the Truth of what he has ſaid; he has given us Reaſon, indeed, to judge of the Clearneſs, and Strength, of the Evidences that are brought in Proof of a divine Revelation, or whether what is pretended to have been ſpoken by GOD be really ſo, or no: and thus we are not, preſently, to *believe every Spirit*, and bold Pretender that may come to us, as he ſays, in the Name of GOD, but are commanded *to try the Spirits whether they are of GOD*; (*p*) to ſearch and prove their Credentials, whether they bring with them plain and full Evidences of their being ſent from GOD; and, if, upon Examination, it be found that their Credentials are authentick and valid, and ſufficient to determine our reaſonable Minds, that GOD thereby ſpeaks to us, it is not for us then to proceed to try and judge, whether what GOD has thereby ſpoken be true, or no, before we will give credit to it; no; GOD demands it of us to believe what he has ſaid, upon the Truth of his Word, and not upon our Capacity of diſcerning the Truth of it, or upon it's Agreement with ſuch Maxims, and Principles, as we have taken up with, or ſuch Ideas, and Conceptions of Things as we have formed in our Minds.

All the Difficulty here will lie in the Evidence, and Aſſurance, that what we are to believe is truly a divine Revelation; and if the Evidences of

(*p*.) 1. *Joh*. iv. 1.

a

a Thing's being a Revelation from GOD are full, and ſtrong, there ought then to be no Difficulty with us in our crediting of it; becauſe Truth itſelf can never deceive. It is readily acknowledged, that there are Myſteries in Religion, though ſome, I know, would perſwade us there are none. I do not mean that the Propoſition, in which the divine Revelation is expreſſed, is myſterious, for then, I ſuppoſe, we could not know the Terms of the Propoſition, and ſo, I think, could not poſſibly believe it; becauſe it would contain juſt Nothing at all in it, nothing to us, whatever it might do to thoſe that underſtand the Terms of it; but it would be, to us, as a ſealed Book, which we could neither read, know, or believe, any thing contained in it. But I mean, that, though the Propoſition be ever ſo plain, and clear, and the Terms of it perfectly well underſtood by us, and ſo it hands to us, a certain Truth, ſufficiently knowable, yet, it contains in it ſuch Doctrines as are, in the Nature of them, myſterious to us, and beyond our Underſtanding how ſuch Things can be. When a Propoſition can be demonſtrated to be true, (as what is proved to be from GOD certainly is,) it ought to be of no Weight with us, nor give us any Uneaſineſs, that it is 'impoſſible for us to comprehend, or 'frame any adequate or compleat Ideas, of the '*Manner how* the Things ſo demonſtrated can 'be; or that there are ſuch perplexing Difficulties on the other ſide, which merely for 'want of adequate Ideas of the *Manner* of the 'Exiſtence of the Things demonſtrated, are 'not eaſy to be cleared *. And it is very

* Vid. *Dr. Sam. Clark*, of the *Being* and *Attributes* &c. p. 10.

wrong

wrong to reject, and disown, That for a divine Revelation, (and 'tis a false Way of arguing to conclude, that there can be no Evidences of it's being a divine Revelation,) because it contains such Doctrines in it as we are not able to comprehend: for this would be for us to make our own Reason, and Knowledge, and not the Truth of GOD, the Foundation of our Belief. And the Absurdity, and Falseness, of this Way of Reasoning, however polite, and conclusive, some Men may think it, will evidently appear, by applying it to the most familiar Instances in Nature. It is a very plain Proposition, the Terms of which are sufficiently understood by every Child of Ten Years old, That *Fire burneth*. But can any Thing be more ridiculous, and absurd, than for any Man, (and much more any Man pretending to a superior Genius, greater Learning, and Philosophy, and a more masterly Way of thinking,) to deny the Truth of this Proposition; meerly because he knows not what Fire is, in the real Nature of it, nor how it burneth? A Philosopher may shew some Smartness, indeed, and try his Brother Philosopher's Powers, by disputing against this Proposition, *there is local Motion*, which however plain, yet has it's Difficulties; but should any one that sets up for a Philosopher, in sober Earnest, deny *local Motion*, and for this Reason, because he could not reconcile it to some Difficulties that occurred to him, he would only render himself justly ridiculous, and every unlettered Person could shew him his Folly, only by walking a few Steps. And is it not an equal Degree of Weakness, and Folly, for any Man to deny a divine Revelation, sufficiently confirmed, purely because he cannot understand

ſtand the Nature of the Thing revealed, though the Terms of the Propoſition are plain, and eaſy. Certainly, whatever GOD makes known is true, whether we underſtand the Nature of it, or no; and becauſe GOD hath ſpoken it, therefore we are obliged to believe it. So that the Divine Original of the Commandment obliges us moſt firmly to believe all the Revelations, Doctrines, Promiſes, and Threatnings, contained in it.

And ſo does it equally oblige us to obey the Precepts of it. For GOD is not only true in what he ſays, but he is our Sovereign, and has an original, underived Right, by Virtue of his being GOD, to enjoyn us what Law he pleaſes, and demand our Obedience to it. Therefore this is prefixed to the Epitome of the divine Commandment, *I am the Lord thy GOD* (*p*); which ſhews us the unqueſtionable Right GOD has, as he is GOD, and our GOD, to command us, and the ſtrong Obligation we are under to obey him: even ſuch an Obligation as it is not in the Power of GOD himſelf to diſpence with, and free us from the Bonds of. The Lord is our Maker; we are the Workmanſhip of his Hands, and becauſe he hath made us, and not we ourſelves, therefore he is our rightful Sovereign, and cannot but be ſo, unleſs we can ceaſe to be his Creatures: He is *Lawgiver, our King, and our Judge*, whoſe Prerogative alone it is to be obeyed, in whatſoever he commands us; for the Excellencies of his Nature will not admit of any Injunction, but what is worthy of a GOD, and what is beſt for his Creatures; and his Commands cannot poſſibly interfere with any prior, and ſuperiour, Obligation we are under, becauſe there is none prior, none ſuperiour to him. Beſides he is

(*p*) *Exod.* xx. 2.

our

our conſtant Preſerver, and bountiful Benefactor, from whom we receive our All, and in whom all our Hopes are laid up; So that Diſobedience to any of his known Commands challenges his Right, and Authority, over us, denies him his peculiar Honour, and ſlurs the Luſtre of all his Perfections, renounces our Dependance on him, and diſowns his Kindneſs to us, and ſo is at once the higheſt Rebellion, and the blackeſt Ingratitude. But, ſince he is GOD alone, he is jealous for the Honour of his Name, and will not ſuffer any of his Glory to be taken from him, eſpecially this natural Homage, Obedience to his Commands. And *thinkeſt thou this, O Man* ! thou that liveſt at Defiance with GOD, thy Maker, in thy known Diſobedience, and Contempt of his Authority, by doing what he has forbidden to thee, or by neglecting to do what he has required of thee, thinkeſt thou, *that thou ſhalt eſcape the righteous Judgments of GOD ?* Verily, whatever the Sinner may imagine, the Time will come, when GOD will cauſe his Jealouſy to burn like Fire, and manifeſt his Indignation in flaming Rebukes, upon every wilfully Diſobedient Soul, without a Poſſibility of their eſcaping.

2. The excellent Nature of the divine Commandment infers our Obedience. The more excellent the Rule of our Conduct is the more it deſerves our Regards : for we ought ever to act as reaſonable Creatures, and walk by the beſt Rules. But what is there ſo excellent, for the Rule of our Behaviour, as the Divine Law is ? How admirably is it adjuſted to the Honour of the Law-giver, and to ourſelves, our Nature, Capacity, and Intereſt ? 'Tis the only perfect

perfect Rule of Rectitude, and Purity. *The Words of the Lord are pure Words, as Silver tried in the Furnace, purified seven Times* (q). That is, it is wrought up to the highest Degrees of Excellency; so that there wants nothing to compleat it's Perfection, and recommend it to our Acceptance: and needs must it be so, because it is the Result of infinite Wisdom. Thus it is a most perfect Rule to us, and we need never to fear our mistaking of our Way while we closely observe it. Beauty charms the Eye, and Harmony captivates the Ear, and we are not wont to act so unreasonably as not to give the Preference to what we know to be most excellent in its Kind. And what is there that can be more agreeable to the Sentiments of our rational Minds, than to govern ourselves, in all our Conduct, by that Rule which is best, which is true, certain, determinate, and safest for us? which can never lead us out of the Way, and in our Conformity unto which, only, we act wisely, in doing what is best for us, and safely, in doing what we ought to do, both in our personal, and relative Capacity, whether in The Family, State, or Church? So that because the Divine Commandment is most excellent in itself, it ought to be embraced by us, and observed as the Rule of our Walk; and we cannot, knowingly, act contrary thereto, without doing Violence to right Reason, and exposing ourselves to our own just and severe Reproaches, by refusing to practise what, we are forced to own, is a most excellent Law. But this Argument will appear more fully under the next Head.

(q) *Ps.* xii. 6.

3. The End and Design of the divine Commandment infers Obedience: whether we consider it, as it respects Society, or our Selves in particular.

For, if we consider the divine Commandment as it respects our Society, and Relation, to one another, so it is the just Rule, and Measure, of our Conduct, and Behaviour towards our Fellow-Creatures; it shews us how we may be truly serviceable in the World, and promote the publick Good, and Welfare, by the Practice of these, and those Vertues, which will render us obliging, beneficent, and helpful, to all about us; and by carefully avoiding such Vices, and Irregularities, in our Temper, and Behaviour, as would render us hurtful, and injurious, to one another. Thus it sweetens our Tempers, improves, and betters, our Manners, and lays it's Restraints upon our unruly Lusts and Passions, and prevents the dismal Effects of their unbridled Rage, and puts us upon the Exercise of universal Benevolence, and Goodness, and so makes us profitable Members of the Body Politick, Ornaments in the Church, and Delights in the Family. Now, certainly, a Law, so admirably calculated for the general Service of Mankind, ought to be obeyed. For without something of this, there would be no quiet, and peaceable, living in the World; but every Man would turn a Beast of Prey upon his Neighbour, and the World would presently wear the Face of the wildest Anarchy, and Confusion. 'Tis the want of a due Regard to the divine Commandment which renders the World so bad as it is, at present: this introduces Tyranny, and Oppression, among the higher Orders of Men; Mutiny, Sedition, and Rebellion, among Inferiours;

ours ; Injuſtice, Rapine, Cruelty, Hatred, Strife, Revenge, and the like, among Equals. And whilſt the great Props of the World, Righteouſneſs, and Truth, ſo much fail from among the Children of Men, it is no Wonder to hear Men complain of the Badneſs of the Times, and the Difficulty of living ; and, believe it, there is nothing, the Wit of Man can invent, that will ever correct, and mend, the Times, without a more conſcientious Obſervation of the divine Commandment : the Thought of which alone, one would be ready to ſuppoſe, ſhould have it's due Influence upon us all, to move us, to take more Heed to our Ways, and govern our ſelves according to the Word of GOD, that excellent Rule of all our Actions.

But then, if we conſider the divine Commandment, as it more particularly relates to Ourſelves, we ſhall ſee how indiſpenſibly we are obliged to obey it.

For, as ever we would be freed from the domineering Power of thoſe Luſts, and Paſſions, of Concupiſcence, Covetouſneſs, Pride, Anger, Wrath, Malice, Revenge, and ſuch like, which fret, and diſturb, our Minds, and give us the greateſt Uneaſineſs ; as ever we would have our vicious, and unreaſonable Prejudices, againſt what is truly good, and profitable to us, removed, and have our Underſtandings brightened, our manifold Diſorders cured, and would poſſeſs ourſelves, with Calmneſs, and Serenity, certainly we are concerned to be very careful to keep the Commandments of our GOD ; becauſe nothing, without this, will give us the Maſtery over what is prejudicial to us, and afford us inward Satisfaction. And let but the covetous Worldling, the impure Senſualiſt, and the raging Mad-man, think a little

ſeriouſly, how much the Prevalency of thoſe Luſts, and Paſſions, over him, is truly a Burden to him, and lays the Foundation of moſt, if not all, the Sorrows he meets with, what unaccountable Pains, and Difficulties, he is at to gratify them, what unknown Struggles to ſcreen, and defend them, what perplexing, and ſometimes inextricable, Broils they intangle him in, and, at the ſame Time, how much it debaſes him below the Dignity of his Nature, hurries him into unmanly Actions, and not ſeldom brings very grievous Hurt, and Damage, upon his Perſon, and worldly Intereſt; I ſay, let him but ſeriouſly conſider theſe things, and he will plainly ſee, that it is richly worth his while to endeavour to rid himſelf of ſuch troubleſome Companions, ſuch baneful Inmates, by a cloſe Adherence to the divine Commandment, which will render him Maſter of himſelf, and pleaſed with his own Actions.

Nay; as ever we would entertain any well grounded Hope of eternal Happineſs, we are indiſpenſibly obliged to Obedience. For, though our Obedience to the Divine Commandment is, by no Means, meritorious of future Happineſs, yet it is the ſure Way to it; the Way which the unerring Wiſdom, and ſpotleſs Purity, of the Divine Nature have marked out for us; and a Man may as reaſonably hope, to ſupport, his animal Life, without Food, as think to obtain true Happineſs, which is the Life of the Soul, without Obedience; Nay, more: for the Life of the Body is not ſo neceſſarily dependent upon Food, but that GOD can ſupport it without any; but GOD Himſelf cannot make a Soul happy, without Holineſs; becauſe this would imply a Contradiction to the Divine Nature, and to our own. Hither looks

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all the Grace of the Gospel, as well as all the positive Commands of the divine Oracles, and JESUS CHRIST *is the Author of eternal Salvation unto them*, and them only, *that obey Him* (*r*). And who, in his Wits, would not think an eternal State of compleat Happiness worth his striving for? That Man, must first divest himself of his very Nature, who has no Desires after Happiness; and he must cease to think rationally, who can imagine he may be happy, without being obedient. Thus you see, that, since the Divine Commandment is exceeding broad, it necessarily infers our Obedience to it, and you see also how strong our Obligations to Obedience are.

(2.) As it infers Obedience, in the general, so does it particularly, with Respect to each, and every one of the divine Commands: that our Obedience be universal, and without Exception. For, they are all the same, in the Dignity of their Original, the Excellency of their Nature, and the same noble End and Design is pursued by them all. The same Authority that enacted one Command, has enacted all; they all bear the evident Impress of the supream Lord of all upon them; and therefore are all to be obeyed by us. If we urge upon you the Practice of any Duty, which GOD has not required of you, regard us not. Examine, with the noble *Bereans* (*s*), whether the things we preach to you, for divine Commands, are agreable to the Mind and Will of GOD, or no; and if they are not, reject them; but if we publish to you nothing more than what GOD demands of you, then you

(*r*) *Heb.* v. 9. (*s*) *Act.* xvii. 11.

ought to pay a due Regard thereunto, and do accordingly, and that, not becauſe we tell you, This is your Duty, but, becauſe the Lord your GOD requireth it at your Hands.

It is very poſſible, indeed, that we may not be able to ſee into the Reaſon of all the divine Commands, though we may of many of them; yet this is no ſufficient Objection againſt our Obedience to them, when we know they are the Commands of GOD, any more than it is a ſufficient Objection in a Servant, againſt his complying with the Commands of his Maſter, that he knows not to what End and Purpoſe his Maſter hath given him ſuch a Command. A Maſter may, perhaps, command a thing, which yet may be very unworthy of himſelf, and unfitting for his Servant to comply with; becauſe he is liable to Miſtakes in his Judgment, or may be influenced by the Strength of his Paſſions in what he commands; and then that Servant may very reaſonably be allowed modeſtly to expoſtulate the Caſe with his Maſter, and finally refuſe to obey his Maſter, in that thing which is contrary to the Commands of a ſuperior Power, to whom he is under Obligation to obey. But the infinitely wiſe, and good GOD cannot poſſibly be guilty of any ſuch Error, as to command any thing unworthy of Himſelf, or unfitting for us to do, and has ſufficient, and good Reaſons, for every one of his Commands, though we are not able to ſee them: So that it is enough for us to know that it is the Command of GOD; our Buſineſs is to reſign our Wills intirely into the divine Will. For, though we know not why He hath commanded ſuch a thing, yet we know why we ought to obey that Command, name-

ly,

ly, becauſe God hath commanded it. (*t*) *Hath not the Lord GOD of Iſrael commanded thee?* is ſufficient to ſilence all Cavils, and put us upon the moſt ready Obedience. Nor is this to make GOD an arbitrary Being, as ſome Men count Arbitrarineſs. Though Arbitrarineſs is of an ill Sound, when it is applied unto Men, who are liable to Miſtakes, and are accountable to a ſuperior Power, and therefore have no Right to ſet up their Wills as the Rules of their own, much leſs of others Actions; yet, rightly underſtood, when it is applied unto God, it is no other than his acting *His own Pleaſure* (*u*), and His performing *all things according to the Counſel of his own Will*, (*w*) without being accountable unto us, or any of his Creatures, for the Reaſon of his Actions, or Deſigns: and this the Perfection, and abſolute Supremacy of the divine Nature challenges as his indiſputable, and unalienable Right: and thus GOD is arbitrary, and it is his peculiar Glory that He is ſo; that is, it is the Greatneſs, and Glory, of the divine Being, and what none but GOD can challenge, that his Will alone, without Dependance on, or Accountableneſs to, any other Being, or any Thing out of Himſelf, gives Law unto all Creatures: His Will, I ſay, which, from the Perfection of his Nature, is above all Poſſibility of being erroneous, or biaſſed with Prejudices, and ill Affections, and therefore cannot poſſibly be ſubject to Caprice, and Humour, as the Will of a finite, and fallible Being may. And ſure I am, that it is an Argument of the greateſt Arrogancy, and of an Arbitrary Temper, in the worſt Senſe, for any Man to aſ-

(*t*) *Judg.* iv. 6. (*u*) *Iſa.* xlvi. 10. (*w*) *Eph.* i. 11.

ſume to himſelf a Power that does not, in the leaſt, belong to him, and ſet up his own Will in Oppoſition to the divine, and determine with himſelf, to obey none of the divine Commands, until GOD is pleaſed, firſt, to be accountable unto him for the Reaſonableneſs of them; or if, forſooth, he is not able to diſcern that there is good Reaſon for the Command, that then he will have nothing to do with it. For what is this but to ſet himſelf up in the Throne of GOD, and to bring the Almighty to his Bar. *My Soul, come not thou into their Secret, unto their Aſſembly, mine Honour, be not thou united!* The infinitely Great GOD is the ſole Diſpoſer of his own Actions, and has an abſolute, uncontroulable, Sovereignty over all His Creatures, and therefore has a Right to be obeyed by them, in whatſoever he commands them. For, I ſuppoſe, and, doubtleſs, it will be readily granted, that GOD, who is infinite in Power, and Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, has a Right to do whatſoever is conſiſtent with himſelf; and that GOD perfectly knows what is conſiſtent with himſelf, tho' we do not; and from hence, I conclude, he never will, or can, do, or order to be done, any thing but what is conſiſtent with himſelf: and from hence, it follows, that there is no Room for us to heſitate in our Obedience to any thing, we know to be the Command of GOD, tho' we ſhould be perfectly ignorant of the Deſign, or Reaſonableneſs of the Command, until we can be guilty of the Vanity, and Blaſphemy, to think ourſelves wiſer than GOD, and that we know, what is conſiſtent with himſelf, better than he does himſelf. So that, whatever GOD has required of us, it is our Duty to perform without

out disputing the Legality, or Reasonableness of it ; His Will being the highest Law and Reason of all our Actions. For, though there may be what is called the Fitness, or Unfitness, of Things, arising from their Relation, Proportion, and Dependance, which are of excellent Use in Philosophy, without Revelation ; yet to us who enjoy a divine Revelation, these can be no false Rule for us to go by in our Conduct, nor be the *formal Obligation* of our Obedience to the divine Law : because, as a great Man observes, * *What these eternal and unalterable, Relations,* Respects, or Proportions *of things, with their consequent* Agreements, *or* Disagreements, Fitnesses *or* Unfitnesses, *absolutely and necessarily are in themselves* ; That *also they* appear to be, *to the* Understandings *of all Intelligent Beings* ; *except those only, who understand Things to be what they are not, that is, whose* Understandings *are either very imperfect, or very much depraved :* Where, though doubtless that learned Person designed to evidence that the Fitness, or Unfitness, of Things, is the *formal Obligation* of our Obedience, and Rule of our Behaviour, yet, I humbly conceive, that, by his Exception, he truly evinces the contrary : For, alas, the Exception, which he makes, is the very Case of all Mankind, since the Fall, whatever it be of Angels, namely, that their *Understandings are very imperfect, and very much depraved.* That the Mind of Man, since the Fall, is very *imperfect* is evident, from the little real Knowledge any attain unto after all their diligent Study and Search, and the much less Knowledge the Bulk of Mankind can attain to, for want of Leisure, if not of Capacity ; and from

* *Dr. S. Clark,* Dem. of the Being &c. p. 183.

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the different Sentiments, which different Perſons, (though as far as we can judge, of equally clear Perception, and Underſtanding,) have of one and the ſame thing, in many Inſtances; and from the ſaid *Author*, who aſſerts, ‖ that "*what* "is for the *good of the whole Creation*, in very "many Caſes, none but an *infinite Underſtanding* can poſſibly judge; and from the ſacred Scripture, which aſſures us, that naturally Men *have their Underſtandings darkened* (*x*). So that, from the evident Imperfection of our Underſtandings, we are not able clearly to diſcern, in many Caſes at leaſt, the abſolute and neceſſary Relation, and Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of things, in themſelves, and therefore can by no Means, with Safety, make it the Rule of our Conduct. And beſides this Imperfection, there is evidently a very conſiderable Depravity upon our Underſtandings, which is ſeen in their being biaſſed and bribed, by Paſſions, and Prejudices, ſwaying the Minds of thoſe that ſeem to be moſt free from them; and the ſame *Author* acknowledges, † *a great and general Corruption and Depravation.* Hence though we may be able to diſcern the Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of Things, in many Inſtances, yet, ſince, from our *Imperfection* and *Depravity*, in many other we do not; and in ſome we cannot, therefore the Will of GOD, the ſupream Lawgiver, which Will is always wiſe and good, is the only ſure and certain Rule, to us, to regulate our Actions by; and conſequently the Will of GOD, made known to us, is the higheſt Law and Reaſon of our Conduct, and not our own Conception of the Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of Things. And our not being able to diſcern the Fitneſs, or Unfitneſs, of

‖ *p.* 223. (*x*) *Eph.* iv. 18. † *p.* 254.

Things

Things, can be no sufficient Reason why any Man should refuse to observe that Law, or believe that Truth, which GOD hath clearly revealed to us. For " since, said that learned " *Author*, † the *natural* Attributes of *GOD*, his " infinite Knowledge, Wisdom and Power, sets " him infinitely above all Possibility of being " *deceived by Error*, or of being *influenced by* " *wrong Affections* ; 'tis manifest his divine " Will cannot but always and necessarily deter- " mine itself to choose to do what in the " whole is absolutely Best and Fittest to be " done ; therefore his divine Will which ne- cessarily orders what is most fitting for us to do, is, to us, the best Rule by which to Judge of the Fitness, or Unfitness, of Things, and the strongest *formal Obligation* upon us to Obedi- ence ; and consequently our Obedience must be universal and extend to every Command, that has the Authority of GOD stamped upon it, whether we see the Reason of it, or no.

We may not therefore think to excuse ourselves with a partial Obedience, or in obeying such Commands only as are suitable to our particular Temper, and Interest in the World, or which we can see the Reason of ; nor may we hope to enjoy the Benefit of the exceeding broad Com- mandment, unless our Obedience extend to every particular Duty required of us : that is, unless we sincerely endeavour after universal Obedience to every divine Command. The Commandment is all of a Piece, and therefore called, the *Com- mandment*, in the singular Number. We must sincerely endeavour after an Obedience as extensive as the Commandment is, or it will be no true Obedience, in the Sight of GOD. Hence is that

† *p.* 184.

of

of the Apoſtle *James*, (*x*) *Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, is guilty of all.* He is guilty of denying the Authority of the ſupream Lawgiver, and guilty of breaking the Unity of the Commandment; and from the ſame Principle, by which he allows himſelf in Diſobedience to any Part of the Law, he would alſo tranſgreſs the whole, under equal Temptations, and Opportunities. It muſt therefore be our great Care, as ever we would be eſteemed obedient Subjects, to comply with the juſt Expectation of GOD, and his earneſt Deſire, of an univerſal Obedience. *O that there were ſuch an Heart in them!* (ſays he,) *that they would fear me, and keep all my Commandments, always, that it might go well with them, and their Children, forever* (*y*).

Thus, we muſt not content ourſelves with being Legaliſts, by obſerving only the moral Duties of the divine Commandment, without taking due Care to obey evangelical Precepts; for the Young Man, in the Goſpel, could ſay, (*z*) *all theſe have I kept from my Youth up*; and yet our Lord ſaid to him, in the next *Verſe*, *One Thing thou lackeſt.*

And it will be but a vain Preſumption in us, to think that we are truly obedient to the Precepts of the Goſpel, and call ourſelves Chriſtians, while the Duties of the moral Law are neglected by us. *Wilt thou know, O vain Man, that Faith, without Works, is Dead* (*a*). Moral, and Poſitive, Natural, and Evangelical, Precepts, muſt all, in their proper Place, be duely regarded by us; *theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone* (*b*): they muſt go Hand in Hand

(*x*) *Jam.* ii. 10. (*y*) *Deut.* v. 29. (*z*) *Luke* xviii. 21. (*a*) *Jam.* ii. 20. (*b*) *Matth.* xxiii. 23.

with

with us, and our Obedience, in our ſincere Aim, and Endeavours, muſt univerſally extend to them all and to every Article included under them.

I will only add,

3. Laſtly; Thus too it infers the Conſtancy, and Perpetuity, as well as the Univerſality of our Obedience: that we perſevere in our Obedience as long as we live. For the divine Authority ever remaineth good, and GOD is our Sovereign, in one Part of our Lives as well as in another, yea, as long as we have any Being; and the Commandment remains the ſame excellent Commandment, to Day, that it was Yeſterday; and as that is not more holy, juſt, and good, at one Time, than at an other, ſo neither is it leſs Obligatory upon us at any Time, but always abides in full Force, and Virtue, and therefore ought always to be obeyed by us; Every Day we live, and all the Day long, and as long as we live in the World. So ſaid the devout *Pſalmiſt*, (*c*) *I have enclined my Heart to perform thy Statutes, always, even unto the End.* We may not imagine, therefore, that there are any particular Seaſons for Obedience, and others in which we may lawfully interrupt our Obedience; for, though there may be ſpecial Seaſons for This, or That, particular Branch of our Duty, and ſometimes Leſſer Duties muſt give place to Greater ones, according to that of our Saviour, (*d*) *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*, yet, with Reſpect unto the whole of the divine Commandment, there is no Part of Time can be called, a ſpecial Seaſon for Obedience, becauſe there is not, nor can there be, any Seaſon for Diſobedience. GOD allows us no Part of

(*c*) *Pſal.* cxix. 112. (*d*) *Matth.* ix. 13.

our

our Lives to Sin in, though he allows us, at proper Seaſons, to call off our Minds, from thoſe Duties which are more toilſome, and burdenſome, to us, unto thoſe that are more eaſy, and pleaſant; but He demands of us a conſtant, perſevering, Courſe of Duty, throughout the whole of our State of Probation, and Trial, in this World; that we *ſerve him in Righteouſneſs, and Holineſs, all the Days of our Life* (*e*): that we *patiently continue in the Way of well doing?* (*f*): that we *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith, without Wavering* (*g*): and that we be *ſtedfaſt, unmovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*; *foraſmuch as we know that our Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord* (*h*). If this were well remembred, it would have a mighty Influence upon us, to make us more exact, in our Obedience to the Commands of GOD, throughout the whole Courſe of our Lives; and we ſhould not ſo eaſily be prevailed upon, to allow ſuch wide Gaps in our Duty, as are often to be found among us.

(*e*) *Luk.* i. 75. (*f*) *Rom.* ii. 7. (*g*) *Heb.* x. 23. (*h*) 1 *Cor.* xv. 58.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

PSALM CXIX. 96.

I have seen an End of all Perfection; but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

THE last Opportunity of discoursing upon this Subject, I entred upon the Improvement of the second Doctrine from the Words, viz. The Commandment of GOD is exceeding broad; and I inferred from it,

1. The wonderful Goodness, Mercy and Compassion of GOD to a miserable World, in making a clear Revelation of his Mind and Will, in such important Affairs, wherein our own Reason would not have been sufficient to have directed us, and all with the blessed Design of recovering of us to Rectitude, and Happiness; which special Advantage demands of us our grateful Tribute of Thankfulness, and Praise.

I have also inferred,

2. The indispensible Obligations we lie under to keep the Commandment of GOD; that is, to believe all that GOD has told us, and perform

form all that he requireth of us. 'Tis the Commandment of the GOD that made us, who is our ſupream Ruler, and to whom we muſt be accountable; 'tis a moſt excellent Commandment in itſelf, and reſpecting Society, and particular Perſons; and therefore as ever we would act reaſonably, poſſeſs the Peace of our own Minds, and be happy in the Favour of our GOD, we are indiſpenſibly obliged to obey it, and that every Part thereof, as the Will of GOD concerning us, and be conſtant and perſevering in our Obedience to the End, without allowing any Interruptions therein.

And I now ſhall go on to a Third Inference from this Doctrine; viz.

3. This Doctrine teaches us, That Religion is our trueſt Wiſdom. For what is Religion, but our keeping the Commandments of GOD? Religion indeed includes in it, that we believe that there is a GOD, and that we believe the Commandment, as the Rule of our Duty, is from GOD, and that the Way, in which GOD hath ſignified to us that he is willing to be reconciled unto us, and admit us to his Favour, namely, in and by his Son JESUS CHRIST, is the only Way of our obtaining Mercy with him: but yet all our Faith in GOD, and in his Son JESUS CHRIST, all our Fear of GOD, and Love to him, all terminates in this, as the Sum of true Religion, and what includes all the Reſt, that we readily obey this GOD, in whatſoever he commands us; Therefore the Preacher ſaid, (*i*) *Fear GOD, and keep his Commandments; for this is the whole of Man.* His whole Duty is included in this,

(*i*) *Eccl.* xii. 13.

and

and his whole Happineſs is laid up in it. Since therefore the Commandment of GOD is ſo exceeding broad, as to reach to us in all our Capacities, and Relations, and Deſigns to better us, as rational Creatures, to render our Lives comfortable to us here, and to make us compleatly happy hereafter, then it muſt needs be the trueſt Wiſdom in us, thus to be religious. And, indeed, what Wiſdom is there equal to this? *(k) Unto Man, he ſaid, Behold, the Fear of the Lord, that is Wiſdom, and to depart from Evil is Underſtanding.* Let a Man be ever ſo worldly wiſe, though he ſhould underſtand all the Secrets of Nature, and of Art, and be deeply read in the moſt refined Politicks, yet, without Religion, he has not the Wiſdom, and Underſtanding, of a Man; and his whole Life will be but an ill concerted Deſign, which will come far ſhort of his true End, and all his fine Schemes, his Labour, and Toil, will be in vain, and to no good Purpoſe: when a Storm gathers thick and dark about him, and the Waves of Adverſity beat heavy upon him, he will be deſtitute of every thing that can afford him any ſolid Comfort; and when the gloomy Proſpect of Death, and the Grave, appears, with all its Terrors, before him, he will not be able to look, with Calmneſs, into the future World, and comfort his Heart with the refreſhing View of a State of compleat, and endleſs, Happineſs reſerved for him. For his inquiſitive Search, and cleareſt Diſcoveries, his cloſeſt Thought, and greateſt Labour, have been about thoſe things which are of the leaſt, and moſt temporary, Concernment to him, while he has contented himſelf to remain a Stranger to that

(k) *Job* xxviii. 28.

which is his main Intereſt, and of everlaſting Conſequence unto him: the Folly of which is apparently much greater than that, of him, who ſhould ſpend all his Thoughts, and Time, about catching of Butterflies, to the Neglect of the neceſſary Proviſion for the Support of his Body. Whereas, he that is truly religious takes a prudent Courſe to ſecure his main Intereſt, to enjoy the Favour of his GOD, and poſſeſs everlaſting Peace and Joy; and let the World frown upon him, and all things about him be thrown into Confuſion, and his whole Life, here, be filled up with various Afflictions, and Sorrows, yet, in the midſt of all, he can look within himſelf with Calmneſs and Pleaſure, at the Thought of his having done his Duty; and can look forward with a joyful Proſpect of an happy Iſſue to all his Afflictions, ſecured to him in the Promiſe of that GOD, who is faithful, and will do it: Nay, though he ſhould be forced for the Sake of this his main Intereſt, to ſuffer in leſſer, and more trifling Matters; yet, ſo long as his greateſt Concerns are ſafe, he has evidently acted the Part of a Wiſe Man, in making a leſſer Intereſt ſtoop, and give Place, to the greater. So, like *the wiſe Merchant, having found one Pearl of great Price, he readily ſells all that he has*, parts with things of leſſer Value, *and buys it* (*l*).

Beſides, the Wiſdom of Religion appears in this, that a Man does nothing herein that he will afterwards have any Reaſon to be aſhamed, and repent of; whereas he that leads an irreligious Life, in Diſobedience to the Divine Commandment, will certainly, as he has juſt Cauſe for it, be aſhamed, and heartily ſorry

(*l*) *Matth.* xiii. 45.

for

for his Folly, ſooner, or later: If he ever ſee his Error, while he has Opportunity to correct it, his paſt Folly will coſt him many an uneaſy Thought, and make him very reſtleſs; and his Repentance, though it be the beſt thing he can poſſibly do, will be attended with inward Shame, and Regret, and he will bitterly reflect upon himſelf, and moſt ſadly condemn himſelf, as a vile, wretched, loathſome Creature, who by his Rebellions againſt his Sovereign, and Ingratitude to his beſt Friend, has deſerved Hell a Thouſand Times over. But if he ſhould go on in his Irreligion, until Death, and Judgment, overtake him, how ſeverely, then, will he reproach, and condemn himſelf? What pointed Stings will pierce deep into his very Soul, at the Reflection on his paſt Folly? What inexpreſſible Horror will take hold upon him, at the Thought of his former mad Courſe of Life? How dreadfully will he become his own Tormentor, and that throughout an endleſs Eternity? Whereas, he that lives religiouſly, in Obedience to the divine Commands, is always doing what he ought to do, what becomes him as a rational Creature, what greatly improves and betters him, and therefore what will forever ſet eaſy and comfortably about him, and what will afford him unſpeakable Satisfaction in the Review of it.

Nay; if the religious Man ſhould have deluded himſelf, with the pleaſing Hopes, of living happily forever, in an other World, after he has acted his Part in this, and, inſtead of his partaking of that Joy and Satisfaction he lived in Expectation of, ſhould, at laſt, die, and periſh, like the Beaſt, yet has he acted the wiſe Part: becauſe he has denied himſelf

of nothing that was fitting for a wife Man to allow himself in, he has had the Pleasure, and Satisfaction, as he went along, to carry himself regularly, and behave decently, and to do nothing but what was worthy of him, as a Man; and all this he did upon, at least, the probable, Hopes of a happy Eternity, as the full Reward of all: and, if after all, he should miss of what he hoped for, by ceasing to have any Being beyond the Grave, yet he will truly have lost nothing, by his Religion, but what he could very well spare, without any real Damage to himself, and he will then be in no Capacity to receive any Uneasiness, at his Disappointment, or to feel any Degree of Misery. But he that lives irreligiously truly gains nothing, by his Irreligion, but what he had better be without, namely, an indecent, misbecoming, and unmanly Conduct, which exposes him to the Censure, and Disesteem, of the thinking Part of Mankind, and uneasy Reflections within himself, which he cannot, at Times, be without; and all the Liberty he has taken to gratify the irregular Appetites of Flesh and Sense, besides it's reducing him upon a Level with the Brute, has been with a View to some probable Hope, (for no Man is, or can be sure of it,) that he shall have no Being in an other World; which Hope if he should find himself, at last, mistaken in, he would be unavoidably miserable, and that forever. So that, upon Supposition, that the future State is only probable, and that there were equal Reason to conclude, that it will, or will not, be, the religious Man is, by far, the wiser of the two; because he has provided for that which possibly may happen, and that with no real Disadvantage to himself in his present

ſent State, while the irreligious has made no real Gain to himſelf, by a Life of Diſobedience, and is utterly unprovided for the fatal Chance, which, for ought he can poſſibly know, may, at laſt, happen to him.

But then, whatever profane Men may think of it, there is no ſuch Chance, whether we ſhall have a Being in an other World; no, my Brethren, it is an undoubted Certainty, founded upon ſolid Principles of Reaſon, and evidenced by the clear Light of indiſputable Revelation, that we ſhall exiſt after we leave this World, that Death does not make a final and full End of us, but we paſs, from hence, into an other World, where we ſhall have aſſigned unto us a Portion anſwerable to our Conduct in this: and then who will be found to be the wiſe Man? He that has aforehand been thoughtful about that State he is paſſing into, and done all he can to render it a comfortable and happy State to him; or, he that has caſt off all Thoughts of Futurity, and has been doing all he can to render it a State of endleſs Miſery, and inſupportable Torment to him? Verily, when all things are duely conſidered, it will certainly be found, that Religion is our trueſt Wiſdom. Well then might *Solomon*, the wiſeſt of Men, ſay, (*m*) *Whoſo keepeth the Law is a wiſe Son*; and, (*n*) *He that getteth Wiſdom loveth his own Soul, and he that keepeth Underſtanding ſhall find good.*

4. We may from hence infer the very great Evil of wilfully making light of, and contemning, the divine Commandment. Is the Commandment, a Revelation from GOD, partaking

(*m*) *Prov.* xxviii. 7. (*n*) *ch.* xix. 8.

of the Purity of his Nature, with the Stamp of his royal Authority upon it? Is it exceeding broad, as it reaches to every one of us, and every Part of us, includes our whole Duty, and consults our truest Interest, in this World, and the next? What an high Crime, and misdemeanor, must it then be, for any to make Light of it, and pour their Contempt upon it, as though it were mean, and despicable, and not worthy to be treated with Decency, and good Manners: What is this but to pour Contempt upon GOD himself, who speaks to us in his Word? Surely the Oracles of the great GOD ought to be forever sacred with us, and to be thought, and spoken, of, with the greatest Reverence. One would be ready to think, that the Purity of its Morals, the Sublimity, and Majesty, of its Sentiments, and the Nobleness, and Gravity, as well as Familiarity, and Plainness, of its Diction, besides the Remembrance that Life, or Death, turns upon our Regards to it, should secure it our greatest Veneration, beyond that of any other Writings whatever; because no other Writings, whatever, can pretend to come near the Sanctity, and Majesty, of the sacred Scriptures; nor so nearly concern us, in our best, and lasting Interest. And yet, as if it were not enough to live, and act, contrary to the Documents of this sacred Word, are there not a Generation, (*O how lofty are they in their own Eyes!*) who add to all their other Crimes the prodigious Guilt, of pleasing themselves in breaking their scurrilous Jests upon the holy Writings, and scruple not to turn the divine Oracles into Burlesque? What can be more contrary to that Reverence and Esteem which is due to a Revelation from GOD, than for

for Persons to account themselves witty in their profane Drollery upon it? And yet, for ought all that the wittiest of them can say, it may possibly be a Revelation from GOD, and no other than GOD himself speaking in that Word which they contemn. Nor is it any Argument of the Meanness of the sacred Scriptures, or their want of a divine Original, that Persons of but little real Wit, though of a great Deal of Profaneness, and Malice, can play their silly Squibs, upon the Doctrines, or Precepts, contained in them, any more than it is an Argument of the Meanness of a noble Man's Character, that a contemptible *Buffoon* wears the Title of *my Lord*: Though with some, it may be thought a sufficient Confutation of the divine Original of the Scriptures, that they can strain a low Banter, or break a homely Jest upon them. But, let such Men know, that Bantering, and Jesting, are not Reasoning; and they must give us other Proofs of their supposed masterly Way of thinking, before we can yield up our Understandings, and Consciences, to their Direction: yea, they must give us other Evidences, than they do, of their being Friends to Reason, whatever Shape they appear in, before they are fit to be hearkened to. A Man is never the less valuable for a Monkey's ridiculous Representation of him. What is there so sacred, and true, so beneficent, and serviceable, which a very low, but a very licentious, Wit, may not turn into Ridicule? But of all Wit this is the most foolish, and the most dangerous: This is to sport, in the Dark, with edge Fools, and to act the Part of *Solomon*'s mad Fool, (*o*) who *casteth Fire-*

(*o*) *Prov.* xxvi. 18.

brands, Arrows, and Death, and crieth, am I not in Sport? becauſe it is to play the Fool in a Matter of the greateſt Conſequence that can be, in which, if a Man be miſtaken in his Jeſt, and for ought he knows he may be miſtaken, he does himſelf the greateſt poſſible Injury, as well as to many about him: he runs on inconſiderately, with a broad Laugh, and hideous Grin, and hurries many unthinking Fools, with the empty Noiſe, into everlaſting Burning. Nor, know I any Sin, that, in our Day, may be ſuppoſed to come nearer to *the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, (if it be not the very ſame,) *which ſhall never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in that which is to come*, than for a Man deſignedly to ridicule the Scriptures, and the Miracles recorded in it, as little Tricks of Juggling, and Legerdemain; becauſe ſuch a Man Evidently diſcovers himſelf to be under the Power of Malice, and Rage, againſt our holy Religion, and it's Author, who can, for the Sake of his Enmity to them, become ſo great an *Enemy to Reaſon*; by which Means he ſtands *abſolutely Self-condemned*. And whatever the profane Droll may think of himſelf, and however he may gain the Laugh, of the vain World on his Side, he will find, in the Concluſion, that he has been all the while ſporting himſelf to his own undoing, by paſſing the Flout, and Jeer, upon his Maker, and his Judge, and has jeſted away his Soul, and his Happineſs forever. Of all Perſons, ſuch ſhould be had in the greateſt Contempt, and Abhorrence, by us, becauſe of their ſcurrilous ſpitting in the Face of our heavenly Father, and their bold Attempt to undermine, by the moſt unmanly, and ſordid, Methods, the very

very Foundations of our moſt holy Religion, and bury the nobleſt Structure in the contemptible Ruins.

Thus alſo, it argues a Slight caſt upon the divine Commandment, for any to form new Notions, and Schemes of Religion, and Ways of Worſhip, not enjoyned, or warranted, by the Word of GOD. For, as GOD himſelf knows beſt, what Worſhip, and religious Service, is moſt agreeable to his Nature, and Perfections, and conſonant to his grand Deſign of the Salvation of Sinners, through the Merits of his Son; ſo he has been pleaſed to reveal to us, in his holy Word, what that Worſhip is, which is acceptable and pleaſing to him; and his Commands, therein, extend not only, to every one of us, but, to the whole of our Duty, relating to GOD, and his Worſhip, as well as to our whole Duty to our Fellow Creatures. It muſt therefore be looked upon as no leſs than, a reproaching the exceeding broad Commandment with Imperfection, for us to interpolate it with Inventions of our own; and an Impeaching the Wiſdom of GOD, for us to ſet up Modes of Worſhip which he hath not enjoyned; and an arrogating to ourſelves the Authority of GOD, and his Dominion in his own Houſe, for us to impoſe our own Schemes upon others, and make our new found Services the Terms of Communion in the Church of GOD; and, at the ſame Time, ſuch pernicious Principles do but give the Scope to vain conceited Minds, full of themſelves, and contemning all beſide, when once they have gotten ſufficient Power on their Side, to impoſe upon us what new Religion they pleaſe, when ever they ſhall think it fitting to do ſo. If, therefore, we would approve ourſelves unto GOD, and not make light of

his

his Commandment, we ought to be careful, in all Parts of our religious Worſhip, to conform ourſelves, not to the Dictates of Men, but, to the Rules laid down in the Word of GOD. (*p*) *To the Law, and to the Teſtimony; if they ſpeak not according to this Word, it is becauſe there is no Light in them.*

Furthermore; It is a Slight and Contempt caſt upon the Word of GOD, for Perſons to neglect to make that due Improvement of it, which it is deſigned for, to inſtruct them in the Way of Righteouſneſs. The great Deſign of GOD's holy Word is, *to convert the Soul, to make wiſe the ſimple, to rejoice the Heart, and enlighten the Eyes*, and to guide us in the Path of our Duty, and the Way to true and endleſs Felicity. Now, in order to have this bleſſed End promoted, 'tis neceſſary that Perſons act the rational Part, in a diligent Application of the Means to the End, by a due Improvement of the divine Commandment, ſo as that it may be a Lamp to their Feet, and a Light unto their Path. But if they refuſe to make a wiſe Improvement of it, to this great and good End, 'tis becauſe, either, they contemn the End, as not worth their regarding, or, ſlight the Means, as not well adapted to the End: either of which is to make light of the Word of GOD, by which only we have the great End, the Purity, and Happineſs of Man aſſertained, and the beſt Way to attain this End pointed out to us.

This therefore is their Sin, and Folly, who live without reading the Word of GOD, daily, with cloſe Application of Mind to what they read; for 'tis plain they neglect, and ſlight, the beſt Means to promote the higheſt End; and it may

(*p*) *Iſa.* viii. 20.

be

be ſaid to them, in the Language of the wiſe Man, *(q) wherefore is there a Price, in the Hand of a Fool, to get Wiſdom, ſeeing he hath no Heart to it?* The greateſt of Men, as well as the leaſt, owe this to the ſacred Bible, carefully to inform themſelves in the Nature, and Importance of it, what it diſcovers to them, and what it requires of them; this their own Intereſt demandeth of them; this the great GOD commands them. *(r) When he (* the King *) ſitteth upon the Throne of his Kingdom, he ſhall write (* have *) a Copy of this Law; — and it ſhall be with him, and he ſhall read therein all the Days of his Life; that he may learn to fear the LORD his GOD, to keep all the Words of this Law, and theſe Statutes to do them.* And how can any Man hope to fear GOD, and keep his Commandments? who, ſo deſpiſeth the divine Commandment, as to caſt it behind his Back, and is the Fool that hateth Inſtruction.

And ſo, when Perſons refuſe to come to the place of Publick Worſhip, that they may hear the Word of GOD preached, his Commands explained, and enforced, 'tis evident they make light of this holy Word, becauſe they neglect to improve it, as they ought to do. It has pleaſed GOD in his great Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, to make Uſe of the Word of Reconciliation, by the Miniſtry of Men, appointed for this End, to bring the Soul of the poor Sinner home to GOD in CHRIST, by a hearty Belief of all Goſpel Truths, and ſincere Practice of all Goſpel Duties; in this Way our bleſſed LORD, and his Apoſtles, after him, converted Sinners, and ſaved their Souls from Death. But now, when any wilfully abſent themſelves from the Publick Worſhip, and refuſe to hear the Word preached, whatever Pretence they may have there-

(q) Prov. xvii. 16. *(r) Deut.* xvii. 18, 19.

for,

for, from their Conceit of their own Knowledge, or low Eſteem of the Preacher, 'tis evident they deſpiſe Propheſying, and contemn the Word of Life; which, if they truly valued, they would embrace all proper Opportunities to receive their Portion of, as they do the returning Seaſons to entertain the Food of their Bodies. GOD therefore charges it againſt his rebellious People, of old, (*s*) That, *they caſt away the Law of the LORD of Hoſt*, (they put it from them, and deſired to have nothing to do with it,) *and deſpiſed the Word of the Holy One of Iſrael.* And verily, when Fools thus deſpiſe Wiſdom, and the Means leading to it, their Sin is greatly aggravated thereby, and their Condemnation will be ſadly increaſed; becauſe they deſpiſe GOD, who ſpeaketh to them in his Word, and deſpiſe their own Souls, which the Word is the deſigned Means to promote the Salvation of: and therefore, unto ſuch Sinners, that awful Warning belongeth, (*t*) *Behold, ye Deſpiſers, and wonder, and periſh.*

5. From hence we learn, how ſhort we all come of the Rule in our Obedience, and what need the very beſt of us all have, humbly and earneſtly, to implore the pardoning Mercy of GOD, through the Merits of JESUS CHRIST, that we may find Acceptance with him. Is the Commandment of GOD thus exceeding broad? Doth it extend to every Duty, and require an exact Obedience of us, in Heart, and Life, and that without any, the leaſt, allowed and wilful Defects? Then, upon an Examination of ourſelves, we cannot but ſee, that, after all our Care to perform our Duty,

(*s*) *Iſa.* v. 24. (*t*) *Act.* xiii. 41.

and

and preſerve ourſelves pure, and untainted with any Error, we have come greatly ſhort of the Rule, and that even in the very beſt of our Performances. Alas, for us; we daily ſin in Thought, in Word, and in Deed; and though any of us ſhould not have allowed ourſelves in any of the greater, and more heinous, Tranſgreſſions of the divine Law, as in ſwearing and Drunkenneſs, Uncleanneſs, Falſhood, Malice, or the like atrocious Crimes, yet there is enough of Obliquity, cleaving to all we do, to juſtify the holy and righteous GOD if He ſhould condemn us. For he that would hope to eſcape the righteous Condemnation of the great Judge, upon the Account of his own Performances, muſt be able to lay claim to a perfect ſinleſs Obedience of his own; becauſe, whatever the Grace of GOD, according to the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, might do, in abating the utmoſt Exactneſs of the Law, in it's Demands upon us, for the Sake of a Mediator interpoſing on our Behalf, yet, the Law itſelf, which is the Rule to us, allows of no Failure, in our Obedience, without our falling under the condemning Power of it; nor will the Honour of the Sovereign, ſeparate from the Grace of the Goſpel, admit of any Repugnancy in us to his rightful Authority, without his proper Animadverſions upon us for it. And where is the Man, (the Man JESUS only excepted,) that can pretend to a perfectly ſinleſs Obedience to the divine Law? For in Order to any Man's being perfectly righteous before GOD, by Vertue of his own Obedience, it is abſolutely neceſſary, that there be the moſt exact Agreement between the divine Will, made known to him; and his Obedience, without the leaſt

Failure

Failure, or Defection from the right Line of his Duty: for if he ſhould, in the leaſt Degree, go off from the Rule, his Obedience would not then be perfectly agreeable to it. It is therefore but a vain Pretention for any to imagine themſelves altogether perfect, and ſinleſs. For ſo, *there is not a juſt Man upon Earth, that doth good, and ſinneth not* (*a*): and, *if we ſay we have no Sin, we deceive ourſelves, and the Truth is not in us* (*b*). And yet, poſſibly, we may find many carnal Profeſſors, who, like the *Publican*, are very ready to Juſtifie themſelves, ſaying, *GOD, I thank thee*, I am not like this, and the other Man; I do this, and that; they are morally honeſt, and do no Injury to any Man, (they ſay,) and it may be they are charitably diſpoſed, and ſo not only do no Hurt to any, but they do, (they think,) what good they can. But is this to be perfect, and ſinleſs? Let no Man flatter himſelf with a vain Deluſion. Come to the Word of GOD, view thy ſelf in that clear Glaſs, and, doubtleſs, thou will then plainly ſee, that there are many Blemiſhes upon thee, many Defects which attend thee daily in all thou doeſt.

Does the divine Commandment extend to every Duty? who is there of us then can ſay, there has ever a Day paſſed him, wherein he has not been guilty of ſome ſinful Omiſſion or other? Have you got all the good you might, by hearing, or reading, the Word of GOD, by Conferences, and Meditation, and Prayer? Or have you done all the good you could unto others, to their Bodies, and to their Souls, by your charitable Aſſiſtance, by your Exhortations, Admonitions, and Counſels? Nay, if we thoroughly ſearch our Ways, may we not find, that there is

(*a*) *Eccl.* vii. 20. (*b*) 1 *Joh.* i. 8.

not

not a Day we have lived which has been wholly free from the Commission of many Evils, which were in our Power to have prevented; Can we say, that our Carriage to GOD, and to our Fellow Creature, has been with that Reverence, and Devotion, with that Exactness, Circumspection, and Goodness, which it might, and ought to have been? Or, have we suffered no evil Communication to proceed out of our Mouths, no Words that have been hasty, and rash, indecent, or censorious, or that savoured too much of Levity, and Profaneness? Or, have our Hearts been in suitable Frames all the Day long? Has there been no Degree of forbidden Anger, Malice, Hatred, or Revenge, lurking there? Or, has there been no Lust of Concupiscence, Covetousness, or Pride, harboured there? Have we suffered no vain Thoughts to lodge within us? It is to be feared that there is a great Deal of Guilt chargeable upon every one of us, upon these Accounts.

Besides; it must be remembred, that as the Commandment reaches to the Heart, so it Means to govern us in our Principles, and Ends, and the Manner of our performing of our Duty, as well as in the Matter of it. Possibly, there may be many, who pass for good People, that have no Regard to the Principle, and End, of their Actions, nor to the Manner of their Performance of their Duty, any further than the external Form; and so they do but attend to the doing of the Thing required of them, as to the Matter of it, they are easy, and contented, and look no further. But, say now, does not the Commandment require us to do all that we do with a sincere *aim to the Glory*

Glory of GOD (*c*) ? Does not the Commandment, require us to *Worſhip GOD in Spirit, and in Truth*, (*d*) *and to ſeek him, and keep his Precepts, with our whole Heart ?* Well then ; do we find, upon Examination, that, even in the Religious Duties we have been imployed about, we have always come up to what the Commandment requireth of us, and ſincerely aimed at the Glory of GOD, and the ſhewing forth our Makers Praiſe ? Has our whole Heart been engaged therein, and have they always been performed by us with that Life, and Vigor, that Spirituality, and Purity, of Mind, that Delight, and Satisfaction of Soul, which the Rule demands of us ? Or, are we not often carnal, cold, dull, ſlothful, and perfunctory, in our very Acts of Devotion, or backward to them, or ſoon weary of them ? Have we allowed no evil Thoughts, no Stirring and Workings of Corruption in us, while we have been praying, reading, or hearing the Word of GOD ? Have no worldly Views, and Concerns, crowded into our Minds, and been tolerated there, while we have been attending upon the holy Supper of our Lord, one of the ſacred Rites of our holy Religion ? Has no Temptation taken hold of us, and influenced us in our Duties ; no ſiniſter and worldly Principles, of making a Gain of Godlineſs ; no carnal Ends, of being ſeen of Men, of pleaſing our Superiors, and of being applauded, ever been propoſed by us in our religious Performances ? And if we have been Defective in our holy things, how many more, may we well ſuppoſe, have been the Errors we have committed, in the common Affairs of Life,

(*c*) 1. *Cor.* x. 31. (*d*) *Joh.* iv. 24. *Pſ.* cxix. 2, *and* 69.

where

where we are moſt off from our Guard, and are apt to be leſs critical and exact in our obſerving the Rule? Alas! *Who can ſay, I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from my Sin* (e)?

O! how hard and difficult do the very beſt of us find it, to live in ſuch a conſtant conſcientious Obedience to the Divine Commandment, as the Rule requires, without allowing ourſelves, at any Time, in the Neglect of any known Duty, or committing any wilful Error in our Conduct? The conſtant keeping of our End in our Eye, and the diligent Application of ourſelves to our Maſter's Buſineſs, without any ſuch Remiſsneſs as will bring us under the Character of the ſlothful Servant; the perpetual ſtriving againſt the corrupt Bent, and Inclination, of our own depraved Hearts, and the prevailing Force of the vicious Cuſtoms of the Place, and Age, we live in and the powerful Suggeſtions of a buſy and malicious Devil; and the keeping of our Hearts true to GOD; and ſtedfaſt in his Covenant, amidſt all the Snares and Temptations that ſurround us; are much more hard and difficult Things, than many carnal Profeſſors imagine; who are ready to conclude, that an open Profeſſion of Religion, and a Round of external Duties, are ſufficient to denominate a Man a good Chriſtian, and entitle him unto the Favour of GOD. Alas; *there are many that ſeek, who ſhall not be able to enter into* the Kingdom of GOD, as our bleſſed Lord informs us (f); becauſe it is a much more laborious Taſk than they imagine to be univerſally obedient; and they will not be at the Pains with themſelves, to ſtrive

(e) *Prov.* xx. 9. (f) *Luk.* xiii. 24.

for the Maſtery over every Corruption, and ſubdue every Luſt, and perform all that they do in Singleneſs of Heart unto the Lord, with thoſe holy Views, and in that ſpiritual Manner which the Commandment preſcribes. How exceeding difficult is it, for a Man to preſerve himſelf Steady in his Obedience unto his GOD, when he is perpetually in danger, from his Company, his Buſineſs, his natural Temper and Conſtitution, of being turned aſide from the holy Commandment? "How hard a Matter is it, "(ſaid the excellent Dr. *Tillotſon* †,) to be "much in Company, and free in Converſation, "and not to be infected by it? to live "in the midſt of a wicked World, and yet to "keep ourſelves free from the Vices of it? And "then how hard is it to be chearful, without "being vain? and grave and ſerious, without "being moroſe? How difficult is it to have a "Mind equal to every Condition, and to be con"tent with mean and moderate Things? to be "patient in Adverſity, and humble in Proſperi"ty, and meek upon ſudden and violent Pro"vocations? So that we may ſadly conclude, that the beſt of Men have their Weakneſſes and Imperfections, and come greatly ſhort of that Exactneſs, which is neceſſary to render their Hearts and Action conformable to the Rule.

But, perhaps, ſome will be ready to ſay, why theſe are but ſmall Faults, meer Peccadilloes which GOD will not be ſo ſevere as to mark againſt us, and we doubt not but he will overlook ſuch ſmall Failings in us, ſeeing that, in the Main, we endeavour to be obedient to his Commandment. But why ſhould you imagine that GOD will over-look them? Is your

† *Vol.* ii. *p.* 262.

Obedience

Obedience perfect, while it has so many Defects in it? and does not the Law insist upon a perfect Obedience? But GOD is merciful, (you say,) and, from the Goodness of his Nature, will readily pass by and forgive small Faults. Why, truly the Goodness of his Nature is sufficiently manifested, in making of thee a rational Agent, and not a Brute, and in giving to thee an holy, just, and good Law, in supporting of thee in Being, and continuing the Use of thy Reason to thee, and in so long waiting upon thee to be gracious to thee. But is not GOD just, as well as good? and shall there be no Room for the Manifestation of his Justice but in the more atrocious Crimes? Must the Goodness of GOD clash with his Holiness, and Justice, to give thee an Opportunity to sin with Impunity? And is not the least Departure from the Commandment a Sin? And will the holy GOD tolerate it, and the just GOD forbear to punish for it? The very Plea shews, that there has been a Defect, in your Obedience, which needs a Pardon; and that shews, that you have deserved to suffer. So *the Scripture* (*the Law*) *concludes all* (all Men, and all that they can do,) *under Sin* (*g*): for *whatsoever the Law saith, it saith unto them that are under the Law, that every Mouth may be stopped, and all the World may be guilty before GOD* (*h*).

Yea, so exceeding broad is the divine Commandment that we cannot possibly reach to the utmost Extent of it, in our present imperfect State. Though we ought to press after the highest Attainments in Grace and Holiness, yet when we have arrived at the utmost Degrees it is possible for us, now, to reach unto, while

(*g*) *Gal.* iii. 22. (*h*) *Rom.* iii. 19.

we are cloathed with Fleſh, and attended with our ſinful Infirmities, there will ſtill remain farther Degrees for us to labour after. Therefore the holieſt of Men are commanded, *(i)* to *grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.* So that if we bring ourſelves, and all our Actions, to the Rule, we may plainly ſee that we come vaſtly ſhort of that Exactneſs which is our Duty, even in the very beſt that we do; and it is juſt Matter of Humiliation to us, that we are ſo very defective in all, that if GOD ſhould enter into Judgment with us, and mark our Iniquity againſt us, we could not anſwer him for one of a Thouſand; and it concerns us daily to renew our Repentance, becauſe we daily offend.

What a Wonder of Mercy, then, is it, that the infinitely holy GOD will be pleaſed to accept of any of our imperfect Services? Truly, we ſerve the beſt of Maſters; whoſe Mercy reaches us in our poor low infirm State, and pities us under all our Weakneſſes, helps us under all our Infirmities, and accepteth of our ſincere Deſires, and Endeavours, after perfect Obedience, though there are innumerable Defects in us, and our Services, when we have done our beſt. We are beholden to a merciful GOD for every good Thing wrought in us, or done by us. * *Who maketh thee to differ from another Man? and what haſt thou which thou didſt not receive?* Thy very Faith, and Repentance, and every Grace in thee, is the Gift of GOD to thee, without whom thou couldeſt do nothing. GOD oweth thee Nothing, but Thou oweſt thy Self, and all that thou canſt do, to him: it is but thy due Debt

(*i*) 2 *Pet.* iii. 18. * 1 *Cor.* iv. 7.

to ſerve him, in the moſt exact, and ſteady, uninterrupted, Obedience to his Commands; a Debt which thou art to be always paying, and yet canſt never fully pay; a Debt which thou comeſt ſo ſhort in, that, when thou haſt done all thou canſt, thou wilt have no Room to boaſt and glory, as if thou deſervedſt any Thing, but muſt rely upon the infinite Mercy of GOD to accept thy poor Performances. *We are all an unclean Thing, and all our Righteouſneſſes are but as filthy Rags*; ſaid the *Prophet* †. That after a Man has lived the moſt holy circumſpect Life, that ever any mere Man in the World did, after all his fervent Prayers, and Devotions, and penitent Tears and Humiliations, and exemplary Probity, Juſtice, and Charity, if the great and holy GOD ſhould deal with him according to the ſtrict Demands of his holy Law and Commandment, he would be ſent down to Hell, as the juſt Reward of the Iniquity of his holy Things. But by Grace ye are ſaved; and the Grace of GOD is ſuperabundant towards us, in accepting, and rewarding of our Obedience, which, after all, is ſo very defective.

Certainly then, in vain do any expect Juſtification by any Performances of their own; for *by the Deeds of the Law no Fleſh ſhall be juſtified in his Sight* (*k*.) We are, after we have done our beſt, not only unprofitable Servants, but, ſo very defective, that we ſhould not be able to ſtand a Trial before our Judge, and hold up our Heads in the great Day of Account. This therefore ſhews us what Reaſon we have to repair to the pardoning Mercy of GOD, through the Merits of JESUS CHRIST, that our Sins may be forgiven, and we may be accepted into

† *Iſa.* lxiv. 6. (*k*) *Rom.* iii. 25.

His Favour. If the Commandment be ſo exceeding broad, as we have ſeen, then we need a more perfect Righteouſneſs than any we are able to procure by our own Obedience, to juſtify us before GOD, and entitle us to the divine Acceptance. For, how can we imagine that GOD, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, will accept our imperfect Services, as they are in themſelves, without any farther Conſiderations? Verily, the Juſtice, and Holineſs of GOD will not admit of it. The holy, and righteous, wiſe, and good GOD can look upon no Righteouſneſs, as ſufficient to recommend any to his Favour, but what is every Way adequate, and correſpondent to the Demand of his Law; the want of this is a Treſpaſs upon his Authority, and Dominion, which was the Caſe of Apoſtate Angels, and fallen Man; and therefore, ſince, through the Defectiveneſs of our Obedience, we are not Owners of ſuch a perfect Righteouſneſs of our own, 'tis neceſſary that we be provided of ſuch a ſinleſs Righteouſneſs from an other, as our Surety, in the Vertue of which GOD may accept us, and our Services, and confer the Bleſſing upon us. GOD ſmelleth a ſweet Savour only in a perfect ſpotleſs Sacrifice. All of which ſhews us the Neceſſity there is of our being found in the Righteouſneſs of JESUS CHRIST, our only Mediator, in the Merits of whoſe Sufferings GOD will graciouſly pardon all our Sins, and in the Virtue of whoſe perfect Obedience he will accept of our ſincere, though imperfect Services, according to the Tenor of the Grace of the Goſpel; and conſequently the Neceſſity of our Faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, relying upon his infinite Merits alone for our Juſtification

tification before GOD, that being juſtified by Faith, through the Imputation of the Righteouſneſs of CHRIST unto us, we may have Peace with GOD, and be accepted to his everlaſting Mercy. For, bleſſed be GOD; *if any Man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous; who is a Propitiation for our Sin* (*l*). *If there had been a Law given which would have given Life, verily Righteouſneſs ſhould have been by the Law* (*m*): *But what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the Fleſh, GOD ſending his own Son, in the Likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, and for Sin condemned Sin in the Fleſh; that the Righteouſneſs of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit* (*n*): *whom* (JESUS CHRIST) *GOD hath ſet forth to be a Propitiation, through Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteouſneſs for the Remiſſion of Sins that are paſt; through the Forbearance of GOD;---that He might be juſt, and the Juſtifier of him which believeth in JESUS* (*o*). Our only Hope, and Plea, then, is the prevailing Merits of his Obedience, and Sufferings, *who gave Himſelf for us, that He might waſh away our Sins in his own Blood* (*p*). And need have we to renew our Cloſure with the Lord JESUS CHRIST, by a daily freſh Exerciſe of our Faith in Him, in the Virtue and Efficacy of his Obedience and Paſſion, that we may have our imperfect Services, perfumed with His ſweet Incenſe, and, preſented through His Hands, rendred acceptable to His eternal Father; and

(*l*) 1 *Joh.* ii. 1, 2. (*m*) *Gal.* iii. 21. (*n*) *Rom.* viii. 3, 4. (*o*) *Rom.* iii. 25, 26. (*p*) *Rev.* i. 5.

that we may obtain the Forgiveneſs of all our Sins, and ſhort Comings in Duty, and may be received unto that eternal Life, which CHRIST has purchaſed, and GOD, that cannot lie, has promiſed before the World began.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

PSALM CXIX. 96.

I have seen an End of all Perfection; but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

I Am yet upon the Improvement of the second Doctrine from these Words; and I have inferred,

1. The wonderful Goodness, Mercy, and Compassion, of GOD to a miserable World, in making a clear Revelation of his Mind and Will to it.

2. The indispensible Obligations we all lie under to keep the Commandment of GOD.

3. That pure Religion is our truest Wisdom; because it meaneth to better us in our Persons, and all our Relations, and render us comfortable here, and compleatly happy hereafter; and it requires nothing unreasonable of us, or that we shall have Cause to be ashamed or repent of; and if at last we should be deceived in our Expectations of future Happiness, (which

(which the truly religious Man shall not be,) yet we shall have acted the wisest Part, in living as becometh our rational Nature, and guarding against the greatest future Evil.

4. The very great Evil of Persons making light of, and contemning, the divine Commandment, by playing their prophane Jests, and Banters upon it, turning it into Drollery and Ridicule; or by forming new Notions, and Schemes of Religion, unwarranted by the divine Oracles; or by neglecting to attend upon it.

5. How short we all come of the Rule in our Obedience, and what need the Best have to be humble, and implore the pardoning Mercy of GOD, through the Merits of CHRIST, that we may find Acceptance.

I shall mention two or three other Inferences, and then conclude this Subject with a Use of Exhortation.

6. Hence we may infer, that the Office of the Gospel Ministry, is attended with very great Labour and Difficulty, as well as is truly honourable. JESUS CHRIST hath appointed the sacred Order of the Ministry, not for a temporary but a standing Office, in his Church, to the End of the World; and therefore he said to his first Ministers, in the latter End of *Matthew*'s Gospel, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the End of the World*: and the great Work, and Business, of this Order of Men are, the *Work of the Ministry*, the converting of Sinners from the Error of their Ways, the *perfecting of the Saints*, and so the edifying of the Body of CHRIST; to which End the Word of Reconciliation it committed

mitted unto them, that they ſhould preach the unſearchable Riches of CHRIST. Now, if the Commandment is exceeding broad, if there is a tranſcendent Excellency in it, as it is the Word of the Great GOD, the Law of the eternal King, and it's great Deſign is to perfect our Nature, and compleat our Happineſs? then certainly, thoſe whom GOD employs to diſpence his Word to us, who explain to us, and enforce upon us, the Will of GOD, whoſe Buſineſs it is to conduct us in the Paths of Righteouſneſs, and ſhew to us the Way of Salvation, theſe ſurely are fixed in an high and honourable Station. Shall the Care of our worldly Intereſt, the defending us from the Injuries and Oppreſſions of the voracious, and the Recovery of our Rights, when they are unjuſtly detained, or violently taken away from us, be thought to confer Honour upon him that pleads, or Umpires, our Cauſe? Or ſhall the Care of our Bodies, and the ſecuring them from the Maladies they are liable unto, and the reſtoring them to Health and Vigour, when they are weakened and impaired, be thought to render him honourable that prudently adminiſters to them? And ſhall not the Care of our Souls, the promoting their Health and Vigour, and the ſecuring their preſent Comfort, and their eternal Intereſt, confer as great an Honour upon thoſe whoſe peculiar Buſineſs it is to lay themſelves out in Study for us, and are conſtantly, and faithfully, ſpending their Time, and Strength in warning, counſelling, and inſtructing of us? Yea, ſhall the Care of the external Affairs of Mankind, the Government of their outward Conduct, and Behaviour, to one another, by proper Laws, and the enforcing Obedience to thoſe

Laws

Laws of the State, be thought to confer an high Honour from thoſe that wear the Commiſſion from an earthly Monarch? And are they, at the ſame Time, in a low and deſpicable Poſt, who are commiſſioned from the great, the eternal, King, to take Care of the Government of Mankind, by inſtilling the beſt Principles into them, by teaching them the beſt Manners, and have Power to enforce the Laws of the Kingdom of Heaven, upon it's Subjects, by an Authorative Declaration of it's Promiſes, and Denounciation of its Threatnings, and miniſterially to execute the ſacred Diſcipline upon the bold and incorrigible Offender? Is not the Welfare of our Souls greatly to be preferred to that of our Bodies? Is not their eternal Happineſs beyond any temporal Felicity the Body can enjoy? And does not this argue, that their Office, whoſe Buſineſs it is to promote their Welfare, their Rectitude and Happineſs, is of a far more noble and excellent a Nature, than any that relates to the Concerns of the Body, and the preſent Life only, can be? Or is their Office more honourable, and their Perſons only more contemptible? *Now then we are Embaſſadors for CHRIST, as though GOD did beſeech you by us, we pray you, in CHRIST ſtead, be ye reconciled unto GOD*; this is the Language of the Apoſtle concerning the Miniſters of the Goſpel (*q*): and how ſtrongly does it argue the Honour that is due unto them? Truly, I have often wondred at it, that any, who wear the Character of Gentlemen, ſhould act ſo mean and low a Part, as to pour their Contempt upon the ſacred Order and Office, upon which even the Temporal Welfare of

(*q*) 2 *Cor.* v. 20.

humane

humane Society is so much dependent, while at the same Time, we see them pay the highest Court to Offices of vastly less Importance: But our blessed Lord has said, (*r*) *My Kingdom is not of this World.*

Though, we magnify our Office, yet, we do not mean, by this, that great swelling Titles of Honour, and worldly Grandeur is to be heaped upon us; no, these are contemptible, and mean, compared with our high Office; nor mean we to lord it over GOD's Heritage, no, *we preach not ourselves, but CHRIST JESUS the Lord, and ourselves your Servants for JESUS Sake* (*s*); but then give us leave to hope that you will so far honour our Office, and our Persons, while we are faithful in it, as to preserve such an inward Respect, and Reverence, thereto, as may afford us the Opportunity to do you all the Good we wish to do, and may best answer the great Ends of our Ministry; that you may hearken to our Instruction, receive our Counsel, and submit to our teaching and Government, and *esteem us highly, in Love, for our Work's Sake*; for thus the *Apostle* of our Lord hath said, (*t*) *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves; for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give Account, that they may do it with Joy and not with Grief; for that is unprofitable for you.* The Ministers of the Lord come unto you in his Name, vested with Authority from him, and declare what his Will and Pleasure concerning you is, and therefore it is your Part to regard them, as Messengers of GOD; though if they speak not according to their Instructions,

(*r*) *Joh.* xviii. 36. (*s*) 2 *Cor.* iv. 5. (*t*) *Heb.* xiii. 17.

hear

hear them not ; there will be no Danger in ſuch Diſobedience. The Keys of the Kingdom of GOD, and his MESSIAH, are committed to them, thoſe they regularly bind on Earth, ſhall be bound in Heaven, thoſe they regularly looſe on Earth ſhall be looſed in Heaven ; the Sentence they paſs, according to the Law of GOD, will be ratified and confirmed by their great Maſter : and it is no Preſumption in them, in the Diſcharge of their Office, to reprove the greateſt, and haughtieſt, Tranſgreſſor, and warn him of the Evil of his Ways, and adminiſter the holy Diſcipline of the Kingdom of CHRIST upon him, and let ſuch know, that their Sovereign Maſter will ſeverely puniſh all that impenitently go on in Diſobedience to any of his known Commands : and whilſt they keep within their proper Line, and faithfully do the Duties of their Office, they that affront, inſult, and injure them, affront the King of Heaven himſelf, whoſe Miniſters they are ; and hence we may obſerve our Saviour publiſhing to all the World, how he will reſent the Treatment of his Miniſters, ſaying, (*u*) *He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me ; and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me.*

But then, as it ſhews the Dignity, and Authority, of the Miniſters of the Goſpel of CHRIST, ſo does it alſo beſpeak the very great Labour, and Difficulty, that attends their ſacred Office. They are, in a qualified Senſe, the Keepers of the divine Law, entruſted with that ſacred *Depoſitum*, and to explain and enforce the divine Commandment upon their Fellow Creatures, and, in this Way, to train them up, and fit them, for the

(*u*) *Luk.* x. 16.

future

future Happineſs, the unutterable Rewards of the Kingdom of GOD. And though, one would be ready to think, that, it ſhould require no very great Labour, and Pains, to perſwade Men to be happy, becauſe every Man naturally thirſteth after Happineſs, yet, ſo it is, that it is one of the moſt operoſe, and laborious Taſks that can be; becauſe we have the Weakneſſes, and Miſtakes, and Prejudices, the Luſts and Paſſions of Men to encounter withal. 'Tis true, Men would be happy, if they might; but it muſt be in their own Way. If they might but get to Heaven, and enjoy all the Happineſs they are capable of, at laſt, and yet indulge their ſeveral vicious Appetites, and walk in the Ways of their own Heart, for the preſent, and be obliged to no Acts of Self Denial, they might eaſily be perſwaded to this; becauſe this would ſuit well with their corrupt Inclination, their depraved Taſte, and miſtaken Notion of things: but to perſwade them to be happy, in GOD's Way, the only Way in which they can be happy, this is an exceeding great Difficulty; becauſe their Prejudices are levelled againſt this as an uneaſy and burdenſome thing to them, and their various Luſts draw them another Way, and their Maſtakes perſwade them that they may be as truly happy in a Way of their own chooſing. And hence there needs a great deal of Pains to convince Men, that they are miſtaken in their Notions of Happineſs; that, as fond as they are of it, they are vainly ſeeking for it where it is not to be found, and that they muſt certainly take another Courſe, than they do, if ever they would be happy. Here we have the carnal Intereſts of Men, which bias and warp their Minds, to conflict withal; and it is no eaſy Matter to draw them off from thoſe Prejudices, and

and convince them, that their true and main Intereſt does not lie in this World, neither is their Happineſs to be enjoyed here; that there is an End of all created Perfection, and that they need ſomething beyond the Riches, and Pleaſures, and Honours, of this World, to make them truly happy. It is very hard to beat Men off from their ſtrong Attachment to the Objects of Senſe.

Beſides, we muſt let Men know, that they muſt be better Men, or they cannot be happy; that they muſt rectify the Diſorders of their Minds, ſubdue and mortify their irregular Appetites, and carefully avoid every thing that is mean and baſe, that is impious and unjuſt, and conſtantly practiſe all the Vertues of a ſober, a righteous, and a godly Life, and Converſation: and this engages us in a Struggle with the Luſts and Paſſions of Men, which are no real Friends to Vertue: And becauſe theſe Luſts and Paſſions are ordinarily very ſtrong and active, through a long Courſe of indulging them, therefore it is ſo much the more Difficult for us to overcome them: ſo that there needs a great Deal of Study and Thought, Caution and Guard, Prudence and Watchfulneſs, and a diligent Application, to be able to come 'at the right Side of Men, and find out accep-'table Words, that may reach them, and yet 'pleaſe them; that may ſuit their Caſe, and 'yet not be offenſive to them; that may ſtrike 'home upon their Conſciences; and not ſtir 'their Wrath; that in all we may be faithful to GOD, and faithful to the Souls of our Neighbours, and yet, if poſſible, not provoke them to diſreliſh our Miniſtry. So that we muſt be *made all things to all Men, that we might by all Means ſave ſome* (*w*). And after all our Study, and

(*w*) 1 *Cor.* ix. 22.

Watchfulneſs,

Watchfulneſs, and Diligence, and Prudence there is requiſite our fervent and unwearied Prayers to the GOD of all Grace, for the Preſence and Aſſiſtance of the divine Spirit to accompany our Miniſtry, and ſucceed our Labours; without which, *who is ſufficient for theſe things* (*x*)? If the holy and omnipotent Spirit of GOD do not accompany our Miniſtry, we may be heard, but we ſhall not be regarded; we may be unto our Hearers, as *Ezekiel* was to his, *as a very lovely Song, of one that hath a pleaſant Voice, and can play well on an Inſtrument*, but our Word ſhall not be obeyed; the Sinner will ſtill go on in his vicious Courſes, and, under the Influences of a vain Dream of Happineſs, poſt down to eternal Miſery, in Spite of all that we can do to prevent it.

And this produces an other very great Difficulty in our Work, namely, the Diſcouragement we meet with, becauſe our Meſſage is not regarded, our Maſter is ſlighted, and all his gracious Offers are contemned, and Men are ſuch Fools as to neglect Heaven, and Happineſs, upon the faireſt Offers imaginable, and all for the Sake of a vain World, and ſordid Luſts; ſo that we have often Cauſe ſadly to lament, with the Prophet, *the Bellows are burnt, the Lead is conſumed of the Fire, the Founder melteth in vain; for the Wicked are not plucked away; we labour in vain, and ſpend our Strength for nought*; and to cry out with the Apoſtles, *Lord, we have toiled all Night*, and all Day too *and have caught nothing*. And what Uneaſineſs muſt this be to us? How does it ſtir all our Compaſſion and Sorrow? to ſee thoſe we live amongſt, and converſe with, whom we have

(*x*) 2 *Cor.* ii. 16.

contracted a Friendſhip for, and are become dear to us, as our peculiar Charge, living in Defiance with our great Maſter, trampling upon his holy Laws, and pulling down his amazing Vengeance upon them, and all we can do for them will not ſave them from endleſs Ruin? Our Hearts muſt be hard as the Nether Milſtone not to feel the very forcible Impreſſions of Pity and Compaſſion, mixed with a killing Grief and Sorrow, at ſuch a lamentable Sight as this.

Nor are we without our Difficulties, ariſing from ourſelves. We are of the ſame Nature, and of like Paſſions, with other Men, are equally liable unto Temptations, and more ſo: and it requires no leſs Care and Pains to furniſh ourſelves for our Work, that we may *be able Miniſters of the New Teſtament, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*, that we may have a thorow Knowledge of the divine Commandment, and may be able to teach others; and when we have ſpent our Time, in Study, and Prayer, how watchful muſt we be? that we bring no unhallowed Fire to GOD's Altar, that we feed you with the wholeſome Food of the Word of GOD, that Bread of Life which our Maſter has ordered for his Family, and not put you off with Chaff, or teach for Doctrine the Commandments of Men. It is no little Difficulty to approve ourſelves faithful Stewards in the Houſe of GOD; and, conſidering the Tempers and Humors of Mankind, to overcome our Fears of offending thoſe that look upon themſelves as great Men, or leſt we loſe the Favour and Friendſhip of thoſe from whom, it may be, a conſiderable Part of our ſcanty Allowance comes, for our being true to our Truſt, and faithful in the Diſcharge of our Office;

Office; and yet we are under the ſtrongeſt Obligations, as we will anſwer it to our Lord and Maſter, to be faithful, in warning every Man, and bearing our Teſtimony againſt every Vice, and when we ſpie Danger, to lift up our Voice like a Trumpet, and cry aloud, and ſhew our People their Iniquity, that, if poſſible, we may keep ourſelves free from the Blood of all Men, and ſave our own Souls, and the Souls of them that hear us. Theſe are ſome of the Labours, and Difficulties, of thoſe who are employed in the Service of the Miniſtry, whoſe Buſineſs it is to teach the Law of the Lord; and we may be ſure that the grand Adverſary, whoſe Kingdom they oppoſe, will not fail to give them Diſturbance enough: and we ſee that the more honourable their Work is, ſo much the more laborious, and ſerviceable, it is alſo; and Reaſon there is for our addreſſing of you, in the Strain of the Apoſtle, *Now I beſeech you, Brethren, for the Lord JESUS CHRIST ſake, and for the Love of the Spirit, that ye ſtrive together with me, in your Prayers to GOD for me* (*x*).

Hence we learn, what is, and will be, the miſerable Condition of all ſuch as live, and die, in Diſobedience to the divine Commandment. For if it is the Commandment of the great GOD, and aims at our Comfort, and Happineſs, then thoſe that live in Diſobedience thereto muſt of Conſequence greatly provoke the divine Majeſty, and deprive themſelves of their own Comfort and Happineſs; and this is to be truly miſerable. For what is it to live in Diſobedience to the Commands of GOD? but to riſe up in Rebellion againſt him, to deny his rightful Authority over us, to joyn in Confederacy with his avowed

(*x*) *Rom.* xv. 30.

Adverſary, and conſpire the dethroning of him from his Dominion: ſo that a Life of Diſobedience is no other than a vile Inſult upon his Government, and, as *Job* expreſſes it, (*y*) *a denying the GOD that is above:* it is to ſet up a mean and low Pretender, a vile Uſurper, in his Stead, as Lord over us, and pay that Homage to Self, and Satan, which is due unto GOD only. And what can argue a meaner Thought of the all-perfect, and infinitely glorious GOD, the Greateſt, and the Beſt, of Beings, than thus to ſet up the vileſt and worſt of Beings in Oppoſition to him? And what can give a higher Provocation to the divine Majeſty, than not only to do all we can to ſtrip him of his Authority, but, to give the Preference to ſuch as are moſt deteſtable? Yet this prodigious Guilt and Folly is juſtly chargeable upon all ſuch as live in a continued Courſe of Diſobedience to any of the known Laws of GOD; who live in the Neglect of the religious Worſhip of GOD, either ſocial, or ſolitary; who take his Name in vain, and profane his holy Day; who are ſtubborn and rebellious in their Carriage to their Superiours, or inſulting and tyrannical over their Inferiours, or malicious and revengful to their Equals; who live in Falſhood and Unrighteouſneſs, in Intemperance and Incontinency, and the like; by ſuch open, bold, and daring Tranſgreſſions they pour the greateſt Contempt upon their ſovereign Lawgiver, and provoke him to his Face: which made the Apoſtle ſay, (*z*) *through breaking the Law diſhonourest thou GOD.* It is not only true of the Heathen World, that, though they know GOD, by his Works, yet they glorify him not as GOD, by living up to the Dictates of natural Conſcience, which is the

(*y*) *Job.* xxxi. 28. (*z*) *Rom.* ii. 23.

Com-

Commandment, or Law, written on their Hearts; but it is to be feared, that there are many among profeſſed Chriſtians, who, notwithſtanding the Advantages they enjoy, in the clearer Revelation of the divine Will, and though they appear openly to own that Revelation to be from GOD, and pretend to take it for the Rule of their Lives, yet, in their Practice, *ſay unto GOD, depart from us, we deſire not the Knowledge of thy Ways: what is the Almighty that we ſhould ſerve him? and what profit ſhall we have, if we pray unto him (a)?*

But is the Commandment exceeding broad, as we have ſeen, then certainly thoſe who ſo reproach their Maker, by a wilful Diſobedience to his holy Laws, muſt unavoidably be in a miſerable State and Condition: and indeed they evidently carry about with them, daily, ſo great a Part of their Miſery, as is ſufficient, one would think, to make them cry out in the Strain of the *Apoſtle, (b) O wretched Man that I am; who ſhall deliver me?* For it is very apparent, that they, who ſo contemn the Authority of GOD, and go on in a Courſe of Diſobedience to his holy Commandment, are under the Power of diverſe Luſts, and Paſſions, being *ſold under Sin.* For, what but a ſtrong Prejudice upon the Mind, (againſt the Commandment of GOD, which is the Reſult of the higheſt Reaſon, and Goodneſs,) ariſing from the powerful Influence of ſome Luſt or other, could prevail with a reaſonable Creature to live in a direct Contrariety to the Authority of his rightful Sovereign, and in Diſobedience to thoſe Commands which are every Way calculated to promote his real Benefit, both in this World, and the next? For, the Man cannot but acknow-

(a) *Job.* xxi. 14, 15. (b) *Rom.* vii. 24.

ledge, if there be a GOD, (and this is the Language of all Nature about him,) that then this GOD is his Sovereign Lord, and has a Right to be obeyed in whatever he commandeth, and that it must needs be for his Interest to resign up his own Will entirely to the divine Will, and govern himself, in all things, by the divine Law; because this his almighty Sovereign is able fully to reward all his Services, and severely to punish him for his Disobedience; and that therefore it must be an unreasonable thing in him to obey and serve some Lust or other, rather than the living GOD. Nay do we not find the Generality of profligate and vicious Livers, in their cool Thoughts, acknowledging the Equity and Goodness of the Law it self; and yet they act directly contrary to it? like him, who could say, *Video meliora proboq; deteriora sequar*: or, in the Apostle's Stile, *I consent unto the Law that it is good, but do that which I would not, Evil being present with me* (*c*). And whence is this but from the prevailing Power of Prejudice enslaving of them? What can be a greater Infelicity, than, for an intelligent Mind, capable of discerning right, to be in vile Subjection to some base and sordid Lust or Passion, and ever be led wrong by them? What can be worse, than to be under the Power and lordly Dominion of Irregularity and Disorder? to be ever erring from the Way of Truth, and Peace? Is there any thing more unbecoming a rational Creature, than to be a Slave to Sense; or, than for an heaven-born Soul to be the Devil's Drudge? Can there be a greater Unhappiness, than for a rational Agent to be continually acting contrary to his Light and Knowledge, and be perpetually ex-

(*c*) *Rom.* vii. 16-18.

posing

posing himself to the Reproaches of his own Heart? Does he need any other Torment, who carries that within him, which challenges his Actions, accuses him for his Impiety, and lashes him for his extream Folly and Madness? What is there can make such a Man easy and comfortable, while he feels the stinging Reflections of his own Mind? 'Tis true, indeed, that a Man may very much stifle and suppress the Remonstrances of his own Mind, by the Hurry, and Noise, and Diversions, of the World; but can he always command Silence in his own Breast, and stop the just Clamours of Conscience against himself?* No verily; sometimes it will cry aloud, and will be heard, in Spite of all that he can do to prevent it; and when once the Heighth of his Noisy Mirth is over, and the Heat of Wine and strong Drink hath spent itself, and he begins to be a little cool, and retire within himself, and think sedately, what an Uproar is there raised in his Soul? what a Storm rages in his Breast? What Convulsions seise him? which he cannot, for a while at least, get rid of, nor knows he how to support himself under. (c) *The Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infirmities*, the ordinary Calamities of Life, *but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* Who indeed! Certainly, this is the very Misery of Devils themselves; to be unable to act up to the Dignity of their rational Nature, and to feel the Smart of their own Reproaches for it. Yet so miserable are all they who are under the Power of Lust and Prejudice, and turn their Backs upon the holy Commandment. And though, through the Defilement, and Stupidity, of their Consciences, they may not, for the present, feel the Sting, and be sensible of

(c) *Prov.* xviii. 14.

their unhappy Condition, yet the Time will come when their Sorrows shall compass them about, as with a Chain, and the pointed Arrows of the Almighty shall drench up their Spirits within them.

If ever such irreligious and disobedient Creatures should come to a serious Temper, and wisely consider their present State, and their latter End, before it is too late, they will then know what is meant by the Conviction of Sin and Guilt; and the Sense of their having made GOD to become their Enemy, and of having affronted their own Minds, by their acting contrary to the Dictates of right Reason, in their Disobedience to the divine Commands, will give such a Wound and Sting to their Souls, as will not easily be cured, and can hardly be endured.

But if the poor thoughtless Creatures should go on in their Contempt of the divine Authority, and carry their rebellious Principles out of this World with them, they will forever regret their Madness, when they shall find themselves everlastingly separated from the least Glimpse of all that Happiness, which the divine Commandment would have led them to; and, in Lieu thereof, shall inherit the contrary Misery, in having their awakened Apprehensions, with exquisite Sensation, forever weltering under the heavy Impressions of the divine Wrath and Indignation. *For the Wrath of GOD is revealed from Heaven, against all Ungodliness, and Unrighteousness of Men* (*d*): and GOD will *render Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile* (*e*): There is, in-

(*d*) *Rom.* i. 18. (*e*) *Rom.* ii. 6, 9.

deed,

deed, a very great Infelicity that hardened Sinners are liable unto, through the Wrath of GOD, in the preſent World, namely, that all the Creatures of GOD are in a State of Enmity with them. For by making GOD, whom they rebel againſt, to become their Enemy, they unavoidably render all the Creatures of GOD, who are his Servants, the Miniſters of his Pleaſure, to be at Enmity with them alſo: ſo that they all ſtand ready, whenever their Maſter ſhall ſay the Word, to execute the divine Vengeance upon them, in ſuch a Manner as ſhall greatly embitter their preſent Life to them with various and amazing Sorrows; nor have they any Security againſt being ſoon brought into the moſt uncomfortable Circumſtances that can poſſibly attend any in this World, nor any Method, if ſuch a wretched Condition ſhould overtake them, to get rid of it, or to enjoy themſelves with any tolerable Satisfaction in it. But however, it is impoſſible, whatever be his preſent Senſations, for the diſobedient Soul to be otherwiſe than compleatly miſerable, in the future World. There Diſorder and Peace, Guilt and Comfort, cannot poſſibly dwell together. Then every Tranſgreſſion, and Diſobedience, will receive a juſt Recompence of Reward, from a provoked Sovereign and Judge; and the bold Contemners of the divine Authority, who have *hated Inſtruction, and caſt the Word of GOD behind their Backs*;---(however GOD may ſeem *to keep Silence* for the preſent, as if he regarded not their Behaviour,) ----- *He will certainly reprove, and ſet their Sin in Order before them*; ---- *He will tear them to Pieces, and there ſhall be none to deliver* (*f*). For, the future World

(*f*) *Pſal.* l. 17, 21, 22.

will

will be the Time, and Place, of Retribution and Rewards, when every Man shall receive according to what he hath done in the Body: and because their Judge perfectly knows all the Crimes they have been guilty of, and wants neither Purity to resent them as they deserve, nor Power to punish for them, and everlives to see the threatened Sentence executed upon them, therefore the Condition of the obstinately disobedient Sinner will be miserable indeed. It will include the Heighth of Misery in it, and be utterly unavoidable. It will include in it the utmost Degrees of Misery the Sinner is capable of enduring, because it will be the Effect of the righteous Displeasure, the heated Indignation, of an infinitely holy and powerful GOD, the Power of whose Wrath as much exceeds our Fears, as the Riches of his Grace does our most enlarged Hopes; the Weight of whose Arm will fall heavy, in the Day when he executeth Vengeance upon the bold Transgressors of his Law. And who then shall be able to endure it! And if that Misery be inconceiveably great which results from the fierce Wrath of an Almighty GOD, how amazing will it be, when we add the Consideration of it's eternal Duration to the Weight of it! That they *shall be punished with everlasting Destruction, from the Presence of the Lord, and the Glory of his Power, who know not GOD, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord JESUS CHRIST* (g)! In a Word; it will be beyond the Sinner's Reach to escape this Misery; because GOD can find him out in his most secret lurking Places, and neither the Strength of his own Arm, nor the Wisdom of his Heart, can deliver him, nor will any Creature avail him, to

(g) 2 *Thess.* i. 8, 9.

afford

afford him Help againſt the prodigious Deſtruction that will overtake him, in that Day of the Lord's Anger. Nothing but divine infinite Mercy could reſcue the guilty obſtinate Sinner from everlaſting Burning, but this Mercy he utterly ſlights and abuſes, by his continuing in Diſobedience to the divine Commandment, after all the Calls and gracious Invitations, made to him to turn and live; and now, *how ſhall he eſcape, ſeeing he neglects ſo great Salvation (b)?*

I will juſt add one Inference more, *viz.*

8. This teaches us, that we ſhould not content ourſelves with the bare Letter of the Commandment. The Commandment, or Revelation from GOD, is deſigned to produce a ſpiritual Life, and Power, in our Souls, and ſo to make us truly and thorowly Good; and therefore we ſhould not ſatisfy our ſelves, that we know the Letter of the Commandment, or that we practiſe according to the Letter of it, in an Obſervation of the external Duties required of us; but we ſhould endeavour to feel the Force of it on our Hearts, that it may quicken us, and inſpire us with a new, and divine Principle, and influence us to ſpiritual Devotion, and real Holineſs, and ſo make us alive unto GOD. 'Tis not enough that we ſtudy the Scriptures, as Men do other Sciences, to inform our Minds, and furniſh us for Diſcourſe, to enlarge our Speculations, and increaſe our Ideas and Notions of Things, without having any Regard to Practice; but the Word muſt be ingrafted in us, that our Fruit may partake of its Virtue, and we muſt endeavour to reduce our Knowledge to Practice, and therefore know, what we may do; otherwiſe we ſhall but render the Scripture a dead Letter to us. Nor is it ſufficient

(b) *Heb.* ii. 3.

that

that we say our Prayers, go to Church, and observe the external Ordinances of the Gospel, and that we wrong no Man in our Dealings, but the Commandment may sink deep into our Hearts, and enliven us with a divine Flame of Love to, and Delight in it, that with our Spirits, fervently engaged therein, we may serve the Lord; without which we shall but have *a Form of Godliness*, while we are *destitute of the Power of it.* And this accounts for what we sometimes have the melancholly Experience of, namely, of some who seem, for a Time, to be walking in a Course of Religion, they appear openly for the Truth, hold the Profession of Faith, and vindicate it against all Opposers, and yet, after all, in a Time of Trial, they fall away from the Truth, and the holy Ways of GOD; and that, (to allude to the Words of the *Apostle*, (*i*) because *they did not serve in the Newness of the Spirit, but in the Oldness of the Letter.* They took no Care, as new-born Babes, to desire the pure Milk of the Word, that they might grow thereby, but contented themselves with having the Breast at their Mouths, and therefore, though they had a Name to live, for a while, yet they were truly dead; and not having their Nature perfected by the divine Commandment, they finally came short of the Blessedness it was designed to lead them to. If therefore we would partake of the compleat Happiness the divine Commandment aims at, we must not only inform our Minds, and direct our outward Behaviour, by it; but we must endeavour to search out the spiritual Meaning, and submit our Wills, and Consciences, entirely to the Government of it, that it may be in us a quickening Word; for, as the *Apostle* observes, (*k*) *the Letter*

(*i*) *Rom.* vii. 6. (*k*) 2 *Cor.* iii. 6.

killeth,

killeth, but the Spirit giveth Life. Not only does the Letter, or the Law given by *Moſes*, bring under Condemnation, while the Spirit, or Grace of the Goſpel by JESUS CHRIST, maketh alive; but the Knowledge of the bare Letter of the divine Commandment will but aggravate a Man's Condemnation, if he is deſtitute of the ruling Power of it in his Heart, which truly conveys a new and divine Life unto the Soul.

Uſe II. The Second, and only remaining Uſe I ſhall make of this Doctrine is by Way of Exhortation. Wherefore we *beſeech you, Brethren, that you receive not this Grace of GOD in vain*; but be ye all perſwaded now to make it your ſincere Endeavour, ſo to behave your ſelves in your pious Regards to the divine Commandment, as remembring that it is exceeding broad. My Neighbours and Friends; Do you believe it to be the Commandment of the ever-living GOD? that it reaches to every one of you, and includes your whole Duty in it? Is this the gracious End and Deſign of it, to make you wiſe, good and happy? and does it forever remain the perfect Rule of Righteouſneſs? Then, I beſeech you, let it find a due Entertainment with you, and pay all that Regard to it which the excellent Nature, and Ends, of ſuch a divine Revelation demands of you. It is not for nothing that GOD hath written unto you the great Things of his Law, and ſhewed you the Line of your Duty, and made the Path of Life plain before you; no, he hereby aims at the improving of you in Righteouſneſs, and true Holineſs, and the training of you up in the Practice of Vertue, that you may be fitted for the more ſublime Services, and Entertainments of perfected Spirits, and

and for the everlasting Enjoyment of the divine Favour, in the heavenly World. And shall not the refreshing Thoughts of serving GOD perfectly, with Delight and Pleasure, and without Interruption or Impediment, and the Enjoyment of him as the satisfying Portion of your Souls, and your exceeding great Reward, be sufficient to influence you unto an hearty Respect to his holy Commandment, and prevail with you, to yield the ready Assent of your Minds unto all the Truths thereof, and the Submission of your Wills to the Conduct of those holy Rules he has prescribed? If to be perfectly holy, and perfectly happy; if to have your Nature wrought up to the noble and exalted Temper and Disposition of Angels, and possess all that can be delightful and entertaining to your rectified Powers and Capacities, and that forever, can have any Weight with you; then let not the Commandment of GOD be grievous unto you, but receive the Truth in the Love thereof, firmly credit the Reports of the sacred Oracles, and universally conform to all the Precepts of it, that you may be found among the Friends of GOD, and be the true Disciples of CHRIST, who hear his Voice, and follow him, and may be owned, and accepted, by him, another Day, to the Glory, and Joys of Heaven.

What is the Work of Heaven? but to obey GOD. There GOD sits enthroned in Glory, surrounded with his Myriads of holy Angels, who constantly, diligently, chearfully attend his Pleasure; whose great Happiness it is, that there is an exact Agreement between the Will of GOD in Commanding, and their Will in Obeying; who never have a Thought that any of the divine Commands are hard, nor so much

much as a secret Inclination to act contrary to them: There too it is the Felicity of the Saint, that his Will is intirely swallowed up in the divine, and he *serves GOD Day, and Night* (*l*), constantly, uninterruptedly, and forever; thus those holy Ones are arrived at their Centre, and there they are at Rest, and have not the least Tendency to move from it. And do we hope to get to Heaven, and Share in the Happiness, and join in the Services, of those perfected Spirits? Oh! how should the Thoughts hereof quicken us all, now to endeavour after an Imitation of those holy and happy Ones? that as our Lord hath taught us to pray, (*m*) *Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven*, so we may make it our daily Care to conform our Hearts, and Lives to the Will of GOD, while we are on Earth, as Saints and Angels do above.

What mighty and powerful Obligations are lying upon us to be obedient to the Lord our GOD? All his Goodness to us, in his common Providence, is to allure and draw us, to draw out our Desires after him, and move us to a ready Compliance with his Will; all his Corrections are to excite and stir up our Aversions against what is offensive to him, that we may fly from every provoking Evil, and be true to him, and his Interest; it is our own. But then what peculiar Advantages hath GOD favoured us with? While the heathen World have only the Light of Nature to lead and guide them, we are even lift up to Heaven, are brought to the very Borders of the Land of Promise, have the direct Way thither clearly pointed out to us, and have a full View of

(*l*) *Rev.* vii. 15. (*m*) *Matth.* vi. 10.

the

the compleat, and endleſs, Happineſs of the glorious Inhabitants of that bliſsful Place. Though, in the Times of groſs Ignorance, GOD ſeemed to wink at the Follies of Men, yet *now he hath commanded all Men every where to repent*, and thus opens the Door of Hope to the guilty Creature, and letteth him know, that for the Sake of CHRIST, he will freely pardon all his paſt Offences, if he will but now become ſincerely Obedient. And what Obligations hath a merciful GOD laid upon us, to walk in all his Ordinances and Commandments blameleſs, by giving his own Son to die for us, to purchaſe the Forgiveneſs of our Sins, and procure for us the Gift of the Holy Spirit, to enable us, for the future, to live in Obedience to Him?

But if after all theſe Advantages, and Obligations, any of you reſolve to go on in your Diſobedience to the divine Commandment; whoſe Crime will be ſo aggravated? whoſe Puniſhment, will be ſo greatly increaſed? You may well fear the Doom of *Capernaum*, to whom we find CHRIST ſaying, (*n*) *Thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, ſhall be brought down to Hell.* The Heathen *will riſe in the Judgment, and condemn the Men of this Generation*, who profane the Name of GOD, and live without Prayer to Him, and indulge the various brutal Appetites, and Paſſions; and becauſe ſuch ſin againſt the cleareſt Light, and the ſtrongeſt Bonds, and Engagements, therefore their Puniſhment will be proportionable to their Crime, and an hotter, and more dreadful, Portion will be aſſigned unto them, in the Place of Torment: for, as our Saviour ſaid to the

(*n*) *Math.* xi. 23.

Capernaites,

Capernaites, † *It shall be more tolerable for the Land of Sodom, in the Day of Judgment, than for thee.*

Oh that you would seriously think of these Things, and every one of you be effectually moved hereby to come to a fixed Resolution with yourselves, no longer to turn a deaf Ear to the Counsels of GOD, and refuse to hearken to his Voice, but turn at his Reproof, and give such a due Entertainment unto the exceeding broad Commandment, as GOD reasonably expects from you, and as you yourselves may reap the Benefit of.

And therefore, to hint a few things.

1. Treat the divine Commandment with an upright honest Heart. GOD, by his Prophet says, (*o*) *Do not my Words do good to him that walketh uprightly?* Such as preserve an honest Principle, an upright Intention, in what they do, especially, in their reading, and hearing the sacred Word, will, most likely, reap all the Benefit by it, which it is intended for; while they that suffer their Minds to be carried away with unreasonable, and groundless Prejudices against the divine Commandment, will be never the better for it, nor pay any suitable Regard to it. The very Frame and Temper of their own Minds, while under evil Affections and corrupt Dispositions, will render the Commandment contemptible, and unprofitable to them. Our Saviour, therefore, not only adviseth us, *to take heed how we hear* ; (*p*) but informeth us, who they are that profit by the Commandment, even they that, *in an honest, and good Heart, receive the Word.* (*q*) That is

† *Matth.* xi. 24. (*o*) *Mic.* ii. 7. (*p*) *Luk.* viii. 18. (*q*) *Luk.* viii. 15.

one who layeth aſide his Prejudices, and bringeth a Mind open, and free, to receive Conviction. Let it be your Care, therefore, to get, and keep, ſuch an honeſt upright Heart, not biaſſed and warped by any particular Fondneſs for, or Averſion to, any Thing, without good Reaſon; and be ready to give Entertainment to any Truth, you find revealed, though it ſhould contradict ſome of your former beloved Notions; and to practiſe whatever is contained in the divine Commandment, though it go againſt the Grain, and Bent of your carnal Inclinations, and ſecular Views; and to avoid whatever the Commandment of GOD forbiddeth, though it may croſs your contracted vicious Habits. Thus, in this Reſpect, approve your ſelves to GOD, and your own Conſciences; and allow of no Diſpoſition, no known groundleſs Diſlike, to the Commandment, which your own Conſciences, upon a ſerious Reflection, will condemn you for; but, when you read, or hear, the divine Revelation, be willing to learn, and open to receive the Inſtructions of Wiſdom.

2. Highly Prize the divine Commandment. It is a moſt excellent Law; and ſhall we not prize it? It every Way conſults our Benefit and Advantage, in both Worlds; and ſhall we not value it? What is there that deſerves your Eſteem, and Veneration, equal to the Words of the great King; thoſe Words by which alſo you are made to live? Is it not reaſonable that every Thing ſhould be valued according to its excellent Nature, and real Uſefulneſs? *Job* ſaid, *(o) I eſteem the Word of his Mouth, more than my neceſſary Food.* His daily Bread was not

(o) Job xxiii. 12.

ſo

so necessary to him, nor so valued by him, as the Word of GOD, the Food of his Soul, upon which, its Life and Comfort, is dependent. And what is there in this World, which we are so apt to dote upon, that is comparable to the divine Commandment? Which is in it self preferable to fine Gold, and more precious than Rubies, and which tends to make us the excellent in the Earth, and the Heirs of Heaven. And will you not then esteem it above all the Dross of this World? See how the devout *Psalmist* expresses his Value for it, in the *Psalm* where my Text is, *O, how love I thy Law!* (says he) *The Law of thy Mouth is better to me than Thousands of Silver and Gold*; — *I love thy Commandment above Gold, yea, above fine Gold*; — *I esteem thy Precepts, concerning all Things, to be right, therefore I hate every false Way.* Thus learn to work up yourselves to such an high Esteem for the Commandment of GOD, as to prefer it to every thing else; and this will be one effectual Means to prevent your being easily drawn away to any sordid sensual Gratifications. Look upon this as the bright Star that directs you unto Vertue, and Happiness, and rejoice therein, and prefer it to all the dark Shades of an imperfect World.

3. Diligently study the Commandment of GOD. He, that will not take the Pains to inform himself, will not be likely to know much of the Mind and Will of GOD; and how shall he, that knows it not, be able to do it, or take the Comfort of it? If therefore you would have your Manners reformed, your Hearts bettered, and your Happiness promoted, diligently search for this Wisdom, as for hid Treasure, and think not much to be at Pains with your selves, to find out

the Knowledge of the Holy, and the Way to an endless Life. Search the Field for the Pearl of great Price. Thus CHRIST directed his Hearers, (p) *Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think to have eternal Life; and they are they which testify of me.* You must daily sit at the Posts of Wisdom's Gates, embrace the proper Opportunities of being instructed out of the Law of GOD, that you may know Wisdom and Understanding, and the Fear of the Lord; for *how should you understand, except some Man guide you?* The *Priest's Lips shall preserve Knowledge, and the People shall receive the Law at his Mouth.* But then, seeing it is your great Advantage to have the Word of GOD in your own Hands, you should diligently read therein, and that daily, that by comparing Scripture with Scripture, you may be able to see with your own Eyes, and know what GOD requires you to believe, and do, in order to your Comfort here, and your eternal Well being hereafter. And to this add your frequent Meditation on the divine Law, that it may ever be with you, as the Man of your Counsel, to direct your Practice Day, and Night. And earnestly beg it of GOD to open your Eyes, that you may understand the Wonders out of his Law, that he may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom, and Revelation, in the Knowledge of him who hath called you unto Glory, and Vertue. In a Word, If you would have CHRIST for yours, and walk in the Paths of Vertue, and obtain eternal Life through him, you must carefully attend the Methods he has directed you to, and diligently read, and hear, and meditate, and pray; and thus go to him to teach you, who is able to open your

(p) *Joh.* v. 39.

blind

blind Eyes, and give you Underſtanding, that you may live.

4. Bring yourſelf, and all your Actions to the Commandment. The Commandment is the Rule of Life; and therefore you owe this to it, to eye it as your Rule, and examine, and prove, all your Actions by it, as the certain Standard of Truth and Holineſs. This will be the Way for you ſo to govern your whole Walk, as that it may bear ſome agreeable Proportion to the only Rule, and that you may be able to adorn the Doctrine of GOD your Saviour in all things. The Pſalmiſt enquires, (q) *Wherewithal ſhall a young Man cleanſe his Way?* and the anſwer to it is, *by taking Heed thereto, according to Thy Word.* This Word muſt be a Lamp unto your Feet, and a Light unto your Path, as ever you would run the Way of the divine Commandment. Without this you will be in great Danger of running into Errors, in Opinion, and Practice, and give Satan a great Advantage againſt you, to draw you away from your Stedfaſtneſs in your Chriſtian Courſe; but while you diligently compare yourſelf, and Actions, with the Word, and arm yourſelf with the Sword of the Spirit, *it is written*, you will be the better able to repel Temptations, and preſerve yourſelf pure from the great Tranſgreſſion. Be very careful therefore to put in Practice all known Duties, of Piety, and Devotion, to GOD, and of Juſtice, and Charity, to Man, and to avoid all known Sins of Profaneneſs, Injuſtice, Intemperance, and whatſoever elſe you find the Word of GOD warns you againſt; that your whole Lives may be a conſtant, ſteady, uniform,

(q) *Pſ.* cxix. 9.

Obedience

Obedience to the divine Commandment: then ſhall you not be aſhamed, when you have reſpect unto all his Commandments: then will not your own Hearts reproach you; for acting contrary to the Light of your Mind, and your Duty to GOD, but approve the Wiſdom of your Conduct, and afford you good Hope of a happy Concluſion.

5. Finally; Live upon the divine Commandment. The Deſign of the Commandment is to promote our Comfort in this World, and our compleat Happineſs in the next; great and precious are the Promiſes by which this is made over, and ſecured to us. Let the obedient Soul then take this as his proper Food and Nouriſhment, and live upon it; live in the Exerciſe of a lively Faith in the Promiſes of GOD, and in JESUS CHRIST, the great, and only Head, and Mediator, of the new Covenant, *in whom all the Promiſes are Yea, and Amen.* Here, therefore, let the obedient Soul repair, as to his *Aſylum*, his Place of Safety in the evil Day; and at what Time he is in Diſtreſs and Trouble, of any Kind, regularly lay hold upon the Promiſes, and all the Bleſſings contained therein, and from thence fetch in ſeaſonable, and ſufficient Support to his Mind under the Afflictions that befall him, and let in the Beams of divine Light, and Joy, in the darkeſt, and moſt melancholly Hours, that paſs over him. Thus you find the holy *Pſalmiſt* deriving his Comfort from the divine Commandment in the midſt of all the Afflictions he met withal, (*r*) *This is my Comfort in my Affliction*, (ſays he) *for thy Word hath quickened me,— Thy Statutes have been my Songs, in*

(*r*) *Pſ.* cxix. 50, 54.

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the Houſe of my Pilgrimage. Let us then draw Water out of theſe Wells of Salvation, and drink in of the River of divine Pleaſures, and feed upon the full Joys, which are thus provided for us. Think not to find Relief from the Creature, and therefore go not to an imperfect World, alone, to ſupply our Wants, or redreſs our Grievances; but go to the exceeding broad Commandment, where GOD, and CHRIST, and Earth, and Heaven, are made over to the believing, penitent, obedient Soul; and in this Portion let us rejoice, though we ſhould be poor, deſpiſed, and afflicted, in this World; for this is a Portion infinitely preferable to all that the whole Creation, alone, can yield us. While others, therefore, are ſaying, to all about them, *Who will ſhew us any Good?* And have no farther Concern upon their Minds, than how they may grow great, and graſp enough of this World in their Hands; let us take in the Sweetneſs of the divine Promiſes, and rejoice in the Lifting up of the Light of GOD's Countenance upon us, more than in the Increaſe of Corn, and Wine, and Oil. So you ſee the *Pſalmiſt* ſlighting a Portion in this Life, and living upon the Promiſe, ſaying (*s*) *Deliver me from the Men of this World, who have their Portion in this Life;—as for me, I ſhall behold thy Face in Righteouſneſs, I will be ſatisfied when I awake with thy Likeneſs.*

Let this be our conſtant Temper, and Behaviour, towards an imperfect World, and towards the exceeding broad Commandment of GOD; and then, when all the Springs of Nature ſhall have run dry, and the final Diſſolution of the preſent Frame of this Viſible World ſhall have put an End to all the fair Promiſes, and deluſive

(*s*) *Pſ.* xvii. 14, 15.

Flatteries,

Flatteries, of created Objects, as well as taken off all their Terror, we shall have a larger Experience of the Excellency of the divine Commandment, in the Fulness, and Perpetuity of its Happiness, and be everlastingly entertained in the Delightful Enjoyment of GOD, the inexhaustible Fountain of all Blessedness. I conclude all with the Advice of the *Apostle* to the *Romans*, (*t*) *Be not conformed to this World, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your Minds, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of GOD.*

(*t*) *Rom.* xii. 2.

F I N I S.