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Our SAVIOUR'S  
DIVINE  
SERMON  
ON THE  
MOUNT,  
CONTAIN'D

In the V<sup>th</sup>, VI<sup>th</sup>, and VII<sup>th</sup> Chapters of  
St. MATTHEW'S Gospel,  
EXPLAINED:

And the Practice of it Recommended in divers  
SERMONS and DISCOURSES.

In FOUR VOLUMES.

To which is prefix'd,  
A PARAPHRASE on the whole  
SERMON on the MOUNT:

And Two Copious Indexes annex'd; one of the Scriptures  
explain'd, the other of the particular Heads treated of in  
the Work.

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By *Ƴ* AMES BLAIR, M. A.  
Commissary of *Virginia*, President of *William and Mary*  
College, and Rector of *Williamsburgh* in that Colony.

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*The* SECOND EDITION.

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WITH  
A Recommendatory Preface by the Reverend  
Dr W A T E R L A N D.

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V O L. II.

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L O N D O N:

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THE  
CONTENTS  
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Second VOLUME.

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SERMON I.

**C**H R I S T *does not abolish the Moral Law.*  
Matt. v. 17. Page 1

SERMON II.

*Christ a great Encourager of good Morals.* Matt.  
v. 17. p. 15

SERMON III.

*The Perpetuity of the Moral Law.* Matt. v. 18  
p. 29

## S E R M O N IV.

*Who are the Least in the Kingdom of Heaven.*  
 Matt. v. 19. P. 44

## S E R M O N V.

*Who are Great in the Kingdom of Heaven.* Matt.  
 v. 19. P. 59

## S E R M O N VI.

*A Description of Pharisaical Righteousness.* Matt.  
 v. 20. P. 72

## S E R M O N VII.

*The Danger of Pharisaical Righteousness.* Matt.  
 v. 20. P. 85

## S E R M O N VIII.

*Against Anger and Malice.* Matt. v. 21, 22.  
 P. 99

## S E R M O N IX.

*Against Slighting and Affronting Words.* Matt. v. 22.  
 P. 113



SERMON X.

*Against Murder and Manslaughter. Matt. v. 21.*  
P. 127

SERMON XI.

*Degrees of Punishment in the future State. Matt.*  
v. 22. P. 142

SERMON XII.

*The Moral Law reaches the Thoughts. Matt 5, 22.*  
P. 154

SERMON XIII.

*The Duty of Reconciliation and Reparation of In-*  
*juries. Matt. v. 23, 24.* P. 168

SERMON XIV.

*Agreeing with the Adversary quickly. Matt. v. 25.*  
P. 183

SERMON XV.

*The Danger of delaying to agree with the Adversa-*  
*ry. Matt. v. 25, 26.* P. 197.

SERM.

The CONTENTS:  
S E R M O N XVI.

*The Meaning of the Seventh Commandment.* Matt.  
v. 27. p. 210

S E R M O N XVII.

*The Spiritual and Temporal Dangers of the Sins  
of Uncleanness.* Matt. v. 27. p. 222

S E R M O N XVIII.

*Against Lustful Looks and mental Uncleanness.*  
Matt. v. 28. p. 238

S E R M O N XIX.

*The good Government of the Eye and Hand.* Matt.  
v. 29. p. 254

S E R M O N XX.

*Self-denial in abandoning dangerous Company and  
darling Sins.* Matt. v. 29, 30. p. 269

S E R M O N XXI.

*The Christian Doctrine concerning Divorces.* Matt.  
v. 31, 32. p. 283

S E R M O N XXII.

*The evil Consequences of parting Man and Wife*  
Matt. v. 32. p. 297

S E R M O N XXIII.

*The Great Sin of Perjury.* Matt. v. 33. p. 311

S E R M O N XXIV.

*Of the wrong Interpretations of the Third Commandment, and against common Swearing.* Matt. v. 33.  
p. 326

S E R M O N XXV.

*Of Judicial Oaths, and Swearing by Creatures.*  
Matt. v. 34, 35, 36. p. 341

S E R M O N XXVI.

*Simplicity and Veracity of Speech enjoined.* Matt.  
v. 37. p. 357

S E R M O N XXVII.

*Against Retaliation of Injuries.* Matt. v. 38, 39,  
40, 41. p. 371

S E R M O N XXVIII.

*Of doing Good for Evil.* Matt. v. 42. p. 385

## S E R M O N XXIX.

*Of the Love of Enemies.* Matt. v. 43, 44. p. 398

## S E R M O N XXX.

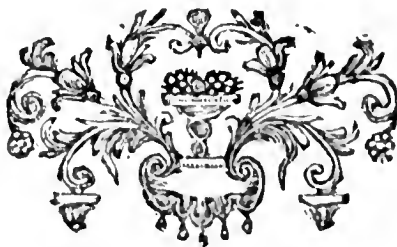
*Of the Love of Enemies.* Matt. v. 45.  
p. 412

## S E R M O N XXXI.

*Of the Love of Enemies.* Matt. v. 46, 47.  
p. 425.

## S E R M O N XXXII.

*Of Christian Perfection.* Matt. v. 48. p. 440





# S E R M O N I.

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M A T T. V. 17.

*Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

Ver. 18. *For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.*

Ver. 19. *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven : But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Ver. 20. *For I say unto you, that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

The First Sermon on this Text.



WE have heard, in the former Part of this Sermon on the Mount, what Pains our Saviour took with these his Hearers and Disciples, to take off their wrong Notions of the Kingdom of the Messiah, and their bad Dispositions of Mind for it. Those bad No-

tions and Dispositions flowed from one fundamental Error, as I have formerly observed to you, namely, that they expected the Kingdom of the Messiah would be an Earthly and Temporal Kingdom; that it would flow in Wealth and sensual Pleasures, and gratify their carnal Appetites to the utmost, in enriching them with the Spoils, and satiating them with the Pleasures, attending a full Revenge and Conquest over their Enemies. This wrong Notion of the Messiah's Kingdom gave their Minds a quite wrong Byass, and filled them with Dispositions to Covetousness, Ambition, Oppression, Luxury, Lust, Cruelty, and Revenge; all which they hoped to gratify to the utmost, from the Victories and Prosperity they expected in that new State of Things under the Messiah's Government. Our Saviour thought it necessary, in the *first* Place, to rectify all these Mistakes of their Judgment, and wrong Dispositions of their Hearts and Minds, by teaching them the Necessity of a Spirit of Poverty, Penitence, Meekness, Justice, Mercifulness, Purity, Peaceableness, and Patience; and, in short, that it was a Religion and Discipline of the Cross; that it was an Institution of the strictest Virtue and Self-Denial, he was to teach the World; and that he might fix it so much the deeper and stronger on these his first Disciples, he acquainted them that they were the Persons he intended to make Use of as Instruments, in setting off his Doctrine by their good Examples; and therefore that it was chiefly incumbent upon them to prepare themselves to be Patterns of Holiness and Virtue to others:

Having

Having made this Beginning, by correcting in general their gross Carnal Notions of his Kingdom, and shewing that it requires *new Men and Manners*; he proceeds now to another Step of the same Design, namely, to describe in the Particulars, what an Height and Perfection of Duty he required of all his Disciples and Followers; that is, of all Christians, beyond what they had ever learned before. And this he doth for their more clear Apprehension and Instruction, by instancing *first* in several Lessons which had been given them out of the Law; and the Interpretations that their Doctors had put upon them; and then superadding his own Improvements. But before he comes to the Particulars, he thought it necessary to remove one General Mistake, which it seems they were under in this Matter. *Think not*, says he, *that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* The Words, chiefly by the Glosses of Interpreters, are become full of Difficulty; for Understanding the Scope and Meaning of them, it will be necessary that we enquire into these *three* Things:

I. What is meant here by *the Law or the Prophets*: Whether the whole Law of *Moses*, Moral, Ritual, and Judicial, or only the Moral Law?

II. Whether there was any such received Opinion, as that the Messiah was to destroy the Law or the Prophets?

III. In what Sense it is true, that he came not to destroy, but to fulfil them?

I. *First* then, By *the Law or the Prophets* in this Place, as I apprehend, is meant the *Moral Law*; or that Body of Moral Duty delivered by *Moses* and the Prophets; without any Regard as yet to that which was called the *Judicial* or the *Ceremonial Law*. My Reasons are, 1. It is altogether the Moral Part of Duty, which our Saviour is a treating of in this whole Sermon on the Mount. 2. I cannot imagine any Reason why they should think he was come to destroy the Ceremonial or Judicial Laws, he having exactly complied with them; and there appearing nothing as yet in his Doctrine or Example to make them entertain such a Suspicion: But I can easily conceive a very natural Reason, why they should think he would evacuate the Moral Law, as being inconsistent with that vast Liberty and Licentiousness they hoped to enjoy under the Messiah's Kingdom, according to the carnal Notions they had of it: which indeed were utterly inconsistent with the strict Duties of the Moral Law. And therefore after he had in the particular Beatitudes pronounced a Blessing to all the particular Dispositions of Mind which were directly opposite to their carnal Notions and Expectations, it was very natural for him in general to tell them, not to think that he would, either by his Doctrine or Practice, evacuate that noble Rule of Duties which was set them in the Moral Law; and that he was so far from evacuating it, that he intended, by his Doctrine and Example, to set it in a clearer Light, and to contrive that it should be better understood, and observed to greater Perfection than ever it had been hitherto. 3. I think this Expression of *the Law*, with



with the Addition of *the Prophets*, will generally be found to mean this; and I do not know that any one Instance can be brought, that ever the Ceremonial or Judicial Laws are meant by it. I shall give you one Authority or two for my interpreting it in this Sense, *Matt. vii. 12. Therefore all Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.* And *Matt. xxii. 40.* having spoken of the Love of God, which is the *first and great Commandment*; and of the Love of our Neighbour, which is *the second like unto it*; he adds, *On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* There is indeed one Passage, *Luke xvi. 16.* which seems to have another Aspect, *the Law and the Prophets were until John*; as if they had then ceased to be regarded or observed; and if so, then he must have meant the Ritual Law; but that is not at all the Meaning. St *Matthew* in a parallel Place expresses it more clearly; *Matt. xi. 13.* thus: *All the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John*; meaning, that *John* did more than prophesie, for he demonstrated and pointed out the Messiah. So that still, as I said, I do not see but that this Expression, *the Law and the Prophets*, is always used to signify the Moral Law, with the Explications and Commentaries of the Prophets. And perhaps, if it were not too great a Digression, it might be shewed, by comparing the Scripture Style, that when the New Testament speaks of the Ceremonial Law as distinct from the other, instead of giving it the honourable Title of the Law or the Prophets, it commonly speaks much more diminutively of it; calling it *the Law of a carnal Commandment*;

*the Rites or Customs, carnal Ordinances, and the like.* 4. *Lastly,* Our Saviour's vehement Affe-  
 ration concerning the Perpetuity of the Law, till  
 Heaven and Earth should pass away, seems no  
 way consistent with Truth, if applied to the Ce-  
 remonial Law, which he knew was quickly to  
 be abolished. Nor does it seem to be a sufficient  
 Answer, that the Types were fulfilled in their Anti-  
 types, and the Prophecies in their Accomplish-  
 ment; for there are Abundance of Ceremonies  
 abolished, besides what were Types of the Mes-  
 siah; and the very Sabbath itself is changed from  
 the Seventh to the First Day of the Week. For  
 all which Reasons, I am of Opinion, our Saviour  
 speaks here only of the Law, as it is a Rule of  
 Life and Manners, that is, the Moral Law, with  
 the Explications of the Prophets. I have insisted  
 the longer on this *first* Question, both because  
 Interpreters are much puzzled and divided about  
 it; and because, by the Help of what has been  
 now observed, we shall find an easier Solution to  
 the other Questions proposed.

II. The *Second* Question is, whether there was  
 any such Opinion current among them, as that  
 the Messiah was to destroy the Law or the Pro-  
 phets? It is plain our Saviour enters upon this  
 Argument, as if he had known of some such  
 Error they had concerning him in their Minds,  
 by this saying, *Think not that I am come to de-  
 stroy the Law or the Prophets.* For Answer of  
 this Doubt, the Generality of Interpreters give us  
 this Account of the Matter; That our Saviour  
 being about to give out so many Things as Du-  
 ties, in which he prescribes either quite new  
 Laws, or at least a much higher Degree of Ho-  
 lineſs

liness and Virtue than the People had been hitherto taught ; he was afraid on that Account they would think he intended to destroy the Law of *Moses*, for which they deservedly had a very great Veneration. But tho' this be the common Answer to this Question, I confess it seems to me not so satisfactory ; and that for these *two* Reasons: *First*, Because this Answer supposes, that they had already an Apprehension of the Reformation our Saviour was going to make in the Law, before he had acquainted them with it: And that by way of Anticipation of a Doubt which he was going to raise, he fortified them with this Antidote, which seems not so very probable. *Secondly*, Supposing they had as perfectly known all the Reformation Christ was to make about the Law before-hand, as they did afterwards, I can see nothing from which they could entertain any such Prejudice or Suspicion ; as that he was about to destroy the Moral Law : his whole Doctrine about it having so clear a Tendency to the perfecting of it, but not the least Shew or Colour of abrogating or destroying it. So that really I can't think this Opinion of his Intention to destroy the Law or the Prophets, did at all proceed from any of the Doctrines he delivers in this Sermon about them. That which seems to me a much more probable Account of the Matter is, that this Opinion was a Consequence of the Notions they had of the Messiah's worldly Kingdom ; for how could they think to do so much Mischief as to set up the Kingdom of the Messiah by Conquest above all the Kingdoms of the World, and to flow in Wealth and carnal Pleasure, and to kill, and slay, and fall upon the

Spoil, and possess themselves of other Mens Goods and Inheritances, unless the Strictness of the Moral Law, particularly of the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 10th Commandments, were dispensed with, which do so carefully guard and fence Governments, and Mens Lives and Estates and Properties, that till those Laws are out of the Way, there is no coming at them. And therefore the Prejudice our Saviour is here correcting, as I take it, was not a Prejudice they had learned in his School, but a Prejudice they brought along with them to it, like all those other Prejudices, which he cured in the eight Beatitudes; for this flows as naturally from their carnal Notions of the Messiah and his Kingdom, as any of those other did: and is very properly annexed to that Discourse, as well as it is a pertinent Transition from it, to the preaching up of the Moral Law in it's Purity and Perfection, *q. d.* As I have been endeavouring to undeceive you as to your Covetous, Ambitious, Vain, Vindictive, Unjust, Unmerciful, Lascivious, Turbulent and Seditious Expectations from the Messiah's Kingdom; and to possess you with the contrary good Qualifications, Poverty of Spirit, Penitential Seriousness, Meekness, Justice, Mercifulness, Purity, Peaccableness and Patience; so now I tell you in general, as to all Sorts of Duty, that ye are not to expect that I will exempt you from your Obedience to any Part of good Morality whatsoever, recommended either by *Moses* or the Prophets; I am so far from evacuating those Duties, that I am resolved, by my Doctrine and Example, and the Injunctions I intend to lay on my Disciples, to preach up all Moral Duties to a greater Height than ye have ever

ever as yet been taught them. And this leads me to the *Third Question*.

III. In what Sense it is true, that Christ *came not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets*. The *Law and the Prophets* here meant, I have just now shewed to be the Moral Law, with the Interpretations of the Prophets. This Law Christ did not come to destroy, that is, to abolish; so far from it, that with a great Affelevation he affirms in the next Verse, *That till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled; or till all Things come to an End*; as the Words are rendred by some learned Interpreters. And thus far all Commentators are agreed, except a few *Anti-nomians*, that Christ doth not evacuate the Moral Law; but that it is still binding and obligatory upon us Christians. But as to the Meaning of the latter Part of this Sentence, that he was come *to fulfil, or fill up, or perfect it*, (for all these does the Original Word  $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omega\sigma\alpha\iota$  signify) there seems to be a considerable Variation among Interpreters; tho' at Bottom, like many other Things, it will be found rather a Verbal, than a real Controversy. The Question is, whether our Saviour has only better cleared the Meaning of the Moral Law, vindicating it from the wrong Glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees; or whether he has not further added to the Moral Law itself, requiring some further or more express Moral Duties of us Christians, than *Moses* required in the Law of the *Jews*? That which induces me to think this is not so material a Controversy, as is by some pretended, is this; that all are agreed in the Duties required by Christ; there is not one of *them*

them disputed ; the Question is only, whether the same Duties do not belong to the Law of *Moses*, rightly interpreted, or whether they were superadded anew by Christ ? I say, as long as we are all agreed in the Duties, what signifies it whether they are required only by Christ, or by *Moses* and Christ both ? For that is really all the Purport of this Controversy. For my Part, I see no Necessity of making all that follows here with this Introduction, *But I say unto you*, quite new Constitutions ; it is sufficient to justify that Form of Expression, that it was new to them, and quite another Meaning from what the Scribes and Pharisees, their present Interpreters of the Law, understood by it. And I am well satisfied, that as to the Design of the Law, which is to teach the Love of God and our Neighbour to the Height ; and as to the Spiritual Meaning of the Law, it is the same with that of the Gospel ; but the Means of compassing that Design are not near so effectual in the one, as in the other ; and therefore I shall briefly give you my Reasons, why it seems to me our Saviour meant more by this Expression, than barely to act the Part of a good Interpreter of the Law ; and that he has proceeded further to make Amendments and Alterations. 1. *First* then, the Original Word in my Text, *ἀρτιπῶσαι*, which we render to *fulfil*, signifies likewise to *fill up* and *perfect* ; and is by almost all the Ancient Fathers upon this Text, interpreted in this latter Sense. And they illustrate it by a very pretty Similitude ; the Similitude of a Painter, who at first makes his rude Draught with a Coal or Lead ; then afterwards comes with his Live-Colours, and finishes. So this

Doctrine

Doctrines of our Saviour's on the Moral Law, is like the finishing Strokes of the Painter, it being before much duller and more obscure. Besides, I know not that ever this Word, which we render *fulfil*, signifies a better Explication or Interpretation; it is never taken in that Sense, but commonly in the other of Fulfilling, Filling up, Finishing, or Perfecting. 2. It is plain that our Saviour in these Matters, which he says were indulged to the *Jews*, because of the Hardness of their Hearts; such as Divorces, and the Law of Retaliation, has directly retrenched those Concessions; and so has not interpreted, but amended and perfected the Law in those Particulars. 3. But it is not only those Things which were permitted because of the Hardness of their Hearts, he has thus amended; there are some New Duties he has added. I shall at present mention one relating to the *First*, and another to the *Second* Table of the Law. As to the *First* Table, the Instance I shall give, is his prohibiting of all Oaths in common Conversation. And that in the *Second* Table of the Law, relating to our Duty to our Neighbour, is that *New Commandment* of *Brotherly Love*, *John. xiii. 34.* which Christ calls particularly *his* Commandment, *John. xv. 12. This is my Commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.* For neither the Law of Nature, nor the Law of *Moses*, erected the Disciples of Christ into a Society, and cemented them together by that firm Friendship, which Christ by that New Institution or Commandment set up among them. 4. There are many other high Degrees of Duties, e. g. of Humility, Self-denial, Bearing the Cross, Suffering to Martyrdom, Love of Enemies, and the

the like, which tho' now by the Help of Christ's Doctrine we can reduce to some Head or other of the Ten Commandments, yet really it would puzzle any one to find them out there, if we had no better Assistance than is afforded us from the Law of *Moses* itself. 5. *Lastly*, It was prophesied concerning the Messiah, *Deut. xviii. 18.* that he should be a Prophet like unto *Moses*. Now how could he be a Prophet like unto *Moses*, if he was not to be a Lawgiver? To be only an Interpreter of the Law, seems to make him a Prophet inferior to *Moses*, like the other Prophets of the Old Testament. And it is not a sufficient Answer to this, to shew how, in divers other Respects, he was preferable to *Moses*, unless we make him preferable in this Respect of his Doctrine, and the Authority he had to deliver God's Mind and Will; for the Prophecy relates particularly to that. *I will raise them up a Prophet, says God to Moses, from among their Brethren, like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my Words which he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him.* Upon all which Accounts it is much more probable to me, that our Blessed Saviour has not only explained, but perfected the Law.

There is one Objection against this Doctrine, which I find has made the learned *Calvin*, and several others, oppose it with some Vehemence; Namely, because the Law requires the highest Degree of Love, both to God and our Neighbour, therefore they think it is not capable of any Rectification, or further Perfection. But there is a Fallacy in this Argument; for tho' the Law may



may design the same Perfection, yet it may not have such perfect Ways and Means of coming at it. For it is possible enough for the Law in general to require the Height of Love both to God and Man, and yet in the Ways and Means of compassing this Design, there might be, and there were such Things indulged to that carnal People, as required an Amendment by the higher Dispensation of the Gospel, tho' both Law and Gospel aimed at the same Thing; as we aim at the same Thing in the Instruction of Children and Men, tho' in the Instruction of Children we are forced to take some childish Methods, not so proper for Men.

The Difficulties of the Words being thus cleared, we may now gather our Saviour's Meaning in the Text to be as if he had said: "Think not that  
 " there is any such Liberty or Licentiousness in  
 " my Kingdom, that to gratify your carnal Ex-  
 " pectations from it, I will dispense with any of  
 " the Rules of Morality prescribed by *Moses*, and  
 " explained by the Prophets. I am so far from  
 " any Design of evacuating them, that I intend  
 " to teach them more clearly and perfectly than  
 " ever they were taught before."

From the Words thus explained, there are these *Three* Things I would speak to.

I. In general, how requisite it is to remove all Mistakes and Prejudices out of Peoples Minds, in order to prepare them for the Reception of the Truth. *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets.*

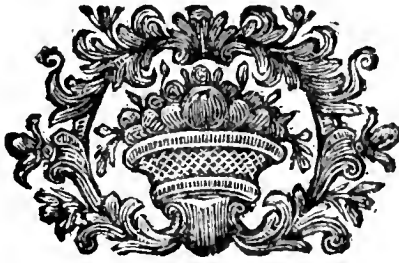
II. That Christ is a great Friend, Promoter, and Encourager of good Morality.

III. I would

III. I would shew what Influence this Doctrine should have both upon our Judgment and Practice.

But Time not permitting the handling of these Things as they ought, I shall rather choose not to enter upon them, but to refer them to some other Opportunity.

*Now to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be all Praise, &c.*



S E R-

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## S E R M O N II.

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### M A T T. V. 17.

*Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

**T**H E S E Words being difficult, and occasioning some Controversy among Interpreters, I was the more particular in the Explication of them at the last Occasion. The Result of the Sense and Meaning of them I gathered up thus; as if our Saviour had said; “ Think not that there  
 “ is any such Liberty or Licentiousness in my  
 “ Kingdom, that to gratify your carnal Expecta-  
 “ tions from it, I will dispense with any of the  
 “ Rules of Morality prescribed by *Moses*, and ex-  
 “ plained by the Prophets. I am so far from any  
 “ Design of evacuating those Laws, that I intend  
 “ to teach them more clearly and perfectly than  
 “ ever they were taught before.”

From the Words thus explained, there were *Three* Things I just proposed to consider, but had not then Time to do it, which I do therefore design for the Subject of our present Meditation.

I. The *First* was, to observe in general, how requisite it is to remove all Mistakes and Prejudices  
 out

out of Peoples Minds, in order to the preparing them for the Reception of Truth.

II. The *Second* was, that Christ is a great Friend, Promoter, and Encourager of good Morality.

III. And the *Third* was, to shew what Influence this Doctrine should have both upon our Judgment and Practice.

I. The *First* Thing I observe from the Words is, how requisite it is to remove all Mistakes and Prejudices out of Peoples Minds, in order to the preparing them for the Reception of the Truth. *Think not*, says he, *that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets.* There are some Mistakes and Prejudices so pernicious, that till they are rooted out, no good Plants of Religion or Virtue will thrive. Such were several Mistakes and Prejudices mentioned in the New Testament, concerning the Messiah, e. g. that Mistake the *Jews* were under, that his Kingdom was to be a Temporal Kingdom, and was to be set up by Force, and was to flow in Wealth and carnal Pleasure. Such likewise was their Opinion, that the Privilege of Birthright was to answer for the Want of all other good Qualifications. *Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our Father*, says *John the Baptist*, Matt. iii. 9. Such likewise was the Prejudice in my Text, that the Messiah was to destroy the Law and the Prophets; to free Men from the Obligation to Moral Duties. This Opinion must needs have been attended with very bad Consequences among all Sorts of People, both good and bad. The Good it must fill with Prejudice against Jesus and his Religion, if they thought what was so firmly established

established in the Minds of Men by the Law of Nature, and what had been so expressly revealed to *Moses* and the Prophets (who by many clear Proofs they had all Reason to believe were sent of God) must now be contradicted by him. For how could God contradict himself? Or what greater Proofs could Jesus bring that he was to destroy, than *Moses* had brought to establish the Law? Surely by this Doctrine, might good Men think, none will join themselves to Jesus, but the vicious Part of Mankind. And accordingly they seem to suspect him as profane and immoral himself, *a Glutton and a Winebibber*, and *a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; from this Opinion belike, that all who had a Mind to get loose from the Obligation of the Moral Law, were for betaking themselves to him. On the other Hand, what Opinion could be more dangerous for bad Men, to sooth them in their Sins, and to prevent their Repentance and Amendment of Life, than this same Opinion, that our Saviour was to exempt his Followers from all Obligations to Moral Duties? Prejudices in general are Amulets and Charms against all good Doctrine; it is necessary the Enchantment be broken, before we can hope any good Documents will find Entrance.

II. The *Second* Thing I observed from the Words is, that our Saviour is a great Friend, Promoter and Encourager of good Morality. *I am not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets*, says he, *but to fulfil*. He came not to loosen any of the Obligations to Moral Duties Men were under before, but to oblige us to, and encourage and assist us in the more strict and diligent Performance of them. I know not how a

great many, who are called by Christ's Name, have taken up other Notions of his Religion, as if they knew of some other Way of being saved by inward Acts of Faith and Repentance, without the conscientious Practice of Moral Duties; but certainly, if they will be at the Pains to observe, it is only wrong Notions of those other Duties Men have taken up, which have led them into this Error as to Morals. For whatever is said of Faith, or Love, or Hope, or Repentance, or any other Evangelical Grace, it is not to dispense with our Study of good Morality, but to further us in it. Faith, which is the Belief of the Gospel Promises, is a great Spur to Duty; the Love of God cannot more naturally exert itself, than in a Respect to his Commandments; Hope of the Reward doth mightily quicken our Endeavours to perform the Conditions required of us; and Repentance, without the due Fruits of Obedience, will be found vain and abortive. Whosoever studies the New Testament with a Mind free from Partiality and Prejudice, will find, that tho' it insists chiefly on a more internal Purity and Holiness than that recommended by other Moralists, yet that internal Purity is so far from being any way inconsistent with the external, or derogatory from it, that it is a very great Help and Furtherer of it. An Heart free from impure Desires, is a great Guard against unclean Words and Actions; and so in all other Duties, an inward Principle of Holiness in the Heart will direct and govern all our Morals in the Sight of Men. But to set this Matter in a clearer Light, I intend to lay before you some Things, from the Consideration of which it will appear what

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our Saviour has done to advance the Morals of Men, beyond whatever they were before; and so to fulfil, or perfect the Law and the Prophets.

1. First then, It is plain he has much better cleared up the spiritual Meaning of the Law, whereas the Jews commonly understood it only in an external, carnal Sense. By interpreting the Law in this true Sense, he has taught Mankind the true Purity, which is that of the Heart; and by this Means he has cut off sinful Actions in the Seed, before they grow ungovernable by a frequent Repetition, and have acquired the Strength of Habits and Customs.

2. He has likewise cautioned us against all the Causes, Occasions, and Inlets of Sin, than which nothing could have been a greater Bar against it: laying Restraints on the Eyes, and Ears, and Hands, and Tongue, and all our Members; and commanding us to cut off the Temptations to it, and Occasions of it, if ever so dear and near unto us, and if ever so convenient, profitable, or pleasant. This keeps Vice at a Distance, and suffers it not to approach, to employ it's whole Strength to attack us.

3. He has more clearly proposed the Benefit, as well as Duty of Repentance, accepting of Repentance instead of Innocence; which is a mighty Encouragement to come off from a sinful Course. He has discovered to us the Mercy of God, in offering us gracious Terms of Reconciliation, and in providing and accepting a mighty Attonement for the Sins of the World; he has acquainted us with a powerful Mediation and Intercession at the Father's Right Hand, by virtue

of which all our Prayers come so well recommended, that if we put them up with that Seriousness and Assiduity that we ought, they shall be sure to be heard and accepted.

4. He has called us more off from the Ceremonials of Religion, and taught us to bend all our Strength to the Substantials of it, the great and weighty Matters of the Law ; which is a Thing that has a mighty Influence on Duty ; for besides that Men were apt to deceive themselves, by thinking to make up for their Deficiencies in great Matters, by an over-Zeal in these lesser Things ; besides this, I say, their Care and Diligence being withdrawn from what it should be chiefly placed on, and diverted to a great many lesser Matters, is just like the Strength of a Stream subdivided into a great many lesser Rivulets, so weak, that it can't turn a Mill, or bear any great Burthen, which otherwise it might easily compass, if it had not been so diverted.

5. There were a great many Things indulged the *Jews*, because of the Hardness of their Hearts ; which kept them very low in Goodness and Virtue. The vast Liberty of Divorces, for Example, for every trifling Cause, was such an Indulgence to the Lusts of Men, that it could never consist with that Union of Hearts, and that firm Love and Friendship, which is so necessary to the Happiness of the Married State. This Unsettledness of their Circumstances made them that there could never be that Concern for the Family and Estate, or for the Education of the Children, that there is where the Parties are joined for Life. The very Prospect of a Possibility of parting, would naturally drive them into separate Interests ; and



marr the Happiness resulting from an uninterrupted and inseparable Communication of Life. So the Law of Retaliation, indulging the Heats of Mens Passion and Revenge, gave them a Loose into a very ungovernable Temper, if once the Sluices of it were ever so little opened. At best this kept them very low in that noble Attainment of subduing and conquering their Passions, which the Christian Duties of Meekness and Humility, of Self-Denial, and the Forgiveness of Injuries, do teach us. Now our Saviour, by withdrawing such dangerous and unreasonable Indulgences, (unreasonable, I say, under the greater Grace of the Gospel) has taught us to study a much greater Perfection in all Virtue, and much nearer to the Pattern of Almighty God himself.

6. The Doctrine of our Saviour is better suited to work on our Hopes and Fears, than the Law of *Moses* was; having added much better Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments. The Gospel works much better on the best Principles of the Human Nature, by which we are disposed to prepare for Eternity. For it has brought Life and Immortality to Light. It has given us such a Demonstration of a future State, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, that we can no longer doubt of it. The Day of Judgment is now so plainly described, with a particular Account of the Proceedings thereon, that we cannot easily be either ignorant or forgetful of it. The Natural Consequence of which Belief is, that it must certainly wean our Hearts more from the World, and set them more on Heaven, than if we knew little or nothing of any other but Temporal Rewards and Punishments.

7. There is a much larger Measure of Grace, and of the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, promised and exhibited under the Gospel, than there was under the Law. As the Means of Grace are more powerful under the Gospel, so the Grace attending those Means is much more plenteous. There are now most express Promises of the Holy Spirit to them that ask it. It is this Grace which facilitates every the most difficult Duty. *I can do all Things*, saith St. Paul, *through Christ strengthening me.* Phil. iv. 13. There never was such a plentiful Effusion of the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, as under the Gospel-Dispensation, particularly after our Saviour's Ascension. Some perhaps may think all this was miraculous, and was necessary for the first planting of the Gospel; but is not to be expected now the Gospel is planted, and Things settled in a more ordinary Course. But granting the Truth of this as to the main, every one who reads the New Testament must see, that it abounds in Promises to the importunate Orator at the Throne of Grace; and that Grace is every where offered to them who fervently ask it, and diligently use it.

8. *Lastly*, The Gospel furnishes us with a much more perfect Pattern of all Duty, in the Example of our Lord Jesus Christ, than any they had under the Law. Under his Conduct, and the Influence of his Example, we may be animated to make extraordinary Attempts in so good a Cause, as that of doing our Duty, and encountring our Lusts; for if we faint not, but hold on with Perseverance, we may be assured of the Victory, he having conquered our Enemies  
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before us; and being ever ready upon our Prayer to come in to our Aid and Assistance.

III. Having thus shewed what a Friend our Saviour is to good Morality, and what a Promoter and Encourager of it; I proceed to the *Third* and last Thing I proposed, which is to shew, what Influence this Doctrine should have both upon our Judgment and Practice. And this I shall do in two or three Inferences, which will naturally follow upon it.

1. *First* then, Has Christ come, not to destroy but to fulfil the Law? Is he so great a Friend to the Morals of Religion? This may shew us the great Danger of all such Opinions, as tend to evacuate our Obligation to Moral Duties. Such as the Opinion of the *Antinomians* and *Solifidians*, who bind no Duty upon us, but by way of Gratitude; and therefore make it void, as it is either a Law directing our Practice, or a Condition of our-Salvation. And in the same Rank I think we may reckon the Opinion of our Absolute, Unconditional Election, and Reprobation, without any Respect to our Obedience and Disobedience. In short, all Opinions which require only such a Faith as is not made perfect by good Works; such a Repentance as evaporates in a little Sorrow for Sin without Amendment; and make God all Mercy without Justice; such Opinions of loose Casuists, particularly the Jesuits, who have made it their Business to suit their Doctrines of Christian Morals to the various wicked Tempers and Inclinations of Men; as some of their own Communion have very well discovered: And the Opinion of the Pope's Power of dispensing with the Law in some Cases; All these

we may reckon to be condemned by this Text. And together with these wicked Opinions, I may rank some wicked Practices as much in Use, tho' nobody will write for them and maintain them. Such as the Practice of Private Persons assuming the Sword, and taking Revéngé by Duels, or Rebelions: The Practice of striving to outdo one another at Drinking, or to outwit one another at Knavish Bargaining; the Practice too of living securely a wicked Life, indulging ourselves in sinful Habits, and neglecting known Duties, in Hopes to make all up by a Death-bed Repentance.' For these are all Opinions as contrary to this Spirit and Design of Christ and Christianity, as any Thing can be. And indeed, whatever opens a Door to immoral Practices, is so far inconsistent with this Declaration of our Blessed Lord, as tending not to fulfil, but to destroy both Law, and Prophets, and Gospel too.

2. Has our blessed Lord done so much to perfect us in true Christian Morals? Has he made Use of so many Methods to improve us in Holiness? It is then our Duty to use our utmost Endeavour to render those Methods effectual both in our selves and others. Particularly, has Christ interpreted the Law in a more Spiritual Sense, killing Vice in the Seed, and strictly forbidding the feeding the very Thoughts and Imaginations with it? Then let us employ a great Part of our Care in the good Government of our Heart and Thoughts, that when wicked Fancies or Imaginations start up in our Minds, or are thrown in by the Devil, we may take Care not to harbour them, but to throw them quickly out, before they sprout out into bad Resolutions and Designs,

or ripen into wicked Actions and evil Habits. Has our blessed Lord strictly cautioned us against all the Causes and Occasions of Sin, and against all the Temptations and Opportunities to commit it? Let it be our Care then to avoid evil Company, to shun tempting Objects, and to keep out of the Way of all Occasions and Opportunities of acting Sin. Has our Saviour clearly proposed the Terms of the New Covenant, Faith, Repentance, and new Obedience; and are these in their own Nature fitted to assist and encourage us in the Practice of Moral Duties? Then let us take Care sincerely to comply with them, in the same Manner as he expects at our Hands; and let us not content our selves with a dead Faith without Works; with a bare Sorrow for Sin, without forsaking it; and with a partial or hypocritical Obedience. Has our Saviour called us off from the Ceremonials, and required our greater Zeal in the weighty Things of the Law? Let us then endeavour, both in our Judgment and Practice, to learn a Moderation in Rituals and Circumstantials, and a true Zeal for real Holiness and Vertue. Has our Saviour removed what was defective in the *Jewish* Morals, and added some more perfect Precepts of Love to Enemies, and against Divorces for trivial Causes? Let us not then think it below us to pardon an Injury, or choose to drive things to Extremities; particularly seeing it was his Pleasure that married Persons should live in an uninterrupted Friendship, and that all Divorces for any other Causes than those are which destroy the Ends of Marriage, should be prohibited; let us learn to cultivate a true Friendship in the married State; mutually forgiving one another, and forbearing one another, without driving

driving Things to a Rupture by our implacable wicked Tempers. Has our Saviour added better Sanctions to the Law, by proposing eternal Rewards and Punishments? Let us take Care duly to ponder and meditate upon them, firmly to believe them, and to live under the Power and Influence of that Belief. Let the Day of Judgment, with the Rewards of Heaven, and Punishments of Hell, make a deep Impression upon our Spirits, and powerfully influence and govern our Lives. Is there a greater Measure of Grace promised for our Assistance, under the Gospel, than was promised under the Law, upon our importunate Asking, and diligent Using it? Then let us learn diligently to make Use of the Means of Grace, Reading and Hearing the Scriptures, Prayer and Meditation, with the Use of the Sacraments, that we may obtain Grace; and when we have it, let us be as careful in using it, this being the sure Way to obtain more. *Last-ly*, Has the Gospel furnished us with a perfect Pattern of all Duty in the most Exemplary Life of our Blessed Lord and Master Christ Jesus? Let it be our Care attentively to look at this Pattern, and to copy after it, and to consider in every Thing what our Lord did, or would have done in the like Circumstances; and endeavour to *do likewise*.

3. The last Use I shall make of this Doctrine, concerning our Saviour's Zeal to keep up the Moral Law in it's Perfection, shall be to stir us up to an Enquiry into the State of our own Hearts and Lives, that so we may, through the Grace of God, bring our selves to be of the same Spirit and Temper with our Lord in this Particular. We see what exact Morals are required and expected

expected of us Christians; but, alas, where are they to be found among us? Time was, when a Drunken Christian, a Cursing and Swearing Christian, a Whoring, Cheating, or Lying Christian; nay, even a Covetous, Vain, Proud, Passionate, Discontented, Peevish, Revengeful Christian, would have been thought a most unreasonable Contradiction. Time was, when, according to our Lord's Prescription, the Light of Christians did *so shine before Men*, that the World saw and observed their *good Works, and glorified their Father and Master in Heaven*. Time was, when the Christian Religion was legible in the Lives of the Generality of Christians. But now this rare Spirit is become so rare indeed, that it is a wonder to find a true Christian, I mean one that is throughly such, in Life as well as Profession. We seem to be ashamed of Religion, and there is scarce so much as a Form of Godliness left; but *Men declare their Sin as Sodom, and hide it not*. To find out true Christianity, we must not look for it in our Lives, but in our Books and Sermons; for there is nothing more unlike the Spirit and Temper of Christ, than the Lives of most of those who are called Christians. But let us not deceive our selves; for, as the Apostle St Paul hath told us, *If any Man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. Rom. viii. 9. And therefore it is necessary, that we content not our selves with a Speculative Belief of the Christian Doctrine, but that we apply our selves with our utmost Diligence to the Practice of the Christian Morals; as being that which our Saviour lays the greatest Stress upon; that which he has laboured most to inculcate upon his Disciples; and that which is  
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the surest Proof of a true Faith, and the most infallible Sign of our Interest in Christ; for he has told us, that he will not at last own the *Workers of Iniquity*. A new Life then will be the solidest Ground of our Hope, the greatest Ornament of our Profession, the greatest Satisfaction to our own Consciences, and the truest joining in with the Spirit and Doctrine of Christ, who *came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them. If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c.





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## S E R M O N III.

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M A T T. V. 18.

*For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.*

Ver. 19. *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called Great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

The Third Sermon on this Text.

**F**OR apprehending rightly the Meaning and the Coherence of these Words, we are to remember what our Lord said in the Words immediately preceding: *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* I shall not spend your Time in the Repetition of what was said in the Explication of that Doctrine; only put you in mind, that by *the Law or the Prophets*, is meant the Moral Law, with the Explications of the Prophets. Now to shew how what our Lord now says in these 18th and 19th Verses, depends on what he had said in the 17th; Two Things he had there asserted, First, *That he was not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets.* Secondly, *That he was come to fulfil*  
*them.*

*them.* He begins with the *First* of these, concerning not abolishing the Law or the Prophets; and handles it in the Words I have read; and then goes on to the other, of perfecting or fulfilling them, in the Words immediately following.

In the *First* Part, concerning the not abolishing the Law or the Prophets, we have first our Saviour's Affeuration concerning the Perpetuity of them, *ver.* 18.

Then, as a Consequence from that Doctrine, we have a Caution to all our Saviour's Disciples, to beware of breaking or evacuating any Part of the Moral Law, either by their Example or Doctrine, *ver.* 19.

I begin with the *First*, (which will be sufficient for our present Meditation) our Saviour's Affeuration concerning the Perpetuity of the Law; *For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.* In which Words, we have these *Three* Things to consider.

I. The vehement Form of the Affeuration: *Verily I say unto you.*

II. The Assertion concerning the Perpetuity of the Law: *Till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law:*

III. The seeming Limitation of that Assertion, *till all be fulfilled.* Which *Three* I intend to consider as they lie in Order.

I. As to the *First*, the Form of the Affeuration, *Verily I say unto you.* It is a Form frequently used by our Saviour, when he speaks of Matters of great Consequence, not sufficiently minded, to which therefore he would stir up the Attention

tion of the Auditors. Now that this Doctrine was a Thing of this Nature, may appear if we consider;

I. The Consequence of it. We have had in the Church a great many dangerous Opinions derogatory to it. Some making Christ as our Surety, so to comply with the Covenant of Works for us, that there is nothing left for us to do our selves; some, that overlooking the written Precepts, turn us over to hidden Decrees; some that make the Gospel all Promises, or if there be any Condition, they make it such as shall be performed to our Hand; some that think the Law is so abolished, that the Gospel-Liberty has absolved us from it; some that think it was a Law so peculiar to the *Jews*, that we Christians are not concerned in it; some that Christ's perfect Righteousness is so imputed to us, as if it were really Ours, and consequently that we have no need of any inherent Righteousness of our own: and a great many more Errors of this Nature, attending the strange Schemes some Men have made of Grace and Decrees. For there is no Part of Religion has been more endeavoured to be overthrown and undermined, than this that relates to Moral Duties; to that Degree, that Morality it self has been vilified as a low and mean Dispensation. Not to say any Thing now of the infinite Ways they have in the Church of *Rome*, by Pardons, Dispensations, Penances, Commutations, their Doctrine of Probabilities, and other numerous Arts of loose Casuists, to evacuate the Force of Duty. All these foreseen by our Saviour, together with the Designs of his present Followers, who expected to fit themselves for his Service, by fighting his Battles,

Battles, and sharing in his Conquests, not by the Renovation and Sanctification of their Hearts and Lives; made it a Thing of great Necessity to principle them well in this Doctrine, of the perpetual Obligation of the Moral Law: and therefore proper for our Saviour to usher it in with such a solemn Affelevation.

2. That this Doctrine is apt of all other to be the least minded, even by those that believe it, at least do not pretend to deny it, is another good Reason for Ushering it in with this Affelevation. Alas, how many Pretences have we to sink our Necks out of this Collar of Duties? How many Excuses from Fashion and Custom? How many from natural and acquired Infirmities? How many Off-puts and Delays? And, at last, what a sorry Business do we make of all our most exact Performance of Duty? How far short does it come of that prescribed in the Gospel? It appears by all this, that there is nothing we are more apt to forget; and that there was nothing more proper for our Saviour to take Pains upon, and labour; as accordingly we find he has done in this Sermon on the Mount: and particularly in this Text, where he ties the Moral Law upon his Followers to the End of the World by a solemn Affelevation.

II. The *Second* Thing I proposed to speak to from the Text, is the Assertion itself, concerning the perpetual Obligation of the Law. *Till Heaven and Earth pass, one Jot or one Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law.* This Expression of one Jot or one Tittle not passing from the Law, is figurative; and is not to be understood literally of Letters, or Points, or Corners and Parts of Letters; but only that none of the Moral Laws,  
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not the least or most inconsiderable of them, is to be abolished; but that they are all to be kept up in their full Force and Vigour. Taking our Saviour's Assertion then in this Sense, there are these Three Truths I apprehend belong to the Scope and Purport of it.

1. That the Moral Law is of perpetual Obligation even to us Christians.

2. That an universal Obedience to all the Parts of the Moral Law is required of us: for here all Exceptions are expressly excluded.

3. That a Niceness or Exactness, even in the seemingly most inconsiderable Parts of the Moral Law, is recommended: for so much is meant by *every jot or Tittle*.

1. That the Moral Law is of perpetual Obligation to us Christians; this is the plain Meaning of those Words, *till Heaven and Earth pass*; that is, for ever shall this Law remain in its full Force and Vigour. Now in speaking to this Point of the Perpetuity of the Law, there are these *Two* Things to be made out.

(1) That this Law did not cease, as belonging only to the *Jews*; but that it remains in Force with Us Christians.

(2) That no Christian Liberty, no high Dispensation of Grace, exempts us from the Obligation of the Moral Law.

(1) *First*, I say, that this Law does not cease, as belonging only to the *Jews*. I confess, to consider the Moral Law, not from the Matter of it, as it contains the eternal Dictates of the Law of Nature; but as it was enacted on Mount *Sinai*, and made a Statute-Law to the People of *Israel*; the Obligation of it to the rest of the

World is not ſo apparent; for it is there given out in ſuch a Form, as to have a peculiar Relation to that People; as appears by the Preamble to it in the Beginning of the xxth Chap. of *Exodus*, *I am the Lord thy God, which brought Thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the Houſe of Bondage.* As alſo from ſome of the Reaſons to enforce Obedience to it, inſerted in the Body of the Law itſelf; particularly that in the Fifth Commandment, *that their Days ſhould be long in the Land, which the Lord their God had given them:* Which is properly a Temporal Promiſe, relating to that People, and that particular Land. There are notwithstanding very good Reaſons to tie upon us Chriſtians the Obligation to the Moral Law. For, *First*, It is confeſſed by All, to be a Tranſcript and Abridgment of the Law of Nature, and therefore binding upon all Men. It is true, the Law of Nature was obſcure, and by Reaſon of that Obſcurity, without the Help of this other Law of *Mofes*, could not have been ſo well underſtood; yet this doth not hinder but that the Explication of *Mofes* (to make it no more than an Explication to the reſt of the World, beſides the *Jews*) caſting great Light upon the Law of Nature, this ſuperadds a new Obligation to the Performance of thoſe Duties of which we had before but a more confuſed Perception. As when we are convinced of the Obligation of Goſpel Duties, which yet being perhaps in ſome Points obſcure, if a clear Expoſition ſhould come out upon them, and we were convinced that That is really the true Senſe; and that Expoſition ſhould acquaint us with ſome Parts of our Duty which before we underſtood not ſo well; we ſhould

should think our selves obliged to comply with those Duties, not from any new Authority of the Expositor, but from the prior Obligation of the Duties Themselves, which he has only helped us to understand better.

But *Secondly*, That which puts the Thing quite out of Doubt with me, of the Obligation of this Law upon us Christians, even such of us as are not descended from the *Jews*, is the Words of our Saviour in my Text, concerning the perpetual Obligation of that Law; and his enforcing and explaining it to his Disciples under these Terms, *For verily I say unto you.* And if there were no more to convince me that Christ has made Additions, and not only new Explications, this One Thing would do it, that I do not see, till Christ's Authority enacted it, that the Moral Law of *Moses* was formally bound as a Statute Law upon any other besides the *Jews*. The Law of Nature indeed enjoined it (but obscurely) to all Men; the Law of *Moses* bound it peculiarly upon the *Jews*; and now the Law of Christ binds it upon Christians.

And *Thirdly*, the Spirit which is given to Christians teacheth them the same Things; and the Fruits of the Spirit are no other than the Moral Duties enjoined by the Law: So good an Agreement there is in this Matter between the Law and the Gospel; that we may well use St. *Paul's* Question, *Rom. iii. 31. Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid, nay, we establish the Law.*

(2) The Law then belonging to Christians, the next Thing is to shew, that it is perpetual; that no Christian Liberty, no high Dispensation

of Grace exempts Us from the Obligation of it. Almost all Enthusiasts usurp the Liberty of following the unguarded Dictates of their own Fancies, taking them for the Dictates of the infallible Spirit of God; but our Saviour thought not fit to entrust such a wild Liberty as this is, with any Persons whatsoever; he has given us his Holy Laws, as for other Uses, so for Helps, and Directions to us, how to examine all our own Notions and other Mens too, and to try what Spirit they are of. *They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them:* And as the Prophet *Ijaiab* says, *To the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them.* Isa. viii. 20. And certainly there can be nothing more agreeable to Reason than this Method; for if we had not God's Laws to direct us how to judge of the Spirits, we should be at the Mercy of every bold Pretender to impose upon us what new Doctrines he thinks fit; nay, to set up his own Spirit with a paramount Power to repeal or suspend the Laws of God himself; if there were not some certain Bounds fixed, which we are not to transgress. And what better Bounds can be set than those of the Moral Law, with the Explications of the Prophets in the Old Testament, and of our Saviour and his Apostles in the New, directing our Duty both to God and Man?

2. The *Second* Thing contained in this Assertion of the Text is, that an universal Obedience to all the Parts of the Moral Law is required of us; for our Saviour's Words exclude all manner of Exceptions; *not one jot or Tittle shall pass from the Law.* It is true, He is here speaking of



of the Doctrine, not the Practice; for his Meaning is not to assert, that there shall be such an exact Holiness and Obedience in the Christian Church, that the Members of it shall never in the least transgress any of the Rules of the Moral Law; but only that under the Gospel the Authority of the Moral Law shall be preserved in full Force; yet it will follow even from this, that we ought to endeavour after an universal Obedience. I hope none of us are so ignorant, or so badly instructed, as to believe that we can compound with God by the Observation of some Duties for the Neglect of others; yet forasmuch as we have, through the Corruption of Nature, and the Byass of natural Temper, Custom, worldly Interest, and other Temptations, strong Propensities to some Vices beyond others; we should learn from this Doctrine of our Saviour's, to study a sincere Respect to all God's Laws, and more particularly to bend our Care to those, where we know we are in the greatest Danger of transgressing: remembering that if we transgress any one of God's Laws, we trample upon that Sacred Authority which establishes the Whole: And therefore it is to be feared, the Respect we pay to the rest, proceeds not so much from the Love or Fear of God, as from the Want of the like powerful Temptation to transgress them.

3. The *Third* Thing I judge to be pointed at in this Assertion is, that a Niceness or Exactness, even in the seemingly most inconsiderable Parts of the Moral Law, is recommended here by our Saviour, when he says, *that not one Jot or Tittle of the Law shall pass*; for the Letter *iota* in the Greek, and especially the Letter *jod* in the Hebrew,

which answers it, being the smallest Letter of the Alphabet, and the Word *Tittle* signifying something yet smaller, either a Point, or an Interpunction, or a Corner of a Letter, all this shews what Regard our Saviour had, and consequently what Regard he requires us to have, to the very smallest and most inconsiderable Parts of our Duty. It is certainly a very great Error in Morals, that we are apt to content our selves with abstaining from gross Sins, without endeavouring the like Watchfulness and Care against lesser Transgressions. We should consider that God requires our Care in the one, as well as in the other; And that the giving Place to the Devil in small Things, and the harbouring of small Temptations, makes Way for greater; and that there is often a very near Connexion between them. A sinful Thought harboured, doth quickly bring in a whole Train of sinful Imaginations, and these do naturally sprout out in sinful Actions; so that the surest Way to keep off great Sins, is to watch against small Ones: And tho' smaller Sins do not lay waste the Conscience so much as great Ones, yet they defile the Man, they hinder his Growth in Grace, they very much indispose him for Prayer, and good Thoughts; and if indulged, make the Difference very small between him and an Hypocrite; for an Hypocrite takes care to keep a fair Outside, and to abstain from scandalous Sins; but he has not the same Regard to God's Eye as to Man's, nor to Conscience as to Reputation; and therefore if we would secure our Sincerity, let us extend our Care to all the Parts of Duty, tho' after all our Care, we shall be guilty of many Errors, both of

Omission

Omission and Commission. But if we have the Comfort of doing our sincere Endeavour, as in the Sight of God, we need not doubt but that, through the Help of his Grace, we shall be advancing gradually towards Christian Perfection, such as is attainable in this Life.

So much for the Assertion in my Text, concerning the Perpetuity of the Law, and the Respect we are to have to all the Parts of it.

III. I come now to the *Third* and last Thing I observed in the Words, namely, the Limitation of this Assertion; *till all be fulfilled.* This, which our Translators render, *till all be fulfilled,* in the Original is, *till all Things be done,* that is, till the World be destroyed, and all Things come to an End. This Interpretation seems most agreeable to the parallel Place in St Luke xvi. 17. *It is easier for Heaven and Earth to pass, than one Tittle of the Law to fail.* And it seems most agreeable likewise to the Context, which speaks only of the Moral Law, as I proved by several Arguments, which is to remain for ever. And it is the most general Interpretation of Interpreters; *donec omnia fiant, till all Things be done.* But if the Word must be understood (as our Translators will have it) in the Sense of *Fulfilling*; then we must have Recourse to the Word *Propets* in the foregoing Verse, taking the Law for the Law or the Prophets, as it was there expressed; and the *Fulfilling* must relate to the Accomplishment of the Prophecies concerning Christ. But the Prophets not having been mentioned here, as foretelling Things to come, but as Expositors of the Moral Law, I prefer the other Interpretation, for the Reasons abovementioned; namely,

as being nearer the Original, *ἕως ἄν πάντα γῶν*), till all Things be done; nearer the meaning of the Context, and the Words of St *Luke*. So it is but a further Assertion of the same Thing he had said before; *q. d.* Till Heaven and Earth pass, that is, are changed by the last Revolution, and all Things are at an End, the Law shall be kept up in it's full Vigour and Perfection.

So now I have done with what I proposed to speak to from the Words; but there is an Objection will naturally rise from what our Saviour here says, which it will be necessary to remove by Way of further Explication of this Doctrine, concerning the perpetual Obligation of the Moral Law. The Objection is this; If the Moral Law is so binding upon Christians, then we are yet under the Covenant of Works, which promised Life only upon the Perfect Obedience of the Law, and threatned its Curses to all them who continued not in all Things written in the Law, to do them. And if so, how is Christ's Yoke easier, or his Burthen lighter? For Answer of this Objection; and for the Explication of this Doctrine, concerning the perpetual Obligation of the Moral Law, we are to consider, that tho' the Moral Law is still binding as a Rule of Duty, and as being a Transcript of the Law of Nature, assumed into the Gospel Dispensation; yet by Virtue of the New *Gospel-Covenant* we are delivered, both from the Curse, and Rigour of it; and several more Gracious Terms are allowed us, than by that Law we could have pretended to. All which Terms, notwithstanding, do not tend to the abolishing of the Law, but to the better Observance of it: as will be plain

plain from the Consideration of the Particulars, in which the new Covenant is more favourable to us, than the old. I shall briefly mention the chief of them, from which this Advantage will be manifest, and so have done.

1. *First* then, whereas by the new Covenant there is a larger Measure of Grace bestowed, whereby God's Laws are written in our Hearts, it is plain this Privilege facilitates Duty, and makes the Yoke of the Law lighter, without abolishing it.

2. Whereas God is willing, for the all-sufficient Merits of Christ, to make an Offer of Pardon and Indemnity, upon very gracious Terms, to those that stood condemned by the Law, provided they will return to their Duty; it is plain, this has a further Tendency to the better Observance of the Law; in that it brings Men off from the Despair they were in, on Account of past Transgressions, and encourages them to begin their Endeavours afresh, upon the Foot of this Act of Indemnity, procured for Mankind by Christ's meritorious Obedience and Sufferings.

3. Whereas on Account of the same Mediation of Christ, the old *impossible* Condition of Perfect Obedience to the Law in all Points, which brought Condemnation to All Men, is dispensed with; and instead thereof, a New *Gospel* Obedience is accepted; such an Obedience as consists in the Sincerity of the Endeavour, tho' far Short of Perfection; yet even This has a great Tendency to the better Observation of the Law; because this is an Obedience, which, by the Help of the Grace of God, is feasible and possible; whereas the other Sinless Obedience was only fitted

ted for the State of Man before his Fall and Corruption; and in the present Circumstances could never be complied with.

4. *Lastly*, Whereas it is one Part of this gracious New Covenant, not to take the Advantage of our Lapses, provided we quickly repent and amend; and, for that Reason among others, we have an Advocate at the Father's Right Hand, continually interceding for us; it is plain, that This likewise tends to the better Observance of the Law; for if there were no Place for Repentance, no Flesh could be saved, it being morally impossible, but that after the utmost Measure of Grace allowed by the Gospel, and our utmost Care to use it well, we shall sometimes be overcome through the Force of Temptations; and if in all such Cases we had no Remedy, but were in the Hands of a rigorous Judge, who would hear of no Intercession in our Behalf, we should certainly abandon our selves to all manner of Wickedness, being out of Hope of Mercy, and consequently having no Encouragement to Repentance or Amendment: But now, knowing that we have to do with a reconciled God and a merciful Father in Christ, we are encouraged quickly to return to our Duty, and in so doing, are sure of Acceptance; and so go on in Amendment of Life. From all which it is very plain, that tho' the New *Gospel-Covenant* is a much lighter Yoke and easier Burden; yet it is so far from abolishing the Law, that it facilitates and encourages Obedience to it. If ye ask me, what could be the Use of the Law, under the Covenant of Works, since by it all Men in this corrupt State must have been condemned? I answer, the Law had  
many

many Uses; such as, the shewing Men their Duty; the convincing them of Sin; the awakening their Fear; the humbling them under a Sense of their lost State and Condition. But the chief Use of all, and that to which all these other Uses have a direct Tendency, was to bring Men to Christ; and so to fit them for that higher Degree, both of Holiness and Happiness, which is offered by the New Covenant.

From the whole, the Perpetuity of the Law doth appear, and therefore we can never be too much exhorted to the Obedience of it; or to a Caution that by our Doctrine or Example we do not evacuate any the Least of it's Duties. But this is the Subject of what follows in the next Verse.

Now God bless what ye have heard, that it may not be as Water spilt on the Ground, but as Seed springing up to eternal Life, for Jesus Christ his Sake. *To whom, &c.*



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## S E R M O N IV.

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### M A T T. V. 19.

*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

The Fourth Sermon on this Text.

**T**H E S E Words are brought in by way of Consequence from the Doctrine of the Perpetuity of the Law, which our Saviour had asserted in the foregoing Verse. Before we can find out the Meaning of them, it will be necessary to explain the Terms or Forms of Expression here used, which are not altogether free from Difficulty.

The Terms to be explained are these; what we are to understand by *Breaking one of these least Commandments, and Teaching Men so*: And what by *Doing and Teaching them*? What by *being called Least in the Kingdom of Heaven*? And what by *being called Great in that Kingdom*? Or, in short, there is a Sin, and the Punishment, and a Virtue, and the Reward of it, which are here to be explained.

I. *First,*



I. *First*, We are to explain what is to be understood by the Sin here described, of *breaking one of these least Commandments*; or rather one of the least of these Commandments, *and teaching Men so*. For Brevity's and Perspicuity's Sake, I shall join this with the contrary Virtue of *doing and teaching them*. The Sin here described I take to be in general, *the teaching of Immorality, both by Example and Doctrine*; as the opposite Virtue is the teaching of good Morals both by Word and Example. This Expression then of *the least of these Commandments*, was as much as to say, any of these Commandments; not with a Design to lay the Emphasis on the Word *LEAST*, but to shew the universal Regard which we ought to have for all the Precepts of the Moral Law; for that is the Subject our Saviour was treating of; and that is the opposite Virtue here described; *doing and teaching them*. When he says then, *whosoever shall break one of the least of these Commandments*, it is only, as I take it, a more Vehement and Emphatical way of speaking; but signifies no more, than *whosoever shall break any of these Commandments, and teach Men so*. There might perhaps be several good Reasons for this Way of Expression; as *first*, it shews our Saviour's greater Zeal for this Doctrine; like *the one jot or Tittle* in the foregoing Verse; tho' upon the Matter the Sense is the same; as if a Man should say, I will observe all my Father's Will, he means the very same thing, tho' not so zealously expressed, as if he had said, I will observe every the least Word in my Father's Will.

2. This manner of Expression might perhaps be more exactly levelled against some of the *Jewish Doctors*, whom

whom it is plain, from the Words immediately following, our Saviour had in his Eye; for they by their Doctrine and Example both, expounded away considerable Parts of the Moral Law, as he proves by and by, by many Particular Instances. 3. This was a more elegant Expression, considering the Punishment that here follows, of being called *The least in the Kingdom of Heaven*: for the two together, *the breaking one of the least of the Commandments*, and *the being called least in the Kingdom of Heaven*, make an elegant Figure in Rhetorick, called *Antanaclasis*: where the same Word is twice repeated, but in a different Sense.

II. We are to enquire what is meant by being *called least*, and *called great in the Kingdom of Heaven*. By the Kingdom of Heaven here, I understand the Christian Church, as very commonly it is taken in that Sense; not the true Believers, whom we call the Invisible Church; but those who profess the Christian Religion; of whose Sincerity or Insincerity Christ is afterwards to pass Sentence. And this Sentence I take to be the judging or *calling* here spoke of. So that the Meaning of the whole Verse is, as if we should say in other Words; “ That Christian who shall  
 “ by his bad Life and loose Principles and Doc-  
 “ trine, evacuate the Obligation of any Part of  
 “ the Moral Law, when Christ comes to pass  
 “ his righteous Sentence on Men according to  
 “ their Deserts, shall be judged to be in the very  
 “ lowest Form of all those who profess Christia-  
 “ nity, even lower than Hypocrites themselves;  
 “ and be punished accordingly. Whereas, on  
 “ the contrary, they who do their best both  
 “ by their Life and Doctrine, to establish  
 good

“ good Morals in the World, shall be ad-  
 “ judged eminent Persons, that have done great  
 “ Service in the Christian Church, and be re-  
 “ warded accordingly.”

This Sense I think answers the Phrase of being *called least in the Kingdom of Heaven*, much better than if with some other Commentators, I should interpret the Kingdom of Heaven here, to be the Kingdom of Glory; and the Expression of *Least in that Kingdom*, to signifie to be totally excluded from it. For tho' they come much to the same Sense, the Words will bear the one without any Constraint; but not the other; for it is very easy to apprehend, how the lowest Rank of Christian Professors shall be excluded the Kingdom of Glory; but it is not so easy to apprehend how the lowest Rank of them, who are admitted to the Kingdom of Glory, shall be judged unworthy of it.

From the Words thus explained, there are two Things present themselves to our Consideration.

I. The Heinous Sin, and the grievous Punishment of breaking any of the Precepts of the Moral Law, and teaching Men so to do.

II. The commendable Practice of recommending a perfect Morality by our Example as well as Doctrine, and the glorious Reward attending it.

I. I go now upon the Consideration of the heinous Sin of *breaking any of the Precepts of the Moral Law, and teaching Men so to do*: Or the Sin of teaching Immorality by Example and Doctrine. *Whosoever shall break one of the least of these Commandments, and shall teach Men so.* This Sin has in it these *Four* apparent Aggravations:

1. In that an Error in Morals, is more dangerous than a mere Speculative Error.

2. In that the Corrupting of Others is an higher Pitch of Wickedness than only transgressing our selves.

3. In that scandalous Practice, which tends to the Corruption of others, is the most dangerous Sort of evil Practice.

4. In that the joining of vicious Counsel, and the propagating of wicked Principles by our Interest, Skill, or Authority, is yet an higher Degree of Wickedness, than the doing it by evil Example alone.

1. *First*, I say this Sin is aggravated here, in so far as an Error in Morals is more dangerous than a meer Speculative Error. This Observation I think, doth fairly rise from the Words; for if we mind it, it is only the Practical Errors, the Transgressions of Morality, which our Saviour degrades into the lowest Rank. And I apprehend there may be very good Reasons for it, for Speculative Errors can neither be so dangerous, nor are they so easily known as practical ones.

(1) *First* I say, Speculative Errors, which have no Influence on the Life and Conversation, cannot be near so dangerous as those Errors which lead Men out of the Way of their Duty. As in a Voyage at Sea the Master, and Seamen, and Passengers may chance to see several Objects, and very friendly and innocently may differ in their Opinions about the Names and Natures, and Colours, and Shapes, and Properties of them; and yet none of all these Opinions, the most True, or the most Erroneous, either furthers or hinders their Voyage; but if they should be in an Error

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in using a bad Compass, or in not knowing the Tides and Currents, the Rocks and Shelves; if they should run rashly on the Shore in the Night-time, by not keeping a Right Reckoning, thinking themselves far enough from Land; these are Errors of fatal Consequence; such as may endanger the Ship and Voyage. Just so it is in Errors of Opinion, with Relation to Speculative and Practical Matters. The Speculative, such as have no Influence at all on Practice, are a very innocent Sort of Errors, in comparison of the other, which endanger our Voyage to Heaven. And of this last Sort are all Errors in Morals, by which we are apt both to seduce our selves and others; every the least Deviation in them leads by Degrees more and more out of the right Way, which, if unperceived or unminded, will carry us very far in a wrong Course; and therefore it is no wonder our Saviour pronounced so emphatically in this Matter, that *Whosoever shall break one of the least of these Commandments of the Moral Law, and shall teach Men so, he shall be accounted among the unworthiest of Christians.*

(2) Practical Errors fall much more within our Knowledge and Cognizance than Speculative ones, and for that Reason are more Criminal; whereas Speculative Errors are often mere Sins of Ignorance, and for that Reason have very little of our own Fault in them; unless it be the Rashness of wading beyond our Depth, when we should have kept within our own shallow Line; and therefore we should weigh well what is, and what is not revealed; and what falls within the Compass of our own Comprehension, and what doth not.

2. A *Second* Aggravation of this Sin in the Text is, that it includes in it the corrupting of others, as well as the doing ill Things our selves; for these two are joined together, *the breaking the Commandments, and Teaching Men so*; whatsoever way this teaching is, whether by Example, or Advice, and Doctrine. Now there cannot be a greater Aggravation of any Crime than this is, to seduce Mankind into sinful Courses; This is the very Work of the Devil, who delights in Mischief; and this is the countermining our Blessed Saviour, whose Contrivances were all for the Good and Salvation of Mankind. And therefore they whose Authority or Example have Influence in leading or misleading of others, had need to take a most particular Care of their Conduct, being a Thing of such mighty Consequence both to themselves and others. As in a Fleet of Ships, that Ship which *carries the Light*, and leads the rest, especially in any dangerous Passage, has a vast Care and Trust upon her; and if she strikes against the Rocks, all that follow her are in danger of perishing with her. And this leads the Way to the other two Aggravations of this Sin; namely,

3. That of all Sorts of evil Practice, that which tends to the seducing of others is the worst. While evil Actions are secret, and carefully hid, either under a Veil of Shame and Modesty, or under a Cloak of Hypocrisie, tho' they are always bad enough at best; yet they are not near so Criminal or Dangerous, as when they are publick and avowed; and by the scandalous Example of them make as it were a Party for Wickedness, and draw in Abettors and Followers. For, as I take it, the  
great

great Strefs of the Crime, and consequently of the Infamy and Danger attending it, in the Text, is in the *Teaching Men* to break God's Commandments. To be sure they are both Wickedness, Secret or Open; yet the Open has much higher Degrees of Aggravation. For, *first*, it has most of Boldness or Impudence in it; it has that which the Prophet calls, *The Whore's Forehead*; when Men are not ashamed of their Sin, and hide it not. *Secondly*, It has most evil Consequences in drawing in, and corrupting others. And *Thirdly*, it is much more incorrigible, because more headstrong and rooted. While we can bring a Sinner to blush and to be ashamed, there is much greater Hope that Remedies will work upon him, for then he is still struggling with his own good Inclinations, with the Checks and Remorse of his own Conscience, and wants but a little Help of good Counsel, to strengthen his weak Resolutions, and to extricate him entirely out of the Snare of the Devil; he's then very capable of receiving good Admonition, and has something within him that joins in with it. But when his evil Deeds once grow Publick and Scandalous, that he owns and defends them, and makes it his Business to corrupt others, and to be as it were a Professor and Teacher of Vice, a Ring-leader in evil Courses, he's quickly hardened against all Means of Grace, and has not Patience to hear, far less to yield to good Advice. Such a Difference there is between *Secret* and *Scandalous* Sins.

4. But *Lastly*, the highest Degree of Aggravation of this Sin in my Text, is the Teaching of Immorality not only by our Example, but by our Doctrine, Advice, Authority, Countenance, Encouragement,

couragement, and all those other Methods whereby we are capable of shewing our Zeal for it. The Apostle St *Paul* describes some *who not only do ill Things, but have Pleasure in them that do them.* Rom. i. 32. So there are too many who give all the Demonstrations of Zeal and Industry for propagating and teaching their wicked Opinions, such as over-turn the Foundations of all Morality; and encourage Atheism and Libertinism in the World; and so do what in them lies to carry whole Shoals along with them into Perdition.

II. Having given this Description of the Sin of Breaking or dissolving the Moral Law; it will be no wonder that our Saviour says here in Punishment of it, that such Persons as are guilty of this Sin *shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven*; that is, shall in the Day of Judgment be accounted the very worst of all those who have given up their Names to Christ, and profess Christianity: and shall be punished accordingly. For understanding the Justice of which Sentence, we need but compare the several Sorts of bad Christians together, and we shall easily perceive how These in my Text are the worst.

(1) *First* then, we may reckon among Bad Christians, Hereticks and Schismaticks; who from gross Errors they have imbibed, the one concerning the Articles of Faith, the other concerning the Discipline and Government of the Church, seduce Men into Heresie and Schism; but tho' both these are exceeding bad, yet I cannot think either of them so bad as the seducing of Men into Immorality: Because, while even good Men are liable to Error, it is no hard Matter to imagine how a small Degree of Pride and Self-conceit



conceit may drive those Errors to Heresies and Schisms; and we ought to have so much Charity, even for Hereticks and Schismaticks, as to believe they follow their own erroneous Consciences in what they do; whereas they who go about to destroy Morality, may very well be supposed to act quite contrary to the Light of their own Minds and Consciences.

2. A worse Sort of Christians than these, I reckon such Christians who use some weak and faint Endeavours to do their Duty, but are born down with the Prevalency of their Lusts and Corruptions, and so live in a Contradiction to the Sentiments of their own Minds and Consciences; but yet do not approve themselves in these their evil Practices, far less justify and defend them, or strive to gain in Profelytes to them. It will appear upon the first Sight that there is more of Weakness than Wilfulness in the Transgressions of this Sort of Christians; at least that they are much more modest Sinners than those described in my Text; who are not only corrupted themselves, but strive to seduce and corrupt others.

3. A *Third* much worse sort of Christians than either of the former, are the formal Hypocrites, who for their own By-ends take upon them the Profession of Christianity, and tho' they may do a great Deal outwardly to answer that Profession, yet secretly they give up themselves to whatever Wickedness they are inclined to, or find it their wordly Interest to practise. They put on the Christian Profession only for a Cloak, that they may more commodiously pursue their own Ends. Yet even these are nothing near so bad as the Christians in my Text, who are wicked

Livers themselves, and make it their Business to debauch and corrupt others.

4. This *Fourth* Sort I reckon to be by much the worst; as paying not so much as external Honour to God; but being open Factors for the Devil; and therefore it is not so much to be wondered, I think, that they should be adjudged to be the least and unworthiest in the Christian Church, here called *the Kingdom of Heaven*; as that they should be reckoned any Part of it at all. For indeed we may well wonder what should tempt such Men to take upon them the Christian Profession; and why they do not rather choose to abandon it altogether, and declare openly for Atheism and Licentiousness. But there may be several Reasons, why, tho' their Lives are so immoral, they choose rather to retain the Profession of Christianity; particularly these *two* or *three*. *First*, there being several Secular Advantages in Christian Countries annexed to the Profession of Christianity, it is no wonder that such Men, for the Sake of these, should be unwilling to abandon the Profession. *Secondly*, Being seduced by false Principles, perhaps they think to find out an easier Way to Heaven, by the Way of Orthodoxy of Opinions, and partial Obedience, without that Strictness of Life, which the Gospel enjoins. *Thirdly*, Perhaps tho' they lead wicked Lives, they may have some Fancy of escaping at last by the Plank of a Death-bed Repentance; and so to make an Attonement at once for the whole Course of an ill spent Life by this dangerous Doctrine. But my Text informs us what Sentence our Saviour will pass upon all such; and that of all those who profess

IV.] *in the Kingdom of Heaven.* MATT. V. 19. 55  
profess Christianity, they shall be degraded to the  
lowest Rank, and punished accordingly.

For it is not the Profession of Christianity, without a suitable Life and Conversation, that will avail any one towards the Salvation of his Soul; as our Saviour hath told us most expressly in this same Sermon on the Mount, where he acquaints us that it is not the Profession of his Name, but the doing the Will of his Father in Heaven, which will be accepted in the great Day of Accounts. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name? And in thy Name have cast out Devils? and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that Work Iniquity,* Matt. viii. 21, 22, 23. And if all this Profession, and all these Gifts, will not save the *Workers* of Iniquity, how much less will it save them, who are both *Workers* and *Teachers* of it?

So much for the *First* Thing I proposed to consider from the Words; namely, the heinous Sin, and grievous Punishment of Transgressing the Rules of Morality, prescribed in the Moral Law; and teaching Men so to do. I find Time will not serve to handle the other Part of the Text, namely, the commendable Practice of recommending a perfect Morality by our Example as well as our Doctrine, and the glorious Reward attending it; from these Words, *But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

There is an Use or two I would briefly make of what has been said, and I shall have done.

1. *First* then, this Doctrine may serve to direct us what Value to set upon the many several Opinions which are in the World in Matters of Religion. My Text informs us, that the most dangerous of all other are those which undermine Christian Practice; and as they have a Tendency to the establishing or the dissolving of this, they are more or less Important, more or less Edifying, or Dangerous. And therefore let us not be imposed upon only with Names of Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy; and those perhaps taken only from the Name of some famous or infamous Author, or from some Party which pretends to Monopolize all sound and Orthodox Opinions to it self. The true Mark whereby to know what Opinions are, or are not of Value and Consequence, is to consider what Tendency they have to the Establishing or Destroying, to the Fixing or Unfixing Christian Morality; for all sound Opinions are in Order to an holy Life; and all that are otherwise, have a bad Influence on our Morals; and if there be any Opinions which have no Influence that Way, neither directly, nor in their Consequences, these are of so indifferent a Nature, that we ought not to spend our Zeal about them. *The new Creature* is what Christ regards more than either *Circumcision or Uncircumcision*; and so should we. And in general, if our Zeal for dry Opinions were abated, and all the Feuds and Heats which are usually raised on Account of them prevented; and our Zeal and Concernedness reserved for better Purposes, even for promoting Holiness in our selves and others; this would be the best Sign

Sign of our Orthodoxy in Opinions, and the best Fruit flowing from our Belief of them. As a Tree is known by it's Fruit, so let all Opinions be tried by this Test, and judged of accordingly.

2. This Doctrine is as good to direct our Practice, as to regulate our Opinions. By every Thing our Saviour saith here, we may see what a Zeal he hath for good Morals; and how earnestly he requires them at our Hands. There is nothing in this excellent Sermon, but what is directly upon this Subject. His Respect to the Moral Law he expresses and inculcates in the fullest and highest Terms, and takes all possible Pains to stir up his Disciples to the Practice of it. And more particularly in this our Text he guards them against all such Practices or Doctrines as may have any Tendency to the propagating any the least Immorality in the World. Let this then put us mightily upon our Guard, and make us very cautious how we espouse any Customs, that have in them a Tendency to corrupt the Morals of Mankind, either by our Example or Opinion, or Countenance, Authority or Interest. If we are so weak as to be guilty of any Piece of Immorality, let us take Care not to justify and defend it, nor to tempt others into the like evil Practice; remembering that this is to set ourselves directly in Opposition to our Blessed Lord; this is to desert our Saviour's Side, and to side with the Devil, his grand Enemy, who seeks as much to corrupt and destroy us, as Christ to sanctify and save us. Let the Thoughts of the Judgment, which will be pass'd on all those who are instrumental in teaching Immorality, either by their evil Example, or by their Doctrine, Interest, Counsel, or Authority,

thority, utterly deter us from all such Practice; and, on the contrary, make us good Instruments in propagating all good Morals by Word and Example. This is to enter into our Saviour's Design and Spirit; This is to be Co-operators and Fellow-workers with him in the Reformation of the World; This is the way to become the best Benefactors to Mankind; and this is the surest Way to save our own Souls. All which God of his infinite Mercy grant, for his dear Son Jesus Christ his Sake; *To whom, &c.*



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## S E R M O N V.

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M A T T. V. 19.

*Whoſoever therefore ſhall break one of theſe leaſt Commandments, and ſhall teach Men ſo, he ſhall be called the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoſoever ſhall do and teach them, the ſame ſhall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

The Fifth Sermon on this Text.

**H**A V I N G, ſince I formerly diſcourſed on theſe Words, been by diverſe Accidents interrupted, and diverted from the Proſecution of them, it will be neceſſary briefly to remind you of their Senſe and Meaning, and of the *two* Points I propoſed to handle from them; one of which ſtill remains to be ſpoke to.

By the Kingdom of Heaven here, I ſhewed you was meant the Chriſtian Church; and that by the being called little or great in it, was meant the Judgment, which in the great Day ſhall be paſſ'd, concerning the ſeveral Sorts of Chriſtians. Particularly our Lord declares here, who ſhall in that great Deciſion and Reward of all Mens Actions be contemned; and who ſhall be honoured. On the one Hand, they who break the Commandments of the Moral Law, and teach Men to break them, ſhall in that Day be accounted the very worſt and unworthieſt of all Chriſtian Profeſſors;

feffors; and, on the other Hand, great Honour shall be put upon those Christians, who both by their Life and Doctrin shall have promoted the Study and Practice of Morality.

Now having formerly spoke to the Sin and Punishment of those, who by their Life and Doctrin destroy Morality, from these first Words of the Text, *Whoſoever therefore ſhall break one of theſe leaſt Commandments and ſhall teach Men ſo, he ſhall be called the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven*; I proceed now to the Virtue and Reward of the Promoters of Chriſtian Morals, from these last Words of the Text, *But whoſoever ſhall do and teach them, the ſame ſhall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven*.

I. I begin with the Virtue, which is briefly described here to consist in a Conjunction of these two, the *Doing* and *Teaching* the Commandments. Before I speak of these apart, it may not be amiss perhaps to observe this Difference, which our Saviour puts between his Disciples, and the Teachers of the *Jewish* Church in those Days. The *Jewish* Teachers contented themselves with Teaching good Things; but did not think themselves obliged to put them in Practice. The Character our Saviour gives of them is, that *They ſay, and do not*, Matt. xxiii. 3. But as to our Lord's Disciples, he every where lays the chief Stress upon their good Lives, as in the end of this excellent Sermon, where the only Difference he makes between the Wise and Foolish Builder is, that the Wise Builder *bears and doth his Sayings*, but the Foolish Builder *bears and doth them not*. And in Imitation of our Lord, St Paul advises *Timothy* to be an Example of the Believers,



1 Tim. iv. 12. and *to take heed to himself and his Doctrine*, 1 Tim. iv. 16. Here then, if we would know who shall be accounted great in the Christian Church, by him who is the truest Judge of Honour, our Lord himself, in the Great Day of Accounts; it is not the greatest Doctors and deepest Scholars; it is not the Learnedest Criticks and the Subtilest Disputants; it is not they who have been advanced to the first Chairs, and the highest Preferments in this World; but in the first Place they who live good Lives themselves, and then they who take a great deal of Pains to make others good too. It is the Doing and Teaching the Commandments which will entitle a Man to this Encomium, with all the other consequent Rewards, of being *Called or Adjudged Great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

So much I thought proper to observe in general from the Words. But now that we may entitle our selves to this high and valuable Dignity, it will be necessary that we understand more distinctly what is meant by *Doing and Teaching the Commandments.* For neither is it all Sort of *Doing* that will serve turn; nor is it only those who are called Pastors or Teachers, who are capable of this Dignity of Teaching, but all Men in their several Stations may have Access to it, if they industriously employ their Talents for doing good.

To begin then with the *Doing the Commandments*; there are these *two* Things I shall endeavour to account for: 1. To give a Description of that holy Practice, which is requisite to qualify us for this high Dignity. 2. To consider why we must begin with holy Practice our selves, in order to the Teaching others their Duty.

I. *First* then, It is not all Sort of Doing the Commandments, that deserves that Name, or will entitle us to this high Dignity, of being *called Great in the Kingdom of Heaven*. For some afford a bare formal Outside Obedience; secretly indulging themselves in lewd and wicked Practices. Some are zealous in some Duties, that are suitable to, at least do not much thwart their natural Genius and Temper; but quite negligent as to other Duties, which require any Thing of Mortification or Self-denial. Some are careful at some particular Solemn Times; the Time of a Sacrament, the Day of Affliction, or the Approach of God's Judgments; but at other Times give themselves a Loose into whatever Sorts of Immorality they are inclined to. Now we cannot imagine that this is the Holy Practice here meant or described. It concerns us then to enquire a little more exactly into the Nature of that Christian Obedience, or good Life, to which our Saviour makes this great Promise in my Text. I shall briefly give you some of the chief Scripture Marks of it, by observing of which ye will be in no Danger of mistaking in a Matter of so great Consequence.

(1) *First* then, It is carefully to be remembered, what Sort of Commandments our Saviour is here speaking of, namely, the Precepts of the Moral Law, as I have in some former Discourses shewed from the Context. This, I say, is to be carefully Observed, because as there were in those Days a great many who neglecting the Moral and Substantial, spent all their Zeal in the Ritual Duties of Religion, whom our Saviour, as well as the Prophets, every where reprehends and endeavours to correct; so there are in our Days a great many Pretenders

Pretenders to Religion, who place their Zeal in any Thing rather than in this, that our Saviour is here driving at, the Study of Christian Morals. Some spend their Zeal about Orthodoxy of Opinions, and in diving into the more Abstruse and Myfterious Parts of the Christian Faith; others contend earnestly for the Ceremonials, and Ritual Part of Religion; but let us take Care to reserve our greatest Care and Industry for the Christian Morals, remembering that *Obedience is better than Sacrifice*, 1 Sam. xv. 22. and that in the great Day of Accounts, Holy Lives will be more enquired into, than Orthodox Opinions; and that *Judgment, Mercy, and Fidelity*, will be preferred to the *tithing of Mint, Anise, and Cummin*, Matt. xxiii. 23. Our inward Lusts and Corruptions are the chief Enemies we have to struggle with; our natural and acquired evil Habits; which we are continually to endeavour, with our utmost Care and Diligence, to reduce to the exact Rule of God's holy Laws, *perfecting Holiness in his Fear*.

(2) As we are to direct our Care to the right Object, so, as to the Manner of it, we must see that it be such as will please God, and not such as is governed only by By-respects and worldly Considerations. If our Obedience is of the right Stamp, we must set God before our Eyes, and endeavour to approve ourselves to him from an inward Principle of his Love and Fear, without Regard to the Fashionableness or Unfashionableness, of the Profitableness or Unprofitableness of the Duties on other worldly Accounts. I speak thus, because, of that little Duty which is performed in the World, there is a great deal owing to wrong Principles, such as Pride and Vanity, Covetousness and

and Ambition, Fear of Men, Strength of Party, Popular Applause, Fashion, Custom, and Emulation, and a thousand other By-respects, which, though they cannot be always discovered by Men, are well known to Almighty God, and will never be able to impose upon him, who understands all the various Meanders of our Hearts infinitely better than we do ourselves, and will set no Value on any Duty that doth not proceed from his true Love and Fear.

(3) If our Obedience is of the right Stamp, such as may hope for this Approbation of our Saviour in the Great Day of Accounts, it must not be a Partial, but an Universal Obedience. That is, we must not pick and choose such Duties as are most agreeable to our Humour and Temper and worldly Interests, with the Neglect of others that require more of Self-denial to comply with them; but we must study to pay an undistinguished Respect to all God's Laws. Not but that where Nature is most frail, there it is to be feared, after all our Care, we shall be in the greatest Danger of most frequent Lapses. But we must have a great Care that we indulge not ourselves in a voluntary Neglect of any Part of our Duty, because of it's Difficulty or Inconsistency with our Inclination to Profit or Pleasure; on the contrary, where the Difficulty is greatest, we ought to meet it with double Diligence, and according to our Saviour's Advice to his Disciples in the like case, *to watch and pray, that we enter not into Temptation, for that very Reason, because though the Spirit be willing, the Flesh is weak*, Mark xiv. 38.

(4) It is further requisite concerning our Obedience, which our Saviour here requires in order

V.] *in the Kingdom of Heaven.* MATT. V. 19. 65

to his Approbation in the great Day, that it be not temporary, by Fits and Starts, or upon some particular Occasions, but constant and uniform; as he doth not deserve the Name of a Workman who works one Day and plays three; so he will by no means deserve the honourable Compellation of a Doer of God's Commandments, who while for Ordinary he is a Worker of Iniquity, makes a few Interruptions on solemn Occasions, and seemingly resolves to be a new Man, but presently *returns with the Dog to the Vomit, and with the Sow that was washed, to the wallowing in the Mire again*, Prov. xxvi. 11. Tho' it is not to be expected of the very best of our Obedience here upon Earth, but that it will be liable to Errors and Lapses, and many daily Infirmities, which will require the constant Use and Exercise of Repentance; yet we must keep our selves to the constant Practice of Duty, and make Obedience to the Laws of God our Ordinary and continual Employment. This we should look upon as our great and main Business; *the one Thing needful*; herein with St Paul we should *exercise our selves to have always Consciences void of Offence, both towards God, and towards Men*, Acts xxiv. 16.

(5) I shall add but one Qualification more of our Obedience, to make it of the right Stamp, and that is, that it be hearty, chearful and diligent. This is what the Apostle calls, *running the race that is set before us*, Heb. xii. 1. and the Psalmist, *running the Way of God's Commandments*. As running is not a slow, heavy, heartless Gate, but it implies the exerting our selves with Diligence and Alacrity; so the Respect we ought to have for such an excellent Master, and

the Consideration of such a noble Reward, and the full Persuasion we have of the Goodness of the Commandments themselves, should animate and inspire us with a great Degree of Courage and Resolution in the Ways of Holiness and Virtue. So much for the Description of the *First* Qualification required here by our Saviour, in Order to a Man's being adjudged Great in the Kingdom of Heaven, namely, that he be a Person of good Life, *a Doer of the Commandments*.

2. Before I proceed to the *Second*, which is *the Teaching Men so*, I shall, as I proposed, consider the Order in which our Saviour places these Qualifications, assigning the first Place to *good Life*, and the next to *good Teaching*. This Order I take to be very natural, and necessary on diverse Accounts; for, 1. how should a Man teach others to keep God's Commandments, when he does not keep them himself? You'll say he may have the Theory, tho' he has not attained to the Practice. It may be so perhaps in other Sciences; but in this the Theory and the Practice go most commonly together, and it is a great Question whether the one can be rightly had without the other. It is not easy to apprehend how a wicked Man should come by the Knowledge of the Mind and Will of God, except we will distinguish between a superficial speculative Knowledge, and *a right Sense* of Divine Truths. The first a Man may attain by Human Learning; but the second is not imparted, but to them who *receive the Truth in the Love of it*. And as a wicked Man cannot have a right Sense, and Apprehension, and Taste of divine Things, his Palate being vitiated, it is not easy to be imagined how he can communicate the same to others; for the Streams  
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can rise no higher than the Fountain; he that has but a cold Sense of divine Things himself, will not be able to make a lively Impression upon others. But, 2. Suppose the Theory and Practice in Divine Things separate; with what Face or Confidence can an ill Man urge Duty upon others, when he is not only conscious to himself of the Neglect of it, but those others perhaps whom he would teach are privy to the same? It is a Thing not only disgraceful to the Teacher, but very obstructive to the Scholar, when the Teacher is guilty of the same Faults, which he would amend in his Disciples. Is there any Thing will sooner harden Men in their Sins, than this Observation? for the most natural Conclusion from it, is, either that the Teacher believes none of these Things himself; or if he does, that he knows of some easier Way to Heaven than what he shews others. It is necessary therefore on many Accounts that our Saviour's Method be observed, that is, that Keeping the Commandments go first, before the Teaching them. Which being now considered, together with the Order in which it stands here in the Text, let us go on in the next Place to the *Second Part* of the Qualification here described.

II. Namely, *the Teaching good Christian Morality to others.* Next to good Life in our selves, this is what our Saviour esteems most, the Teaching the same to others. I need not offer any Reasons for this; the Thing speaks it self; for if Holiness be what God delights in most, then the further it is spread, and the more Hands are at Work to propagate it, it is so much the better. Christ is so desirous of carrying on this great Work,

that he has instituted an Order of Men for this very Purpose, to carry on the Practice of Religion among Mankind; and has made them very ample Promises of a large Share of Honour and Happiness in the future State, if they are faithful in the Discharge of this Trust. We are told in the Prophecy of *Daniel*, Dan. xii. 3. That *they who turn many to Righteousness, shall shine as the Stars for ever and ever.* And the eminent State of the Apostles, those extraordinary Labourers in this Harvest, our Saviour describes by *their Sitting on twelve Thrones, judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel*, Matt. xix. 28.

But tho' these Words of Doing and Teaching God's Precepts may perhaps have a principal Regard to the ministerial Function, whose particular Business it is to teach Men their Duty both by their Example and their Doctrine; it is not to be restrained to them only; for all Men, in their several Stations, are admitted to a Share in this Honour. Particularly Parents are often called upon to train up their Children in the Fear and Nurture of the Lord: And it is given as the Character of good Masters of Families, that they will lay their Commands upon, and use their Authority with their Children and Servants, to keep the Way of the Lord. Hear what God himself says of the Care of *Abraham* in this Respect, by which he entailed a Blessing both on himself and his Posterity, Gen. xviii. 19. *I know him, saith God, that he will command his Children and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Judgment and Justice, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.* Rulers and Magistrates too are enjoined to *Rule in the Fear of God*, and they are every where commended



commended for employing their Authority to promote both *Godliness and Honesty*. In short, St *James* sets it forth as the Duty of every Man, and that in a very meritorious Manner, to convert his Brother from the evil of his Ways, *Jam. v. 19. Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he who converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins.* So that this Way of being adjudged Great in the Kingdom of Heaven, is not confined to one Rank of Men; but all Men, if they are not wanting to themselves, may be admitted to a Share of it, if they will employ their Talents in observing the Commandments of God themselves, and in Teaching the same to others, by their Precepts, Counsels, Admonitions, Example, Interest, Encouragements, or Authority.

II. So much for the Virtue of the Promoters of Christian Morals here described, *The Doing and Teaching the Commandments of God*; I come next to their Reward described in these Words, *The same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.* The Straitness of Time will oblige me to be very short upon this. As there is a prodigious Difference in the several Degrees of Virtue among professed Christians, all which go undistinguished in this World; ye are to know that there is a new State to come, when our Blessed Saviour will separate the precious from the vile; and not only so, but will distinguish them most exactly according to the several Degrees of Virtue and Goodness; according to which most righteous Judgment, some shall receive both more honourable Compellations, and be assigned higher Degrees

of Glory than others. But none of these Honours or Felicities shall be decided after an Arbitrary Manner; for tho' in this Day of Grace God bestows his Grace often out of Favour, and not by any certain Rules known to us; it will not be so in the Proceedings of that Great Day, where *every Man shall receive according to what he hath done in the Body, whether it be Good or Evil.* The Rules of Justice tempered with Mercy, will be then exactly observed; and that not only in assigning all Men to Happiness or Misery, according as they have, or have not complied with the Terms of the Gospel; but likewise in appointing them their several Stations and Degrees in each. Hence it is that we hear of *many Mansions in God's House*; and here in my Text, of *some that shall be called Great in the Kingdom of Heaven.* And tho' by the *Kingdom of Heaven* here, as in the former Part of the Verse, I believe we are to understand the Christian Church, that is, the whole Body of Christian Professors, yet it will, as to this Part of Retribution of Happiness, be all one as if it were meant directly of Heaven; for they who shall be by our Saviour in the Great Day of Accounts Called, or Denominated, or Adjudged Great in the Christian Church, shall likewise be treated accordingly, that is, shall be assigned a proportionable Great Reward in Heaven.

I need not say any Thing to cast Light on the Equity of this Proceeding, there being nothing more just, than that they who make Conscience of living according to the Direction of God's Precepts themselves, and likewise are zealous and diligent in bringing others to the same good State, should be highly esteemed of in the Sight of God,

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V.] *in the Kingdom of Heaven.* MATT. V. 19. 71

and be counted truly Great in the Christian Church, howsoever low they may be in the World; and accordingly rewarded with an high Degree of Glory and Felicity in Heaven. This was the Employment of Christ himself and his Apostles here upon Earth; this is the Employment which brings most Glory to God, and the greatest Benefit to Men, and therefore it is fit that in that just Retribution, and in that due Estimate of all Mens Actions, it should be rewarded in a distinguishing Manner.

From all this we see how we may arrive at true Honour and Greatness, even by the plain Way of being good our selves, and teaching as many others as we can to be such. This Way we see, is not confined to any particular Rank of Men; but lies open to every one's Industry. Here we need not fear, what is usual as to the Honours of this World, that when one has taken the Pains, another will run away with the Honour and the Reward; and therefore we have all Encouragement to go on chearfully, every one of us, in our several Stations, in observing God's holy Laws our selves, and in instructing, inducing, perswading, and encouraging as many others as possibly we can, to fear God and keep his Commandments; which of all other Labours and Studies will turn to the best Account, both to us and them; thro' the Merits and Mediation of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; *To whom, &c.*

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## S E R M O N VI.

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M A T T. V. 20.

*For I say unto you, that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

The Sixth Sermon on this Text.

**B**EFORE we enter upon the Explication of these Words, there is one Thing I would observe concerning the Method and Connexion of them. Our Lord had said at the seventeenth Verse, *That he was not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but πληρῶσαι*, that is, *to finish or perfect them*. Now in Pursuance of these two Heads of his designed Discourse, he begins first at the eighteenth and nineteenth Verses, to shew how clear he was from any Design of Destroying or Abrogating the Law; meaning still the Moral Law with the Explication of the Prophets, by asserting the Perpetuity of it, 'till Heaven and Earth pass away; and that the Measures by which Men shall be judged in the great Day, shall be taken from their Diligence or Negligence in observing the Law themselves, and teaching the same to others. So much for his not dissolving the Law; now in the Words I have read, he proceeds to the

the other Branch of his proposed Method ; namely, to the Perfecting or Finishing the Law, or Rule of Moral Duties ; upon which he insists a great deal longer ; for all the rest of this Sermon on the Mount belongs to this ; besides several other Precepts scattered all over the Gospels. For it is a true Observation of them all, that none of them tends to the Abrogating, but all of them to the Perfecting of the Moral Law. In the Words I have read, our Saviour enters upon this Subject, by comparing the Degrees of Duty to be performed by his Disciples, with what was taught and practised by the Scribes and Pharisees, who were reckoned the learnedest and strictest Interpreters of the Law among the *Jews* ; asserting that if his Disciples do not outstrip the other, they shall have no Share in his Kingdom ; that is, he will not look upon them as Genuine Members of his Church Militant upon Earth, or of the Church Triumphant in Heaven. *For I say unto you, that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

For understanding which Assertion, it will be necessary to explain, 1. What is meant here by *Righteousness*. 2. Why *the Scribes and Pharisees* are brought into this Comparison. 3. What is meant by *entering into the Kingdom of Heaven*.

I. *First*, We are to enquire what is here meant by the Word *Righteousness*. Some there are who place the Comparison here between the legal Performances of the Scribes and Pharisees, and Christ's *imputed Righteousness* ; but I think the first View of the Context may quickly convince us, that it is *Righteousness in a Moral Sense* our Saviour

Saviour here means. For the Point he is proving is, that he was not come to destroy the Moral Law, but to finish and perfect it. Now what Sort of Proof would it be of this Doctrine, to tell us, that we shall be pardoned by virtue of our Faith in Christ, for the Sake of whose All-sufficient Merits our weak and imperfect Duties shall be accepted. Mistake me not, as if I were speaking against the Truth of this Doctrine, for I believe it is the true Account of the Justification of a Sinner. I know too that in *St Paul's* Epistles it is called the Righteousness of God, or the Righteousness of Faith. But in this Place, the Purport of our Saviour's Discourse will by no means admit this Sense; it being very plain that he is here asserting in himself and his Disciples, a superior Regard to the Moral Law, and the Duties therein enjoined, beyond what any the strictest Sect among the *Jews* had; and accordingly he immediately goes on to prove it in the particular Duties of the Moral Law. By *Righteousness* then is here meant Moral Righteousness; as if he had said, Except ye my Hearers interpret and observe the Moral Law in a more perfect manner than the Scribes and Pharisees do, ye shall have no Share in the Kingdom of the Messiah.

II. We are to enquire why the Scribes and Pharisees are brought into this Comparison. I move this Question on Purpose, because I perceive some Commentators (and therefore more probably some Readers and Hearers) are apt to think it is with a Design to lessen and disparage them, as indeed our Saviour does sufficiently expose them elsewhere; and therefore in enlarging upon, and in asserting the Truth of this Comparison,

parison, they make a Collection of all the Faults they can pick up any where mentioned in the Scriptures, of these Men. But whatever just Occasion there may be to expose them elsewhere, I am of Opinion, if we consider the Context, and the Force of our Saviour's Argument, they are mentioned here rather on an Honourable, than a Dishonourable Account. *q. d.* I say unto you my Hearers and Disciples, Except ye interpret and observe the Moral Law, in a more perfect Manner than it is interpreted by the learnedest and strictest Interpreters among the *Jews*, the Scribes and Pharisees, ye are no Way fit to make Disciples of the Messiah. I say, the Scribes and Pharisees are brought in here as the learnedest and strictest Interpreters of the Law, that were among the *Jews*, and not as Hypocrites, proud, cruel, and covetous, as in some other Passages of the Gospel. And therefore in speaking to this Comparison between the Scribes and Pharisees, and our Saviour's Disciples, I should not think that I kept to the Point, should I muster up all their Personal Vices; for here they are only to be considered under the Character of Doctors and Interpreters of the Law; and accordingly to that alone I intend to restrain what I say of them from the Words.

III. We are to enquire here what is to be meant by entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. This Expression is sometimes taken in so wide a Sense, as to take in all professed Christians; but very often too it is limited to the Genuine True Members, who, upon a due Enquiry, shall be found sincere, and adjudged their Portion in Heaven. It is in this latter Sense it is here to be understood;  
for

for tho' Hypocrites may get into the Visible Church, *as the Man without the Wedding Garment*, in the Parable, *got in to the Marriage-supper*, Matt. xxii. 11. yet they cannot, no more than he, be said to be admitted; for he was presently detected, and disgracefully thrust out; and so shall they. By the not entering into the Kingdom of Heaven then, is not meant that they should never take upon them the Christian Profession; but that they shall be shut out as no true Members of Christ's Church, and so shall never partake of the Glory and Happiness of Heaven.

From the Words thus explained, we may gather our Saviour's Sense in this one Proposition: That if we do not take care to observe the Moral Law more exactly than the Scribes and Pharisees required in their Interpretations of it, we shall be judged unworthy to be Members of Christ's Church here, or to go to Heaven hereafter. In handling which Proposition, I intend to do these *Four or Five* Things.

1. To enquire into the Defects of this Phari-  
saical Righteousness, by shewing what Sort of Obedience it was which they required to the Law.

2. To shew what farther Degrees of Perfection Christ requires of his Disciples.

3. To consider the Penalty upon which this Higher Degree of Duty is enjoined, Exclusion from the Kingdom of Heaven.

4. I shall endeavour to shew the Equity of this Sentence, why the Duty of a Christian should be carried higher than the learnedest Doctors among the *Jews* carried it.

5. *Lastly*, I shall draw some practical Inferences from the whole.



I. *First*, In Order to the finding out the Meaning of our Saviour in this Place, it is necessary that we enquire into the Defects of the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Now in doing of this, I shall not think myself at Liberty, as I told you, to rake into all the Personal Faults of the Scribes and Pharisees; for I think their Faults and their Righteousness are to be distinguished; by their Righteousness I mean that Rule of Duties which they set; or the Law with their Interpretations of it, called here *the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*. Their Faults, like other Men's, might be personal Transgressions of good Rules; and we have nothing to do with them in this Place.

The only Thing then we are here to enquire is, what Sort of *Righteousness* the Scribes and Pharisees approved of; and where the Defects of it lay. I shall be but brief upon this, because it is more fully treated by our Saviour in the following Parts of the Sermon, which seem to me to be so many particular Proofs of this General Assertion. But some brief Heads of this their Righteousness it will be necessary to produce, that we may the better understand the Nature of that Evangelical Righteousness which our Saviour here requires, and sets in Opposition to it.

I. *First* then, the Scribes and Pharisees, in their Interpretations of the Law, contented themselves with the External Part of Duty, without minding the full Latitude of the spiritual Sense, which obliges us in all Sins to cleanse our Hearts of those inward bad Dispositions, which are Violations of the Law, and defile the Man; and in all Duties, to join the inward Sincerity and Hear-

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tiness to the outward doing of the good Work. Thus our Lord doth several Times represent them as having only a fair Outside, but being rotten at Heart; as Matt. xxiii. 25. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites; for ye make clean the outside of the Cup and of the Platter, but within they are full of Extortion and Excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the Cup and Platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.* And so he goes on there to compare them to *whited Sepulchres, which appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead Mens Bones, and of all Unclean-ness.* And that this fair Outside doth not relate only to a fair outward Profession, while secretly they lived wicked Lives; but that it has reference to their Opinion, that they were only tied to the external Part of Duty; I am convinced from what follows immediately after my Text; where our Saviour teacheth his Disciples, that the sixth Commandment prohibits all Rancour and Malice in the Heart, as well as the outward Act of Murder; and that the Seventh Commandment prohibits the Lust of the Heart, as well as the gross Act of Adultery.

2. Another Part of the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees consisted in a Strictness concerning the Ceremonials and Circumstantial of Religion, with a Neglect of the greater and more substantial Duties. In this Respect our Saviour calls them *Blind Guides, which strain at a Gnat and swallow a Camel; paying Tythe of Mint, Anise and Cummin, but omitting the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Fidelity.*

3. A *Third Part* of the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees consisted in a Zeal for Traditions, which they observed with an equal Veneration with the Precepts of Almighty God; nay, sometimes gave them the Preference. As our Saviour Objects to them, *Mark vii. 9. Full well, says he, ye reject, or as it is in the Margin of our Bibles, ye frustrate the Commandment of God, that ye may keep your own Tradition; for Moses said, Honour thy Father and Mother: and whoso curseth Father or Mother, let him die the Death. But ye say, If a Man shall say to his Father or Mother, it is Corban, that is to say, a Gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free; and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his Father or Mother: making the Word of God of none Effect through your Tradition; and many such like Things ye do.*

4. A *Fourth Part* of the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, was, when they were pinched between Duty and Interest, to stock themselves with Evasions and Distinctions, whereby they satisfied their Consciences in several Things, wherein they would have been bound by the Law. Our Saviour gives an Instance of this in the Matter of Oaths, *Matt. xxiii. 16. Wo unto you ye blind Guides, which say, whosoever shall swear by the Temple, it is nothing: but whosoever shall swear by the Gold of the Temple, he is a Debtor. Ye Fools and blind: for whether is greater, the Gold, or the Temple that sanctifieth the Gold? And whosoever shall swear by the Altar, it is nothing: but whosoever sweareth by the Gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye Fools and blind: for whether is greater, the Gift, or the Altar that sanctifieth the*  
*Gift &*

*Gift?* and concludes that all these Oaths are binding, and that these their Evasions therefore were insignificant; *whoso therefore shall swear by the Altar, sweareth by it, and by all Things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the Temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by Heaven, sweareth by the Throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.*

5. A *Fifth Part* of the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, consisted in a Zeal for all those Duties and Customs which made a great Shew of Devotion and Mortification to the World; such as long Prayers, Fasting, strict keeping the Sabbath, enlarging the Borders of their Garments, that they might more conveniently have the Sentences of the Law fixed on them; Honouring the Memory of the old Prophets, and repairing their Sepulchres; Propagating their Party with an infinite Diligence, and condemning and persecuting all others.

6. I shall name but one Part more of their Righteousness, which is, that they valued themselves exceedingly upon their External Privileges, as being descended from *Abraham*; as if they had been the only elect People of God, and all the rest of the World Cast-aways. This great Privilege beyond the rest of Mankind they expected would atone for all their other Faults and Infirmities, and secure them of God's Favour, notwithstanding the many Defects of their Lives. And therefore *John the Baptist* thought it necessary to undeceive them in this Point, *Matt. iii. 7.* For when he saw them come to his Baptism without Repentance and Amendment of Life, he thus accosted them: *O Generation of Vipers, who hath warned*

warned you to flee from the Wrath to come? bring forth therefore Fruits meet for Repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our Father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these Stones to raise up Children unto Abraham. So much for the Description of the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

II. I proceed now, in the next Place, as I proposed, to consider what further Degrees of Perfection our Saviour requires of his Disciples. This Part ought not to be slightly passed over, it being a Thing of the greatest Consequence to have a right Notion of that Evangelical Righteousness, which is required as the Condition of our Salvation. We have several Descriptions of it in the New Testament, for indeed it comprehends the whole Duty of Man, as there described; at present I shall confine myself to the Description in my Text, which is taken from the Comparison between it and the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees: which I shall endeavour closely to pursue.

i. *First* then, whereas the Scribes and Pharisees contented themselves with the Exteriour of Duty, there is no Quality more essential to Evangelical Righteousness, than that it chiefly regard the Heart and Inner Man: and that it go about all Duty with a pure Eye to God. Our Saviour has been very plain, full, and particular upon this Subject. Instead of those Devotions which were performed by the Pharisees standing in the Synagogues, and at the Corners of the Streets, to be seen of Men, he recommends to us *to enter into our Closets, and to shut the Door behind us, and to*

*pray to our Father in secret.* So when we fast, he forbids a sad Countenance, and a demure down-look, which were put on by the Pharisees, that they might appear unto Men to fast; but prescribes the Anointing of the Head, and the Washing of the Face, and the behaving ourselves so, as if we desired our Fasting should be known only to our heavenly Father in secret. And so for our Charities and Alms-Deeds, instead of sounding the Trumpet, and hunting for the Applause of Men, as they did, we are directed not to let the *left Hand know what the right Hand doth*. In short, in all Duties, all worldly Regards and Considerations are so to be laid aside or postponed, that it is manifest the chief Regard is to be had to Almighty God; and that the Interiour is reckoned by our Saviour the Life and Soul of all Duty; it is this Setting God always before us, which is the chief and main Property of our Gospel Obedience, whereby it is distinguished from this Pharisaical Righteousness in the Text.

2. Another Character of Evangelical, whereby it is distinguished from Pharisaical Righteousness, is, that it lays no great Stress on Ceremonials, or other Circumstantials of Religion; though it uses them for Decency and Order; but reserves it's Zeal for the more Substantial Matters of it: for, as *St Paul* observes well, *The Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost: for he that in these Things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of Men*, Rom. xiv. 17. Not that a good Christian neglects any the smallest Duty, but he is most zealous for the best Duties, and such as are of greatest Importance.

3. A *Third* Character of Evangelical Righteousness is, that it delights in the Study of the holy Scriptures; and the good Christian forms his Practice by that Model. He endeavours to be well rooted and grounded in the sound Principles of Faith, and holy Maxims of Duty, which are there contained; and this fortifies him against the Wild-fire of Enthusiasm, the Seduction of Hereticks, the idle Stories of Tradition, or whatever else would lead him aside from his plain Duty.

4. A *Fourth* Character of Evangelical Righteousness is, that it seeks for, nor admits of, no Evasions or Subterfuges, whereby to decline or shift off Duty, remembering that *God is not mocked*, and *he that doth Righteousness is righteous*, and no other. And though the Solifidian, and Antinomian, and rigid Predestinarian; though the loose Casuist, and the Delayer of Repentance, and a great many more such Underminers of Christian Morals, do attack the good Christian in his Principles; and the World, with all its Cares and Lusts, and bad Examples, endeavours to corrupt his Practice, he keeps that Christian Simplicity and Sincerity, which guards him against all Trick and Fraud, and Dissimulation in his Duty, continually *exercising and training himself to have always a Conscience void of Offence, both towards God and towards Man*, Acts xxiv. 16.

5. A *Fifth* Character of Evangelical Righteousness is, that it is well guarded against all the Effects of blind Zeal, and by Moderation and Humility is preserved from many Rocks the Phari-  
saical Righteousness splits upon. Howsoever zealous a good Christian may be for propagating the Truth, he understands the Christian Spirit better

than to propagate it with Fire and Faggot, or by any other Methods of Persecution; and though he will neglect neither Prayer, nor Sacraments, nor Fasting, nor any of the other Means whereby Christian Graces and Virtues are obtained, he still remembers that the Virtues themselves are of more Value than the Means of obtaining them; and therefore will be far from valuing himself, or making Ostentation to others of his Fasting and Mortification, and his other Attempts to bring himself to an Habit of Virtue; but humbly waiting on God, he importunately intercedes with him, through the Mediation of Christ, *who resists the Proud, and gives Grace to the Humble.*

6. The last Character I shall mention of the Righteousness of a good Christian, as distinguished from that of the Scribes and Pharisees, is, that the good Christian believes *God to be no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation he that fears him, and worketh Righteousness, shall be accepted by him.* And therefore trusting to no such external Privileges, *he works out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling, watching and praying that he enter not into Temptation,* and taking Care lest by Negligence and Disuse of his Talent, he provoke God to take it away from him.

So much for the *Second* Thing I proposed to consider from the Words. I find Time will not allow my going on to what I farther proposed; I shall therefore refer the Consideration of it, together with the Practical Inferences from the Whole, to another Opportunity.



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## S E R M O N VII.

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M A T T. V. 20.

*For I say unto you, that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

The Seventh Sermon on this Text.

**A**T the last Occasion, I explained to you the Meaning of these Words, which being the Foundation of what was then said, and what is now farther to be said upon them, I shall again give you the Sum and Substance of it in this short Paraphrase; as if our Saviour had said, “ Except ye my Hearers take Care to observe the  
 “ Moral Law more exactly than the Scribes and  
 “ Pharisees require in their Interpretations of it,  
 “ ye shall be judged unworthy to be Members of  
 “ the Christian Church here, or to go to Heaven  
 “ hereafter.” In speaking to which Proposition, I proposed to do these *Five* Things.

I. To enquire into the Defects of the Phari-  
 faical Righteousness, by shewing what Sort of  
 Obedience it was which they required to the  
 Law.

II. To shew what farther Degrees of Perfection  
 our Saviour requires of his Disciples, as to this  
 Point of Obedience to the Moral Law.

III. To consider the Penalty upon which this higher Degree of Duty is enjoined, Exclusion from the Kingdom of Heaven.

IV. To shew the Equity of this Sentence, why the Duty of a Christian should be carried higher than the learnedest Doctors among the *Jews* carried it.

V. To draw some practical Inferences from this Doctrine.

Now having at that Time dispatched the *First* and *Second* of these, concerning the Defects of the Pharisaical, and the further Perfection of the Christian Righteousness, I shall now proceed to the other *Three* Things which I proposed.

III. The *Third* Thing then I was to consider, is the Penalty upon which this higher Degree of Duty is enjoined, Exclusion from the Kingdom of Heaven: *Ye shall in no case enter*, says our Saviour, *into the Kingdom of Heaven*; where there are *Two* Things to be accounted for:

1. The Nature of the Penalty.
2. How the Want of this higher Degree of Duty deserves it.

1. As to the Nature of the Penalty, it is a Total Debarring both out of the Church and out of Heaven; For the Kingdom of Heaven comprehends both the Kingdom of Grace and of Glory; and by it is commonly understood in the New Testament, the Kingdom of the Messiah. Why our Saviour usually called the Messiah's Kingdom, *the Kingdom of Heaven*, or the *Kingdom of God*, may perhaps be worth while to enquire. By these Phrases is meant the Christian Church under the Government of the Messiah, which was by the *Jews* commonly styled the  
Age

Age of the Messiah, or the Kingdom of God, according to that famous Prophecy of *Daniel*, Dan. ii. 44. That *the God of Heaven should set up a Kingdom which should never be destroyed, but should stand for ever.* The Meaning then here seems to be plainly this; Unless ye my Hearers observe the Moral Law in a more full, perfect, and spiritual Sense, than is required by the Scribes and Pharisees, who content themselves with the outward Observation of the Letter (such a Righteousness that the Law cannot reach them), ye shall not be counted worthy Members of the Christian Church here, or be admitted to the Kingdom of Glory hereafter. Perhaps one great Reason why our Saviour loved to use this Phrase, and to describe the State of the Christian Church under the Messiah, by *the Kingdom of Heaven*, might be first for the Word *Kingdom*, all Men had learned it from that Prophecy of *Daniel*; and they expected mighty Things from it, that the Messiah would be a very great earthly Prince, and erect an universal Monarchy, in which they were often cutting out great Places and Preferments for themselves; To have denied this of the Messiah's being a King, as it would have been against the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and against the Truth of the Thing, it being the noblest Kingdom that ever was erected, and the most durable, being to last for ever and ever in Heaven; so it would have been such Doctrine that even his own Disciples could not have digested. And therefore our Saviour chose rather always to explain it, by calling it *the Kingdom of Heaven*, that so he might raise their Minds above these Worldly Hopes; and so when he was questioned before *Pilate* about his

being a King, he explained it thus, that his Kingdom was not of this World; and that it was not a Kingdom to be propagated by carnal Weapons, that wanted Soldiers to fight. This Kingdom of the Messiah then is that happy State or Government of true Believers under Christ their Head, which may well be resembled to a Kingdom, for the Excellency of it's Laws, for the Beauty of it's Order and good Discipline, for the Greatness of it's Rewards, for the subduing and punishing of it's Enemies, and the Obedience and Happiness of it's Subjects, under this great King Jesus Christ. The being excluded any Share in this Kingdom, is certainly the being abandoned to Everlasting Misery; as it is in the Parable, He that was thrown out from the Marriage Supper of the King's Son, as not having on a Wedding Garment, was cast out into *Outer Darknes*, where there is *weeping and gnashing of Teeth*. Now because true Believers are all Members of the Visible Church, it is no unusual Thing for the Visible Christian Church to have it's Denomination from the better Part, and to be called *the Kingdom of Heaven*, tho' there is in it a great Mixture of Tares with the Wheat, Hypocrites with true Believers, who shall be at the General Judgment separated from them, and finally excluded Heaven. For there after all, is the true Glorious Kingdom of Heaven, into which we shall never enter, except our Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. And this leads me to the

2. *Second Thing* I proposed to consider, How the Want of this higher Degree of Moral Righteousness doth deservedly exclude from Heaven. Might it not have been a more equal Punishment for

for a lower Degree of Righteousness to have been assigned a lower Degree of Glory? but to be altogether excluded Heaven and Happiness, and condemned to Everlasting Misery for want of a superior Degree of Righteousness, seems hard: Especially if we consider that the Pharisees are represented as Men of good Moral Lives, as far as could be seen or observed by the World; and if they fall short of the Higher Righteousness of the Gospel, it might be imputed to the Times of Ignorance in which they were bred, and their Want of Opportunity to be better informed. In Answer to these Doubts and Difficulties, and first as to this last Excuse of their Ignorance, there is no necessity that we enter into the Secrets of God's Judgments, to examine how far Ignorance will excuse those Faults, which have proceeded from pure invincible Error. I am sure that is not the Case of my Text; for the Ignorance of the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's Days, was chiefly owing to their own Obstinacy, who having Ears, would not hear our Saviour's excellent Doctrine; and having Eyes, would not see his great Miracles; and having Hearts, would not understand the Prophecies; and if after all it should be thought hard that so severe a Sentence should be pronounced against them, I answer, that it is not directly pronounced against them, but against such of our Saviour's Disciples as being educated in his School, should not observe the Moral Law better than the Scribes and Pharisees thought necessary. There is great Difference between these *Two*, Pharisaical Righteousness in a Pharisee and in a Christian. And this brings me to the *Fourth* Thing I proposed to consider from the Words.

IV. To shew the Equity of this Sentence, why the Duty of a Christian should be carried Higher than the learnedest Doctors among the *Jews* carried it. There are briefly *Two* Reasons for this Doctrine; the great Corruption of the *Jewish* Doctors in our Saviour's Days; and the great Advantages a Christian has beyond what the *Jews* had.

1. *First*, I say, the great Corruption of the *Jewish* Doctors in our Saviour's Days, which was such, by the Descriptions given of it in the New Testament, that it required a great deal of Reformation. When Matters where come to that pass, that Traditions were set up to evacuate Scripture; when the chief of Religion was placed in external Ceremonies, and the weighty Matters of the Law were slighted and neglected; when the Promises of the Messiah's Kingdom were all interpreted in a carnal Sense; when the Commandments of the Moral Law were so slightly taught, that Men thought it sufficient to perform the mere Shell of Duty, by refraining the gross outward Acts of the Sins prohibited in the Law, without carrying it Home to the Heart and Soul; when Men thought they could atone for greater Crimes, by a Strictness in lesser Trifles, it was then high Time to preach up the Necessity of observing the true spiritual Sense of the Law, under the severest Penalties. And to think that the turning all Morality only to an external Decency, and the laying aside that which is the Soul of all Duty, the Purity of the Heart, the Principle of Love to God and Man, ought to be punished only with some Abatement in the Degrees of Glory, would be to alter the Nature of God, who regards chiefly the inward Sincerity of the Heart;

Heart ; and the Nature of Duty, which is an inward Principle ; and the Nature of the Heavenly Felicity, for which an impure Soul is utterly unqualified and indisposed.

2. The great Advantages of Christianity beyond the *Jewish* Religion, make it very reasonable that higher Degrees of Righteousness and Holiness should be required of us than of them ; or else, why have we more perfect Precepts ? why a more Noble Pattern ? why have we better and clearer Promises ? why more Powerful Means of Grace ? why a greater Effusion of the Spirit ? is it not most equitable that according to the Talents entrusted, the Increase should be expected ? that Christ should do more for promoting Holiness than *Moses* ; and that Christians should be more perfect than *Jews* ?

V. And so now I come in the last Place, as I proposed, to draw some Inferences from this Doctrine for our Edification both in Faith and Good Morals. On which, not being straitned in Time, I shall take the Liberty to dwell longer than usual.

Inf. 1. §. 1. The *First* Inference I shall draw is this. Is Christ for a much higher Degree of Moral Righteousness than the Scribes and Pharisees, the strictest reckoned of all the *Jewish* Sects ? then we come nearest to the Spirit of our Master Christ, when by our Life and Doctrine we are the greatest Promoters of Christian Morals. It is plain our Saviour recommended both the most Extensive, and the most Intensive Holiness ; an Holiness the most extended to all Manner of Duties, and the highest Degrees of it. In this let us Christians strive to imitate our Master, and employ our Zeal not only, nor so much in Speculative,

ive, as in Practical Points; and therefore upon this Head let me leave with you these few short Advices.

1. Of all Notions in Religion, beware of those which undermine Christian Practice. The learned Author of the *Whole Duty of Man* has writ a whole Book to detect and expose those Principles, called, *The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety*; I wish it were more seriously perused; for we can never be too much upon our Guard against them.

2. Let this Observation teach you, that Good Morality is Good Christianity; for by Morality, I hope ye do not mean only a fair Outside, but the Inward Principle too of the Love and Fear of God; and a careful watching of our Hearts and Thoughts, and keeping a good Conscience before God.

3. From the same Principle it will follow, that good Moral Preaching is good Christian Preaching. I am sure this was the Practice both of our Saviour and of the Prophets and the Apostles, in their Discourses; and this is what tends most to Edification; I mean to the Purifying our Hearts, and Reforming our Lives; and therefore if our Discourses have a visible Tendency to holy Practice, they ought not for this to be slighted as dry Morality; but rather so much more regarded than if they entertained you with either unintelligible Cant, or high Speculation, concerning the most abstruse Points of Mystery and Controversy.

4. From the same Principle too it will follow, that a good Moral Life is one of the truest Characters of a good Christian, and as St *James* observes, one of the surest Signs of true Faith. Yet there is a sort of Men in the World, who pretend mightily to the Spirit, that are as yet to learn the Principles



Principles of Common Honesty. They cannot be depended on for the Truth of what they say, nor the Fidelity of what they promise; nor for the Fairness of their Accounts, or the Honesty of their Work; they will lie, cheat, equivocate, oppress and exact; they are covetous, hard-hearted and uncharitable, censorious, envious, proud and imperious; Matters of Morality are too little and inconsiderable for them to mind; as if it were possible to be a good Christian, and yet not a good Moral Man.

Inf. §. 2. The Character here given of the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, that it is such as will bring us short of Heaven, should make us afraid of our own State; especially if we consider what sort of Persons the Pharisees were; for they were not only clear of scandalous Vices, such as Cursing, Swearing, Whoredom, Drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, and such other Vices as the Rakes and Debauchees of the World allow themselves in; but were exemplary for many other good Things, as the Pharisee makes his Boast in the Parable, *Luke xviii. 11. God, I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the Week, I give Tithes of all I possess.* These Pharisees, had they lived in our Days, might have passed for very good Christians. I am sure there are many among us, who fall short of them; and therefore we have all Reason to look with a jealous Eye on ourselves, and to examine ourselves very narrowly, to make sure that we be in the State of such a Righteousness, as may exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees. In order to which there are *Two Things I*  
would

would recommend. 1. The *First* is, to make sure that we do not fall short of it. They were a careful People as to the *Exteriour*, which had a very good Shew of Gravity and Religion. There are a great many I wish we could persuade to go thus far, who are now Scandals to their Profession, by their profane Talking, and loose Living; who, if it were not for the Name of Christians, might as well be Pagans and Heathens; nay, would have been thought Scandals among some more civilized Heathens. The external Part is not to be neglected, altho' our Care is not to stop there, but to go on to *the Interiour, the New Man in the Heart*, which is next to be recommended. *Secondly* then, if we would have our Righteousness to outstrip the Pharisees, let it be contrived not so much for Ostentation in the Sight of Man, as inwardly to please God. Be diligent in *secret* as well as exemplary in *publick Devotion*: Refrain from ill Things as well when there is no Eye upon you but God's, as if you were in the Presence of ever so awful Company. Do good with a pure Eye to him; and beware of Sounding the Trumpet of thy Praise thy self, or contriving the same to be sounded by others. Meditate more on thy Faults, than on thy good Deeds; the one will move thee to Repentance, which is always wholesome, always necessary; the other will be like *dead Flies in the Ointment of the Apothecary*, Eccl. x. 1. which will cause thy best Works to send forth a stinking Savour. But when I advise you frequently to think on your Faults, I hope ye understand it is to be with a Spirit of Mourning and Repentance for them; not to please and delight your selves with the Thoughts of your former

mer Follies; for this is to reiterate and act them over again in your own Fancies and Imaginations; one of the worst Acts of the carnal Mind, as bad as contriving new Mischief. Above all Things study inward Humility, Purity, Modesty, and the Fear of God, if ye would exceed this Pharisaical Righteousness. And because this Righteousness of theirs seems to me chiefly to owe it's Original to one Vice, which is very fruitful in such Opinions as that Sect produced, I shall give you a little Description of *that*, and quickly have done. The Vice I mean is *Spiritual Pride*, with which both these Pharisees of old, and many their Followers of latter Days, both in our own Church and in the Church of *Rome*, have been acted. It is from this Pride that they were such great Party Men, that, as our Saviour says, *they would compass Sea and Land to make one Profelyte*, Matt. xxiii. 15. and when they had made him, they took Care to inspire him so with Rage and blind Zeal, that he became twofold more the Child of Satan than themselves. O beware of this Party Spirit, which is a Spirit full of Uncharitableness, Cenforiousness, Pride, Fury and Cruelty; and has produced Abundance of strange Tragedies in the World. It was from the same Spirit of Pride, that they affected to be Dictators in all Matters of Religion; their Opinions were the Standard of Orthodoxy, they must have *the chief Seats in the Synagogues*, Matt. xxiii. 6, 7, 8. and they must be called of Men, *Rabbi, Rabbi*, that is, they affected a Superiority of imposing their Judgment on the World; and had not the Humility and Modesty to learn any Thing of others. This is a dangerous Piece of Spiritual Pride, and is good  
for

nothing but to make and propagate Heresies. For, as I take it, it is not so much the Liberty of venting a singular Opinion or Interpretation, which makes new Sects and Heresies; for indeed that is often necessary for finding out the Truth, that Men shake off the Yoke of Opinions which they sucked in only through the Prejudices of Education; but the Thing which makes Heresies is, that when once Men have published their Opinion, they are Proof against Conviction; and will right or wrong tenaciously adhere to it, and propagate it against the most convincing Arguments, and will by no Means suffer themselves to be brought off or undeceived. It was from the same Spirit that they put on such a mighty Affectation of Sanctity with their long Prayers, down Looks, disfigured Faces, broad Phylacteries, imposing on the weaker Sex, and preying on their Estates, to carry on the Designs of their Godly Party. Finally, it was from this Spirit of Party and Spiritual Pride, that they raged with Envy against all that were not of their Faction, and set themselves first by all the Arts of Calumny to vilifie and defame them, and then by all their Power and Interest to ruin and destroy them; for no other Reason, but lest their growing Fame should eclipse their Own. This was visibly the Part they acted towards our Blessed Lord. They had their Spies out continually to watch all Advantages against him; they came like Men that were desirous to learn of him; and proposed their ensnaring Questions; they brought him upon difficult, dangerous Subjects, on Purpose that they might trepan and accuse him. They suborned false Witnesses to pervert his Words, and with their

their own Additions and Glosses at least, to make them Criminal. They defamed him with all manner of Calumnies, of Heresie, Treason, and Immorality. When his Miracles were so publick that they could not be hid, they had the Wickedness to suggest, that he wrought them by the Power of Magick, and *cast out Devils by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils*, Mark iii. 22. and at last, when, notwithstanding all their wicked Arts, his Fame increased, such Things having been wrought by him as were sufficient to convince all Mankind, and them too, if their Pride and Envy had not made them Proof against Conviction; when, notwithstanding all their Calumnies, the World was like to go after him, upon his raising of *Lazarus* from the dead, they then combined under a Form of Justice to cut him off. This is a true Picture of that Spirit of Pride and Party, which daily produces so many Tragedies in the World, and which had so great a Hand in framing this bloated Pharisaical Righteousness; which therefore we should by all means study to decline and avoid.

Inf. §. 3. I shall make but one Inference more from the Words, and have done; and 'it shall be to confute an Error of some of the Popish Writers on this Sermon, as if several of these severe Injunctions had not been designed by our Saviour as necessary Precepts, but only as *Counsels of Perfection*. And of Affinity with this, is another Error of some of that Church, as if they were not fitted for the ordinary Christians of the World, but for those who have taken upon them strict Monastick Vows or Sacred Orders: And there are really some among our selves, who have laid down such Principles, as help private Christians to creep

out from the Obligation of these Duties; by interpreting several Parts of them to relate peculiarly to the Apostles, when I think it very certain there were no such Officers as Apostles appointed at the Time when this Sermon was preached, as I have proved in another Discourse. But there is one Thing in my Text, which at once confutes all these Opinions; and that is, that our Saviour makes this Evangelical Righteousness, which is here set opposite to the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and is more particularly described in the subsequent Parts of this Sermon, to be a necessary Condition of Salvation, without which *we shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Let this for ever stop the Mouth of all such bold Asserters. And therefore let Us with the utmost Application and Diligence, as a Thing of that infinite Consequence requires, set about the Study of this Gospel-Righteousness, as ever we expect to avoid Hell, and to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. For which God of his infinite Mercy in due Time prepare us all, through the Mediation of Jesus Christ, our Blessed Saviour and Redeemer: *To whom, &c.*



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## S E R M O N VIII.

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### M A T T. V. 21.

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old Time,  
Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill,  
shall be in danger of the Judgment.*

*Ver. 22. But I say unto you, that whosoever is  
angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall  
be in danger of the Judgment: and whosoever  
shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in dan-  
ger of the Council: but whosoever shall say, thou  
Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.*

The First Sermon on this Text.

**F**OR discovering the Connexion of these Words with what goes before, we need but look back to the 17th Verse, where our Saviour acquaints his Hearers, that *he was not come to destroy, but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets.* In Pursuance of which Assertion, after he had at the 18th and 19th Verses guarded them against the Destruction of the Law; securing the very Least of it's Precepts from being encroached upon by the Doctrine or Example of their Teachers; he proceeds at the 20th Verse to the making good the other Part of the Assertion, of his Design of Fulfilling or Perfecting the Law; where after having laid down in general, that *unless their*

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*Righteousness*

*Righteousness should exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, (who were reckoned the best Teachers of the Law at that Time) they should in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; he goes on next to some particular Instances of this Truth; in which it was necessary that they should proceed to higher Degrees of Duty, than were required by the Scribes and Pharisees. And the first he instances in, is this of my Text: Ye have heard that it was said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the Judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment: and whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council: but whosoever shall say, thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire. He says not, Ye have read; but, Ye have heard: that is, ye have been thus taught by the Jewish Doctors, the Scribes and Pharisees, that it was said by them of old time; or rather, as it is in the Margin of our Bibles, to them of old time; that is, that Moses gave this Precept to our Forefathers in the Sixth Commandment, Thou shalt not kill: And whosoever shall kill, &c. i. e. This Commandment these Doctors taught you to look upon as no other than a Judicial or Political Precept, prohibiting only the external Act of Murder, upon Pain of being tried by the Criminal Court for your Life; thus confounding it with that other Precept of the Judicial Law of Moses, Num. xxxv. 30. Whoso killeth any Person, the Murderer shall be put to death by the Mouth of Witnesses; without extending it to any farther Obligation on the Conscience; or considering any farther Penalty in the World to come. But I*

*say*



say unto you, *whosoever is angry with his Brother,* so as to have an inward Grudge or Hatred against him, shall, in the other World, be liable to a Punishment answerable to that inflicted by the Ordinary Criminal Court, which was, to be killed with the Sword; and *whosoever shall suffer his Anger to proceed to Words of Contempt,* shall, in the other World, be liable to an higher Degree of Punishment, answerable to that which is inflicted by the Council, or great Sanhedrim, which was Stoning. But *whosoever shall suffer his Anger to proceed to downright Reproach and Contumely,* shall be liable in the other World to a yet higher Degree of Punishment than is inflicted by any Court, resembling that in the Valley of *Hinnom*, which was the being burnt to Death by a slow Fire.

This in general I take to be the Sense and Meaning of the Words; but for our clearer understanding them, I shall more distinctly consider these *Three Things*, which are here particularly taught.

I. Wherein the Error of the *Jewish* Doctors, the Scribes and Pharisees, as to the Sin prohibited by this Commandment, consisted.

II. What was their Error as to the Punishment due to this Sin.

III. How far our Saviour improves the Commandment, both as to the Description of the Sin, and Punishment of it.

I. As to the *First*, the Error of the *Jewish* Doctors, as to the Sin prohibited by this Commandment: It seems to me to be plainly this; that they looked upon it to be no other than a Judicial or Political Law; as appears both by the Penalty

they annexed to it; *whosoever kills, shall be in danger of, or rather liable to the Judgment*; and likewise by our Saviour's Interpretation, as it is set in Opposition to Theirs. And if this was their Notion of the Sin, they extended it no farther than to the gross Act of Murder; because Human Judicatures took no Cognizance of the Anger, Hatred, and Malice of the Heart, till they broke out into these gross Acts.

II. Having this Notion of the Sin, we are next to enquire, what was their Error as to the Punishment due to this Sin. And this it is probable they looked upon only as a Temporal Punishment; and that all the Guilt of it was absolved by their undergoing the Censure of the Law; which was, that *whosoever shed Man's Blood, by Man should his Blood be shed. Whosoever shall kill, said they, shall be liable to the Judgment*; whether the Ordinary Judgment of *Twenty three Men*, which was a lesser Sanhedrim in all their Chief Cities, which had the Cognizance of Ordinary Murders, and punished them with the Sword; or the extraordinary Judgment of the great Sanhedrim, which sat at *Jerusalem*, consisting of *Seventy*, and had the Cognizance of Murders of a deeper Nature, such as were aggravated with Treason and Sedition against the State; so that their Views of this Commandment were very short, limiting the Transgression of it, both as to the Sin and Punishment, to this Life, and to Man's Judgment only, without minding the Nature of the Guilt in the Sight of God, or the Punishment of it in the other World.

III. And this leads me to the *Third Thing* I proposed to consider; namely, how far our Saviour

viour improves the Commandment, both as to the Description of the Sin, and Punishment of it.

1. *First*, As to the Sin, he extends it to *three* Things more than were reckoned Criminal by the Doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees. *First*, To Anger in the Heart, under which are comprehended all Inward *Hatred, Malice, Envy, Revenge*, the first Springs of Contentious Words and Injurious Actions. *Secondly*, To the saying to our Brother, or Neighbour, *Raca*, that is, empty or vain Person, which is a lower Species of Contempt. This no doubt is an higher Degree both of Sin in our selves, and of Injury to our Neighbour, when we suffer that Anger, which before we suppressed in our own Breast, to break out into any Words of Slight and Contempt against our Neighbour. *Thirdly*, To the calling him, *Thou Fool*: This Word, tho' in our Language, and by our Use of it, it sound not so harsh, as importing only some Defect in the Understanding, had a much worse Meaning among the *Jews*; for among them it signified a Wicked, Profligate Man, that had shaken off all Sense of Duty and Religion; such as we call a *Rake-bell*, or *Hell-bound*, as, *Psal. xiv. 1. The Fool hath said in his Heart, there is no God.* By this Word then is to be understood all provoking, contumelious Language; as by the Word *Raca* lesser Affronts, and Significations of Slight and Disparagement.

2. *Secondly*, As to the Punishment, our Lord gives us a great Improvement of it; for whereas the Scribes and Pharisees seem to have looked no further for the Punishment of the Transgressions of this Commandment, than to human Judicatures: the utmost of whose Punishments reached

only to the Death of the Body; he tells us of the unspeakable Danger of these Sins in the other World; which, according to their several Degrees of Aggravation and Heinousness, shall meet with proportionable Punishments in that future State. This our Saviour illustrates here by three Sorts of Punishments, which were understood by the *Jews* his Hearers; namely, *First*, the Punishment used by the Ordinary Courts of Justice consisting of *Twenty three*, which sat in the Gates of their Cities, here called *the Judgment*; the highest of whose Punishments was Death by the Sword: *Secondly*, the Punishment used by the great *Sanhedrim*, consisting of *Seventy*, which sat at *Jerusalem*, here called *the Council*, the highest of whose Punishments was Stoning: *Thirdly*, the Burning in the Valley of *Hinnom*, which alluded to an Idolatrous Custom they had formerly used of Offering up their Children to *Moloch* in that Valley; where they enclosed them in the Belly of the Idol, and scorched them to Death by slow Fires; and that they might not hear their Shrieks, caused Cymbals and Drums to make such a Noise, as drowned the other. By these three Punishments, our Lord represented the gradual Punishments of those Sins in the other World, which were yet such Species of Murder as the Scribes and Pharisees had taken no Notice of.

From the Words thus explained, there are these *Five* or *Six* Things which will deserve our more particular Consideration.

1. *The inward Anger*, which is here mentioned as the *First* Degree of Transgression of the Sixth Commandment.

2. The

2. The Sin and Danger of *slight Affronting Words*, which our Saviour assigns as the *Second Degree* of the Transgression of this Commandment.

3. *The higher Provocations of Contumely and Reproach*, which our Saviour describes as the *Third Degree* of Transgression of this Commandment.

4. What kind of *Killing* it is, which is here prohibited.

5. We may observe from the Words, that there are *great Degrees of Punishment in the other World*; exactly proportioned to the several Degrees of Sin.

6. *Lastly*, There is one general Instruction we may gather from the whole; namely, that wherever any Sin is prohibited in the Law, there all Thoughts, Words and Actions, usually occasioning the Sin, or tending towards it, are prohibited likewise; all these, I say, if we would sufficiently apprehend our Saviour's Meaning in the Text, it will be necessary that we consider more particularly.

I. The *First Thing* we are to consider in the Words is, *the inward Anger* here mentioned and threatned, as the first Degree of Transgression of the *Sixth Commandment*. This Anger must necessarily be considered here as it has a Tendency *to do hurt* to our Neighbour, and therefore must not be extended to all inward Indignation at our Neighbour's Faults, which is often very just, and may proceed both from a Zeal for the Honour of God, and a true Love to our Neighbour. And therefore whether the Words *without a Cause* had been here or not, the Thing might have been plainly enough understood from the Scope and Purport

Purport of our Saviour's Discourse, which is to describe the several Degrees of Transgression of the *Sixth Commandment*; the *First* of which is that *Inward Anger, or Malice and Hatred* against our Neighbour, from whence provoking Words and injurious Actions proceed; which is a Thing of quite another Nature from those inward Commotions, which proceed from a Spirit of Love to God and our Neighbour, which Occasion not only sharp Rebukes in Parents, Masters, Judges, and Magistrates, but sometimes severer Censures and Punishments. I add this so much the rather, because there are several very ancient Copies of great Authority in which this Word *εὐχῆ*, which we render *without a Cause*, is not to be found; and which is more, two learned Fathers of the Church, St *Jerom* and St *Austin*, tell us how they examined into the Matter, and are of Opinion, that from being at first put in the Margin by Way of Exposition, it came afterwards to creep into the Text. For my Part I confess I cannot help yielding a great Deference to these Ancient Copies and Fathers; and besides, I am so far from thinking the Word necessary in this Place, that I am of Opinion that being Angry with our Brother, as it is the Beginning of Malice or Hatred against him (and no otherwise can it be a Transgression of the *Sixth Commandment*) doth not suit well with that Addition; for no Cause whatsoever is sufficient to justify such Sort of Anger. For let his Transgression be what it will, it should indeed stir us up to Pity and Compassion, Grief and Concern; but never to Hatred and Revenge, tho' we should happen to be in such

such Stations wherein we are obliged to censure and punish him for the Transgression.

The Anger then here condemned, is that which proceeds from inward Hatred to our Neighbour; for this only can be a Breach of the *Sixth Commandment*. If we govern our Anger so, as to raise only an Indignation against the Vice, with a Resolution to rescue the Person from it; or are grieved for the Dishonour done to Almighty God, with a Resolution by all honest Ways to remove it, these are not this Anger with our Brother here prohibited; the One proceeding from Love to *him*; the Other from a Zeal for the Glory of God. Nor are the first Motions of Anger in the Heart, before they fix into Malice or Hatred, to be judged the Anger here prohibited; those first Motions belonging properly to the natural Passion, not to the Vice of Anger; and being indeed not among the Things in our own Power; but when we let them tempt us to Malice and Hatred, then they grow vitious; but when they only serve to warm and stir us up to our Duty, and to be Incentives of Courage in well-doing, they are virtuous; and as the Apostle says, *we are angry and sin not*, Eph. iv. 26. The Anger then our Saviour would here guard us against, is that Inward Hatred of our Neighbour, or Desire of Revenge, after we have, or think we have, been affronted or injured by him. This, when it is cherished and entertained, settles into Rancour and Malice; and is a most fruitful Source of all manner of Mischief. And therefore it concerns us especially to take Care of this first Beginning of the Breach of the *Sixth Commandment*. In order to the cautioning us against it, there are *two* Things which seem necessary,

necessary, in which I shall employ the remaining Part of this Discourse; for I perceive I cannot now finish the whole Subject.

1. It is necessary that we be duly sensible of the evil of this Sort of Anger.

2. That we be directed to the proper Means of preventing and removing it.

I. As to the evil of it, let it be considered,

(1) That in our Saviour's Interpretation, it is the first Step towards the Sin of Murder. And in all Sin, it is both more easy, and turns to much better Account, to watch the first Beginnings of it, than to stay till it has got a Head, and cannot so easily be conquered. When a Leak is first sprung in a Ship, the Mariners take Care to stop it; and when the first Spark of Fire takes in the Chimney, we put it out as soon as we perceive it; for it may quickly be too late, if it be delayed till the House is all in a Flame. Just so it is with Anger; if it is not prevented or stopt in the Beginning, it quickly grows ungovernable, and is followed with Abundance of Mischief.

(2) Let it be considered what inward Disorders this Anger with our Brother occasions to our selves; how it clouds the Judgment and Understanding with such thick Fumes of Passion, that it is not capable of discerning *Truth* from *Falshood*, or *Right* from *Wrong*; what a strong Byass it gives to the Affections, that they cannot follow the Conduct of Reason, if the Judgment could perceive it; how furiously it drives a Man upon unalicious wicked Designs, such as drown all other good Thoughts, and indispose him for asking or taking good Counsel of God or Man. In short, as it utterly incapacitates us to take the Conduct



of our selves, so nothing doth more effectually hinder our following the good Conduct of others.

(3) For let it be considered in the *Third Place*, that there is no Passion more inconsistent with Society and good Government, than this is. In the Superiour Sort of Men, Rulers, Judges, and Magistrates, there is no greater Enemy to that fair and equal impartial Justice which their Office obliges them to administer to all Mankind; the least Tincture of Anger is enough to misguide them in their Judgment of Persons or Things; the greatest Merit shall then only occasion the greater Suspicion and Jealousie; the justest Cause shall then raise the greater Fury, if there be no handsome Pretext to give it against the Person with whom we are angry. Then in the Inferiour Sort of People, there is nothing more directly opposite to all Government, or more inconsistent with the Office of Magistracy than this Vice. For whereas Magistrates are by their Office to be the publick Avengers of all Injuries, this private Anger takes the Office of Vengeance out of their Hands, and executes itself, though of all other Tempers of Mind it is the most unqualified for it.

(4) Consider that this Anger mixed with Hatred is the most directly opposite not only to this *Sixth Commandment*, but to the Love of our Neighbour in general; that is, to all the Duties of the Second Table of the Law; and by Consequence likewise to all the Duties of the First. *John iv. 20. If a Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Lyar: for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

So much for the Evil of this Inward Anger against, or Hatred of our Brother.

In the last Place, it is necessary that we be directed to the proper Means for preventing and removing it. I shall just name a few of the chief of them.

1. *First* then, If we would avoid Anger, let us avoid a weak, peevish, waspish Disposition. What is the Reason that what incenses one, another is not in the least moved at it; that what will not provoke a stout Mastiff, will exasperate a little Foist, and set him a barking, till he's both uneasy to himself, and disturbs all the Company? Nothing, but that one Man has not that Firmness and Steadiness of Mind that another is Master of. As a Body full of Sores and Ulcers is galled with every the least Rub, or Touch, or Squeeze, which a sound Body would not so much as feel. Let us endeavour then after this sound Constitution of Mind; this inward Calm, and Tranquillity, and Constancy, which is not easily ruffled and discomposed with outward Provocations. And one of the best Arts to compass it, is to keep a good Conscience, which always brings Serenity of Mind, and Stayedness of Spirit along with it. And next to a good Conscience, nothing perhaps contributes more to it than not to overload the Mind with distracting Troubles and Cares, more than it can well go through with: And therefore that we suit our Mind to our Fortune, not ambitiously struggling after higher Things than we find the divine Providence has cut out for us.

2. Let us consider this World as a Place full of Trouble; that so we may not be surprized, or think strange of any Disaster that happens to us in it.

it. We find by daily Experience, as well as by the Instructions of our Religion, that *Man is born to Trouble, as the sparks fly upward,* Job v. 7. and therefore we should expect them, and be upon our Guard against them. It is our Unacquaintedness with the World, and with our own Circumstances in it, that makes us so sanguine in our Hopes about it, and so easily disturbed whenever Matters fall out otherwise than we had projected to ourselves.

3. It will help us much to keep our Temper, and not to be easily provoked to Anger, if we will accustom ourselves to overlook the present immediate Instruments of our Troubles, and to take them all as out of the Hands of God; as *David* did when cursed by *Shimei*; and as *Job*, when his Herds were carried away by the *Chaldeans* and *Sabeans*; *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken, &c.* And our Blessed Saviour, *Luke xxii. 53. But this is your Hour, and the Power of Darkness,* q. d. why should I be angry, or find Fault with you? This is the Time which God hath destined for this very Thing, and without God's Permission ye could not do it.

4. If we would avoid Anger, let us endeavour, as much as is possible, to observe and avoid all those Things which are the usual Causes or Occasions of it: Such as Drunkenness, Talebearing, Backbiting, Censoriousness, Pragmaticalness, Rudeness, Incivility, Pride, Covetousness, Vanity, a disputatious or satyrical Temper, the Conversation of angry, quarrelsome Men, and the like. And, on the other Hand, let us observe and follow all such obliging friendly Virtues and innocent Customs, as may gain us the good Will of  
our

our Neighbour, and prevent Anger both in him and ourselves.

5. *Lastly*, To help us to suppress Anger and Impatience, let us consider how much Self-denial and Bearing the Cross is a Duty, and a principal Duty of the Christian Religion; and what noble Promises are made to it; which if we believe, we shall count it an Honour to bear Affronts and Injuries for Righteousness Sake, knowing that our Reward in Heaven shall be so much the greater.

So much for the *First* Thing I proposed to consider from the Words, *Inward Anger* against our Brother; which our Saviour assigns as the *first* Degree of the Sin of Murder. The other Things contained in the Text I must refer to some other Opportunity. Now God bless what we have heard, and give us a right Understanding in all Things. To him let us render, as is due, all Praise, &c.



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## S E R M O N IX.

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### M A T T. V. 21.

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the Judgment.*

*Ver. 22. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall be angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment: and whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council: but whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

**B**EFORE I go on to what remains of this important Subject, it will be necessary to refresh your Memories with a brief Recapitulation of what I said in the opening up of the Words. They are our Saviour's Improvement upon the *Sixth* Commandment, in pursuance of the general Doctrine he had delivered in the preceding Verse, that *unless the Righteousness of his Disciples exceeded the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Our Saviour's Improvement consists first in giving us a clearer and fuller Description of *the Sin* prohibited in that Commandment; and then of *the Punishment* to be inflicted on that Sin. As to the Sin, those Doctors seem to have looked no further than to the gross Act of Murder; and as to the Punishment, they con-

sidered only the Sentence of Death inflicted by their Criminal Courts; so that as to both it seems they regarded the *Sixth* Commandment as they would have done one of their Judicial or Political Laws; without minding either the greater Extent of it *in foro Conscientiæ*, in the inward Court of Conscience; or the higher Degrees of Penalty for the Transgressions of it in the Life to come. Both these, I mean the Sin and the Punishments thereof, belonging to this *Sixth* Commandment, our Saviour doth here more particularly explain; extending the Sin to the Thoughts and Words tending to it, or occasioning Murder, as well as to the gross Act of it; and teaching likewise, that there are Degrees of Punishments in the other World for the several Degrees of this Sin; which he illustrates by Allusion to the Higher and Lower Courts of Justice, and the greater or lesser Punishments used among the *Jews*.

From the Words thus opened, there were *six* Things I proposed to consider more particularly.

I. *First*, Inward Anger, which our Saviour assigns as the *First* Degree of Transgression of the *Sixth* Commandment.

II. *Secondly*, Slight affronting Words, which our Saviour assigns as the *Second* Degree of Transgression of this Commandment.

III. The Higher Provocations of Contumely and Reproach, which our Saviour assigns as the *Third* Degree of Transgression of this Commandment.

IV. The gross Act of Killing, which even the *Jewish* Doctors understood to be prohibited by this Commandment; and which we have Reason to suppose, is likewise to be interpreted according

IX.] *and affronting Words.* MATT. V. 22. 115  
according to our Saviour's Meaning in a fuller  
Sense.

V. The Degrees of Punishments in the other  
World, proportioned to the several Degrees of  
Sin.

VI. The last was a general Instruction I gathered from the whole, upon Observation of our Saviour's Way of interpreting this Commandment; namely, that where any Sin is prohibited by any of God's Laws, there all Thoughts, Words, and Actions, usually occasioning the Sin, or tending towards it, are likewise prohibited.

These are all very material Points, and deserve our most diligent Regard and Attention. The *First* of them, namely, the inward Anger, which our Saviour assigns as the *First* Degree of Transgression of this *Sixth* Commandment, I considered at the last Occasion, and think it not necessary to repeat any thing of what was offered on that Head; unless it be to put you in mind, that by Inward Anger here is not meant all sort of Commotion or Indignation whatsoever; for sometimes that may proceed from a true Zeal for God's Honour, or from a true Love to our Neighbour; but only that Sort of Indignation or Anger which proceeds from the *Hatred* of our Neighbour; for no other can be a Breach of the *Sixth* Commandment. And so I proceed to

II. The *Second* Thing I proposed to consider from the Text; namely, slight affronting Words, which our Saviour assigns as the second Degree of Transgression of the *Sixth* Commandment. *Who-soever shall say to his Brother, Raca.* Interpreters agree that this Word among the *Jews* was an Expression of some small Slight, rather than a

downright Reproach and Contumely; so that I think, in handling it, to consider properly our Saviour's Intent, we must do what we can to guard Men against all Expressions of the least Slight or Disrespect towards their Neighbour, as being the usual Beginnings of greater Strife, Quarrels, and even Murder itself.

To guard us then against all Disrespect and Slight, or even Incivility to our Neighbour, there are a few Things I would offer to your Consideration.

1. That this *Slight* and *Disrespect* towards our Neighbour proceeds commonly from bad Causes; such as (1) a Pride and Haughtiness in ourselves; and a Conceitedness as to our own Opinions and Ways. (2) At least, a Want of due Consideration of our Neighbour's Case; perhaps that which we are offended at in him is owing to the Uneasiness of his Circumstances; the Pains and Diseases of his Body; the Fatigue of Business; the Stiffness of his natural Temper; or some little Mistake or Oversight, such as are very incident to all Mankind. Or (3) it is owing to our own hasty and impatient Temper, which could not bear with the least Provocation or Contradiction.

2. Let us consider, that as all Disrespect to our Neighbour proceeds from bad Causes, so it is attended with very bad Consequents and Effects. There is no Man so dull, but that he can presently apprehend every the least Disrespect put upon him; for Self-love teacheth us all to have so good an Opinion of our selves, as to think that we deserve all manner of Respect. One of the first Consequents then of these slighting Disrespectful Words is, that it begins to alienate our  
Neigh-



Neighbour's Affection from us, as Persons that are unjust to him, and take no Care to pay him the common Respects and Civilities due to him. This Alienation of Affection, when brooded upon by our warm and angry Resentments, produces all those Thoughts of Hatred, which are often attended with actual Revenges, by taking all Opportunities to wreck our Malice against those, who did thus slight and disrespect us.

3. Let us consider, that all slight and disrespect towards our Neighbour, is exceeding inconsistent with the Laws of Christianity, which require a Spirit of Love, Charity, Humility, Meekness, and Patience; that we should honour all Men; that we should curb our Tongues, and govern our Passions; that we should be courteous and condescending, and become all Things to all Men, that by all means we may gain some. Christianity requires not only the having of those Duties, that we may use them now and then when there is occasion for them; but it requires that we wear them continually about us; that they be our daily Garb; and that these Virtues appear in all our Actions. So *St Peter* advises, that *we be clothed with Humility*, 1 Pet. v. 5. And *St Paul*, *Let all your things be done with Charity*, 1 Cor. xvi. 14.

4. Let us seriously consider the good Consequences of the contrary Virtue, I mean, true Love and Respect to our Neighbour, manifested by all Expressions of Christian Friendship and Civility; how it smooths Mens Tempers, calms their Passions, disposes them for receiving any good Impressions we would make upon them; how it contributes to keep up Peace and good Neighbourhood, and a Spirit of Love and Friendship a-

mong Men; than which, there is nothing more necessary towards the Happiness of the World.

And as we are thus to treat our Neighbour with all Love and Respect to his Face; for the very same Reasons we are to take Care to use the same Respect to him behind his Back; for Backbiting has a great Tendency to the Breach of this Sixth Commandment, as uncivil provoking Language. For, though it is possible these Provocations may not come so readily to our Neighbour's Knowledge; yet considering how liable they are to be aggravated by Misreports, they are perhaps the more dangerous of the two; and therefore the best Rule in this Case is, to speak no worse of any Person than we would to himself, either suppressing our Resentments, or at least, governing them in such a manner, that more Fuel may not be added to the Fire of Contention, or Opportunity given to go on to higher Degrees of Transgression of this Commandment.

So much for slight affronting Words, which our Saviour mentions as the first Ebullitions of the inward Anger. He goes on,

III. In the *Third* Place, To the higher Provocations of Contumely and Reproach: *Whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.* Our Saviour brings in this as an higher Degree of Anger and Hatred; for to suppose such Words spoken not from a Spirit of Anger, but from a Spirit of Love, to reprove a Man for his Faults, and with a Design to reform and reclaim him; it would alter the whole Nature of the thing, and excuse it from being the high Crime our Saviour here describes. Thus St Paul addresses the *Galatians*, Gal. iii. 1. *O foolish Galatians!*

*latians!* And our Saviour frequently calls the Pharisees, *Fools and Blind*, Matt. xxiii. 17, 19. The Contumelious Words then, must proceed from Anger and Hatred, to make them fall under the high Sin and Punishment in the Text. And besides, as I told you formerly, in the Explication of the Words, the Word Fool has an harsher Meaning in the *Hebrew*, than in our *English* Dialect; for there it is a Word of the greatest Reproach and Contempt, like that of *Rake-bell*, or *Hell-bound*; and from hence I gather, that this last Degree of angry Words is of the bitterest and most provoking Sort. Our Saviour having thus expressly distinguished this higher from the lesser Sort of Provocations, it is fit that we make a Stand here, and consider a little the Nature of Opprobrious Language, before we adventure upon it, being, as we see, so extremely Odious to Almighty God.

1. In all civilized Nations, this scurrilous, opprobrious Language is exploded, it is every where deservedly reckoned a Piece of ill-breeding; and nothing does more distinguish a Gentleman from a Clown (or a Gentlewoman from a common ill-bred Creature) than that the one has an inoffensive obliging Way of expressing himself, and can reprove, admonish, argue, and dispute in a genteel, civil, meek and calm Way; but the other runs out into downright Scandal and Outragiousness.

2. That the Ways of Meekness, Patience, good Humour, Cheerfulness, and Obligingness, are much more agreeable to right Reason, than those of Anger and Fierceness, may appear from hence; that when Men are in the best Temper

of Mind, when most under the Sway of Religion and Devotion, when they are most in their right Wits, when they are freest from the Intoxication of Drink, or Passion, then are they most apt to be upon their Guard against all scurrilous and opprobrious Language: On the other Hand, when is it they are most apt to give into this rude Way of Speech, but when they are least at their own Command; when drink drowns Reason, when through Heats of Anger, they forget themselves, have their Reason muddied, their Memory lost, their Passions put into a precipitate Race down Hill, that they cannot stop them; in short, when the hard-mouth'd Beast runs away with the Man, and carries him into a thousand Dangers before he is aware of them?

3. Is it not a clear Demonstration of the Unreasonableness of this Temper, that the weakest of Mankind are most apt to give into it? Children, and the undiscrctest sort of Women, will fall a wrangling for a meer Trifle, and value themselves upon saying the bitterest and most scoundrel Things, and upon having the last Word at them: Whereas the wiser and graver sort of Mankind would be ashamed to act the least Part in so shameful a Contention.

4. But it is not only the Weakness, Rudeness, and Unmannerliness of this contumelious Behaviour, that may justly expose it to wise Men; let us consider the great Danger, and the innumerable evil Consequences that inseparably attend it. It is compared in Scripture to the Lashes of a Scourge, the Wounds of a Sword, the Cutting of a sharp Razor; and indeed they all fall short (for the Smart of them) of contumelious Language.

It

It seldom fails of enflaming Mens Wrath, and of provoking them to lasting Resentments. And what dreadful Consequences these may have, it is impossible for the injurious Person himself to foresee. It often costs him his Life; it often derives down Feuds to his Posterity; it often enflames whole Countries and Kingdoms, and kindles most desperate Wars among the Citizens; and these attended with all the Cruelty, Rapine, Oppression, and Resentment imaginable.

5. Let us consider how utterly inconsistent this Temper is with the Spirit of the Christian Religion; a Religion, which is all over Mildness and Goodness; a Religion, which stops the very first Motions of Pride, Anger, and Revenge; and lays the Foundation of it's Laws in Humility, Charity, Patience, Peaceableness, Condescension, Moderation, Cheerfulness, Forgiveness of Enemies, and the like good natur'd Virtues: And on the contrary, doth, on the severest Penalties, prohibit all Malice, Envy, Wrath, Hatred, Animosity, and Ill-will in the Heart, and all Railing, Virulency, Bitterness, Slander, Reproach, and Evil-speaking in the Tongue.

6. Let us consider and observe how much these affronting, injurious Railers are detested and avoided by all Societies whatsoever. It was *Solomon's* Advice, *Prov. xxii. 24, 25. Make no Friendship with an angry Man, and with a furious Man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his Ways, and get a Snare to thy Soul.* There is no Man safe that frequents such a one's Company; and indeed, every good Christian, for the Honour of his Religion, should set a Mark on such Persons, as Persons that he should have nothing to do with.

*If*

*If any Man that is called a Brother, be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, St Paul advises us, with such a one, no not to eat, 1 Cor. v. 11.*

7. Let us consider, that foul Language is a certain Demonstration of a foul Mind within; were there Love and Charity in the Heart, such black Steams of Wrath and Hatred could never rise from it. And therefore in the Descriptions of good Men, we find one Ingredient is, a Freedom from this Vice, as *Psal. xv.* The *Psalmist* having put the Question, *Who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy Hill?* among other things, answers: *He that Backbiteth not with the Tongue, nor doth evil to his Neighbour, nor taketh up a Reproach against his Neighbour,* Psalm xv. 3.

8. *Lastly,* Let it be considered, that our Saviour makes this Vice an high Breach of the Sixth Commandment, and consequently, a great Degree of the Sin of Murder, and intimates plainly to us, that howsoever this be a Fault which often escapes the Punishment of human Judicatures, it shall be most exemplarily punished in the World to come; for having compared the Punishment of Inward Anger against our Brother, to the Punishment of the Ordinary Courts of Judicature; and the Punishment of the lesser Provocations by the Tongue, to the Punishment of the Council or greater Sanhedrim; when he comes to this, he can find the Punishment of no Court high enough for it; and therefore compares it to the Burning in the Valley of *Hinnom*; which exceeded the Punishment of all Courts whatsoever.

From

From all which we may conclude, that he that useth such opprobrious Language, is a very Fool indeed; and he that is upon his Guard against it, and abstaineth from it, is a wise Man. *A Fools Lips enter into Contention, says Solomon, and his Mouth calleth for Strokes. A Fools Mouth is his Destruction, and his Lips are the Snare of his Soul, Prov. xviii. 6, 7. He that refraineth his Tongue is Wise, Prov. x. 19. He that keepeth his Mouth keepeth his Life: but he that openeth wide his Lips, shall have Destruction, Prov. xiii. 3.* These are Solomon's Observations. His Father *David* too, takes notice of it, that the good Government of the Tongue is the Way to pass quietly through the World, and not to have one's Days cut short: *What Man is he that desireth Life, says he, and loveth many Days, that he may see good? Keep thy Tongue from Evil, and thy Lips from speaking guile, Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13.*

So much for guarding us against opprobrious, contumelious Language. But before I quit this Subject, because in divers Cases, an harsher sort of Language is countenanced by great Authorities; lest they should be drawn into common Example, it will be necessary to distinguish and separate from the common Practice, some privileged Cases, so to speak, in which it may be lawful for some sort of Persons, and upon some Occasions, to speak in Terms of greater Bluntness and Severity. Particularly,

When Parents, Masters, Magistrates, or Ministers, find that gentler Admonitions will not work upon Children, Servants, Delinquents, and obstinate Sinners, it is then not only lawful, but a Duty incumbent upon them, to rebuke with  
greater

greater Sharpness and Severity. For we find *Eli's* Gentleness to his Sons, who were guilty of great Enormities, faulted in him, and severely punished; and the Zeal of Magistrates, sharply to reprove, and severely to punish Vice, so they are not partial to one more than to another, is very commendable, and every where commended. *St Paul* directs *Timothy*, *To rebuke before all, them that Sin, that others may fear*, 1 Tim. v. 20. And writing to *Titus*; *Rebuke them sharply*, says he, *that they may be found in the Faith*, Tit. i. 13. And the Prophet *Isaiab* had Directions, *To cry aloud, and not to spare; to lift up his Voice like a Trumpet, to shew his People their Transgressions, and the House of Jacob their Sins*, Isa. lviii. 1. And accordingly, God's ancient Prophets, and *John* the Baptist, and our Saviour and his Apostles, did in Terms very sharp and biting, reprove the wicked Ages in which they lived, and more particularly some that gave very bad Examples; *Ab sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of Evil-doers, Children that are corrupters!* says the Prophet *Isaiab*, Chap. i. 4. *They are all Adulterers, an Assembly of treacherous Men; they bend their Tongues like their Bows for Lies*, says the Prophet *Jeremiab*, Chap. ix. 2. And so in many other Passages of the Prophecies. *Thy Princes are rebellious, and companions of Thieves; every one loveth Gifts, and followeth after Rewards: They judge not the Fatherless, neither doth the Cause of the Widow come before them*, Isa. i. 23. *John* the Baptist calls the Scribes and Pharisees, *a Generation of Vipers*: Our Saviour calls them *Hypocrites, an evil and adulterous Generation, painted Sepulchres, blind Guides, Fools, and Blind*,  
And

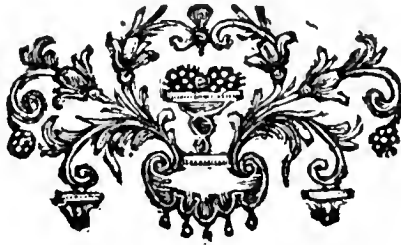


And yet certainly there is a Way to reconcile all these with the Doctrine of my Text; in which, as in all this Sermon indeed, our Saviour teacheth us the common Duties of private Christians, without entring into those of the publick Stations and Vocations of Men: the not observing of which has been the Cause of a great many Errors, especially among ignorant enthusiastick People, who consider only the sound of Words, without the Scope and Connexion. For it is owing to their not observing this, that they have condemned all publick, as well as private Revenge; all judicial, as well as customary Oaths in Discourse; and divers other things, which I have not now Time to take notice of.

Only I must add, that lest we should abuse our Authority, and think that by virtue thereof we may intermix our own irregular Passions; I observe, we are commonly exhorted to use and govern our Authority with a Spirit of Meekness, as Gal. vi. 1. *Brethren, if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness.* And 2 Tim. ii. 24. *The Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.*

But it is Time to draw to a Conclusion. For Application, I shall only say this, That I know none of our Saviour's Precepts more neglected than this is in the Practice; never were there greater Animosities; never did Men take greater Liberty in treating one another with provoking, opprobrious Language of Tongue and Pen, than in our Days; and therefore it was never more necessary to exhort you, as to this Particular, to

be upon your Guard, and to treat one another like Christian Brethren ; and to *save your selves from this untoward Generation*, in which the Spirit of Malice and Hatred has almost extinguished that of Love and Charity. Let us remember our great Master, and learn of him, *who was meek and lowly of Heart, that we may find rest to our Souls*. Now to Him, with the Father and Holy Ghost, &c.



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# S E R M O N X.

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## M A T T. V. 21.

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old Time,  
Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall  
be in danger of the Judgment.*

*Ver. 22. But I say unto you, that whosoever is  
angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall  
be in danger of the Judgment: and whosoever  
shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in dan-  
ger of the Council: but whosoever shall say, Thou  
Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.*

The Third Sermon on this Text.

**I** SHALL not trouble you with Repetition of what has been already spoke to you from these Words. After Explication of the Text, the Heads of Discourse I proposed to consider were these Six:

1. Inward Anger, which our Saviour assigns as the *first* Degree of Transgression of the *sixth* Commandment.

2. Slight affronting Words: Which he assigns as the *second* Degree of Transgression of that Commandment.

3. The higher Provocations of Contumely and Reproach; which are here assigned as the *third* Degree of Transgression of the same Commandment.

4. The

4. The gross Act of Killing, which even the *Jewish* Doctors understood to be prohibited by this Commandment ; and which we have Reason to suppose, is likewise to be interpreted according to our Saviour's Meaning in a fuller Sense.

5. The Degrees of Punishment in the other World, proportioned to the several Degrees of Sin.

6. The last was a general Instruction I gathered from the Whole, upon Observation of our Saviour's Way of interpreting this Commandment ; namely, that where any Sin is prohibited by any of God's Laws, there all Thoughts, Words, and Actions, usually occasioning the Sin, or tending towards it, are likewise prohibited.

Now having already spoke to the First, Second, and Third of these, namely, inward Anger : and both the lesser and greater verbal Provocations ; I proceed now to,

IV. The *Fourth* Thing I proposed to consider from the Words ; namely, The gross Act o *Killing*, which I suppose will be sufficient for our present Meditation. In handling this Subject, *Thou shalt not kill*, I shall,

1. *First*, Explain what is meant thereby.
2. Then offer some Considerations to deter you from it.

*First* then : It is certain, that though the Words are general, *Thou shalt not kill* ; this general Expression is to be limited according to the Intent of the Lawgiver, and not to be interpreted in the full Latitude of the Words. Particularly, I need not to tell you

1. That the killing of Birds, Beasts, Fish, and creeping Things, was not designed to be here prohibited ;

prohibited; but the Killing here mentioned, is to be restrained to Mankind; it appearing from other Passages of Holy Writ, that these other Animals were given Man to be used, many of them for Food as well as Service.

2. Nor was it the Intent of this Law, to forbid all putting of Men to Death; or totally to prohibit the use of the Sword among Christians, as the *Quakers*, and other Enthusiasts do teach: it not being our Saviour's Design in this Sermon to teach the Magistrate's Duty, but only that of private Christians. And besides, it is plain, that Capital Punishments were in use in all the Governments of the World that we read of, before the Days of the Gospel, and were never faulted by our Saviour. On the contrary, the Magistrate's Office is asserted, and that *he is not to carry the Sword in vain*; but to use it *for the Punishment of Evil-doers*, Rom. xiii. 4. Nor,

3. Was it our Saviour's Design in this Commandment, to forbid all Lawful War; it being plain from the New-Testament, that Soldiers are forbid indeed Oppression, and unlawful Plunder, and commanded to be content with their Wages; but never commanded to quit and abandon their Profession. For if it be lawful to apprehend and punish a private Malefactor, it must certainly be as lawful, not only to defend our Selves against, but to bring to condign Punishment those Publick Malefactors that disturb the Peace, and invade the Lives and Fortunes of whole Countries; which cannot be done without Soldiers, Armies, and War. Neither,

4. Was it the Design of the Legislator in this Precept, to forbid private Men the Use of the

Sword in their own lawful Defence, when they are illegally and unjustly Assaulted; for in that Case, both the Law of Nature, and the Laws of all Countries, allow a Man to defend himself; otherwise, perhaps it might be too late to wait for the publick Defence of the lawful Magistrate. Not that it is lawful to make use of this Self-defence against the Magistrate himself, or his Officers, in the Execution of the Laws; or in their Apprehending any One, to bring him to Trial; for in this Case, there will be due Time given to make our Defence in a better and more commendable Way; and therefore our Saviour reproved *Peter* for his assuming the Use of the Sword against the Officers of the lawful Magistrate; telling him, that *he who took, or assumed the Sword, should perish by the Sword*, Matt. xxvi. 52. For whenever we use the Sword in any Case, in which the Laws of God and Man give us no right to use it; this is *a taking, or assuming the Sword*; and thereby we make our selves obnoxious to be punished by the Magistrate's just Power of the Sword; which, I believe, is our Saviour's Meaning in that Commination.

Having thus mentioned the chief Things which, though they seem to be, yet were not intended to be prohibited by these Words, *Thou shalt not kill*: I shall in the next place consider what is intended to be prohibited; and instance in the chief Species in that kind.

No doubt the Chief Intent of this Precept was, to restrain Men from cutting off one another's Lives; that every Man might enjoy his Life, till it is either cut off by the Hand of God, or by God's Officer, the Publick Magistrate, for Punishment

nishment of the Sin of Murder, or some other notorious Crime. This Office of Punishment, or Vengeance, God has very justly taken out of all private Hands, and lodged it in the Publick Magistrate, who is God's Revenger, to execute his Wrath upon Evil-doers. And I know but one Case wherein, without the formal Sentence of this Magistrate or Judge, it is lawful to take away our Neighbour's Life, and that is a Case allowed by this Judge himself; namely, whenever we, or our Neighbour, are unjustly and suddenly Assaulted, that there is no Time for the Magistrate's Rescue and Assistance; if in that just Defence of our Selves or Neighbours, we should happen to kill the Aggressor, whether that Aggressor be Robber or Murderer, or publick or private Enemy, in this Case, the Laws of God and Man give every Man a Power thus far to use the Sword, to defend his own Life, Goods and Liberty, and those of his Neighbours, against the unjust Invader. Now the chief Instances of the Transgression of this Law, *Thou shalt not kill*, are these following.

1. The worst of all is *deliberate Murder*, when either by Force or Fraud we deliberately set upon our Neighbour and kill him. Nothing can justify such an Action as this is; for supposing this Neighbour had given us ever so great Provocation; suppose we judged our selves to be ever so much endangered by him; there are Laws and Judges to right us; and if there were none, we should choose rather to withdraw our selves from that Neighbourhood or Country, than flee to such a desperate, unlawful Remedy. For if this Gap were once opened, that private Revenge

were allowed instead of publick Justice, this would run the World into so great Confusion, that there would be no living in it, Mankind would be all Bears and Tygers to one another, and we should be like the Fishes of the Sea, the greater devouring the lesser. It is absolutely necessary then, for the good of Mankind, that the Lives of Men be left in God's Hands; and for private Men to offer to take them away, is an invading of his Prerogative.

2. Next to Deliberate Murder, another great Breach of this Commandment is, the being so far transported with sudden Anger upon any Provocation, as to kill our Neighbour, though we did not beforehand design it. But still, this being a Perverting of God's Design in this Law, and the Exposing the Lives of Men to all sudden Freaks and Passions, which God would have kept sacred in his own Hands; it is no doubt a very great Sin against this Commandment.

3. All Insurrections and Rebellions of Subjects against their lawful Magistrates, are Transgressions of this Commandment; and I do not see the Difference between the Murders committed in such an Insurrection, and private Murders, as to the Sin of them; but that in the private Murders there is perhaps but one Person, or a very few concerned; whereas in Insurrections and Rebellions great Numbers combine; which is so far from extenuating the Crime, that in this respect it aggravates it, by so many more as it involves in it.

4. All Unjust Use of the Sword in the Publick Magistrate, or Injustice in Jurors, or Witnesses, which Occasions the Loss of Life, falls under the  
Breach



Breach of this Law. If an innocent Person is sworn out of his Life by the Calumnies of false Witnesses; if a corrupt Jury finds an innocent Person guilty; if an unjust Judge makes use of his publick Capacity to execute his private Revenge; if a lawful Prince turns Tyrant, and makes War upon an innocent People, to deprive them of their Lives, Liberties, or Fortunes; or if an Ambitious Prince invades a peaceable Country, in order to make a Conquest of it; in all these Cases, the innocent Lives that are lost, will be charged by God Almighty to those false Witnesses, those corrupt Juries, those unjust Judges, those encroaching Tyrants, and those invading Conquerors: For they are all Breaches of this Sixth Commandment.

5. Though erroneous Judgments, which occasion the Loss of Mens Lives, are not near so Criminal, as those which are wilfully unjust; yet they cannot be exempted from being Breaches of this Commandment. Particularly, the many Persecutions which have been raised in the World upon Account of Religion, though they who raised them, might perhaps think that they did God good Service; yet certainly are so many Murders in the Sight of God, who never commanded or allowed Men to be killed for the Errors of their Understanding, if those Errors do not lead them into wicked Actions worthy of Death, as they sometimes do.

6. All high Acts of Oppression, which have a Tendency to impoverish and starve poor People, to that Degree, that they are not able to subsist or live, are Breaches of this Commandment. They who are so fordid and niggardly,

that they with-hold from Servants necessary Food and Raiment; they who by ill-usage, over-working, or over-correcting, or be-grudging the Cost, neglect to provide Help in time for the Sick under their Charge, prove accessary to the Death of others; I see not how they can excuse themselves from an Hand in this Sin. Especially this should be considered by some habitually cruel Masters and Mistresses, who, by ill-usage, break their Servants Hearts, and sometimes, by their cruel Correction, prove their actual Murderers.

7. All private Fighting, Striking, Maiming, and Wounding; in short, all Violence to our Neighbour, except what is inflicted by those who have Authority, and is designed by them either for the Amendment of the Delinquent, or as a Punishment for the Example of others; and all drunken Quarrels, and deliberate Duels, are deep in the Transgression of this Commandment.

8. *Lastly*, All unlawful Actions which occasion the Shortening of our Neighbour's Life, are reducible to the Breach of this Commandment. And therefore they who by their Talebearing, and other Aggravations of their Neighbours Faults, do so exasperate Mens Minds one against another, that Quarrels and Murders ensue; and even they who industriously promote the Practice of high Drinking, and other Irregularities and Excesses, which commonly ruin Mens Health, and hasten their Death, what they call Living Fast; had best in time consider, and amend, lest they be found guilty of what it is like they might not design, the Death of their Neighbour; for whom they pretend often the highest Friendship.

There

There is one Species of Murder I have not yet spoken of, namely, Self-Murder. The unhappy Persons who are inclinable to this Sin, flatter themselves, as if they had injured none but Themselves; and if it were so, such an irreparable Injury to Themselves, which cuts off all Opportunity of Repentance, were enough to deter all Considerate People from it. But besides all this, the Injury reaches to a great Many others; the State loses a Subject; an Husband loses a Wife, or a Wife an Husband; a Parent loses a Child, or a Child a Parent; and the Scandal of the bad Example reaches as far as the thing is known, and leaves a dreadful Stain on the Family, Society, and even Religion to which they belonged. And besides, if it injured no others, do they make nothing of the Sin against Almighty God, who hath allotted us our Stations and Business in this World, which we are not to relinquish without his leave? Shall a poor Soldier be condemned to Death for deserting the Service in which he is engaged; and shall we think to escape unpunished, when we take upon us to make an escape from all Duty; and to cut-off that Life, of which God alone is the right Owner;

So much for the first Thing, of which I proposed the Explication, what Sins are prohibited by these Words, *Thou shalt not kill.*

I proceed in the next Place, as I likewise proposed, to offer some Considerations to deter you from them.

1. *First* then, It is considerable, that this Practice of making away with our Neighbour out of private Revenge, is utterly inconsistent with all Society and Government; for if this were per-

mitted, who could be safe? Has not every Man some Enemies? If they might gratify their Revenge by the Murder of those they hate; by the same Principle, the Friends of the Murdered Person would gratifie theirs by the Murder of *Them*; and so there would be an endless Circulation of Murders; so that we should be in a worse Condition than the savagest Brute Beasts. In the mean Time, what would become of all Law and Justice, if every Man might be his own Avenger?

2. This leads us to another Consideration against Murder; and indeed, against all private Revenge; namely, that it invades the Magistrate's Office, and by so doing, opens a Door for all Disorders and Confusions among Men: The plain Tendency of it being this, that the weakest must go to Pot, and be always in the Wrong; and the strongest, if their Cause is ever so bad, must always prevail; what signifies the Magistrate's Office, if it is in the Power of every private Man to supersede it, by being his own Avenger?

3. The Crime of taking away our Neighbour's Life, is aggravated beyond all other Injuries which can be done him, insomuch as Life is more valuable than Estate. *Job ii. 4. Skin for Skin, and all that a Man hath will he give for his Life,* is true, especially in the World's Estimation, tho' it was said by so bad an Author.

4. At least, in this Respect, the taking away of a Man's Life is greater than any other Crime that can be committed against him; because this cuts off his Day of Grace, and Opportunities of Repentance; whereas other Misfortunes,  
if

if his Life be spared, may perhaps be repaired afterwards.

5. God claims a peculiar Prerogative in the Life of Man, as being a Creature made after his own Image. He designed him to be Lord of the Universe, and all the other Creatures of this lower World to be subject to *him*; and Man only to be subject to God himself; and therefore it is no wonder if God looks upon it as an Invasion of his Property, for any one to break in upon this Order, and to invade the Life of Man. And to scare Men from it, he has appointed, that even in this Life this Crime shall be punished, *Whosoever sheds Man's Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed*, Gen. ix. 6.

6. Let us consider, that there is no Sin Men naturally have a greater Horror of, than this Sin of Murder; or that gives them more Uneasiness afterwards; and that there is no Vice which Human Laws have taken more Care to remedy and prevent; nor that God's Providence has used so many strange Ways to bring to light and discover. Of all which many great Instances might be brought, but that I hasten to a Conclusion.

But before I have done, I must crave leave to offer a few short Advices by Way of Application, to caution you against any Tendency towards this Sin; And then I shall Conclude.

The gross Act of Murder it self is so odious, and Human Laws take so good Care to punish it, that I shall not need much to guard you against it, especially under that Notion of Murder. But the Enemy of Mankind has many Ways to persuade us to the same Sin, under a different

different Drefs and Disguife. And thefe are the Things which in this Exhortatory Part I intend chiefly to caution you againft.

1. *First* then, If ye would avoid the Sins prohibited in the Sixth Commandment, beware of a falfe Notion of Honour, too much in Request in the World; which reckons it a Dishonourable Thing to bear with any the leaft Affront or Injury, without that Barbarous Satisfaction of drawing our Neighbour's Blood for it. This is the moft unaccountable Practice among Chriftians that ever was heard of. For there is nothing more exprefs in the Chriftian Religion, than that we are not to avenge our Selves. There are Laws and Judges to do right between Man and Man; which is a much more equal Conftitution, than to leave every Man to right himfelf. But if we were to right our Selves, how comes this to be a proper Method to do it? Is it probable that the righteous Decifion will always be of the Side of the beft Fencer, or the ftrongeft Man, or the Fierceft Combatant? And what Satisfaction can it be to a true Chriftian, either to kill his Neighbour, or to be killed by him? Is this like a Man that believes the Doctrines of the Gofpel and a Future State, to go to Death in a revengeful or cruel Temper of Mind?

2. If ye would avoid the Sin of Murder prohibited in my Text; by all Means avoid thofe things which prove the ufual Caufes or Occafions of it; fuch as Rage, Drunkennefs, and Party Quarrels. He that gives Way to Rage and Paflion, can never be fure of avoiding Mifchief, while he is under the Influence of fo

so bad Counsellors. And for Drunkenness, it's drowning of Reason, and occasioning Quarrels; is well enough known, to guard a Wise Man against it. *Who hath Wo? says Solomon, Who hath Sorrow? Who hath Contentions? Who hath Babbling? Who hath Wounds without Cause? Who hath Redness of Eyes? They that tarry long at the Wine, they that go to seek mixed Wine.* Prov. xxiii. 29. And for Party Quarrels, doth not every Age almost produce Experiments how Mankind are divided upon that Account; and how deep those Divisions run, that most commonly they end in Bloody Wars and Rebellions? For I do not know how it is; there are a great many ill Things, which a Man would be afraid of doing alone, which yet he will boldly venture upon, when he is but one of the Crowd.

3. Whosoever would guard against Taking away of his Neighbour's Life unjustly, let him beware of a Narrowness of Soul, and a blind Zeal in Matters of Religion. It is not easie to be believed how readily an Hatred of our Neighbour creeps into our Minds, when we first take him to be an Enemy of God, by professing a false Religion. What dreadful Persecutions have been set on Foot, and how many Thousands of good Mens and Womens Lives have been taken away by this false Zeal? We know not what manner of Spirit the Spirit of the Gospel is, or else we should never set about Propagating of it by the Way of Persecution.

4. Beware of a Spirit of Cruelty and Severity to Servants and Slaves, and other poor People

People that are in your Power. There is nothing more frequently or more strongly press'd in the Christian Religion, than Love and Charity; which Virtue alone, if we were possess'd of it, would be sufficient to incline us to make all Easie and Happy that are about us. And besides, let us remember, that we have a Master in Heaven, who will call us to Account, and *with the Merciful, will shew himself merciful*, as the Psalmist says; *but with the Froward, will shew himself Froward*; that is, he will repay Men in their own Coin; Mercy to the Merciful; but the severe Usage which they unjustly dealt to others, he will in Justice repay to themselves.

5. *Lastly*, Beware of a Quarrelsome, Contentious Spirit: There is a sort of Men, who, valuing themselves upon their great Strength, usurp a Superiority over others; and so are ready upon all Occasions, to hector and provoke them; and if they are ever so little affronted or injured, or (which is all one to them) if they do but fancy that they are, think it below them to wait for Reparation in the usual Way of Law and Justice; but take upon them to be both Judges and Executioners themselves. These Hectors and Bullies are of all Men the most apt to break out in injurious Words and Actions to their Neighbours; and when their Passions are up, are of all Men, the most apt to fall into Transgressions of this Commandment; and tho' their Quarrels seem often sudden and occasional, yet considering the continual Surliness of their Temper, and their habitual Readiness for all Mischief, it is a great Question, whether this is not as sinful and dangerous



dangerous a Temper of Mind, as that of a particular forethought Malice. Let us learn so to behave our selves, as it becomes those who believe a future Judgment; and let us be Merciful, as we expect to obtain Mercy at that Day; through the Merits and Mediation of Christ Jesus. *To whom, &c.*



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# S E R M O N    X I.

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M A T T. V. 21.

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the Judgment.*

*Ver. 22. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment: and whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council: but whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.*

The Fourth Sermon on this Text.

**W**ITHOUT troubling you with Repetition of what I have formerly spoke from this Text, I shall only acquaint you, that having already considered, *First*, Inward Anger: *Secondly*, Slight Affronting Words: *Thirdly*, The higher Provocations of Contumely and Reproach: And *Fourthly*, the gross Act of Killing: I proceed now to the *Fifth* Thing I proposed to consider from the Words; namely, The Degrees of Punishment in the other World; which together with the General Observation concerning our Saviour's Way of Interpreting the Commandments, is all that remains now to be spoke to from this Text.

V. The *Fifth* Thing then I proposed to Consider from the Words is, The Degrees of Punishment

ment in the other World, proportioned to the several Degrees of Sin. In Handling of which Point, I shall observe the following plain Method.

1. I shall enquire what Foundation there is for this Doctrine from the Text.

2. I will consider some other Scripture Proofs for it.

3. I will consider what Ground there is in the Nature and Reason of the Thing for this Doctrine.

4. I will endeavour to draw some Inferences from it, for our Edification.

I. *First* then, Let us enquire what Foundation there is for this Doctrine of several Degrees of Punishments in the other World, from our Text. Where, *First*, we may observe, that our Saviour faults the short Interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees, not only as to the Sin of the Sixth Commandment; but likewise as to the Punishment of that Sin. As to the Sin, the Fault he finds with them is, that they understood nothing to be prohibited by it, but the gross Act of Murder. And as to the Punishment, That they understood no Punishment to be threatned, but that of the criminal Courts among themselves: *Whosoever shall kill, shall be liable to the Judgment.* Now both these Mistakes of theirs, he corrects in his Interpretation. *But I say unto you, &c.* For in this his Interpretation, as he assigns *three* Degrees of Sin, so he assigns likewise as many Degrees of Punishment.

Now that these Punishments do not relate to this Life, but to the Life to come, will, I think, sufficiently appear from the following Considerations.

1. From the whole Scope and Purport of this Sermon on the Mount, it is evident; our Saviour is not instructing Magistrates, but Private Christians; he is not prescribing Laws of human Policy, but directing the Conscience; *his Kingdom not being of this World.* 2. That our Saviour never took upon him either to inflict, or to prescribe Human Penalties; but thought fit to leave the Governments of the World in the full Possession of their Jurisdiction; and therefore it is no way probable that he is here prescribing the Penalties of Human Courts of Judicature. 3. It is plain from the Sins here described, they are such Sins as fall not under the Cognisance of Human Laws; the first of them being *Inward Anger*, which, till it breaks out into some outward Words or Actions, cannot be the Subject of any Rule, but of him who alone is the Searcher of Hearts. The Punishments then here assigned must all relate to the other World. And if so, there being here several Degrees of Punishments assigned, it follows plainly that there are several Degrees of Punishments in the World to come.

But then may some think, why are not we beforehand acquainted with the several Natures of those Punishments; only barely told that they are greater or lesser, according as the Sins are greater or lesser for which they are inflicted? Perhaps if we were made more sensible of the Nature of them, we should be more afraid of them, especially of those Higher, more terrible Degrees, of which we now understand so little. But for answer, what if the Things in their own Nature are so far beyond our present Comprehension, that we are no more capable of them, than Children

are capable of Understanding the Affairs and Policy of Men? But God has thought fit so to condescend to our Understandings, as to illustrate them by Comparisons with such things as fall within our Knowledge and Comprehension. As here, where the several Degrees of Punishment in the other World are illustrated by the Punishment of the Sword, and the Punishment of Stoning, and the Burning in the Valley of *Hinnom*; all which were well known to the *Jews*.

II. So much for the Foundation of this Doctrine from the Text; Let us next consider, as we proposed, some other Scripture Proofs of the same Doctrine.

(1) In general, in the Descriptions given us of the Proceedings of the great Day, we are frequently acquainted that God will reward every Man according to his Works. This the Scripture teaches us in a great Variety of Expressions, *Job xxxiv. 11.* *Elibu* says, *The Work of a Man shall be render unto him, and cause every Man to find according to his Ways.* So *Psalms lxii. ult.* *Thou renderest to every Man according to his Work.* So *Solomon, Prov. xxiv. 12.* *Doth not he that pondereth the Heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy Soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every Man according to his Works?* So the Prophet *Jeremiah xxxii. 19.* *Thine Eyes are upon all the Ways of the Sons of Men, to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings.* The New Testament goes on in the same Strain, *Matt. xvi. 27.* *The Son of Man shall come in the Glory of his Father, with his Angels; and then he shall reward every Man according to his Works.* So *St Paul,*

2 Cor. v. 10. *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* St Peter delivers the same Doctrine, 1 Pet. i. 17. *If ye call on the Father, says he, who without Respect of Persons judgeth according to every Man's Work, pass the Time of your sojourning here in Fear.* St John delivers exactly the same important Truth, Rev. xxii. 12. *Where God says, Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every Man according as his Work shall be.* Now if according to this general Doctrine, every Man is to be rewarded according to his Works; as there is a vast Difference and Variety both in the Quality and Quantity of the bad Works of wicked Men, there must likewise be a great Difference in their several Degrees of Punishments.

(2) But the Scripture doth not only give us these general Declarations, that God will reward every Man according to his Works, which yet would perhaps sufficiently prove this Doctrine of the Inequality of Rewards of both good and bad; it goes further, and is more express to the Point in this Matter: while it acquaints us, that of those Sinners which shall be punished, some shall be punished more, some less, according to the Quality of their Offences. This is plain from Luke xii. 47, 48. *Where we are told, that that Servant which knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with few Stripes.* And in general, those Persons who have enjoyed the greatest Blessings  
and

and the best Means of Grace, and yet have abused them, shall receive greater Punishment than other Sinners who had not so good Opportunities. This is the clear Purport of our Saviour's Doctrine with Relation to those Cities, where-most of his mighty Works had been wrought, *Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum*, and yet repented not: for he says expressly, *Matt. xi. 22, 24. That it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, nay even for Sodom, at the Day of Judgment, than for them.*

3. But now, *Thirdly*, let us go on, as we proposed, to consider what ground there is in the Nature and Reason of the Thing, for this Doctrine concerning the different Degrees of Punishments in the World to come.

(1) It is very plain that all wicked People are not wicked to the same Degree: But one goes on in a wicked Course many Degrees beyond another.

(2) Of those who go on to the same Degree and Pitch of Wickedness, yet the Sin is not equal in them all. For in some, perhaps it is only a Sin of Ignorance, and the Error of their Education; in others, it is studied Perverseness and Wickedness. Some have been Captains and Ringleaders in Vice, others have been but Followers and Accessories; some have been drawn in by the Violence of Temptations; others have been their own Devils and Tempters; some have sinned against powerful Means of Grace; and have acquired strong Habits and Customs of Sinning; others have not been blessed with such Means, and have gone on but fearfully in the Ways of Sin; and in all Probability would have come off, had they had the same Help and Assistance that others

had. Now it is very improbable that the righteous Judge of all the Earth will condemn all these Persons to the same Degrees of Punishments. Particularly in the Sin of Murder unrepented of (the Sin of my Text) do we think God will make no Difference between one that inwardly hated his Neighbour, but governed that Hatred so, that it neither broke out into undecent Words, or injurious Actions; and another that let it go to the Degree of actual Murder? It would be thought strange Justice here upon Earth, to bring all larger and lesser Criminals under the same Condemnation; and certainly we are to believe, that in the future State, there will be a much more exact Administration of Justice, than is administered by the best Justiciary here.

IV. So now I am come to the *Fourth* and last Thing I proposed on this Head, which is, to draw some Inferences from it for our Edification.

(1) *First* then, This Doctrine may serve to vindicate the Justice of God; which, according to the common Notions most People have of Hell Torments, must lie under some Imputations. For to think that all Persons, who fall short of Heaven, shall suffer alike in that hideous Place, is what we can never in our own Minds reconcile with the strict Rules of Justice. But if we suppose many several Degrees of God's Wrath; some lesser, for the poor ignorant Heathen, who transgressed only the Law of Nature; and others, who have not been furnished with powerful Means of Grace; and some greater, for those who have abused greater Talents; this makes Matters look with a more equitable Aspect. We know indeed so little of the future State either of Rewards or Punishments,



nishments, and are so great Strangers to the whole Oeconomy of it; that we ought by no Means to admit any hard Thoughts of God's Providence to sink into our Minds upon that Account; but to rest in this general, that *the Judge of all the Earth will certainly do right; and that he will Reward every Man according to his Works.*

(2) This Doctrine may serve to deter even wicked Men from several High Degrees of Wickedness, to which a contrary Belief might embolden them. For supposing the very worst Success of all their Endeavours after Repentance and Amendment of Life, tho' their vitious Habits are so rooted that they cannot entirely extirpate them; yet by this Doctrine their Labour is not lost; for every Abatement of Evil will meet with a suitable Abatement of Punishment in the future State; and if Men cannot become altogether so good, yet there is some Comfort in being less bad than they were: for if they go on, they may, through the Grace of God, in time obtain an entire Victory, and so be infinitely happy. At least, they will be sure to be less miserable than they would have been, had they given loose Reins to their Wickedness.

(3) Let this Doctrine put us upon the Trial and Examination of our own State; and if we are bad, let us find out what Degree of Badness we are in, that we may be able to make a right Judgment of our selves, and to build our Hopes and Fears on a right Bottom. Some Persons, who are very bad themselves, feed themselves with good Hopes to the last, only because they know, or at least fancy, that some others are a great deal worse. Sometimes this worse Opinion of others proceeds from Censoriousness and

Uncharitableness; there is nothing more common than for Men to look with a friendly and favourable Eye on their own Faults; and with a very censorious one on the Faults of others. But supposing their Judgments in this Particular to be exactly right; that is, that there are other Men and Women a great deal worse than themselves; what then? must they conclude from thence, that themselves shall go to Heaven, because they are better, at least not so bad as those others? No, all that is to be concluded from such an Observation, if it were true, is, that they shall not be condemned to an equal Degree of Torment with these others; but yet that *without Repentance we shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 5. Let us learn then to make another Use of our Observations, of the different States and Degrees of Wickedness in Men; for though some of them are so good, that we may say of them as our Saviour said of a certain Scribe, who had good Notions of his Duty; *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, Mark xii. 34. yet even these Persons, if they go no further, shall certainly fall short of it. O! what Pity it is, we may observe some Persons endued with a great many good Faculties and Abilities, with a great many obliging and commendable Morals, who yet being immersed in some one Vice or other, are held fast by the Devil; what Pity is it, I say, that they cannot go a little further, and extricate their Liberty, who are led captive by him at his Pleasure? As one Leak unstopt is sufficient to sink a Ship, though in other Respects ever so tight and well-built; so one Vice indulged, is sufficient to bring any Man to Hell, if he had ever so many other good Qualities.

Qualities. 'Tis true, it is an easy thing for such a Man to flatter himself, as being nothing near so bad as some others, who take the Scorner's Chair, and set their Mouths against Heaven, and go into the Way of Atheism, open Lewdness, and scoffing at Religion; and therefore he may be apt to think, and to think justly too, that one and the same Portion shall never be assigned them, whose Ways are so vastly different. But let him consider, that though they differ ever so much in other things, they agree in this, that they set up each of them their own Lusts, and prefer them to the Laws of Almighty God; and therefore they must both expect to be treated as his Enemies, though not in equal Degrees; but they shall each of them find Punishments exactly suited to their several Crimes, and to the several Degrees of them in the Future State.

To conclude then: If we are acted with the Spirit of Christianity, and truly believe this Doctrine of our Saviour's concerning the Punishments in the other World, and the various Degrees of them, let this influence our Fear, so as in time, knowing the Danger, we may take Warning, and *Flee from this Wrath to come.* Of all Fears, This is the most to be dreaded; what signify other Things, which end with the Death of the Body, to this, which endures to all Eternity? *With me it is a very small thing,* says St Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 2. *that I should be judged of you, or of Man's Judgment.* The great Judgment we ought to think on, and to dread, is the Judgment of Almighty God. Let the stoutest Sinners consider betimes, how *dreadful a thing it is to fall into the Hands of the living God;* and let the Sinners of a lower

Size consider, how comfortless it is, after all the Measures they keep, that they can only expect one of the best Apartments in Hell; being but *almost Christians*, and *not far from the Kingdom of Heaven*? Would it not be much better for us to *lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us*, and to run with Patience our Christian Course? Would it not be infinitely more prudent to make our *Calling and Election sure*, by sacrificing that beloved Lust, whatever it is, to our Duty to God Almighty, than to halt between two, and to be under the constant Apprehensions that Death may surprize us, before we have finished our Work? The way to make sure is, not to dwell any longer in the Confines, and about the Borders of our sinful Courses; but to go in heartily into the Ways of Holiness and Virtue, and of the two, rather to flee to the Heighth of the contrary Virtue, than even to halt in any low Degrees of it: After the Example of *Zacchæus*, who being in Danger from Covetousness, went in heartily into the other and safer Extreme, so to speak, if there can be any such thing as an Extreme in Goodness. For instead of a bare Restitution (which perhaps he could not exactly have found what it amounted to), *Lord*, says he, *half of my Goods I give to the Poor: and if I have taken any thing from any Man by false Accusation, I restore him fourfold*, Luke xix. 8. It would be a very worthy Study in all Men to imitate this Example, not only in this, but in all other Vices; I mean, to flee so far from the Approaches of such Vices, which our Calling, Inclinations, Circumstances, and Temptations lead us to; that it may appear plainly, both to ourselves and others, that we are clearly come off from the

Vices

Vices we were endangered by, and have made a good Advance in the contrary Virtues. This is what the firm Belief of a Future State, with the several Degrees of Rewards in the one, and Punishments in the other, would naturally lead us to, and settle us in the Practice of. It would make us *stedfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the Work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our Labour is not in vain in the Lord,* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

So much for the *Fifth* Thing in the Words, the Degrees of Punishment in the other World. As for the last Thing I took notice of in the Words, Our Saviour's Manner of Interpreting the Commandments; not having now Time for it, I shall leave it to another Opportunity. Now God bless what we have heard, and give us a right Understanding in all Things. God deliver us from the Wrath to come, and prepare us for his everlasting Kingdom, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord. To whom, &c.



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## S E R M O N    X I I .

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### M A T T. V. 21.

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not kill : and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the Judgment.*

*Ver. 22. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment : and whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council : but whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.*

The Fifth Sermon on this Text.

**A**FTER divers Discourses on this Text, we are now come to the last Observation I made from it ; which is a general one, concerning our Saviour's Way of Interpreting the Commandments ; namely, that where any Sin is prohibited by any of God's Laws, there all Thoughts, Words and Actions, usually occasioning the Sin, or tending towards it, are likewise prohibited. This of my Text is the first Instance of our Saviour's Interpretation of the Commandments in this comprehensive Sense, and therefore this is as proper an Occasion for handling this Observation as we can possibly meet with again.

In managing this Subject, there are these *Three* or *Four* Things I propose to myself.

I. To

1. To shew you from the Text and Context, that our Saviour interprets the Commandments in this large comprehensive Sense.

2. That this is agreeable to the Sense of the Holy Ghost in other Passages of the Scriptures, not only of the New, but likewise of the Old Testament.

3. What Reason there is that the Laws of God should be interpreted in this comprehensive Sense.

4. By what Ways and Means we may be assisted in the Regulation of our Thoughts, and in the cutting off all the other Occasions of Sin.

I. *First*, I am to shew from the Text and Context, that our Saviour interprets the Commandments in this large comprehensive Sense. This he teaches us in as direct and plain Words as can be desired; for from the whole Purport of his Discourse on this Subject it appears, that the chief Difference between his Interpretation, and that of the Scribes and Pharisees, lay in this, that they interpreted this Precept, *Thou shalt not kill*, to relate only to the external Act of Killing; but he interprets it to extend to the very Thoughts of the Heart, in which the first Motion of Anger and Hatred is entertained. And so in the next Commandment which he explains, he is not contented to require only an Abstinence from the gross Acts of Fornication and Adultery, but proceeds to condemn inward Lust, and even those Gratifications of the Senses, which serve to provoke and stir it up. So that this is not only a Truth to be gathered from his Discourse, but is the main Design and Purport of it, and ought to be regarded accordingly.

II. And

II. And that this is agreeable to the Sense of the Holy Ghost in other Passages of Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, I come now to shew in the next Place ; which I confess would be a superfluous Labour, it being the Proving of a Thing denied by no Christian, if it were not that, though granted by all, it is minded or put in Practice by so very few. And therefore it is of good Use to entertain the Mind with the frequent Meditation of such Truths, on purpose to beget a livelier Sense of them, and to cause them to make a deeper Impression on our Minds and Memories. There are Two Things then, which I shall briefly endeavour to prove from the Holy Scriptures on this Subject. *First*, That where Duty is required, or Vice forbidden, such Precepts reach the Heart and Thoughts, as well as the external Behaviour. And *Secondly*, That where any Duty is commanded, or Vice forbidden, there the necessary Means for attaining the Duty, or for avoiding the Vice, are required likewise.

1. *First* then, That God's Precepts reach the Government of the Heart and Thoughts, appears from that Sum and Substance of the Law, those two great Commandments, which require the most Intense Love to God and our Neighbour. It appears plainly from the Wording of these Commandments ; the placing the Duty in Love, and that the most intense Love, that the inner Man of the Heart is the chief Thing that God aims to govern : and that it is not only the Acting of Wickedness, but the thinking of it with Approbation and Consent, that is Sin. If a Man could externally keep the whole Law, without this inward Purity of Heart, or this inward Love



of God, it would be of little or no Value in his Sight. For as our Saviour says elsewhere, *it is what comes from the Heart that defiles the Man*, Matt. xv. 11. the Heart is the chief Seat both of Purity and Impurity.

2. But, *Secondly*, where any Duty is commanded, or Vice forbidden, there the Necessary Means for attaining the Duty, or for avoiding the Vice, are required likewise: as here, Inward Anger, and Uncivil Words, which are the usual Occasions of Murders, are expressly forbidden; and elsewhere, the pulling out of the Right-Eye, and the cutting off of the Right-Hand, which by all are owned to be figurative Expressions, signifying the Avoiding the Occasions of Sin, tho' never so near and dear to us; are commanded. I could bring a great many Proofs of Scripture for these Things; but fearing I shall not have Time for the other Things proposed; I go on,

III. In the *Third Place*, to consider what Reason there is that the Laws of God should be interpreted in this comprehensive Sense.

1. *First* then, It is but reasonable that God's Laws should be more perfect than Man's. Man's Laws are necessarily confined to outward Words and Actions, because in this State of Imperfection we cannot penetrate into Man's Thoughts, but as we guess at them from his Words and Actions; and therefore Human Laws reach no further than to Mens overt-Acts; that is, such Acts as are done before Witnesses; so that a Man may be bad enough, and yet come off clear before human Judicatures; which shews the Imperfection of the Law-Makers, and the Law too: but it is not so with the Laws of God; he sees not as Man  
sees,

fees, nor judges as Man judges ; he can follow us not only into the secretest of Places, but can see through the darkeft and most intricate of our Contrivances ; and therefore has a Right to fet Laws to our Thoughts as well as to our Words and Actions.

2. Man being a Creature endued with Reason and Choice, he has this Privilege above other Animals, that he can govern his Thoughts, which they cannot : and therefore the Thoughts of Man being a Subject capable of Government, are for that very reason capable of Law ; not of Man's Law, because above his Cognifance ; therefore of God's.

3. If we consider the Nature of Duty, the Exterieur is but the Cruft and Shell of it ; and the Interiour is the Kernel ; or, the Exterieur is but the Body, and the Interiour is the Soul of it. And therefore the lefs there is of the Heart in any Duty, of fo much the lefs Value it is in the Sight of God ; and the more Heart there is in it, fo much the more valuable it is.

4. If we consider the Difference between *Sincerity* and *Hypocrify*, we fhall find an absolute Necessity of Interpreting the Laws of God in fuch a Senfe as to reach the Thoughts of the Heart. Hypocrify is an external Acting a Part, when the Heart is no Way concerned ; but Sincerity is the Heart's joining in the Duty : and it is always joined with Freedom and Choice ; whereas the Exterieur is moved by feveral extrinfick Causes, which like fo many Machines, pull it up, tho' it has no Principle of Life in itfelf.

5. It is further to be considered, that the Government of the Heart and Thoughts, if carefully

fully performed, is a Duty which facilitates all other Duties; and if neglected, it opens a Door to all manner of Temptations, and exposes us to all Sin and Vice. *First*, I say, this Duty, if carefully performed, facilitates all other Duties. When the Heart is well replenished with good Thoughts, it is no hard Matter for the Tongue to be supplied with good Words, and for the Life to abound in good Actions; for *out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaks*, says our Saviour, *Luke vi. 45.* and, *keep thy Heart with all Diligence*, saith the wise Man, *Prov. iv. 23. for out of it are the Issues of Life.* But if the Heart is neglected, then there is an open Door left for all Temptations to enter; the Heart being the Pass, through which they must march, before they can attack or overcome the Man.

IV. So now I am come to the *Fourth* and last Thing which I proposed, namely, to consider by what Ways and Means we may be assisted in the Regulation of our Thoughts, and in cutting off the Occasions of Sin. This is a Study of the greatest Use and Importance; and therefore I hope ye will afford it the most serious Attention and Consideration. I shall digest it into a few Advices, the Benefit of which will be best known by putting them in Practice.

I. *First* then, because our Thoughts do commonly fall in with what is the main Design of the Heart and Soul, the principal Rule for the Government of the Thoughts is to set our Heart on the right Object, namely, to pursue the Favour of God; and to place our Happiness in the Enjoyment of him to all Eternity.

If this be the great Treasure we aim at, where our Treasure is, there will our Heart be also. Daily Experience confirms this Observation. If a Man's Heart is chiefly set on the World, then his Thoughts do naturally run upon Projects of *Getting*, and Methods of *Saving*, and Ways of *Improving* an Estate. Such a Man is fruitful in Invention, and dextrous in Execution of all such worldly Designs; and with the greatest Ease imaginable, he multiplies and diversifies these Things by innumerable Turnings and Windings in his own Thoughts. And all this is pleasant and natural as it were to him, because it is nothing else but the Following the bent and principal Inclination of his Heart and Soul. And so it is in Ambition; so in Amour; so in Revenge; so in every Thing a Man sets his Heart upon. His Thoughts run easily towards it, and with Pleasure and Delight are conversant about it. Thus if we had firmly fixed our ultimate Design on the serving, pleasing, and enjoying of God; if our Hearts were in Heaven, this alone would mightily contribute to the Sanctifying of our Thoughts with good Projects and Meditations, subservient and suitable to so good a Design.

2. Because like Weeds in a neglected Garden, bad Thoughts come up Rank in Idleness; let us take Care to have our Time so well employed, that we may never lie open to Temptations, for want of some Business. And therefore we are not to think that Time ill spent, which is bestowed in contriving how to spend the Rest. Idleness, as it has a great many other bad Effects, in rusting our Faculties, and enfeebling our

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our Minds, and exposing us to bad Company, so it lays us open to those Temptations, to which our corrupt Natures are most inclined. And together with this of Idleness, or as a Branch of it, it is necessary that we be cautioned against bad Company and bad Books, as being Instruments whereby our own wicked, but perhaps as yet bashful Thoughts, are ripened and improved to a greater Daringness and Confidence, and assisted to throw off all Restraints of Shame and Modesty, and Reverence for Parents and others, who would give us better Counsel and Example. And as carefully as we are to avoid the Infection of bad Company and bad Books, we are with the like Care to take the Assistance of good Company and good Books; and above all, should acquaint ourselves with the Holy Scriptures; where, whenever our Souls are in a good Temper, we may find abundance of pleasant and useful Entertainment.

3. Let us Study to be well acquainted with ourselves, especially with our most prevailing Inclinations, and to observe the usual Snares and Temptations to which we are exposed; together with the best Methods of diverting or withstanding them; for as the Enemy of Mankind fits his Temptations to the Temper and Disposition of our Mind and Circumstances, so the Way to countermine him, is to fortify ourselves against all his Contrivances, by keeping out of the Way of some Temptations; and by setting ourselves with all our Might to resist others.

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4. But in general, it is much the safest in this spiritual Warfare, not to be overbold in venturing upon Temptations ; but rather to be diffident of ourselves, and of our Firmness and good Resolutions : and therefore to keep out of the Way of Danger. The spiritual Warfare is not to be managed so much by bold Attacks, as by prudent Retreats ; not so much by Courage and Self-Confidence, as by an holy Fear and Caution ; an humble Diffidence of ourselves, and an entire Dependence on God.

5. Because a great many of the evil Thoughts to which we are exposed, are occasioned by Intemperance, which brings on many Indispositions of Body and Mind ; and unbends all our spiritual Care and Industry ; let it be a great Part of our Care and Endeavour to reduce the Body and the carnal Appetite to such Degrees of Self-denial, that it may not rebel against the Mind and Superior Faculty. I do not mean the Tormenting and Macerating the Body, but only the keeping it within the just Bounds of Temperance and Health, that it may be capable of accompanying the Soul in all good Exercises. For the Body ought to be a Servant to the Mind, not the Mind to the Body ; and should be kept under such Rules of Mortification and Self-denial, as to make it a fit Instrument to attend the Soul in the Service of God and our Neighbour.

6. Particularly it is highly necessary to keep a vigilant Watch over all the Senses, they being the usual Doors, through which bad Thoughts get into the Soul. And therefore let us decline such

such Sights of our Eyes as would raise bad Thoughts and Ideas in our Minds, and the Hearing of such Discourse with our Ears, as would corrupt our Hearts; and if our Hands or Feet offend us, that is, prove the Occasions of our Falling into any Sin, let us cut them off; that is, let us deny ourselves the Use of them upon such Occasions. In short, let all our Members be Instruments of Righteousness, and all our Senses Servants to God.

7. Because nothing exposes the Mind to more Snares and Dangers than a melancholy Despondency, which lets in the Devil with all his Temptations at once; or a ruffling Passion, which makes us lose our Presence of Mind, and lays us open to whatever Anger, Fury and Despair suggest; therefore let us make it our Business, if we would avoid bad Thoughts, to keep our Minds in an even and cheerful Temper, well fortified against all the common Provocations to Anger, and well supported against all the Troubles and Calamities of Life, which might put us out of Heart and Temper. Calmness and Cheerfulness are absolutely necessary to withstand the Temptations of the Devil, the World and the Flesh; for if once a Breach is made in the Spirit, it is like a Gap in a Fence, where every destroying Creature may enter; it being impossible to keep a good Guard against sinful Thoughts, if we let ourselves loose to any unruly Passion, or sink under an heartless, melancholy Despondency.

8. It would be a great Means to prevent bad Thoughts, if we would employ the Mind in *two* very useful Exercises, Vigilance, and Self-Examination

mination. By Vigilance, I understand the taking a View in our own Minds of those Snares and Temptations, to which we are in Danger of being exposed ; and likewise of those Opportunities and Advantages which are like to present for doing Good, in that Course and Station of Life in which we are engaged. If this Vigilance and Forecast, so to speak, were made use of every Day, nay, in every new Occurrence of the Day, we should seldom be surpris'd with any Difficulty but what we have foreseen, and armed ourselves against. I confess it is impossible exactly to foresee every Alteration of Circumstances that may happen ; yet no doubt it is very possible, from the Consideration of our present Circumstances, and the Knowledge of our own Inclinations and Dispositions, and former Lapses, to be much upon our Guard against the most usual Temptations that can befall us, so as not to be surpris'd or foil'd by them. Especially if to this Vigilance and Forecast what is to be done, we add a daily Reflection and Self-examination, what we have done, in order to the Praising God for what we have done well, and the Repenting of what is amiss, and the taking right Measures to rectify it for the Future. For by this Method, a Man becomes his own Reprover and Monitor, and from daily Experience, both of his own Good and Bad Actions, learns to improve himself for the Future.

9. It is a great Help towards the right Government of the Thoughts, to have in Readiness a Magazine of good Thoughts to flee to, whenever we are assaulted by Temptations, *e. g.* if  
we



we can then think on God's Works of Creation, Providence, Redemption, or Grace : If we are then ready with a Catalogue of God's peculiar Mercies to ourselves ; or if we can then remember the Examples of other good Men and Women we have been acquainted with ; and if we are not at such Times fit to praise God in Compositions of our own, we may make use of the Compositions of others, particularly that excellent Book of the *Psalms*, where we may find Meditations suiting all the various Tempers and Circumstances of our Minds. These we may usefully read, repeat, or sing, till we have diverted the present Indisposition or Temptation we labour under. This is like a Garrison at Hand, to which we may Retreat from a sudden Attack of the Enemy.

10. The Fixing the Intention aright, in every Thing we go about, is a good Way to sanctify our Thoughts, and from Bad or Indifferent, to make them really Good and Heavenly ; *e. g.* if in setting about any of the ordinary Actions of Life, such as Eating, Drinking, Sleeping, and the like, we should think on God, and actually propose to ourselves the Refreshment of our Bodies, that they may be so much the fitter to accompany the Soul in his Service. If in whatever we do, we should think of his Command, and do it in Obedience to *that* ; or think on whatsoever Relation it may have to his Service, and set about it under that View and Prospect.

11. The Belief and Exercise of the Divine Presence, the Actual Remembrance that God is the Witness of all, even our most Secret  
 M 3 Transactions,

Transactions, is an excellent Means to compose our Minds to a Regularity of Thought, and to a serious grave Deportment upon all Occasions. Let us learn then, with the *Psalmist*, *To set the Lord always before us*, and to behave ourselves as in his Sight and Presence, to whom nothing is a more lovely Spectacle than a good Christian, by the Assistance of his Grace combating all his own Corruptions and Temptations, and doing all the Good that possibly he can.

12. *Lastly*, The great Means of all for keeping out of Evil-Thoughts, and for supplying the Mind with good ones, is the frequent, or rather constant Addressing of ourselves to God by Prayer and Thanksgiving. All our own Endeavours are but like so many Cobwebs in Comparison of the Assistances obtained from God by Prayer. Now there is first, a sort of sudden ejaculatory Prayers, which hinder no Business, but are to be intermixed, to sanctify all our Thoughts and Actions. To these we should accustom ourselves, as being as necessary in a spiritual Life, as Breathing is in the Natural: And these, our Minds are never so out of Frame, but that we can put them up, as requiring no great Application or Study. But then there is the more Solemn Exercise of those Duties, which requires the Opportunities of a more fixed good Temper: All which Opportunities we should carefully watch, as being the Seasons for furnishing ourselves with such Supplies of Grace, as may enable us to cultivate good Thoughts on all Occasions,

Most of these Things are of that Consequence, that they deserve to have been more largely insisted on; but I was willing to have regard to your Time and Patience. Now God bless what ye have heard; and to this great God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, let us render, as is due, all Praise, Honour, and Glory for ever and ever.  
*Amen.*



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S E R.

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## S E R M O N XIII.

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M A T T. V. 23.

*Therefore if thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy Brother hath ought againſt thee;*

V. 24. *Leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy Way, firſt be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.*

The Firſt Sermon on this Text.

**I**T appears from the firſt Word, *Therefore*, that this is a Corollary or Conſequence drawn from the foregoing Doctrine of our Saviour's Explication of the Sixth Commandment. And it is no hard Matter to perceive the Dependance of the one upon the other. For if every Degree of raſh Anger is ſo very dangerous, as to incur an high Degree of Punishment in the World to come, then certainly it is yet more dangerous, to let Anger go on till it boils up to the height of Malice and Reſentment; and therefore it behoves us, laying aſide all other Buſineſs, though of ever ſo great Conſequence, if there is any Quarrel begun with our Neighbour, or any occaſion given for it, eſpecially by us, in the firſt Place to take Care to reconcile ourſelves to him,  
and

XIII. *Reparation of Injuries.* MATT. V. 23, 24. 169

and then to go on with our other Duties of Religion, and Business of Life. This I take to be the chief Scope and Purport of the Words. In speaking to them, I shall endeavour these Three Things.

1. To explain the Duty of Reconciliation with our Neighbour.

2. To consider the Rank here assigned it, being made preferable to the Offering of our Gift upon the Altar.

3. To make Application of this Doctrine towards the Rectifying the Opinions, and amending the Manners of Men.

I. *First* then, I am to explain the Duty of Reconciliation. It supposes some Antecedent Offence, or Occasion of Offence, which we are aware of; it is not expressed whether this Offence was given by us, or by our Neighbour, or whether it was occasioned by the Imprudence or Wickedness of a third Person; but whatever way it was occasioned, the Duty is enjoined upon every one of us, to endeavour to remove it; and to be reconciled to our Brother. In general then, by the Duty here enjoined, we are not, as the Way of the World is, to stand upon the Point of Honour, as they call it; which requires that the injuring Party should make the first Motion towards Reconciliation. In strict Justice indeed it ought to be so; but the more perfect Law of Charity requires both Parties to use a Readiness and Forwardness to this good Work of Reconciliation; and encourages likewise all other Persons to be good Instruments in restoring Peace and Friendship, and in making up Differences. This is the Duty in general; it includes a great many

many Particulars under it, for mollifying our Tempers, and as necessary Prerequisites for removing all Obstructions of Peace and Reconciliation. It may not be amiss, and it will help us to a more distinct Apprehension of the Duty, to mention some of the Chief of them.

1. *First* then, As to the Disposition of our Minds, we must not be of a cruel or revengeful Temper, but inclinable to pardon and forgive Injuries. I speak not of that common Pardon, which even wicked Men pretend to be willing to grant upon their Death-beds to all that have ever injured them. It is an easie thing to pardon at our Death, when we have taken full Satisfaction in our Life. But the pardoning Temper I speak of, is such a Temper as feeds not it self with any Thoughts of Revenge; but for love of Peace, is willing rather to remit something of our just Right, than to run into Quarrels and Divisions. There is nothing more opposite to this Temper than Pride, and Passion. Pride is apt to suggest, that all Thoughts of receding from any Part of our just right, are dishonourable; that it is below us to make the first Steps towards Reconciliation; and that it is a sufficient Discharge of our Duty, if when we are humbly sued to for Pardon, and all other reasonable Satisfaction is made us that we can desire, we are then willing to be reconciled. And Passion, without giving us Time to think, or deliberate what is proper to be done, hurries us into Quarrels and Contentions before we are aware: and by fresh Injuries, feeds the Quarrel, till there is no Choice left to the Adversary, but to fight it out to the last.

2. But

2. But it is not only Revenge that unfits us for Reconciliation; all Surliness and Moroseness of Temper, all Roughness and Inaccessibleness of Manners, does strangely alienate our Neighbour from us, and obstruct this good Work of Reconciliation. Christian Civility, animated by true Love and Charity, is one of the most necessary Qualifications for restoring Peace, and reconciling Differences. What can be more obliging than Charity, as it is described by St Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 7. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not, Charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up; doth not behave it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no Evil; beareth all Things, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things (for the best) endureth all Things.* This is a noble Temper, which whosoever is blest with, not only carefully abstains from making Quarrels; but is very ready to accommodate and make them up.

3. Another Qualification necessary for this Duty of Reconciliation, and of great Affinity with the former, is that of Prudence in a good Government of the Tongue; there is nothing wounds so deep, or rather there is no Weapon that doth so much rankle in the wounding, as the Tongue doth; it is like a poisoned Arrow, not only wounds, but wounds in an unfair Manner, that its Wounds are not easily healed. Whosoever would learn to be of a reconciling Temper, must abstain from all provoking Words, either to the Adversary himself, or behind his Back. The Apostle St Paul joins these two together, Tit. iii. 2. *To speak evil of no Man, and to be no Brawlers, or Quarrellers, ἀμάρτυρος εἶναι, but gentle,*  
*shewing*

*shewing all Meekness to all Men.* This right Management of the Tongue, the wise Man observes to have a special Virtue in it to overcome the hardest Tempers. *A soft Tongue*, saith he, *breaketh the Bone*, Prov. xxv. 15. and *a soft Answer turns away Wrath*, Prov. xv. 1. What was it that reconciled *Jacob* to his Brother *Esau*, who was an angry Man, and came to meet him in a very bad Temper of Mind? Was it not chiefly the mild Expressions of *Jacob*, which he put into the Mouth of his Servants? His calling him my Lord *Esau*, and calling himself his Servant, did perhaps appease his fierce Spirit, as much as the Presents he presented him with. *David's* kind Words, joined with the like kind Actions, in sparing *Saul's* Life, when he had him in his Power, did so gain upon the Spirit of that Haughty Man, that he was melted into Tears of Tenderness and Repentance; for *he lifted up his Voice and wept, and said, Is this thy Voice, my Son David?* 1 Sam. xxiv. 16. It was by kind Words that *Abigail* disarmed *David* and his Men, after he had vowed the Destruction of her Husband, and all his House. Certainly the usual Methods of railing against, misrepresenting, ridiculing, and lampooning our Adversary, are only Means to keep up Feuds; whereas good Words would quickly put an End to them.

4. In Order to Reconciliation with our Neighbour, to good Words we must add kind Actions. *First*, We are to look upon all Acts of Justice as our Adversaries Due, as well as our Friends; it is a devilish Maxim of some People, that an Enemy deserves no fair Play; and therefore they stick at nothing, so they may satisfy their Revenge by hurting



hurting him, whether by detracting from his real Worth; by withholding from him the due Praise and Reward of his good Deeds; or by raising and propagating all the Calumnies they can of him; and, in short, taking all the unjustest Methods to do him a Prejudice; whereas true Justice ought to be equal to Friend and Foe; and the one, as well as the other, ought to be praised, and rewarded according to his Merit. But then it is not bare Justice, which is due to an Adversary; if we intend to comply with this Duty of Reconciliation, we must endeavour to gain him by Acts of Love and Kindness; such as we are frequently exhorted to in the Holy Scriptures. For this I take to be the Purport of these excellent Precepts, *Exod.* xxiii. 4. *If thou meet thine Enemy's Ox, or his Ass, going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the Ass of him that hateth thee lying under his Burden, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him. If thine Enemy Hunger, feed him; if he Thirst, give him Drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap Coals of Fire upon his Head. Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good,* *Rom.* xii. 20. There are few Enemies so hard-hearted, but that they may be gained by such Methods of Kindness.

5. Towards Reconciliation, there is a notable Method laid down by our Saviour himself, *Matt.* xviii. 15. *If thy Brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his Fault between thee and him alone: — but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an Heathen Man, and a Publican.* I know there are great  
Dispute,

Disputes concerning the Meaning of that Passage; which I have not now Time to consider; but this is plain, that before we give Vent to our Repentments, by blabbing out our Complaints to others; our Saviour recommends a Method, which would consult our Neighbour's Satisfaction and Reputation, and would spare his Modesty by acquainting him, all alone by himself, what it is that offends us; for there often wants no more towards preserving a good Understanding, than that we be discreetly acquainted with the Cause of Offence; that we meet in Time, before Grudges and Jealousies have taken Root in our Heart; and with the Freedom of Friends, discourse and argue our Matters. And if this *First* Method fails, the *Second* of taking One or Two more, provided they be wisely chosen, and friendly to both the differing Parties, is usually very successful. The Assistance of their concurring Reasons, and the Discretion of their Judgment and Arbitration, is an excellent Expedient towards Reconciliation. As to the *Third*, of telling the Church; that is, as I take it, the Christian Society, or those among them to whom the Deciding or Compounding of Differences was left, he must be a strange Christian indeed, that would not submit his Differences to such an Authority. But if there was any such, our Saviour allowed him to be impleaded before the Heathen Courts; that I take to be meant by these Words, *let him be unto thee as an Heathen Man and a Publican.*

6. If we would comply with this Duty of Reconciliation, we must have a great Care not to be entangled with Party Quarrels. The Spirit of a Party is what is most opposite to Concord of any

any other Thing whatsoever. For there a Man is obliged, tho' he should happen to be satisfied in his own Particular, to espouse the whole System of Differences, which the Party has with the Rest of the World; and instead of one, to involve himself in a great many Controversies; and instead of his own Particular, to make himself a great many publick Enemies, which is the Way to propagate Quarrels to the End of the World.

7. *Lastly*, If we would be reconciled with our Adversary, let us learn carefully to abstain from all the usual Occasions of Differences; whether we regard the Matter of the Difference it self, or the Manner of managing it; for in both these, great Errors are usually committed. As to the *First*, the Matter of the Difference, there are some certain Opinions, some curious Questions of little or no Use, but to be Bones of Contention, which, through the Indiscretion of Mankind, or the Cunning of the Adversary, are usually brought upon the Stage, and set Men by the Ears. All these we should avoid like so many Wrecks, which point out to us the dangerous Shoals and Rocks, upon which Vessels have been often cast away. And together with these common Occasions of Difference, most Men have some Favourite Humour or Fancy, which they love to indulge; which, while it goes contrary to no Law of God or Man, and does no Harm to our Neighbour, it is a Piece of Moroseness and ill Nature to dispute against, or contradict, only because it is not so agreeable to our Taste and Palate. For Men are commonly very fond of their own Fancies, Humours and Conceptions, and provided they be innocent, it is not worth while

to differ with them about them ; or if we do, we should do it in a pleasant, civil Way, that will give no Offence. And this leads me to say something of the Manner too of venting our own Opinions, especially if they differ from those of other Men: namely, that it be in an humble, Modest, Courteous and Submissive Manner; not with an Air of Positiveness, Passion, Want of Respect, or Affectation of Superiority, or Ascendency: far less with Satyrical, Scornful or Reproaching Language or Behaviour. So much for the Description of this Duty of Reconciliation, or the Qualities of a reconcileable Temper.

II. The *Second* Thing I proposed, was to consider the Rank here assigned to this Duty ; where we find it expressly preferred to the Offering the Gift upon the Altar. *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there rememberst that thy Brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy Way, first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.* It is most probable that our Saviour meant this Literally concerning the Free-will Offerings which the People were taught to offer unto God ; and that he designed by this Doctrine to guard his Disciples against a current Opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees, which was, that the Gifts and Sacrifices brought to the Temple, were sufficient to expiate for all Offences which did not require Restitution, or were not to be punished by the Judge; and that without Amendment of Life. In Opposition to this dangerous Doctrine, we are here taught, that no Sacrifice or other Worship could be acceptable to God without Justice and Charity, and a Mind reconciled to our Brother.

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This is the Design of the Doctrine; but for removing the literal Difficulties in it; first, how we are to apprehend that the Reconciliation with the Brother could be so quickly dispatched, as that the Gift or Sacrifice being already brought to the Altar, yet the Offering it up could be delayed so long, till the Business was made up? In answer to this we are told, that it was customary with the *Jews*, who lived at some Distance from *Jerusalem*, to reserve their Oblations till the next Feast, at which they were obliged to attend, and then to offer them; so that in that Case they might comply with this Precept. But because the Precept speaks of the Gifts being already at the Altar, I see not how this will solve the Difficulty; and therefore I take it to be more a figurative, than literal Expression, and to be only a serious and vehement Sort of Asseveration of the Necessity of being in Charity with our Neighbour, before God will accept any of our more immediate Services to himself. And for confirming this Sense, let us consider,

1. That in several other Texts of Scripture, we are taught this same Doctrine, that the most immediate Services performed to God, without true Charity in the Heart, are utterly disregarded by him. *Solomon* says, *He that turneth away his Ear from hearing the Law, even his Prayer shall be abomination*, Prov. xxviii. 9. And our Saviour says expressly, that *if we forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will our heavenly Father forgive our Trespases*, Mat. vi. 15. And how often are we taught, that *Mercy is better than Sacrifice*? Meaning by Sacrifice all external Worship. And this my Text, the Ancients general-

ly applied to the Preparation for the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ; and they judged it absolutely necessary that we should be reconciled with our Adversaries, at least, as *St Paul* says, *Rom. xii. 18. if it be possible, and as much as lieth in us,* before we presume to receive it.

2. Let us consider, that Reason is consonant to Scripture in this Business ; not that the Duties of the Second Table are in themselves of greater Worth and Dignity than those of the first ; but that it is impossible to discharge the Duties of the first Table without Love and Charity in our Heart ; and that we cannot have Love in our Hearts to God, if we entertain Malice against our Neighbour. And besides, to what use are those Devotions ? Do we think to call in God's Assistance towards the Promotion of our malicious Designs and Purposes ? Would it not be a Thing highly Dishonourable to Almighty God, to make him a Party in any wicked, malicious Designs ? Charity then is absolutely necessary, I do not say preferable to Piety ; but as a necessary Disposition of Heart, in order to Piety. For where there is no Charity, there can be no true Piety ; and therefore the Question is not so much which is preferable, for they are Twins, that live and die together ; and that Piety which is without Charity, is nothing but rank Hypocrisie.

III. I should now proceed to what I proposed in the last Place ; namely, to make Application of this Doctrine, towards rectifying our Opinions, and mending our Manners.

But

But I must be short upon it, because of your Time.

I. *First* then, This Doctrine concerning the Necessity of Reconciliation with our Neighbour, and the Preference of it to the Works of Piety without it, may teach us the Danger of those uncharitable Sects, which, pretending to great Piety and Devotion, hate all others besides their own small Party, and condemn them as Reprobates. It is strange, there is not the smallest pitifullest Sect that starts up, but they are presently out of Charity with all the rest of the World, and limit the Spirit and Grace of God to their own Party. They may brag of their Devotion as much as they please, and pretend to be never so spiritual; we see from my Text, what sort of Spirit it is that begins and lays the Foundation, in the uncharitable Condemnation of all others. This is an old Device of the grand Adversary, to multiply Parties and Factions; and to startle poor ignorant People, as if the World had been led on in Error all along till their New Lights sprung up, to bring them out of Darkneſs. If the Design were only to rouse the World out of their Inconsideration, and to call loudly for Repentance and Amendment of Life, or to stir up People to greater Ardours of Devotion, or to call them more inwards to a good Government of their own Hearts and Thoughts, and consequently of their Words and Actions; they should not need for this to leave the Church, or cry down the Ministry and Sacraments, and all the usual Means of Grace; like a Man, who

finding the House dirty, instead of sweeping it, crys out, that there is no other Way but to set it on Fire and burn it, and then build up a new one. Such mad Reformers will never be satisfied. They think themselves the only Wise Men, and that they could govern the Church better without Pastors and Outward Ordinances, and a written Word. But though our Labours, alas! have not the Success which we desire, and might expect, if they will but go into any Country where there is no settled Ministry, and compare the Lives of the People with any other Country where there is a settled Ministry; they may quickly see the Difference. And to compleat the Comparison, let them enquire particularly among the People of any Country, whether they who wait on the Word and Sacraments, or they who turn their Backs upon them, live the best Lives; and they may quickly be convinced, that it is not the too diligent but the too negligent attending on the Ordinances, the Word and Sacraments, that occasions so great Abounding of Vice and Immorality; and so little of the true Practice of Piety.

2. This Doctrine may shew us the right Preparation of Mind for Acts of Worship and Devotion. That noble Grace of Love and Charity doth not only stir us up to all the Duties we owe to our Neighbour, but likewise qualifies us for drawing near to God in the more immediate Duties of his Worship and Service. There is nothing doth more indispose us for Prayer, than the Anger occasioned



XIII.] *Reparation of Injuries.* MATT. V. 23, 24. 181

sioned by Malice, and that Tumultuary Frame of Spirit, which Uneasy Angry Thoughts create. And therefore the Apostle St Paul, 1 Tim. ii. 8. wills, *that Men pray every where, lifting up holy Hands, without Wrath and Doubting.* The Greek Word, διαλόγισμῶ, there rendered *Doubting*, signifies most commonly, Confused Turbulent Thoughts, such as proceed from Anger, and Inward Disturbance. I am afraid the true Cause why our Minds are seldom in a good Frame and Temper for Devotion is, that we suffer them to be so disturbed and distracted with Anger, occasioned by the Provocations of Servants, Children, and others, with whom our Business lies, that they want that Sedateness and Calmness which is necessary for Devotion. And being thus very indisposed for it, we go about it without any Life or Pleasure, and so grow utterly Averse to the Duty. If we would then go about our Devotions, so as to make them either Pleasant to our selves, or acceptable to God, let us take Care to preserve an inward Calmness and Serenity of Mind, free from all ruffling Passions, and vindictive Resentments.

3. To Conclude, Let all be exhorted without delay to reconcile all Differences, if they have any with any Person, and to prevent all future Occasions of Quarrels, if we can foresee, from whence they will arise; that so preserving our Hearts and Minds in perfect Charity with all Men, we may continually be in a good Disposition, from right Principles, to discharge all Duty both to God and Man; which

will bring great Peace to our Consciences, and Quiet to our Lives in this World, and at last fit us for the Blessed and Peaceable Society of the Children of God in the World to come: Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, through the Merits and Mediation of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *To whom, &c.*



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## S E R M O N    X I V .

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### M A T T. V. 25.

*Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the Way with him : lest at any time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison.*

*V. 26. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast payed the uttermost Farthing.*

The First Sermon on this Text.

**I**T is no small Commendation of the Christian Religion, that, besides its Care of Eternity, it provides so well for the Present Peace and Happiness of Mankind ; and particularly, that it directs so many of its Precepts both for Preventing, and for Agreeing of Quarrels and Controversies. In the two preceding Verses, we heard how little God values all those religious Services, which are more immediately performed to himself, if the Heart is not at the same time clear from Malice against our Neighbour. And in the Portion of Scripture which I have now read, our Saviour presses the same Duty of Reconciliation with our Neighbour, from another sort of Arguments ; namely, from the manifold Inconveniences to ourselves, of letting Quarrels run on to

the utmost, without Endeavours of Reconciliation. *Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the Way with him, &c.* By the Word Adversary, is to be understood every one with whom we have any Difference; the Word *quickly*, implies the Danger of Delays, till this Adversary's Mind is rankled, and being past all Thoughts of Reconciliation, he thinks of Righting himself as well as he can without it. The following Words, *lest at any time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, &c.* are an Enumeration of the Chief of the evil Consequences which follow upon standing out to the last. These Consequences are enumerated in one common Instance of a Law-suit, in case we come to be legally Impleaded; but may be considered, by a Parity of Reason, in all the other evil Consequences of Quarrels neglected to be taken up; but prosecuted to the Extremity.

The Words thus explained, will direct us to these *Two Heads* of Discourse.

1. To consider the Duty here enjoined, of *Agreeing with our Adversary quickly, whilst we are in the Way with him,*

2. The evil Consequences attending the Neglect or Delay of this Duty. *Lest at any Time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, &c.*

I. *First*, We are to consider here the Duty of *Agreeing with our Adversary quickly, whilst we are in the Way with him.* But having so lately discoursed of the Duty of *Reconciliation*, from the Words of the foregoing Verse, I shall need to say the less now to the Substance of the Duty; only as it supposes us obnoxious to our Adversary, and is clothed with the Circumstance of Time,  
and

and guards us against Delays of Reconciliation, it seems necessary to afford it some particular Consideration. And in this Respect, the Words comprehend these *Two Things*; that we abandon not our Adversary's Company; and that we make use of that Opportunity to make up our Differences with him. 1. We are supposed expressly to be in our Adversary's Company; and this points to us one much neglected Part of Duty in Case of Difference with an Adversary; namely, the not absenting ourselves from his Company and Society. While we do not break off Communication by Discourse and Letters, there is still some Hopes, and there are many fair Opportunities of making up what Differences may have happened. There are certain Times when our Adversary is in a good Temper, and will patiently hear us upon the Subject of the Difference. That Subject frequently proceeds from nothing but Mistakes and Misinformations, which if they can be friendly and discreetly cleared by the Persons themselves, then the Duty of my Text is answered; and the innumerable Mischiefs which are consequent upon Divisions are prevented. And tho' it should happen that the Point in Difference, like an angry Sore in the Body, will not bear to be touched, or to be made the Subject of Discourse, there are many other Things incident in Conversation, by which an Opportunity presents of ingratiating with an Adversary, and by other good Deeds of compensating and making up for the Injury or Point of Difference between them. And tho' no such should present, by Company and Familiarity, and the common Duties of Courteousness and Civility, the Me-  
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mory of Affronts and Injuries, especially among good natured People, and much more among good Christians, is apt to wear off: whereas by excommunicating ourselves from one anothers Society, upon any Provocation, we leave the ill Humours to work, without any Antidote; and the Remedy becomes daily much more desperate. For such is the Infection of Malice, that as Poison spreads, and swells the Body; so Malice spreads itself into all the Parts of the Soul, and towres all the Thoughts with the same Leaven. It is therefore a very dangerous Practice, upon small Offences, immediately to fling away, and to abandon the Company and Conversation of an Adversary. *Solomon* observed the Danger of this in the Case of Rulers and great Men, *Eccl. x. 4.* *If the Spirit of the Ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy Place; for yielding pacifieth great Offences.* What *Solomon* advised with Relation to Rulers and great Men, our Saviour here recommends in general, that we agree and make up Friendship with our Adversary whilst we are in the Way with him.

2. As we are not to abandon the Adversary's Company if it may be allowed us; we are in the next Place to leave no Means untried with him, that may tend to Reconciliation; but to use the Opportunity, while we are in speaking and conversing Terms, to try to make up our Differences with him; this is the least that can be meant by the Precept of *Agreeing with our Adversary*; that we try all Means that are possible and lawful, to make up the Breach: as the Apostle *St Paul* expresses it elsewhere, *Rom. xii. 18.* *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably*

*peaceably with all Men.* Now how many other Duties this hearty Endeavour of agreeing with our Adversary may comprehend, is not easy to describe. But in general, they may be reduced to these *Four* or *Five*.

(1) Inward Love.

(2) Outward Expressions of Courtesy and Civility.

(3) Receding from our strict Right for Peace's Sake.

(4) Acts of Beneficence and Friendship.

(5) Prayer to God for him.

It will not be amiss to Instance in each of these.

(1) *Inward Love* ; I begin with this, as being the chief, and Foundation of all the rest. It is a Duty more earnestly pressed by the Christian Religion than ever it was by any other Institution ; and is certainly the best Expedient that ever was used, for Gaining an Adversary. The World is not insensible of this ; but having their Minds corrupted with Malice and Hatred, they cannot comply with it ; but act quite contrary to what they are convinced would be their true Interest. And to demonstrate to us that this is their Opinion, we need no more than observe how by Acts of Flattery and Hypocrisy towards their Enemies, they counterfeit true Love and Friendship. Now if the bare Dissembling of Friendship answers many wicked Mens Ends, towards the Pacifying of an Adversary, and Lulling him asleep till they can surprize him with their Revenges ; how much more would true uncounterfeited Love gain upon him towards a Reconciliation ? For if the Hypocrisy is detected, (and a  
very

very hard Matter it is to hide it) it then works the quite contrary Effects, and enflames the Enmity to a much higher Degree than ever ; a Danger which true Love is far from incurring. And at the best, Hypocrisy is but an Imitation of true Love, and therefore can never be so lively as what is real, nor so lasting. Now, what Enmity is there so obdurate, that a lasting importunate Love could not in Time overcome, at least so far as to be reconciled?

But now as the Love of our Adversary is the Foundation of this Duty of Agreeing with him ; for it is not a Counterfeit, but a real Agreement, to which we are here exhorted by our Saviour ; so I must confess it to be a Duty of the greatest Difficulty ; and therefore it will be necessary to say something to induce you to lay this Foundation, without which all other Arts and Inventions, and even Articles of Agreement, will be in vain and to no Purpose. In order then to the exciting this Love of our Adversary, 1. Let us Endeavour frequently to reflect, not so much on his Enmity to us, as on his other good Gifts, and Graces, and Talents, wherewith he is furnished, and the many worthy Actions he has performed. This is a Piece of common Justice due to an Enemy, but very rarely paid him ; for we are usually so Unjust, that if we once look upon a Man as our Enemy, tho' he be otherwise a Person of ever so good Parts, ever so Learned, Prudent, Moderate, Virtuous in all Respects, ever so good a Friend, ever so full of good Works ; we are presently so blinded to all his good Qualities, that he is neither a Man of Parts, nor Learning, nor Prudence, nor Moderation ; in short, we can see no Virtue that he is  
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Master of; but, on the contrary, greedily suck in and believe all the ill Things, either our own exasperated Minds can suggest, or malicious People can represent to us against him. Let us endeavour in the first Place, to rectify and correct our own Judgments in this particular; that we may in the Light of Truth, and not through the false Glass of Enmity, behold our Adversary's Good Qualities as well as our Friend's; and then he will appear to us to be a much more beautiful Person than to our Jaundice Eyes he has hitherto appeared. 2. Let us Consider, whether the Injuries we think he has done us, are not much aggravated by regarding them with the same unjust hostile Mind, as we did his other good Qualities. Daily Experience shews us with what a different Aspect any Action looks which is represented by a Friend, from what it doth when related by an Enemy. The very same Thing charitably construed is altogether void of Offence, which if ill taken, is reckoned a very black Action. The telling a Thing with a grave, serious Countenance, which was spoke with a jocund one; the bare Altering of the Air in Telling, does likewise alter the Sense, and often gives us bad Impressions of our Neighbour very undeservedly. And here likewise we fail in that common Justice which is due to an Adversary, that we condemn him, *ex parte*, without a Hearing, and take our Characters of him from his Enemies, who are sure to interpret every Thing in the worst Sense, and to represent it with the worst Face; whereas Justice requires that we suspend our Judgment till we have heard both Parties, and are well informed of the Action in all it's Circumstances.

cumstances. 3 But granting our Neighbour to be in the Fault, are there not many Things which may so lessen it, that it may be found to be a very pardonable one, and not such as to provoke us to withdraw our Love from him? If we consider that all Men in general are very subject to Lapses, Mistakes and Inadvertencies; that we often see and hear with other Men's Eyes and Ears; that all Men are not of the same Opinion and Judgment; and that Things are represented in a very different Light to one, from what they are to another; that Mens Notions, Principles, and Educations, are vastly different, and must be allowed for; and that if all things be weighed in a just Balance, we have many more Inducements to love our Adversary, as a Man, and a Christian, and a good Man, or one at least, that whatever he is now, may hereafter become a chosen Vessel, an eminent Instrument in God's Service; than we have to hate him, from the little Injuries he has done us. So much for Inward Love; next to it,

2. There is nothing that is more necessary towards Agreeing and making up all Differences with an Adversary, than Outward Expressions of Courtesie and Civility. I mean not that Outward Mimicking of it, which consists in Gestures and Cringes of the Body, and High, Florid, Complementing Words, which by consent are to have no Meaning; but those real Expressions of Humility and Kindness, of which the other is but the Shadow. For as Differences are exceedingly enflamed by Pride and Rudeness, so they are much diminished by Humility and Kindness. It was a prudent Advice *Rehoboam's* Old Counsellors gave

gave him with Relation to the People when they presented their Grievances, to give them good Words; for when they were Assembled in so great Numbers, and were seeking an Opportunity to shake off his Yoke, and had One with them ready to Head their Rebellion, it was no proper Time to give them that Haughty, Threatning Answer, which he afterwards gave them by the Young Mens Advice; which occasioned the Defection of *Ten* of the Twelve Tribes of *Israel* at once. As far as I can perceive from the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles, they recommended always an humble Preference of others, as the most honourable Part in Christianity, mixed with true Love and Kindness. So the Apostle St Paul, Rom. xii. 10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly Love, in honour preferring one another.* So Phil. ii. 3. *Let nothing be done through Strife, or Vain-glory, but in Lowliness of Mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.* So St Peter, 1 Pet. v. 5. *All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with Humility; for God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble.* This Doctrine they had learned of their Master, Matt. xx. 26. *Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant.* What can be more obliging, than that manner of Acting prescribed by St Paul to the Ephesians, Eph. iv. 2. *With all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love?*

3. To this Duty of Agreeing with the Adversary quickly, it is necessary that we insist not rigorously on the utmost Punctilio of Right, but that we be willing to condescend to the lowest Terms

Terms that can in Reason or Equity be desired; nay, that we should part with somewhat of our just Right for Peace's sake, rather than run the Hazard of all the Losses and Inconveniencies of a Controverſie with our Neighbour. This I take to be the Meaning of thoſe Advices of our Saviour: *When we are ſmitten on the right Cheek, to turn the other alſo; and if a Man will ſue us at Law, to take away our Coat, rather to let him have our Cloak too,* than not put an end to the Strife. The ſame Doctrin which St Paul teacheth more expreſly, 1 Cor. vi. 7. *Now therefore there is utterly a Fault among you,* ſays he, *that ye go to Law one with another: Why do ye not rather take Wrong? Why do ye not rather ſuffer your ſelves to be defrauded?* Not that he intends to condemn altogether the Practice of going to Law; but the going to Law unneceſſarily, before all Methods of Peace are tried, and even that of yielding ſomewhat of our juſt Right; eſpecially before the Unbelievers, who were in Poſſeſſion of the Tribunals of Juſtice at that Time. There is no Body who knows any thing of the vaſt Trouble, and Charge, and Loſs of Time, and Diſtraction of Mind, that attends the going to Law, but muſt be convinced that it is better to ſit down with a ſmall Loſs, than to take a Method which will expoſe us to a much greater. And therefore it cannot be ſo much any Gain we propoſe to our ſelves, when we take to that Courſe, as the Hopes of putting our Adverſary to a great deal of Vexation and Charge; a Spirit very different from that of Chriſtianity, which adviſes, *that nothing be done through Strife, or Vain-glory,* Phil. ii. 3. nothing out of Pride or Contention,

Contention, or a Spirit of Litigiousness and Contradiction; but that Peaceableness and Humility govern us on all such Occasions of Difference.

4. Another Method in our Power, and which certainly belongs to this Duty of Agreeing with our Adversary, is that of Prosecuting him with Acts of Beneficence and Friendship; the Abstaining from all Acts of Revenge, when we have it in our Power, and the Rewarding Good for Evil. It was by this Means *David* melted down *Saul* into Tears of Repentance; and thus it was that our Saviour treated one of those who apprehended him, instead of Revenging the Injury, stopping to cure him when wounded by *Peter*. This is the Advice of the wise *Solomon*, Prov. xxv. 21. *If thine Enemy be hungry, give him Bread to eat: and if he be Thirsty, give him Water to drink: for thou shalt heap Coals of Fire upon his Head, and the Lord shall reward thee.* This Heaping Coals of Fire on his Head, seems to me to be designed to melt down his hard and obdurate Temper. *St Paul* uses the same Expression, Rom. xii. 20. and seems to me to explain it in the Words immediately following; while he adds, *Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good:* Intimating plainly, that Acts of Kindness and Beneficence, and doing Good to our Enemies, are the best Way to overcome him, and to make him our Friend; which is the very Advice in the Text, of Agreeing, or being Friends with our Adversary.

5. The last Thing I mentioned as in our Power towards agreeing with our Adversary is, *The Praying to God for him.* This is enjoined by our Saviour among the other Duties we owe

to our Enemy, in that famous Passage, *Matt. v. 44.* which has, I think, all the particular Methods I have been recommending towards this Duty of Agreeing with our Adversary: *But I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.* For this we have our Saviour's own Practice as well as his Precept: For he prayed for his very Crucifiers and Murderers, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,* Luke xxiii. 34. And this was St Stephen the first Martyr's Prayer too, for his Enemies and Murderers: *Lord, lay not this Sin to their Charge,* Acts vii. 60. But some may think perhaps, there is no doubt, this praying for Enemies is a Duty, being enjoined so expressly by the Precept, and recommended by the Example of our Lord; but how comes it to belong to this Duty of Agreeing with our Adversary? There was no Agreement between our Saviour and his Adversaries, nor between St Stephen and his Adversaries, but they were each of them persecuted to Death, notwithstanding their Prayers in behalf of their Enemies. I shall answer this Doubt, and then conclude. 1. *First* then, We are not to imagine, that by the Duty of *Agreeing with our Adversary* in the Text, can be meant an actual Reconciliation of both Parties on any the most unreasonable Terms. No more can be required of us, than that we do our Part, *Εἰ δυνατὸν, & τὸ ἐξ ὑμῶν, if it be possible, and as far as lieth in you,* Rom. xii. 18. is the Apostle's Limitation of this Duty. Now, though we do all the other Things mentioned towards Agreement, though we inwardly love our Adversary, and give him good Words, and do him

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Good Deeds, and remit of our just Right, except we follow all these Means of Reconciliation with our Prayers to Almighty God, we cannot expect that they will prove Successful. This is the first Answer to the Objection. 2. A *Second* is, That supposing Actual Agreement and Reconciliation to be here meant, Prayer to God for our Enemies is a proper Means to bring to pass the Adversary's Part of the Agreement, as well as our own: *First*, The Adversary's; because Prayer for Enemies is a Thing very pleasing to God; and it is said, *When a Man's Ways please the Lord, he makes even his Enemies to be at Peace with him*, Prov. xvi. 7. And further, the Hearts of all Men are in the Hands of the Lord, even the Hearts of Kings; and he turneth them as the Rivulets of Water, which Way he pleases. The Heart of the Enemy then being in God's Hand, what more proper Way to turn it to us, than by flying to the Efficacy of Prayer; which as it is effectual to every good Purpose, so particularly to this of finding favour at the Hands of Enemies; as it is observed by the *Psalmist*, Psal. cvi. 44 and 46 Verses compared together. *Nevertheless he regarded their Affliction when he heard their cry. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them Captives.* So that Prayer is a proper Means to bring the Adversary to Agreement. And it is no less proper to keep our selves in a good Temper for all those other Duties I mentioned as necessary for this Duty of Agreement with the Adversary. It is only by drawing near to God, and keeping our selves in his Love, that we can be so well affected to our Adversary, as to be always in a good Disposition of Mind, and always

using the proper endeavours to be reconciled with our Adversaries. Particularly, there is one Clause of that excellent Prayer which is proposed to us as the Pattern of our Devotions, which teaches us, and puts us in Mind, that we are to expect Forgiveness of our Sins on no other Terms, than as we forgive Men their Trespasles; and therefore praying for Enemies, and particularly that God would forgive them, is a necessary Part of our own Agreement with them. So much for the Duty of *Agreeing with our Adversary quickly, whilst we are in the Way with him.* As for the Consequences of neglecting or delaying this Duty, for want of Time, I must leave them to another Opportunity.

*Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c.*





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## S E R M O N XV.

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### M A T T. V. 25.

*Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the Way with him: lest at any time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison.*

Ver. 26. *Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.*

#### The Second Sermon on this Text.

**I**N my last Discourse on these Words, there were *Two Things* I observed, as contained in them.

1. The Duty here enjoined, of *Agreeing with the Adversary quickly, whilst we are in the Way with him.*

2. The Evil Consequences attending the Neglect or Delay of this Duty; *lest at any Time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no Means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.*

Now having at that Time spoke to the *First* of these, the Duty of *Agreeing with the Adversary*

*whilst we are in the Way*, that is, while we are in speaking and conversing Terms with him; I proceed now to the *Second*, namely, the evil Consequences attending the Neglect or Delay of this Duty; the Adversary's Mind growing more and more exasperated, and he suing us at Law with all the Trouble and Loss attending the Suit, and the Execution of it. And here, as I told you, tho' the Consequences mentioned are enumerated but in one common Instance of a Law Suit, in case we come to be legally impleaded; they may, by a Parity of Reason, be considered in all the other Instances of Quarrels neglected to be made up, but prosecuted to the Extremity: nay further, many Interpreters are of Opinion, that in this Passage, our Saviour had a farther Regard than to these common Controversies before earthly Judges; namely, that he had Respect too, to the Decision of Quarrels before the great Judge of Heaven and Earth, teaching us, that if we do not take Care to make Peace with our Adversary, while we are in the Way with him, that is, while this Life lasts; we shall be cast by that great Judge, and thrown into Hell, from whence there will be no Redemption: And I must think there is great Probability for this Interpretation likewise, both from our Saviour's general Custom of Raising the Mind from things Temporal to things Eternal; and from his Affirmation here, that there is no escaping out of the Prison, till we have paid the uttermost Farthing; which tho' often true of the Prisons of this World, after we have given a great deal of Trouble to our Creditors; yet is more literally true of Hell, the Infernal Prison, from which it was very proper for our Saviour to assure

us with an Affeuration, that there will be no Redemption. And tho' to keep to the Decorum of the Parable or Similitude, he added these Words, *till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing*; we are not to imagine from thence, that ever we shall be able to escape; the Debt being so immense, and we having nothing to pay withal, and the Day of Grace and Redemption being then over; so that it is all one as if he had said, ye shall never get out from thence; only that Expression would not have so well fitted both the Earthly and Infernal Prison, as this of our Saviour's doth.

The Words then being thus explained, there are these three Sorts of evil Consequences will be proper to be considered from them.

1. The evil Consequences in this World of letting Differences run on so far as to come to the Extremity of the Law.

2. The other evil Consequences in this World likewise, of other Quarrels beside Law-Suits, which, by a Parity of Reason, fall under the Consideration of this Advice of Agreeing with the Adversary.

3. The evil Consequences in the great Day of Judgment, of neglecting or delaying to make our Peace with our Adversary.

I. The evil Consequences in this World of letting Differences run on so far, as to come to the Extremity of the Law. Those evil Consequences are so many, that both the Doctrine of our Saviour, *Matt. v. 40.* and of the Apostle *St Paul, 1 Cor. vi. 7.* by some are thought to forbid going to Law altogether. But this will be found to be a Mistake; it is not the going to Law, but the going to Law for slight Causes, and without trying the previous Methods for Peace

and Accommodation, which are discountenanced and forbid by them both. To make us sensible of the Inconveniencies of Controversy and Disagreement, our Saviour here sums up the Trouble and Charge that will most probably attend it; and that in these three Dangers. 1. In the Danger of the Adversary's prosecuting his Suit before the Judge. 2. In the Danger of the Judge's passing Sentence against us, and committing it to the Officers of the Court to be executed. 3. In the Danger of our not having wherewithal to satisfy the Debt, and therefore that the Officer will cast us into Prison, and not dismiss us from thence, till we have paid both the Debt and the whole Bill of Costs; whereas in the Beginning we might have come off much cheaper. I shall consider them briefly in the same Order in which they are mentioned in the Text.

1. *First* then, we have here the Danger of the Adversary's prosecuting his Suit before the Judge. *Lest at any Time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge.* This prosecuting of the Suit before the Judge, is attended with a mighty deal of Trouble and Charge, notwithstanding all the Care human Laws have taken to shorten Suits, and to cut off unnecessary Forms. For under this Head come in the Consultations and Pleadings of Lawyers; the Citation and Examination of Witnesses; the Attendance on Courts and Juries; the Information and Perswasion of Judges; all which distract the Minds, empty the Purfes, and spend the Time of the Clients to that degree, that commonly Peace had better be bought at any tolerable Rate, without going to Law, than even Victory so dear bought with it.

2. We have here the Danger of the Judge's passing Sentence against us, and committing it to the Officer of the Court to be executed. As to the Judge's passing Sentence; it is here brought in as another Hazard the Client runs, by not agreeing quickly with his Adversary. The first Hazard is, that the Adversary's Mind being exasperated by Delays, he will at some Time or other sue us at Law; and if he does, all these other things I just now mentioned of Lawyers, Witnesses, Juries, Loss of Time, Distraction of Mind, Neglect of our other Affairs, and a great Expence of Money, are not casual, but in a manner necessary Consequences of putting the Controversie out of the Method of private Agreement and Accommodation, into that of a Suit at Law. And this alone, tho' he should not be cast, has proved so grievous and burthensome, that many a Man has failed under it, as not being able to go through with the Charge and Delays of the Suit. But now, supposing all this to be got over, my Text leads me to the Consideration of another Hazard by the Delay of Agreement, namely the Hazard of being cast by the Judge, and being committed to the Sheriff, or whatsoever other Officer of the Court, to be kept in his Custody till Satisfaction be made to the Sentence that he has pronounced: *Lest the Judge deliver thee to the Officer.* Some perhaps may wonder, that the Sentence of the Judge, which ought to be directed by the certain Rules of Law and Equity, should be reckoned here among the Casualties. But there is nothing in this Doubt; it is only supposed that the Person, who would not agree quickly; may perhaps be impleaded and cast; he may indeed in the Beginning, and whole Course

Course of the Controversie, think himself in the right, till his Adversary discovering the Defects of his Cause, the Judge is of an Opinion different from his, and gives the Cause against him. But to give all the Advantage that may be to this Person, who is stiff, and averse from Agreement, let us suppose he has a very good Colour of Law or Equity for his Cause; yet taking human Judicatures as commonly they are, that is, weak and imperfect, and not skilful enough to search out the Depths of Causes, and to extricate all the Difficulties and Meanders of Errors; to say nothing now of Partial, Byassed, and Corrupt Judges, either through Bribery, or an Impetuosity of Passion; upon all these Accounts, and especially considering that all Men are fallible; it must be confessed that there is a great deal of Hazard that even a righteous Cause undergoes, by being submitted to the Sentence of the Judge or Judges of any Court. For often the Laws are so intricate or defective, that it is no easy Matter for every well-meaning Judge to find out their true Sense, or to adapt them to the Case in Hand; then for want of Proof, it may often happen that a just Cause may suffer; either there are no Witnesses to the Facts, or they may be dead, or not to be found; or Writings and Papers may be lost; or if they be Facts of Old Standing, perhaps the Witnesses cannot recollect and call them to Memory; besides, if a good Cause should happen to be ill pleaded; or if the Judges or Juries, through their own Unskilfulness, or Misapprehension, should mistake the Matter; all which Cases do frequently happen; then it is very possible, even for a  
righteous

righteous Cause to run the Hazard of a Lottery, and to meet with a wrong Decision.

3. Here is another Hazard, which may likewise frequently happen; namely, That when the Person is cast, he has not Estate enough to pay the Debt, nor can find Bail, and so must go to Prison, and remain there till he has made Satisfaction to the utmost. *Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.* This last Expression, is a Description of the miserable Case of those Persons, upon whose Bodies Execution is served, (having no Estate to answer) after they have tired out the Adverse Party with all the Trouble and Charge of a Law-Suit. They are commonly kept in Prison till they have not only satisfied the principal Debt, but all the Charges and Fees both of the Court and Goal. So much for the First Sort of evil Consequences here mentioned, of letting Differences run on so far as to come to the Extremity of the Law.

II. Now to go on to what I proposed to consider in the *Second* Place; the other evil Consequences of Quarrels besides Law-Suits, which, by a Parity of Reason, fall under the Consideration of this Text. For the Consideration of *Them*, is a good Motive to induce us to agree with our Adversary quickly. It is not only Law-Suits then which are attended with evil Consequences: All other Contentions are subject in that respect to very great Inconveniencies; all other Contentions, I say, whether they be secret Murmurings and Backbitings, or Open Scolding and Railing, or the Pen and Ink Wars, either between Parties or particular Persons; or  
open

open bloody Wars, either of the Inhabitants of one Country among themselves, such as we call *Civil Wars*; or of Prince against Prince, and Nation against Nation. Could we have a lively Apprehension of the pernicious Consequences of all these, we should readily be induced to use our utmost Endeavours after Peace in Time, before Matters come to Extremity. For were they subject to no other Inconveniency but the Loss of Peace and good Neighbourhood, who can enumerate all the Mischiefs which attend the Want of those? For to begin at the Lowest: When Malice is once set to work, and evil Tongues begin to kindle the Fire of Contention, it does almost as much Mischief, and is as hard to be put out, as material Fire when it catches in our Houses. It is St *James's* Comparison, Chap. iii. 5, 6. *Behold, says he, how great a Matter a little Fire kindleth: and the Tongue is a Fire, a World of Iniquity: so is the Tongue amongst our Members, that it defileth the whole Body, and setteth on fire the Course of Nature, and it is set on fire of Hell.* How could the evil Consequences of Contentions be more lively described? And if they are so bad when they are only Tongue Wars, which perhaps keep within some Bounds of Decency and Modesty, what must they be, when they break out into open Ruptures of Sword and Pen? They are then like great Land Floods, which break over all their Banks, and destroy Corn, Houses, Cattle, and every Thing that comes in their Way. And therefore there can be no better Advice than that of *Solomon*, Prov. xvii. 14. *The beginning of Strife is as when one letteth out Water;*



XV.] *with the Adversary.* MATT. V. 25, 26. 205  
*ter ; therefore leave off Contention before is be med-  
dled with.*

III. And so I am come now in the last Place, to the *Third* Thing I mentioned from the Words ; namely, The evil Consequences in the great Day of Judgment, of neglecting or delaying to make our Peace with our Adversaries. This is a Doctrine of extraordinary Use and Importance ; and may put us in Mind of some Truths very necessary to be timely considered. Namely, The Certainty of a future more exact Judgment, in which Right shall be done to every one : And the Terror of the Punishments of Delinquents, in Consequence of that Judgment described here, by their being thrown into the Infernal Prison ; for no Surety will then be accepted ; and by the Security and Perpetuity of that Prison, for there is no breaking it ; nor no Removal out of it by *habeas Corpus* ; and no Compounding the Debt ; which by that Time is risen to such an immense Sum, that there is no hope we can ever pay it. It is highly probable our Saviour had an Eye to these Things in the Text ; for he describes here a Judge exactly doing right ; and to what Judge can this be so applicable, as to the Righteous Judge of all the Earth ? The Business of the Officer or Goaler too, here described, is a very proper Account of the Service which God will require of the Devils, the Keepers of the Infernal Prison. It is a great Mistake to think, that that Place of Torments shall be entirely given up to Them, to punish Malefactors at their Pleasure ; it is a much more rational Account of the Matter which is given here in the Text, that as Officers and Goal-keepers do nothing in the Confinement or Punishments of De-  
linquents

linquents but by Order of the Judge and the Laws; so the whole Business that the Devils are to do in Hell, is appointed them by the great Judge, whose Officers and Executioners they are, as to the Business of Punishments; as he has other Officers, the holy Angels, to execute his Commands in the more delightful Part of his Justice, the Rewarding of such as do well. The Prison too, here mentioned, seems to be a proper Description of Hell; and especially our Saviour's Assuring us with an Affeuration, that there shall be no Mercy shewn there, no Compounding for the Debt, no Abatement of any of the Dues, makes it very probable that this was the Chief Thing he had an Eye to, the Judgment of the Other World; for it is no unusual Thing in this World, to make Abatements and Compositions with Poor Debtors, and to let them get out of Prison, by paying a Part, when they have not wherewithal to discharge the whole Debt. There is one Word indeed put in the End, because our Saviour observes an exact Decorum in all his Similitudes, which would seem to intimate, that upon paying the whole Sum, the Prisoner may be released at last. *Thou shalt by no Means, says he, come out thence, 'till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.* But if we consider the Scope and Purport of the Discourse, we may observe the Simile runs quite another Way; for the Allusion is made to a Debtor that had neglected and abused the Patience of his Creditor, of whom he might have had good Terms in Time, had he been careful to embrace them. But instead of that, he provokes him to the highest Degree imaginable; and will do nothing but as he is compelled by the Extremity of the

the Law. This Debtor is represented as one that had not wherewithal to satisfy the Debt himself, and one that could find no Bail, and therefore was forced to go to Prison; our Saviour assures us, the Creditor was so irritated with this ill Usage, that he would have no Mercy on him; would not abate him one Farthing of the Sum. Now then, what is there to answer this Part of the Similitude? truly this, that when the poor Wretch, who was much in his Neighbour's Debt, and took no Care to satisfy him in this Life, comes to be condemned by the great Judge of all the Earth, and to be thrown into the Prison of Hell, without Effects, and without Friends to do any thing for him; there he must lie till the whole Reckoning is Discharged, which never will be discharged; for it is not the Lying there that discharges any thing. For this Particle *Till*, doth not always denote a limited Time, but is used often to Things that have no end, as 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. *The Wrath of the Lord arose against the People, till there was no Remedy.* So Job xxvii. 5. *Till I die, I will not remove my Integrity from me.* And Isa. xxii. 14. *Surely this Iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord of Hosts.* So Matt. i. 25. *Joseph took to him his Wife, (the Virgin Mary) and knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born Son; though he never knew her at all; but she remained a perpetual Virgin.* So in this same Chapter: *Till Heaven and Earth pass away, one jot or Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law.* So 1 Cor. xv. 25. *He must reign till he hath put all Enemies under his Feet.* The whole Text then having an Aspect this Way, we may learn from it, not only that there shall be a most exact,

righteous

righteous Judgment, which shall pass upon all Men, but particularly (which is home to the Point here treated of) that Severe Vengeance shall be taken of them who wrong their Neighbours in this Life, and neglect to make Reparation, and to reconcile themselves to them. These their injured Neighbours, by not avenging themselves, but committing the Cause to God, may be justly said *to deliver their Adversary into the Hand of the Judge*. And the Terror of what follows here, is a lively Description of the Punishment in the future State, which shall be inflicted on such obstinate, malicious Persons, as refuse to be reconciled with their Neighbour in this World. They shall have nothing wherewithal to make Satisfaction in the World to come; there is none then will be Bail or Surety for them; they shall be personally thrown into Prison; the Time of Accommodation with the Adversary will then be over, and no further Offers of that kind shall then be made them; the Debt, as all other, the longer it is unsatisfied, is still growing bigger and bigger, so that at last it rises to such a prodigious Sum, that the Debtor shall never be able to discharge it, and therefore can never expect to be released from that dismal Place.

Let this Doctrine teach us, in the first Place, to abstain carefully from doing any Injury to our Neighbour, that we may not at all run in his Debt: And in the next Place, Let it teach us to be Careful to make our Peace with him in Time, at least, when we are both in the Way, that is, while we are both alive, in this World; for if the Debt remains unsatisfied till he puts it into the Hands of the Eternal Judge, we see how it

it will be then too late, and how our Misery will be then irretrievable.

And what is here said of the Debts to our Neighbour, might, by a Parity of Reason, be applied to all Sins whatsoever, being Debts to Almighty God; which if neglected to be made up in Time, will have the same fatal Consequences; and therefore there can be no wholesomer Advice given to Men, than to make their Peace with God while the Day of Grace lasts, when he is willing to treat with them in a friendly and amicable Manner; for if they put off their Repentance, and Reconciliation with him, till the final Satisfaction by the Judgment of the great Day, it will be then too late, and all those dreadful Consequences will follow, which we have been describing. Consider therefore in this your Day the Things which belong to your everlasting Peace, before the Time come, that they be hid from your Eyes. I shall conclude with an excellent Advice of the Evangelical Prophet *Ishaiab*, Chap. lv. 6, 7. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly Pardon.* Now to this great God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, let us render, as is due, all Praise, Honour and Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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## S E R M O N XVI.

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M A T T. V. 27.

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,  
Thou shalt not commit Adultery.*

*Ver. 28. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a Woman to Lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his Heart.*

The First Sermon on this Text.

**O**UR Saviour goes on here in the same Subject which he had been treating of from the twentieth Verse of this Chapter, namely, in shewing how we Christians must carry Moral Duties to an higher Perfection than the strictest Doctors and Interpreters of the Law among the *Jews*, the Scribes and Pharisees, carried them; if we intend to have any share in his Kingdom. He had instanced in the *Sixth* Commandment, directing the Government of our Passion; and shewed both what Interpretation those Doctors had put upon it, and what higher Degree of Duty he required. He proceeds now in the same manner to give another Instance of the same Truth in the *Seventh* Commandment, for governing Lust; which it seems those Jewish Doctors had interpreted as forbidding only the gross Acts of Uncleanness: *Ye have heard*, says he; “that is, Ye have been taught by your Doctors,

“ tors, that it was enjoined to them of old time in  
 “ the Law of *Moses*, That they should not commit  
 “ *Adultery*; and provided Men govern themselves  
 “ as to the external Acts of the Sins of Unclean-  
 “ ness, these Doctors mind not any further Trans-  
 “ gressions of this Commandment; but I say un-  
 “ to you, whosoever either outwardly looks on a  
 “ Woman with a lustful Eye, or inwardly contem-  
 “ plates her in his Mind with a lustful Heart, he  
 “ is already guilty of the Breach of the Seventh  
 “ Commandment with her.” This I take to be  
 the genuine Sense of the Words. But for our  
 more distinct Apprehension of it, I shall particu-  
 larly enquire into these two Things, which are  
 plainly contained in the Text.

1. What was the Opinion of the Jewish Doctors concerning the Sin or Sins prohibited in this Seventh Commandment?

2. What further Improvement our Saviour has made in the Interpretation of this Commandment?

I. What was the Opinion of the Jewish Doctors concerning the Sin or Sins prohibited in this Seventh Commandment?

It must be confessed that the Original Word *μοιχεύω*, signifies commonly to commit *Adultery*: But sometimes it is used in a larger Acceptation, for Whoredom in general; so as to comprehend both Fornication and Adultery, and all the other more abominable Species of Actual Uncleanness, such as Incest, Sodomy, and the like; at least by a *Synecdoche* the chief Species is put for the whole Kind; and I am apt to think in this Place it is to be taken in this larger Sense; both because it is very plain that all these were expressly forbidden in the Law of *Moses*; and there-

fore not likely that the Jewish Doctors would limit the Transgressions of this Commandment to the sole Sin of Adultery; and because we find some of the Jewish Doctors (a) interpreting it in this wider Sense; And if they had limited it to the narrower Sense of Adultery, 'tis probable our Saviour would have corrected this their Mistake; whereas the only thing he faults in their Doctrine concerning this Commandment is, that they contented themselves with prohibiting the gross external Acts of Uncleanness, but let pass the inward Lustings and Uncleanness of the Heart.

II. This brings me to the next Thing I proposed to consider, namely, what further Improvement our Saviour has made in the Interpretation of this Commandment? *But I say unto you*, says he, *that whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, (b) hath debauched her already in his Heart.* For so I think the Words should be rendred, agreeably to the large Notion of the Word *μοιχέω*, in which I just now shewed you it ought to be taken. For finding out our Saviour's Meaning then in this Improvement, we are to consider and explain these two Things:

1. What is meant by *looking upon a Woman to lust after her*?
2. Why this lustful Look should be interpreted *the Debauching her in the Heart*?

1. *First*, We are to consider what is the Meaning of this *looking on a Woman to lust after her*. As to the Act of Looking it is worth observing, that the Original Word *βλέπω* is used not only for beholding with the Eyes of the Body, but for mind-

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(a) *Aben Ezra.* (b) *Stupravit eam. Eras.*



ing, regarding, and considering with the Eye of the Mind; as *Matt. xxii. 16. Thou regardest not the Person of Men.* It is the same Original Word which we translate here *looking upon.* So *Matt. xiv. 13. Therefore I speak to them in Parables, because they seeing, see not,* i. e. though they see with their Bodily Eyes, they see not with the Eye of the Mind; they do not consider nor understand. And *1 Cor. i. 26. Ye see your Calling Brethren, how that not many Wise Men after the Flesh are called:* Ye see, i. e. ye observe your Calling. And in the beginning of this same Chapter, what we translate *Seeing the Multitudes,* might be as well translated *Looking upon,* or *Considering the Multitudes;* for it was really the Consideration of their Circumstances, that gave Occasion to this excellent Sermon. And I observe our Saviour uses these Words of *Bebolding,* or *Looking upon,* and *Considering* promiscuously, as what is in one Place, *Matt. vi. 26. Behold the Fowls of the Air,* is presently afterwards *Consider the Lilies of the Field.* But now for the Sense of the Word here translated *to look upon;* I think it will very conveniently in this, as in many other Places, bear both these Senses, both the looking upon a Woman with the Eyes of the Body, and considering her with the Eye of the Mind; for both of them may be to *lust after her;* and when they are so, no doubt they are both a Debauching her in the Heart. The Lustling after a particular Object when present and under our Eye, is the looking on a Woman with our bodily Eyes to lust after her; but the Lustling after an Object that is absent, and only represented to the Memory, Fancy, or Imagination, is the Looking on a Woman too, but with the Eye of the

Mind, to Lust after her. And now that the lustful Look in both these Senses is the Debauching her in the Heart, and is very deservedly by our Saviour brought under the Breach of the *Seventh* Commandment, is what I am to shew in the next Place.

2. Our Saviour says, *Whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath Debauched her already in his Heart*, i. e. as to his part of the Sin; For it is the Consent of the Heart that makes the Sin before God, and nothing else. For if we will suppose any Person invincibly chaste in Heart, overpowered with the mere Strength and Brutality of a Ravisher, and so suffering a part in the external gross Act, there is no doubt in the Sight of God, such a Person would be cleared from the Sin of Whoredom. The Sin then being seated properly in the Heart, we are to consider which way the Heart is prevailed upon to assent to it; and we shall find it is chiefly by this double Sort of Looking, with the Eye of the Body, and the Eye of the Mind. First, I say, Looking with the Eye of the Body; this is the Way the Sensation and Idea of the Object Men lust after, comes to get Entrance into their Hearts, and is the common Original of all the sinful Motions that follow. But because the bare bodily Looking is not always sinful in itself, but according to the Aim or Design of it, may be Good, Bad, or Indifferent; therefore to determine plainly what sort of Looking on a Woman is Sinful, our Saviour has decided it here in a Word, that it is *the Looking on a Woman to Lust after her*, that is, either in order to feed Lust; or at least till Lust is kindled; for it is possible that the first Look might proceed from  
Chance,

Chance, or Curiosity, which if continued, might end in Lust. And therefore we may define these sinful Looks to be either when they are with an exprefs Design to feed Lust; to excite or foment sinful Desires, or when begun upon another Account, they determine in that, and are turned to that Use at last. So it is reported in the Apocryphal History of (a) *Susannah*, that the two wicked Elders *commanded to uncover Susannah's Face, that they might be filled with her Beauty*. This is commonly given as the first Occasion or Original of these sorts of Sins. So it is said, *Gen. xxxix. 7.* that his Master's Wife *cast her Eyes upon Joseph*, and then proceeded to tempt him to Adultery. Now it is certain she was guilty of the Sin so soon as she looked upon him with this Adulterous Eye. Nay, we find this Wantonness of the Eyes condemned, when they are only in general casting their impure Glances, before they come to fix on any particular Object. Thus the Jewish Ladies are censured, *Jf. iii. 16.* *As walking with stretched forth Necks and wanton Eyes*. And thus St Peter describes some Seducers in his Days, *2 Pet. ii. 14.* *as having Eyes full of Adultery, and that cannot cease from Sin*. But if unclean Thoughts and Designs do first enter by the Eye, they do not commonly end there. The Adulterous Mind is commonly more guilty in this Respect, in that it not only receives and harbours all these external Ideas of Temptations, but infinitely diversifies and multiplies them in an impure Imagination, and frequently turns to them and looks at them, to

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(a) *Suf. v. 32.*

kindle or feed the same impure Desires, as if the Person were present. And this is *looking on a Woman to lust after her*, and *debauching her in our Heart*, as well as the other. There is only one Distinction will be necessary in this Place, for the Satisfaction of innocent Persons; that is, to distinguish the sudden Thoughts of an unlawful Object, before they obtain our Consent, if they are immediately thrown out, from an actual Lust-*ing*: These sudden Thoughts not assented to, are more properly Temptations than Sins: and the Sin of this Mental looking on a Woman to lust after her, consists chiefly in the *morosa delectatio*, in the Mind's deliberate and leisurely fixing upon and delighting itself with such Carnal Objects and Desires, called by *Solomon*, *the lusting after her Beauty in the Heart*, Prov. vi. 25. *Lust not after her Beauty in thine Heart, neither let her take thee with her Eye-lids.*

From the Words thus explained, there are these Three Things which we are to be earnestly cautioned against, if we would be acquainted with the true Spirit of Christianity in this Particular of the *Seventh Commandment*. Namely,

1. Against all gross Acts of *Uncleanness*.
2. Against all exposing of our selves to the occasions of those Sins, by the Eye, or other Senses; for the *Looking with the Eye* is mentioned here rather as a principal Example, than as a full Enumeration of the Ways how we are led into the Sins of *Uncleanness*.
3. Against all Mental *Uncleanness*, by *Looking and Lusting after Women in our Heart*.

I. I say, we are to be cautioned against all gross Acts of *Uncleanness*. These the Scribes and Pharisees

rifees themselves allowed to be condemned by this *Commandment*; for whether the *Greek Word* *μνηστέον* here translated to *commit Adultery*, be to be taken, as it is very probable, for all Outward Debauchery of that Kind; or whether by way of *Synecdoche*, as some Authors will have it, the Part is put for the Whole; I must needs think the Scribes and Pharisees, for the Reasons before mentioned, understood that there were several other Sins prohibited in the *Seventh Commandment*, besides *Adultery*. For even the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*, under the severest Penalties and Disgraces, forbid all manner of Whoredom and *Uncleanness* as well as *Adultery*. *Deut. xxiii. 17.* It is expressly commanded that there *should be no Whore of the Daughters of Israel*. And to deter them so much the more from all Sins of that kind, (a) *the playing the Whore in their Father's House* was punished with Stoning: Or if it was (b) *the Daughter of a Priest, with Burning*. Whores were not permitted to offer unto God any Offering out of their unlawful Gains, but those and the (c) *Price of a Dog* (a Creature which among the *Egyptians* had been used for Idolatry) were equally held in Abomination. They wanted not Instances among them of the terrible Judgments of God in punishing Sodomy, and Incest, and the Sin of *Onan*, and all other Acts of *Uncleanness*. So that I cannot imagine the Jewish Doctors could be so ignorant as to think, that nothing was forbid by the *Seventh Commandment* but the Sin of *Adultery*.

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(a) *Deut. xxii. 21.* (b) *Lev. xxi. 29.* (c) *Deut. xxiii. 18.*

I might thus dismiss these gross Acts of *Uncleanness*, as acknowledged by the Scribes and Pharisees to be prohibited by the Law of *Moses*; and come to our Saviour's Improvements: But alas, it is too true, that we Christians under the clearer Light of the Gospel, are so far from coming up to our Saviour's Improvements of this *Commandment*, that we want as much as ever the *Jews* did, to be cautioned against the gross Acts of Impurity themselves. I shall therefore briefly suggest to you a few things to this Purpose, before I come to our Saviour's further Prohibitions of the Lust of the *Eye* and *Heart*. And because I apprehend this may prove a copious Subject, I shall propose what I intend to say upon it under these *Three* Heads.

1. The Spiritual Dangers to our Souls attending those Sins.

2. The Temporal Dangers to the Body, Health, Purse, Reputation, &c.

3. The Publick Dangers to the Commonwealth.

I. To begin with the Spiritual Dangers, which though least observed prove the most fatal; there are several Things I shall propose, which if duly considered, would be sufficient to make us for ever abhor this sort of Vices. But the Mischief of these Vices is, that they fortify us against all that can be said; and make us Brutish, Inconsiderate, and Insensible of all Reason and Argument. And therefore by way of Preface to my other Dissuatives, the first Thing I shall offer to your Consideration against this sort of Vices, is, that they are of an Intoxicating and Bewitching Nature, so as to bind up the Use of our rational Faculties, and to hinder us to behave our selves with the Reason

Reason of Men. If a Man had ever so good natural and acquired Parts, what use are they of to him, if he is perpetually drunk; or so befotted that he is not capable of attending either to the Reasonings of his own Mind, or to the Arguments suggested by others? Of this Nature are those Carnal Pleasures, as well as Drunkenness; they fascinate the Understanding; they drown the Judgment; they overwhelm all a Man's Faculties, and so make him Proof against every thing that can be offered to undeceive him, not by any Force of Reason in themselves, but by that stupifying and intoxicating Quality which is in them. They are a strong Opiate, they make a Man insensible to all the Considerations of God and Religion; of Soul and Body; of Honour, Health or Estate; of this Life, or the Life to come. There is no dealing with them by the way of Argument, till the Force of them is in some Measure abated, that the Person becomes capable of hearing Reason. *Whoredom and Wine, and new Wine, take away the Heart,* Hof. iv. 11. that is, Unlawful Pleasures, as well as Drunkenness, besot Men, and take away the Use of their Understanding and Judgment. And therefore of all things they are to be avoided and fled from; and we ought not to venture our selves in the Lists with them; but to keep at a great Distance from them.

But upon this I foresee an Objection against all that can be offered on this Head. If those Unlawful Pleasures are such bewitching, intoxicating Things, that while we are under the Power of them we are incapable of Considering, or of being persuaded by any Argument; then to what Purpose will it be to offer any Reasons to dissuade us from

from them, or to caution us against them? for if we are under the Power of them, Reason will do no good upon us, and if we are not under the Power of them, we stand in no need of Reasons against them. But to this I answer, though there is very little Hope of prevailing with such as are actually under the Dominion of their Lufts, by Reason of the intoxicating Nature of them, as I have said; yet there is both great Necessity to fortify others against a Temptation to which all are exposed; and there is great Hope likewise of prevailing with those others, as not being Prejudiced against any thing that may be suggested of that Nature. And besides, those that are ensnared by sinful Lufts, are not all Bewitched by them to the same Degree of *Infatuation*. Some are under great Struggles with their own Minds and Consciences; and to these a little Help to extricate them will be very seasonable; others, though for the most part *Infatuated*, yet have their lucid Intervals, in which they are apt to implead and condemn themselves, and at those Times will give a patient and attentive Ear to whatever can be offered against a Vice, to which they themselves are not insensible of their being too much addicted. As for others indeed who lie under the Dominion of this Vice, I know it is almost as much in vain to attack them with Arguments, as it would be to talk to a Man that is Dead Drunk in praise of Sobriety; but it is to be hoped of the greatest Part, that they are not yet Argument-Proof. At least whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, we must not despair, but try to do our Duty: For some Remedies that will not work at present, by Reason of  
some



some great Obstruction in the Patient, yet when those Obstructions are removed, or the Dose encreased, will work at last to some Purpose.

To go on then *first* with the Spiritual Dangers of the Sins of *Uncleanness*; there are on this Account these few Things, if Time would permit, I would offer to your Consideration.

1. That in their own Nature they are altogether inconsistent with the *Spirit of Christianity*.

2. That they banish the *Spirit of Grace*.

3. That they are commonly attended with a long Train of other Sins, both of *Omission and Commission*.

4. That they are very Tenacious, and hard to be overcome.

5. That they involve the Ruin of others as well as of our selves.

6. That upon all these Accounts, in all the Catalogues which are given us in Scripture of Damning Sins, they never fail to make a Part.

7. *Lastly*, They have very bad Effects on the Understanding, Memory, Executive Powers, and good Resolutions and Endeavours of all sorts.

But I perceive Time will not allow my Handling of these Things as they ought; and therefore recommending what has been said to your serious Meditation, and God's Blessing, I shall refer what remains of this Subject to a further Opportunity.

*Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, let us return, as is due, all Praise, Honour and Glory, Might, Power and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

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## S E R M O N XVII.

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M A T T. V. 27.

*Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not commit Adultery.*

*Ver. 28. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a Woman to Lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

**T**HE Meaning of these Words I shewed you in a former Discourse, to be, as if our Saviour had said to his Hearers, “ Ye have been  
 “ taught by your Doctōrs, that the *Seventh Com-*  
 “ *mandment* forbids the gross Acts of *Uncleannefs*;  
 “ but there is a great deal more ye must learn from  
 “ it, if ye intend to be my Disciples, namely, that  
 “ whosoever *either outwardly Looks on a Woman*  
 “ *with a lustful Eye*, or inwardly contemplates *her*  
 “ *in his Mind, with a lustful Heart*, though he  
 “ should go no further, he is already guilty of the  
 “ Breach of the *Seventh Commandment* with her.”

From these Words there were three Things I proposed to caution you against. Namely,

1. Against all gross Acts of *Uncleannefs*.
2. Against all Seeking Occasion of this Sin, especially by *lustful Looks* and *Conversation*.
3. Against

3. Against all Mental *Uncleanness*, by *Looking and Lusting after Women in your Heart.*

As to the *First*, the Cautioning you against the gross Acts of *Uncleanness*, there are *Three* Sorts of Dangers, I told you, I intended to have laid before you of that Sort of Sins, but had not then Time to do it, and shall therefore now go on where we left off. The *Three* Sorts of Dangers are ;

1. The *Spiritual* and *Internal* Dangers.
2. The *Bodily* and *External* Dangers.
3. The *Dangers to the Publick.*

All which I shall endeavour now to represent.

To begin with the *Spiritual* Dangers.

1. The *First* I would offer to your Consideration is, that in their own Nature, these Sins are altogether inconsistent with the Spirit of Christianity. There is nothing more contrary to Repentance, and that Spirit of Mourning for Sin, and for the Absence of Grace, and Peregrination from our Lord, than those Unlawful Pleasures are, which bewitch the Mind with false Joys, and make it utterly forget it's Condition and true Circumstances. There is nothing more contrary to Faith, which feeds itself with the Promises of an unseen Happiness; for these unlawful Pleasures incline us to set up our Rest here. There is nothing more contrary to the Love of God, for that would raise the Affections to those Things which are in Heaven; but these clip their Wings, and clog them that they cannot mount Up; they vitiate our Palate, like much eating of Trash, that we cannot relish wholsom Food. And there is nothing more contrary to the Love of our Neighbour; not only those Neighbours whom we involve in the same Sin and Guilt,

Guilt, and are the Occasion, for ought we know, of their Eternal Perdition; but of all our other Neighbours, whom we are very apt to neglect; these Unlawful Pleasures so Drowning the Thoughts of others, and of all the Duties we owe to them, that all must lie neglected. In short, as the Apostle says, *The Carnal Mind is Enmity to God.*

2. Another Consideration I would offer to shew *the Spiritual Danger* of these Carnal Pleasures, is, that they banish the Spirit of Grace. But ye will say, do not all Sins, at least all sinful Habits, the same? Why then is this particularly laid to the charge of this sort of Sins? I answer, that all Sins are not equally obstructive of Grace. Sins of Ignorance and Error are not so Obstructive of it as Wilful Sins; Nor Sins of *Omission* as Sins of *Commission*. And in general whatsoever Sins draw away the Heart most, and indispose most for Prayer and Meditation, and have the most of a bewitching and ensnaring Faculty; these, till they are repented of, and amended, are the greatest Enemies to Grace. Now there is no sort of Sins take faster hold, or more ensnare, and are harder to get rid of. This *Solomon* found and complains of, from sad Experience. *I find, says he, more bitter than Death, the Woman whose Heart is Snares and Nets, and her Hands as Bands.* Eccl. vii. 26. The Schoolmen deliver it as a general Doctrine of all Mortal Sin, that it destroys Grace; and that our Church, after the Example of the Sacred Writers, reckons this sort of Sins of the Mortal Kind, she teaches us in our Litany, where we pray for deliverance *from Fornication and all other Deadly Sin.*

3. These *Sins of Uncleanness* are commonly attended with a great many other Sins, both of *Omission* and *Commission*.

1. *First*, As to the Sins of *Omission*; these Sins take such violent hold of the Heart, and do so Drown the Thoughts of other Things, that wherever they Reign, no good Business can be Minded. If a Man was before engaged ever so eagerly in any good Thing, so soon as his Mind comes to be possessed with these irregular Passions, all is left at Sixes and Sevens, *Pendent opera interrupta*; his own Business, and every one's under his Charge, is utterly neglected. Nay, which is more, if he has a Mind to shake off this Sluggishness, and stirs up himself ever so resolutely to Duty, he shall find all his Endeavours so retarded and clogged with his Lusts, like so many dead Weights, that he can make no considerable Progress, nor either contrive or execute any thing as he ought. And the Reason is plain, because whatever he sets about, his Mind is absent, his Heart is drawn away after other Objects, and so he minds his Business but by halves, and it prospers accordingly. He's like *Sampson* coming out of *Delilah's* Lap, with his Hair shaved, and his Strength gone, his good Parts benumbed, his Endeavours after good Things all Dormant, and in short, quite lost as to all good and useful Purposes of Life. This Difference *St Paul* observes between those whom he calls *Widows indeed*, and another sort that live in carnal Pleasures. 1 *Tim.* v. 5. 6. The one minds diligently the Duties most proper for one in her Circumstances, particularly the Duties of Devotion; *She trusts in God*, says he, *and continues in Supplications and Prayers Night and Day.*

But the other has no Life left for these Spiritual Exercises. *She that liveth in Pleasure*, says he, *is Dead while she Liveth*. A very Emphatical Expression to signifie the Uselessness and Inactivity of such a Person, as to the Duties of Devotion, or any other good Duties whatsoever.

(2) As to Sins of *Commission*, it is impossible to reckon up all that this sort of Vices expose us to. They make Young People Impudent and Disobedient, and undutiful to their Parents; they make Married Persons harsh and unfriendly, and disregardful of one another; they make us break through all Duties to God, to Parents, to Husbands or Wives. Nay, often they make us break through all Rules of common Decency, Honour, Reputation and Civility; and stop our Ears to all good Advice, and even to the Clamours of common Shame; they blind our Understandings, that we cannot perceive those Vices in our selves, which every Body else perceives, and exclaims against; they make Fools of Men, and expose them to every Unreasonable Thing that may serve to compass their sinful Purposes, or to preserve them in the good Graces of the Persons by whom they are so led aside. They make them espouse all *their* Vices as well as their own; and become Tools and Fools to do any unreasonable Thing, *They* dictate and suggest. And commonly these Creatures finding the Advantage and Ascendant which they have upon the Persons they have thus got in their Snare, spare not to make use of it to the utmost, and not only to *exercise* but to *shew* their Authority, to the most shameless degrees of Imperiousness: So that one would admire what's become of our Understandings and Common Sense,

Sense, to suffer our selves to be so imposed upon: And may with Admiration put the question God puts in *Ezek. xvi. 30.* *How weak is thine Heart, saith the Lord, seeing thou dost all these Things, the work of an imperious whorish Woman?*

4. Another Danger of these Sins is, that they are very Tenacious and hard to get rid of. They are like Pitch or Birdlime, which whosoever touches cannot easily shake off; *Solomon* speaking of the *Whorish Woman*, *Prov. ii. 19.* saith, that *none that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the Paths of Life.* It is an Elegant Allusion to a Wilderness or Labyrinth, in which any one may easily find the Way in, but it is exceeding difficult to find the way out. In another Place he says, *(a) Many strong Men have been Slain by her, and her House is the way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death.* As ye would not then choose to travel through a great Bog or Quagmire, where there is no sure Footing, but every step ye take in it, it is Worse and Worse, and ye are sure to be both bedawbed and bemired; consider before ye are engaged in such dangerous Courses, and extricate your selves quickly all ye that are not yet grown Hardened in your Wickedness; for assure your selves the more ye dally with these Vices, so much the faster shall ye be caught and entangled in them; till at last in vain shall ye bewail your evil Habits, and not find the way out of them, nor be able to comprehend the Reason, how ye are so fast bound to that base sort of Servitude. *Solomon* will tell you how this

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(a) *Prov. vii. 26. 27.*

was a Thing that puzzled his Reason, as well as endangered his Salvation. Eccl. vii. 24, 25. *That which is far off and exceeding Deep, who can find it out? I applied my Heart to know and to search, and to seek out Wisdom, and the Reason of Things, and to know the Wickedness of Folly, even of Foolishness and Madness: And I find more bitter than Death the Woman, whose Heart is Snares and Nets, and her Hands as Bands: whose pleaseth God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her.*

5. Another great Mischief of those gross Acts of *Uncleaness* is, that they not only endanger our own Souls, but the Souls of others, who are Partners in the Crime. And this is really a very great Aggravation of the Sin. To be a Seducer and a Tempter to Sin is the Office of the Devil; and we should consider, though afterwards it may be in our Power to repent of our own Sins, it may not be in our Power perhaps to persuade those others to Repentance, whom we have formerly led aside with our Wickedness. This must be a dreadful Consideration to all that fear God, to think that they have proved the Occasion of the Ruin of the Soul of any other Person. And what our Saviour says of those who Scandalize or offend others, that is, prove the Occasion of their falling away from him and their Duty, is one of the severest Things he ever said against any Sin, except the Sin against the Holy Ghost. Ye may see it, Matt. xviii. 6. *But whose shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a Millstone were Hanged about his Neck, and that he were drowned in the Depth of the Sea.* And although he



he tells us it is *impossible but that Offences will come*, he denounces a *Wo* against Them by whom they come. If we have then any regard either to our Saviour's dreadful Threatning, or are afraid of being Instrumental in the greatest of all Injuries to others, let us beware of those Sins, which bring on the Guilt and Damnation of others.

6. The *Sixth* I shall mention of the *Spiritual Dangers* of those Sins, is the Opinion which God Almighty has of them; for in all the Catalogues we have in Scripture of Great and Damning Sins, They generally make a principal Part. I shall quote a few Passages to this Purpose. Gal. v. 19. *Now the Works of the Flesh are Manifest, which are these, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like: Of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in Time past, that they who do such Things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* And Col. iii. 5. *Mortify therefore your Members which are upon the Earth; Fornication, Uncleanness, Inordinate Affection, Evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness, which is Idolatry: For which Things sake the Wrath of God cometh on the Children of Disobedience.* And 1 Cor. vi. 9. *Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.* And Rev. xxii. 15. speaking of the new Jerusalem, he says, *Without are Dogs and Sorcerers, and Whoremongers,*

*Whoremongers, and Murderers, and Idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a Lye.* From all which we may conclude, that the Sins of Uncleanness are particularly Odious to Almighty God, and shall receive an high Degree of Punishment, unless repented of and forsaken betimes.

7. *Lastly*, Among the *Spiritual Dangers*, we may reckon the Sensuality and Sottishness they bring upon a Man's Spirit, the vile Ideas with which they fill and pollute his Imagination and Memory; the want of Life and Courage to attempt any good Work or Study, which the Consciousness of such vile Practices certainly introduces; the constant Pull-backs in Devotion, the Wandering of the Mind in Prayer and all good Exercises; and the Want of Hope and Assurance in God, without which no great Matter in Spirituals can be effected; all which are such evil Consequences of those Vices, that nothing in this World can ever sufficiently compensate and make up. But I must leave time to say something of the other two Sorts of Dangers of those Vices I proposed, namely, the External Dangers to Ourselves and the Common-wealth: For tho' the Consideration of *them* seems to be foreign to Religion, yet it may prove the Means of bringing Men to Repentance, as the Straits the Prodigal was brought to, occasioned his Resolving to come Home to his Father; and since the Holy Scripture makes use of such Arguments, I know not why we should not use them too.

II. The *Second* Sort of Dangers then of the Sins of Uncleanness I proposed to consider, are the External Ones to our own Persons; such as  
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are all the Prejudices and Mischiefs they bring upon us in our Bodies, Estates, Reputation, and Relations of all Sorts. For in all Capacities we shall find how extremely hurtful and pernicious they are.

1. As to the *Body*, whether we regard the Health or Strength, or Comeliness, or Long Life, or the Children and Issue of it; upon all these Accounts we shall find the great Benefits of Purity and the bad Effects of the Sins of Impurity.

(1.) As to *Health*, it is impossible to reckon up the many Dileates attending that Sort of Intemperance; and some of them so vile, that we can think no otherwise but that God inflicts them on purpose, to deter Men from that Sort of Sins. It is certain whosoever is seized with these, is brought to a sad Repentance, by the Pains and Aches, and Consumption of the vital Moisture, attending commonly those vile Diseases. And therefore this is one Thing *Solomon* recommends to the Consideration of Youth, to abstain from the Company of those wicked Companions in Sin, *lest thou mourn at the last*, says he, *when thy Flesh and thy Body are consumed*, Prov. v. 11. And this *Mourning* he speaks of, is not the kindly Mourning of Repentance, but purely a Sense of Bodily Pain and Sickness, mixed with a Sort of Desperation; for this Mourning is described here to be late, *lest thou mourn at the last*; Then the Cause of it is not so much the Sin, as the Misery it has brought upon us, like the Mourning in Hell; *when thy Flesh and thy Body are consumed*.

(2.) As these Sins are great Enemies to the Health, so they are Enemies likewise to the *Strength* of the Body. And therefore we find

this is the first Lesson given to that young Prince, *Prov. xxxi. 3. Give not thy Strength unto Women, nor thy Ways unto that which destroyeth Kings.* It is true, it is a hard Matter to perswade strong young Men of this; they do not quickly feel the Wounds which these Sins give to the firmest Constitutions; but old Sinners will confess it, when they come to feel the Sins of their Youth hastening on the Decays of Nature. *Solomon* dissuading the young Man from these Courses, *Prov. vii. 26.* assures him, that *the Strange Woman hath cast down many wounded, and that many strong Men have been slain by her.* (3.) The same may be said of the *Beauty and Comeliness*, which has been said of the Health and Strength of the Body, as proceeding from the self-same Causes; what ruins the Constitution will likewise ruin the Complexion, and bring on Deformity, Wrinkles, and gray Hairs, and make such miserable Havock in the best built Bodies and most delicate Complexions, as all the Arts of Patching and Painting will never be able to repair. (4.) The same may be said of *long Life*; for tho' there are innumerable Accidents to cut off the strongest built Bodies; yet humanly speaking, nothing preserves a Man or Woman better to extreme old Age, than Chastity and Temperance. And this the World seems to be sufficiently sensible of, when they call the contrary Vices *Living Fast*; as if a Man were making haste to cut off and destroy himself. And therefore *Solomon* makes no Scruple to promise long Life to his Son, upon the Observation of these his Precepts. *Prov. iii. 1. My son,* says he, *forget not my Law; but let thine Heart*

*Heart keep my Commandments : for Length of Days, and long Life and Peace shall they add to thee.* And at the 16th Verse of the same Chapter, speaking of *Wisdom*, that is, the practical Knowledge of Virtue, he says, *Length of Days is in her Right Hand, and in her Left Hand Riches and Honour.* (5) *Lastly*, As for our *Posterity*, there are none of our Vices whatsoever, which affect them worse than those Sins of Uncleanness. It is to these Sins of their Parents that they often owe their Gouts and Rheumatifms, and Pox, and other hereditary Distempers, which bring along with them an uneasy Life, and an accelerated Death, and are derived down, as *Original Sin* is, to their late Posterity. So that the Generations to come will have Reason to Curse the Sins of their Fore-fathers, for entailing so much Sickness, Weakness, Pain and Misery, upon them.

2. That this sort of Sins is very prejudicial to the *Estate*, as well as the Body, the same *Solomon* frequently observes; for one of the Arguments he makes use of to dissuade from them, *Prov. v. 10.* is this, *lest Strangers be filled with thy Wealth, and thy Labours be in the House of a Stranger.* And *Prov. vi. 26.* he says, *By means of a Whorish Woman a Man is brought to a piece of Bread.* And *Chap. xxix. 3.* *He that keepeth Company with Harlots spendeth his Substance.* And so the Prodigal Son, *Luke xv. 30.* is represented as *one that devoured his Living with Harlots.* And there are many Reasons why it is so. For *First*, The Man's Mind being carried away with his Lusts, he cannot mind the Business of his House and Calling, as he might otherwise do.

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This Negligence alone will quickly eat out all his Profit: If he's a Tradesman, People observing how he slight his Affairs, will leave him off, and be no more concerned with him: If he's a Nobleman or Gentleman, or any other Man that lives upon the Produce of his Land, or Rents and Revenues, his Bailiffs, Stewards, Overseers, and Servants, observing his Negligence, will quickly make a Prey of him. Then the Necessities, and not only the Necessities, but the Superfluities of his Mistresses must be maintained; and it is no small Matter will do that; for according to the Degrees of Ascendency they acquire over him, their Demands will rise higher and higher. The Disorders and ill Temper of his Mind too encreasing upon him with his Sin and Poverty, and Shame, and the Necessities perhaps of a Family, are enough to distract him, that he has neither the Judgment to contrive, nor the Memory to retain, nor the Diligence to execute his Business. Then Bastards and Nurses, and Relations, and Retinue, a Train of expenceful and wasteful Attendants, help to eat him out; and, which is worst of all, there is a Curse of God entailed upon those Courses, which like a Canker eats out all the Profit of the Man's Labour. So that it is no Wonder if Ruin most commonly attends those Ways. And,

3. Which is of great Affinity with the former, a Man's Credit and Reputation sinks all the while. *Solomon* speaking of the Adulterer, *Prov. vi. 33.* *A Wound and Dishonour shall he get, says he, and his Reproach shall not be wiped away.* These foul Sins are called *Works of Darknejs*, which will not bear the Light; undecent, dishonourable Actions, which

which Men strive to hide and conceal: But yet, like God's Revenge against Murder, they commonly break out some how or other, and reflect Dishonour and Disgrace on the Guilty. Whether it is that the Sinners themselves, who in the beginning are more Modest and Cautious, in time grow more Shameless and Impudent, and *declare their Sin as Sodom, and hide it not*; nay brag of their Conquests: Or whether the jealous and watchful Eye of the injured Party is ready to spy them out; or whether the malicious World, which is censorious enough, is ready to suspect the worst, and spread their Censures in Confidence to one another; or *lastly*, whether Pregnancy and Bastards do at last betray what shameful Work has been in Hand; so it is, that by one Means or other, Disgrace, and Loss of Reputation comes upon them: And a good Name, once lost, is so hard to be retrieved, that commonly this drives the guilty Parties to a worse Inconvenience, namely, a Hardness and Impudence, which usually bars all Retreat from vitious Courses, and makes them Proof against all Endeavours to reclaim them: But they go on then from Evil to Worse, till the Devil gets sure Possession, without any great Hopes that ever they will be reclaimed.

4. The last external Inconvenience I mentioned of those Sins is, the Mischief they bring upon us in all our *Relations*, by that means embittering all the Comforts of Life. They make Parents so ashamed of their Children, that they would be glad if they could disown them, and would choose much more willingly to see them laid in their Graves, than live to be a Disgrace to all that belong to them. These Sins bring Jealousie, Hatred,

and

and Discontent between Husband and Wife; Quarrels and Animofities between Rivals; and in ſhort, are attended with ſo much Uneaſineſs of Troubles without, and ill Temper and Guilt within, that their Life is an Hell upon Earth, and they become their own Devils and Tormenters.

III. The laſt ſort of the Dangers of the Sins of Uncleaneſs I thought to have conſidered, are *the Dangers to the Publick*. But this I ſhall diſpatch in a Word, becauſe the other Heads of Diſcourſe have detained me much longer than I expected. The Dammage to the Publick will quickly appear to any one that will conſider the following three or four Inconveniencies, which I ſhall but juſt mention; the Proof of them being to be gathered from what we have ſaid on the former Heads. (1) Is it not a great Loſs to the Publick, the bringing in ſo much Sickneſs, Weakneſs, Pains, and ſo many hereditary Infirmities among it's Subjects, as we have ſhewed to be the Conſequences of theſe Sins? (2) Is it not a great Loſs to the Publick, the bringing in ſo much Poverty and Neglect of all Buſineſs, as attends this ſort of Sins? (3) Is it not a great Loſs to the Publick, that there are ſo many Children brought into the World of uncertain, ſpurious and diſgraceful Births, that the Parents are aſhamed to own them, and conſequently take little or no Care of their Education? (4) Are not the laſting Jealouſies, Diſcontents, Animofities, and Emulations attending this ſort of Sins, of very dangerous Conſequence to the Publick? (5) *Laſtly*, Is not every Thing that breaks the Peace of Families; every Thing that obſtructs the Diſpoſal of virtuous Women in the honourable Way of Matrimony,



trimony, and every Thing that makes their Lives so uneasie in it: Is not every Thing that alienates the natural Affection of Parents from Children, and Children from Parents: Is not every Thing that brings the Curse of God on a Nation, of most pernicious Consequence to the Publick? Most Nations have been so sensible of these Things by the mere Light of Nature, that they have appointed dreadful Punishments for those Sins, if I had Time to give you an Account of them. But having so far exercised your Patience, I shall now make an End of the first Head I proposed to speak to from the Words, namely, the Cautioning you against the gross Acts of Uncleanness; for as *Solomon* says of the Strange Woman, though they are Sweet at first, and (a) *her Lips drop as a Honeycomb, and her Mouth is smoother than Oil, yet her End is bitter as Wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged Sword.* As for our Saviour's further Prohibitions of the Lust of the Eye and Heart, I must refer them to another Opportunity.

Now God bless what we have heard, that it may take Root in our Hearts, and bring forth Fruit in our Lives and Conversations, to his Honour, and our own Sanctification, and Salvation, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord. *To whom, &c.*

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(a) Prov. v. 3.

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## S E R M O N XVIII.

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M A T T. V. 27.

*Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not commit Adultery.*

*Ver. 28. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a Woman to Lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.*

The Third Sermon on this Text.

**I** SHALL not spend much Time in Repetition of what in two several Discourses I have already spoke to from this Text; only put you in Mind, that after Explication of the Words, in pursuance of the Intent of them, there were *Three Things* I proposed to caution you against.

*First*, Against all gross Acts of Uncleanness.

*Secondly*, Against all seeking Occasions of this Sin, particularly by Lustful Looks or Conversation.

*Thirdly*, Against all Mental Uncleanness, by Looking and Lusting after Women in your Heart.

Now having dispatched the first of these, by shewing you the Dangers attending the gross Acts of Uncleanness, I proceed now to the Second and Third; namely, to caution you against the looking out for, and seeking Occasions of this Sin; and  
against

againſt all Mental Uncleanneſs : Which were the two Points our Saviour thought fit to ſuperadd to the Interpretations of the Jewish Doctors, relating to this *ſeventh* Commandment.

II. To begin with the *Occaſions* of this Sin, where our Saviour begins his Improvements of this Commandment: This is to be obſerved in general, That it is not enough that we ſtruggle againſt Temptations, when they preſent themſelves, unleſs by the Principles of our Religion we ſtave them off, and keep them at a Diſtance. As in War, where there is a Town to be defended, the prudent Governour of it will not lead out his Men, and raſhly truſt to the Hazard of a Battle ; but chooſes to keep the Enemy at a Diſtance, by ſtrong Ramparts and Out-works, and Fortifications, which perhaps the Enemy, if he is not very much ſuperiour in Number, will never ſo much as attempt : So here in our Spiritual Wars againſt Sins and Temptations, our Lord adviſes this Piece of Spiritual Prudence, to keep at as great a Diſtance as is poſſible from Temptations, and to guard againſt all Dallying and Tampering with the Enemy: And eſpecially in the Sins prohibited by the *ſeventh* Commandment, it is moſt neceſſary that this Rule be obſerved ; becauſe it is much better dealing with thoſe Sins by keeping them at a Diſtance, than by a cloſe Fight. *Can a Man take Fire in his Boſom, ſays Solomon, and his Clothes not be burnt?* ſpeaking of thoſe very Sins, *Prov. vi. 27.*

Now while we ſpeak of the *Occaſions* of this Sin, we are to remember there are two Ways we are led into it, Outward Temptations, and Inward Imaginations ; againſt both which our Saviour cautions

cautions us in this Text; but neither of them finishes the Temptation Stroke, till our own Lust-  
ing is joined with them. He begins with the Out-  
ward Temptation, which is the external Looking  
on a Woman: But doth not place the Sin in that  
alone, but with the Addition of these Words, **to  
Lust after her**; i. e. either with an express De-  
sign of gratifying Lust; or if the first Design was  
more innocent, so long, or so carelessly till Lust  
is excited; so that That is the Effect, whatever  
the Intention was. From this Description there  
seem to be *three* Parts of Duty pointed at with re-  
lation to these Outward Temptations; which ought  
to be carefully minded.

1. The Declining the Temptation itself, or the  
Keeping out of the way of it.

2. The Regulating of the Intention, that when  
such Tempting Objects present, we have no bad  
Intention.

3. The Governing or cutting short the Sight or  
Conversation, if we find it proves dangerous, and  
is like to excite the Inward Lust-  
ing.

1. The Declining the Temptation itself, or  
Keeping out of the Way of it. This is a Piece of  
Spiritual Prudence much recommended, *Prov. v. 8.*  
Speaking of the naughty Woman, the Advice  
which *Solomon* gives is this, *Remove thy Way far  
from her, and come not nigh the door of her House.*  
q. d. It is not safe to see her, lest thou be ensnared  
with her Beauty; nor to hear her, lest thou be  
taken with her enticing Words. So it is observed  
of *Joseph*, a great Pattern of this Virtue of Chasti-  
ty, *Gen. xxxix.* after the first Temptation, to  
which he gave a resolute honest Denial, that he  
would not trust himself any more either to his  
Mistress's

Mistress's Speech or Company ; for it is said, *as she spake to him day by day, that he hearkened not to her, to lie by her, or to be with her.* It was for this Reason amongst others, that St Paul advised the *Corinthians* to Excommunicate the incestuous Person, 1 Cor. v. 6. *Know ye not, says he, that a little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump?* Insinuating plainly the Danger of being infected with bad Company. Now,

This Duty of keeping out of the Way of Temptations, is very agreeable to the Spirit of Christianity on several Accounts.

(1.) As it is a Branch of Humility ; one part of which consists in a Diffidence of our own Skill and Dexterity, to manage ourselves in Times of Danger. It is always observed in the Spiritual Warfare, that the weakest and most unexperienced are the most confident, and most apt to run upon Temptations. *Peter*, before his Fall, was very confident of his own Strength, and told our Saviour, that (a) *though all should be offended because of him, he never would be offended : And that though he should die with him, he would never deny him.* And it is very probable it might be upon this Confidence, that when the rest fled he followed him still ; not considering the Dangers he was running upon. But afterwards he learned more Wit and Grace. *All of you, says he, be subject one to another, and be cloathed with Humility : for God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble,* 1 Pet. v. 5.

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(a) Matt. xxvi. 33, 35.

(2.) This Duty of Declining Temptation and Keeping out of the Way of it, is most agreeable to Christian Prudence; we are commanded to be (a) *wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves*. Now a *wise Man feareth and departeth from Evil*; says Solomon, *Prov. xiv. 16*. And again, *the Prudent Man (b) foreseeth the Evil and hideth himself, but the Simple pass on and are punished*. He would be thought a strange mad Man, who in worldly Matters should never consider the Danger of any Thing he went about. If in Time of the Plague raging in any City, a Man should not only continue to sojourn in it, but should likewise promiscuously go into all Houses, without enquiring which were Infected, or which were Clear; he would be thought a very Imprudent, Rash Man; much more if he went into those Houses, where he had certain Information before-hand that the Plague was raging. So if a Man in Travelling were informed of a Party of the Enemy abroad, and that if he went such a Road, he should certainly fall into their Hands; would he not be thought an Imprudent rash Man, if he should thus needlessly run himself into the Mouth of Danger? Now in these Sins, which we have under our Consideration, it is certainly as great Imprudence to venture into dangerous Company, and to run into the Mouth of Temptation, as in those other Cases.

(3.) This Duty guards us against another Sin very little considered, the Sin of *Tempting God*; one great Branch of which Sin is the laying aside

(a) Matt. x. 16.

(b) Prov. xxii. 3.

the use of Means, and yet expecting that God should give us the Grace to resist Temptations.

2. The *second* Duty here enjoined under the Prohibition of *Looking on a Woman to Lust after her*, is the Governing the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart, so as in those Places where we must needs see Women, yet it shall not be with any *lustful Look*, or Intention. The Former has a great Influence on This; the Avoiding all dangerous Opportunities has a great Influence on the Thoughts of the Heart, to keep them right. And the right fixing the Intention is a great Preservative against irregular Wandring of the Thoughts, *e. g.* if when we are assembled for the Duties of God's Worship and Service, our Hearts are eagerly intent upon Devotion, or on the learning our Duty, this will be a good Means to keep out the Wandring both of the Eyes and Heart. This Duty chiefly condemns them, who give a Loose to their wanton Desires, and frequent the Theatres, Balls, Frolicks and Rendezvouses of Persons of the other Sex, nay the very Churches, on purpose that they may feed their lustful Eyes, and may pander for their filthy Designs. And though to palliate the many Undecent, Lascivious Glances, and ogling Gestures, which are the Product of an impure Mind, some may think to justify these Things, under Colour of an honourable setting out for Marriage; it is certainly a very dangerous Thing to harbour Lust on any Pretext, for if it is once admitted into the Heart, though upon a plausible and lawful Account, it will make the same Havock and Destruction in disordering the Thoughts, as if it had no such Pretext for it's Entrance. It is Time enough for the Passion to follow the Rules

of Duty, when it becomes a Duty. All too early Thoughts of what is at present the forbidden Fruit, whatever it may be afterwards, ought carefully to be Watched and Guarded, lest the Heart should be disordered by the too early kindling in it such a Flame as, if given way to, would subject all to an ungovernable Lust. Several of the Fathers and of later Divines too, have been so sensible of the Importance of this Precept of our Saviour's, that they have utterly condemned all familiar Conversation between young Persons of different Sexes, and particularly all use of Plays, promiscuous Dances, and Interludes, in which there is more than ordinary Danger of these Lustful Looks and Desires. But instead of driving Matters to any Extreme of Severity, we may safely say that every one who knows the Plague of his own Heart, ought carefully to judge of his Thoughts and Intentions, and unless he finds that he can Innocently make use of those Occasions and Divertisements, he had better abstain from them; for all the Pleasure of them is not to be laid in the Balance with the Sins, which in that Case will necessarily attend them. But which is the best Course to avoid this, whether a great Strictness and Reservedness, or an innocent Freedom, the World has mightily differed in their Opinions; the *Eastern*, and divers other Countries, following the strict Way, and judging it best to keep their Females in great Retirement; and some other Countries, particularly *France* and *England*, allowing the Ways of Freedom; but whatever there is in this, our Saviour's Rule, by which every one may know what Impressions such Customs leave in his Heart, is certainly the best Way to  
 judge,



judge, and by which to govern our selves accordingly.

3. And this leads me to the *third* Duty here pointed at; namely, though the Intention was right at first, yet not to trust it, but to keep it under such constant good Government, that so soon as the Looks or Conversation grows dangerous, we be ready to abandon it. For it often happens that a Conversation Innocently begun, yet in Time proves dangerous, and from Virtue degenerates into Lust; and when so, the keeping up of that Conversation comes to be the Vice described in my Text, *the Looking on a Woman to Lust after her.* Here then the Duty of Christian Vigilance is absolutely necessary, to observe the Danger, and to deny ourselves such beloved Conversation, as we find we can no longer keep up but by endangering our Innocence. The Subtilty of the Grand Enemy appears in nothing more than in this, that he not only makes use of ill Women to corrupt Mankind, and by their Means brings about Abundance of his mischievous Designs; but employs likewise Virtuous Women, nay, the very Virtues and other good Qualifications of Virtuous Women, to induce Men first into a Friendship and Familiarity; and afterwards makes use of that very Friendship, towards corrupting of the Mind to wicked Thoughts and Purposes. It is therefore given as a Rule by some Spiritual Writers, that though we are to pray for all, and use a Civility to all, yet Persons of different Sexes ought to avoid a Familiarity. But the right Medium in this Matter is to look diligently into our own Hearts, and to carry Friendships and Familiarities no further, than they may be kept up

with Innocence and Integrity both of Body and Mind.

So much for the *Second* Thing I propos'd to caution you against, namely, the Seeking or Embracing the Occasions for this Sin, by *lustful Looks* or *Conversation*.

III. I come now to the *Third* Thing which I propos'd; namely, to caution you against all mental *Uncleanness*, by *Looking and Lusting after Women in your Heart*. There is nothing more common in all Authors, and in all Languages, than for Words of *Seeing* and *Looking* to be used not only for *Seeing* and *Looking with the Eyes of the Body*, but for *Looking* and *Contemplating with the Eye of the Mind*. Now this differs from what we just now spoke of, in regard that that related all to *Bodily Looking* and *Conversation*, but this to the Thoughts of the Mind; and is principally the Work of the Imagination and Memory; a Forge, in which the Devil first contrives, Frames and Models all Vices, and often Experiments and puts them in Execution in the Sight of God, when the World abroad knows nothing of the Matter. And there is no Sort of Vices perhaps of which there is more transacted in this inward Shop of Wickedness, than this Sort of *Uncleanness*, the *Lusting and committing Fornications and Adulteries in the Heart*. It was therefore an Improvement worthy of our Saviour, to vindicate this principal Part of this Law, from the defective Glosses and Interpretations of the Jewish Doctors. For though it must be confessed that outward Gross Acts of *Uncleanness* have many more Aggravations, to encrease the Sinfulness of them, than these only mental Impurities have; particularly

particularly in that they both give a greater Scandal to the World, and engage another Partner in the Crime; yet that these inward Pollutions too defile the Person, and make him Guilty in the Sight of God, and have abundance of Mischievous Consequences, will appear, if we consider these two or three Things. 1. *First*, As to all that I formerly represented to you, concerning the *Spiritual* and *Internal Dangers* of the gross Acts of *Uncleannefs*, bating the Guilt of involving others in the Crime, it is all true likewise of these mental Impurities. They are most directly opposite to the Spirit of Christianity; they are certain Signs of an unregenerate Carnal Mind. *To be Carnally minded is Death*, says the Apostle, Rom. viii. 6. *but to be Spiritually minded is Life and Peace; because the carnal Mind is Enmity against God.* And elsewhere he tells us that *They who are Christ's have Crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts (a)*. These mental Impurities are very great Enemies to Faith and Repentance, and the Love of God and our Neighbour; they do as much banish the Spirit of Grace, and tie down the Heart to carnal Objects; they make us as negligent and sluggish in all Duties, and engage us in as many sinful Designs; they are as tenacious and hard to get rid of; they are as odious in the Sight of God, and have as bad Effects upon the inner Man, bringing as great a Sottishness and Sensuality upon his Spirit, and filling his Mind with as bad Ideas; they are as great Pull-backs in Devotion, and occasion as great wandering and absence of Mind in all good Exercises; they cast down the Spirit, and damp it's

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(a) Gal. v. 24.

Hope in God as much as those other grosser Acts.

2. As to the other external evil Consequences, which they do not directly reach, they are yet far from being clear or innocent of them, lending an Head to contrive them, and an Heart like a Fruitful Womb to conceive them, and bring them to Maturity. So that whatever Mischiefs the gross Acts of *Uncleannefs* do cause or Occasion, mental Impurity is the Cause of that Cause, and the Occasion of that Occasion ; if it does not actually Ruin the Man's Body, and Estate, and Reputation, and Posterity, it puts him upon those other grosser Sins which do ; So that in some Sort the impure Mind is like the Principal in a Transgression, and the External Acts are like his Tools and Slaves. The impure Mind prepares the Soil, and sows the Seed of those gross Vices, which afterwards bring a plentiful Harvest of Sin and Misery ; which no doubt will be laid to it's Charge.

3. It is no small Aggravation of mental Impurities, that there is commonly more Expence of Time and Thought about them, than about the grosser Acts ; a longer Contrivance, a more leisurely Contemplation, a more permanent sinful Delectation ; whereas the grosser Acts are momentary and sudden, like a *Bee*, when it Stings, which immediately flies away, and leaves the wounded Person to the smart of Sorrow and Repentance. In this then the mental Impurity is rather more guilty than some sudden gross Acts, as Murder is a more heinous Sin than Manslaughter ; the one being guilty of a leisurely Compassing and Imagining, and the other of a sudden Acting the Death of his Neighbour.

But

But to prevent Mistakes, I must again put you in Mind, that from this mental Impurity, and all the evil Consequences of it, I except those sudden evil Thoughts which are just presented to the Imagination, and not permitted to harbour there; but are immediately thrown out, without obtaining any Assent from the Heart. In that Case I judge they are Temptations, not Sins; and that the sudden expelling them is a great Act of Virtue. The only mental Impurity then which I mean, when I caution you thus against it, is that which is joined with an inward Assent, and leisurely Delectation, which truly constitutes the carnal Mind, and is the Original of other impure Contrivances and Actions.

Thus now I have done what I proposed, in cautioning you against the several Transgressions of the *Seventh* Commandment, mentioned in the Text; Namely, the gross Acts of *Uncleannefs*; the Seeking and Embracing Occasions of them; and mental Impurity. But before I dismiss the Subject, there is some Use by way of Exhortation, I must make of what has been said upon it, and I shall quickly have done.

Upon Occasion then of the Duties here recommended, let me exhort you first to humble yourselves under a Sense of the manifold Transgressions of them. I might here justly take up the Lamentation of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, bewailing the Judgments of God for the like Sins of his People, *Jer. ix. 1. O that my Head were Waters, and mine Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that I might weep Day and Night for the slain of the Daughter of my People. O that I had in the Wilderness a Lodging-Place of Way-faring Men, that I might leave my People and go from them,*  
for

for they be all Adulterers, an Assembly of treacherous Men. The Sins against this Seventh Commandment are so daringly committed, as if they were no Sins at all; Men are not ashamed of them; they declare their Sin as Sodom, and hide it not. One can hardly reprove the gross Acts of this Sort of Vices, without running the hazard of having his Reproofs made the more Ridiculous of the two. And if it is thus with the gross Acts, what shall we say of the Mental Impurities? In this respect certainly **All** have Sinned, and have come short of the Glory of God. *Who can say, I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from my Sin?* Alas, if none are to see God, but *The Pure in Heart*, as our Saviour describes, have we not all Reason to be afraid that we shall not be admitted to that Blessed Vision? But if we have not the Purity of Innocence, let us endeavour at least after the Purity of Repentance. Let us wash away our Sins in Tears of godly Sorrow; and pray to God with the Psalmist, Ps. li. 9. *Hide thy Face from my Sins, and blot out all mine Iniquities; Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me.* And to our Prayers let us add our fervent Endeavours for acquiring a Spirit of Purity; for it is not lazy Prayers that God hears; it is not such Prayers as I remember St *Austin* tells us of himself, that in his Youth before his Conversion, he used to pray to God to bestow upon him the Gift of Chastity, but he added secretly in his own Mind, *Not yet awhile.* If we are come to a through, full, and immediate Desire after Purity, and pray heartily for it, and endeavour diligently after it, God will bless both our Prayers  
and

and Endeavours. But if we are but still half resolved, and at our *shall I, shall I?* the Weight of our sinful Habits will easily retard and frustrate all our good Resolutions.

I shall conclude with a Word of Advice, to such as are resolved heartily to encounter those Vices, and have done at this Time; for the following Directions concerning the plucking out of the offending Eye, and cutting off the offending Hand, and for preserving the Marriage Vow inviolable, without putting away the Wife, will afford some further Advice in this Matter. At present I shall content myself to conclude with a few very short Directions, towards facilitating the Duties I have been recommending.

1. *First* then, begin at the Root, as our Saviour here advises, and restrain all Mental Impurities; for besides their own Pollution, which will be hereby prevented, if the Heart be clean, the Tongue and Eyes and Hands will be kept chaste, and all gross Acts will be much more easily avoided, *for out of the Heart are the Issues of Life.*

In order to this there are two Things carefully to be avoided; first the ripping up the Memory of our former sinful Actions with Pleasure and Delight. For every Time we do that, we shew that we have never yet thoroughly repented of those Sins; or if we have, by that delightful Remembrance and Approbation of them, we do as it were recall our Repentance, and commit the Sins anew. Secondly, the giving Way to the Curiosity of a filthy Imagination and Invention which, if it be indulged, will multiply the wicked Objects of *Mental Uncleanness* in our Hearts, till the Heart and Mind becomes altogether Carnal; the

the very Thing which, as you heard, the Apostle says, is *Enmity against God*.

2. According to another Advice of my Text, carefully avoid all Occasions of this Sin. By Occasions of it I mean, bad Books, impure Plays and Ballads, lewd Company; nay indeed all tempting Objects, whether the Temptation proceed from their Wit, or Beauty, or Personableness, or even from their Virtue itself; for if what is good in them proves a Snare to us, their Company is to be declined and avoided.

3. Keep the Body under by Labour and Temperance, and constant Sobriety. Beware of every Thing that may either inflame the Blood, aggravate the Body, or discompose the Mind. And as this unclean Spirit is much harder to be cast out of some than of others, remember what our Saviour said of an unclean Spirit which the Disciples could not cast out; *This Kind, said he, goeth not out but by Prayer and Fasting*. Devotion and Mortification are the best Remedies in this Case.

4. Of all Things avoid Idleness, and take care to have your Time so prudently distributed, that when you are not employed in the Duties of Devotion, it may be spent in your handy Labour, or the Business of your Calling, or some honest Study, or some innocent Company or Recreation, that the Devil may not find an Opportunity to throw in his Temptations.

And it is not only to be reckoned Idleness, when a Man does just nothing; but when he does nothing of what he ought to mind at that Time: When he invents some idle ways of spending his Time, purely out of Sauntering and Laziness to  
keep



keep himself from his Duty. The chief Design of Recreation is to refresh the Spirits weary with Labour, that they may be the better fitted to return to Duty. But when Recreation is turned into Business, and takes up great Portions of our Time, it is then plain Idleness; and commonly opens a Door to Drunkenness and Uncleanness.

5. When Temptations present, do not go to argue or parley with them; do not tamper or meddle in the least, do not lie still and muse upon them; but flee from them. This is your only Safety in such a Case. Stop your Ears to the Voice of this Charmer, if he charm never so sweetly. And get to some lawful innocent Employ as fast as you can.

6. The best way to conquer Lust, which is an unlawful Inclination of the Soul to the Love of inferiour Things, is to keep ourselves in the Love of God, and for that End to be much in the Meditation of his Works of Creation, Providence, Redemption and Grace; much in the Study of the Holy Scriptures, much in the Exercise of Devotion, and in the Contemplation of the Vanity of the World, and the Four last Things, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell. The Thoughts of Eternity have a mighty Efficacy in them, to cast a Damp on all Carnal Pleasures; and therefore, whenever thy Mind offers to run out into any forbidden Pleasures, *remember*, as *Solomon* says, *that for all these Things God will bring thee to Judgment.*

7. *Lastly*, There is another Remedy of Lust prescribed by God Almighty, the Remedy of Marriage, which, when it is cultivated with that true Love and Friendship that is required, which  
makes

makes it an Union of Souls, as well as of Bodies and Estates and Interests, doth easily keep Lust within due Bounds; the Parties having that mutual Comfort in one another, that there is no Occasion to look for that Satisfaction elsewhere, which they have at Home: But by the Crossness, and mutual Jealousies and Animosities of some Married Parties, Love is turned into Hatred, and Friendship into Enmity, and the want of Contentment at Home makes them run abroad, to the Ruin of their Conjugal Chastity, as well as the Neglect of their House and Family. The Way to Remedy this is not by crying down that Divine Institution, and giving a Loose to Lust: But by restoring to the Institution, that Love and Peace and true Friendship, and mutual Forbearance, which may make it answer all the Ends for which it was appointed, and particularly this of being a Preservative against the Transgressions of the *seventh* Commandment. If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them. Now to conclude in the Words of St Paul, *The God of Peace sanctify you wholly: And I pray God your whole Spirit and Soul and Body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* To Him with the Father, &c.



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## S E R M O N XIX.

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M A T T. V. 29.

*And if thy right Eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy Members should Perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell.*

Ver. 30. *And if thy right Hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy Members should Perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell.*

The First Sermon on this Text.

**T**H E S E Words have a clear Connexion with, and Dependance upon, what went immediately before, concerning the avoiding Adultery and all Uncleaness, not only in the gross Act, but the *Uncleaness* of the Eye and Heart. And this Dependance is yet plainer in the Original than in our Translation, which instead of *And if thy right Eye offend thee*, runs thus, *if then thy right Eye Scandalizes thee*, or causes thee to offend. But though Interpreters agree that there is a clear Connexion, they do not all make it out the same way, but variously, according to the different Interpretations they give of the Words.

For

For the Text is really difficult, and, as several other figurative Speeches, is liable to different Interpretations, which will likewise yield a different Connexion. I shall not pretend to enumerate the many several Glosses have been put upon the Words by Commentators; but there being two or three, that seem to me each of them very probable and agreeable to the Context, and our Saviour's Scope and Design, I shall take the Freedom to consider them particularly. That the Words are not to be taken in a Proper, but in a Figurative and Metaphorical Sense, all the Interpreters are agreed; for besides that the literal Maiming of the Body is against Reason and Scripture, it would no way answer the End, which is to keep us from falling off from our Duty into the ways of Sin; for so the Word here Translated *to offend*, or as it is in the Margin of our Bibles, *to cause to offend* or *Scandalize*, doth import. For if the *Right Eye were pulled out*, we might still be guilty of impure or covetous Looks with the *Left*; and if the *Right Hand were cut off*, we might make the *Left* an Instrument of sinful Practices.

Taking the Words then in a figurative Sense, there are *three* Things, which seem to me to bid fairest for the Meaning of them, and do all of them teach us some useful part of Duty; and if the Words will bear it, I shall be of Opinion our Saviour had an Eye to them all; for his Expressions have a very full Significancy, and I hope we shall find the Senses I am going to mention are not inconsistent with each other.

1. *First* then, It is very probable that the Words *Eye and Hand* may be understood here properly, and that the Figure is only in the Words **pulling out**

out and cutting off, for *denying or mortifying*. So that by these Expressions *the pulling out of the Eye, and cutting off of the Hand*, when they prove the Occasions or Instruments of Sin, may be meant the governing of the Members and Senses of the Body in such a manner, that they shall not be gratified to be made the Instruments or Occasions of Sin, but shall be restrained, kept in, and mortified upon all such Accounts. And in this Sense the Connexion will be plain thus: *q. d.* If then thine Eye lead thee to Sin by lusting after any prohibited Object, deny it the use of any such Sights, as if thou hadst no Eye; at least suppress the Lustings which such Sights might be apt to raise in thy Heart. For thou hadst better be without the use of the Eye on such Occasions, than by Gratification thereof, to plunge thy self into eternal Perdition. And if thy Hand prove the Instrument in this or any other Sin, deny thy self the use of it upon such Occasions, as if it were cut off; for thou hadst better do so, than by gratifying thy self in the sinful Use of it, to bring thy self to Hell at the last. It cannot be denied that this is a Sense that has a very clear Dependence on the preceding Doctrine, prohibiting the looking on a Woman to lust after her. Yet there is one Objection against this Interpretation; namely, that it is not barely said, if thine Eye offend thee, and if thy Hand offend thee, but *if thy right Eye, and thy right Hand offend thee*; as if the Emphasis were to be laid on the *right* Eye, and *right* Hand; that is to say, any thing that is ever so Dear or Useful. But to this two things may be answered: *First*, That the right Eye being more universally employed,

in seeing, especially in taking a Level, or shooting at a Mark, than the Left, this doth not hinder but that the Discourse may relate still to the Objects of Sight, commanding us to restrain and govern them in such a manner that the Occasion of the Temptation may be removed. And the like Observation will hold for the right Hand, which is much more employed in Acting than the Left. *Secondly*, We may answer to this Objection, that in the parallel Places, where this same Text seems to be quoted, it is not said thy *right Eye*, and *right Hand*, but barely *thine Eye* and *Hand*, as ye may see *Matt. xviii. 8, 9.* where it is not said, if thy right Hand, or thy right Foot, or thy right Eye offend thee, but only *if thy Hand or thy Foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into Life halt or maimed, rather than having two Hands or two Feet, to be cast into everlasting Fire. And if thine Eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into Life with one Eye, rather than having two Eyes to be cast into Hell Fire.* And so *Mark ix. 43, 45, and 47.* there is no distinction made of *the right or left*, but only *the Hand, Foot, and Eye* are mentioned. Which makes it really very probable, that the Emphasis is not to be laid on the *right Eye* and *right Hand*; and therefore that the Design here was only to govern the Senses of *Seeing and Touching*, that they might not prove the Instruments of Sin, particularly of this Sin of *Uncleannefs* our Saviour had been speaking of.

2. *Secondly*, Because the Words *right Eye* and *right Hand* are often used figuratively for any Persons or Things that are exceeding dear and useful to us; therefore a Second Sense of the Words may be

be this. *First*, If any Person who is as dear to thee as *thy right Eye*, and as useful and necessary to thee as *thy right Hand*, should prove the Instrument or Occasion of thy falling into this or any other Sin, at any rate shake off the Influence, Authority, or even Company or Society of such a Person; thou hadst better deny thy self any such Gratification, by which piece of Self-denial thou mayst save thy Soul, than indulging thy self in it, be engaged in sinful Courses, and by that Means come to Hell at last. And what is here said of *Persons* may, *Secondly*, be understood likewise of such *Things*, as engage us in sinful Courses; such as a Sinful, though profitable Trade or Calling; the Favour of some great Man, which perhaps cannot be kept but by sinful Compliances: Some Honourable or Profitable Place, for the holding of which we do Violence to our Consciences, and are led into sinful Courses; the accepting some Gift, Profit, or Service, which misleads us in our Opinion or Practice. Now it must be confessed, That this is a very easie and natural Sense of the Words, and has a good Connexion and Dependance with what went before. *q. d.* If it be then so dangerous to look upon a Woman to Lust after her, have a care of all those Persons of either Sex that prove Tempters to this, or any other Sin; and have a care of all such Engagements and Obligations which involve you in sinful Courses: Be those Persons or Things ever so Taking, ever so Useful, like a Right Eye, or a Right Hand, by all Means cut them off; disengage your self from any Relation, Attachment, or Inclination to them, as ye would save your Souls from Hell.

3. *Thirdly*, The Words may be understood of any predominant beloved Lust, which we love like a Right Eye or a Right Hand: And in this Sense have a very apt Connexion with what went before. *q. d.* If there is so much Danger not only in the gross Acts, but in the secret Thoughts and Impressions of Wickedness, then beware of harbouring any secret beloved Lust. But if ye have any such, that ye love like a Right Eye, or Right Hand, by all means part with it, for it will be the ruin of you, if ye are not the ruin of it. And though it be so incorporated, as it were, in your Nature, that ye can hardly live without it, yet treat it as we do a gangren'd Member, an Eye infected with incurable Rheum, or a Leg rotten with a Gangrene; pull it out, cut it off, if thou wouldst save thy Body in Life.

Now there being so fair Probability for all these Senses, and they not being inconsistent; for in order to our not being ensnared by Sin, we are here advised to cut off all the *Occasions* of it; and all these *Three* are *Occasions* of Sin; *First*, Ungovernable Members of the Body. *Secondly*, Bad Company and Sinful Advantages. *Thirdly*, A Predominancy of Love to any Sins: I shall therefore consider them more particularly, and explain and press them, as if they were *three* distinct Exhortations from the Text.

I. *First* then, We are taught by these Words to govern the Members of our Body, and to deny our selves the Use of them whenever they would lead us to Sin. Our Saviour mentions only *the Eye and the Hand*, as being most Instrumental in Offences, that is, Temptations to Sin, particularly those he was speaking of, the Sins of *Uncleanness*.

But



But in the parallel Places which I quoted, the xviiiith of this Gospel, and the ixth of St *Mark*, he mentions *the Foot* too. And as I take it, these are mentioned rather as Principal Examples, than as a full Enumeration; for there are other Members which lead to Sin as well as these; particularly the *Ears*, by listening to wicked Discourse, and the *Tongue* by venting enticing and tempting Words introductory to this Sin. The thing which I believe our Saviour aims at, is the Bridling, Restraining, or Mortifying the Members of the Body, that they may not prove *Occasions* of Sin. For it is by them, as Doors, that Temptations enter, and by them, as Tools, they are put in Execution. But in his way of Describing this Mortification, he alludes to the Practice of those, who when the Eye, or Hand, or Foot, or Leg or Arm is gangrened, pluck out the Eye, and cut off the Hand, or Foot, or Leg, or Arm; in which way of Expression there is a tacit Reason included for this Practice. *q. d.* If Men for preserving this short Life, will deny themselves so far, as to endure the pulling out of an Eye, or the cutting off of a Leg or Arm, to save the rest of the Body, endangered by a gangrened Member, how much more should ye deny your selves the Use of a Member, which is in danger of ruining you both Body and Soul to all Eternity!

In handling this Subject, there are these *three* Heads of Discourse, which seem to be pointed at in the Words.

1. We have a Supposition here put, That the best Members of the Body, particularly *the right Eye and right Hand*, may offend us, that is, lead us into very Dangerous Sins.

2. We have the Duty of Mortification of these Members enjoined, called here *the pulling out of the right Eye, and cutting off the right Hand, and casting them from us.*

3. We have the Danger of suffering our Members to go on in being Instruments of Sin, pointed at in these Words; *for it is profitable for thee that one of thy Members should perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell.*

1. *First*, We have a Supposition put here, That the most useful and necessary Members of the Body may offend us; that is, may be apt to lead us into Dangerous and Damning Sins. *If thy right Eye offend thee, and if thy right Hand offend thee:* By *offending* is meant the leading into the Snare of Sin, and such Sin as may bring us to Hell; as appears by the last Words of the Text. Now this Supposition of our Saviour's is not a Supposition of a Thing that rarely happens; but it is the constant Fate of all Men, till they have learned to mortify their Members. To say nothing of the rest, What is more common than for the Eye and Hand here mentioned to be abused to sinful Purposes? The Eye by wandring from it's Business, and gadding abroad after unlawful Objects, lets in Lust to the Heart, which being harboured and entertained there, withdraws the Heart from God, and drowns the Man in sensual Pleasures. The first Entrance of these is by the Eye, which is first led aside after an unlawful Object; then fixes so long upon it, till Lust is conceived in the Heart. This was the Case with *David*; that which led him first into those horrid Sins of Adultery with *Bathsheba*, and Murder of her Husband *Uriah*, was a wrong Glance of his Eye from the

Roof of his House, and the letting his Eyes fix on that unlawful Object. And it is not only in the Sins of Uncleanness, but in many other Sins that the Temptation enters by the Eye. The Sins of Covetousness commonly enter that way, by beholding and fixing our Eye upon our Neighbour's House or Land, or Goods; and then admitting inordinate covetous Desires, which often put Men upon sinister Ways of acquiring and purchasing what they have a mind to. The Sins of Ambition too often enter by the Eye, which being dazzled with Grandeur, sets the Man's Invention and Industry to work to climb to what he aims at, and to throw down every Thing that stands in the way of his Pretensions and Designs. The Sins of Vanity, Luxury, and Prodigality too, commonly enter by the Eye, when we see others, how neatly and great they live, or how fine they are in their Dress, Furniture, Buildings, or Equipages; and from thence become unsatisfied, till we equal, or exceed them: Nay, *Solomon* speaks of the Sin of Drunkenness as entering by the Eye; (*a*) *Look not thou on the Wine when it is red, when it giveth his Colour in the Cup, when it moveth itself aright.* How many other Sins are taken in, in the Execution of all these Designs, it is impossible to reckon up; the Lies, Frauds, Thefts, Perjuries, Supplanting, Bribing, and all the long Train of Iniquities, that Lustful, Covetous, Ambitious, Vain, Prodigal, and Luxurious Men have invented and practised, for carrying on and compassing their several Projects and Designs. And as the Eye is a

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(a) Prov. xxiii. 31.

great Instrument in letting in bad Thoughts and Purposes, so the Hand is in the Execution of them, as well as the Foot, and Tongue, and Ears; for they all have their several Parts to act in this Scene of Wickedness. It would be infinite to enumerate the Particulars, how the Feet carry us into ill Company, how the Tongue is subservient to our wicked Designs, in corrupting the good Principles or Morals of others; how bad Impressions enter by the Ear, and are executed by the Hand. But I proceed to

2. The *second* Thing I proposed to consider in the Words, namely, the Duty of Bridling, Governing, or Mortifying these Members, called here *the pulling out of the right Eye, and the cutting off of the right Hand, and casting them from us*. These Expressions do plainly allude to the Method People take with a gangren'd Member, which is to part with it for saving the Body. But now the Design being upon the Mind, to cure the Diseases of it, this *pulling out*, and *cutting off*, cannot be understood literally, but figuratively; that is, in such a way as these Vices are to be pulled out, and cut off, namely, by the Mortification of them. This Duty of Mortification implies these Three Things:

(1.) A serious and firm Resolution of restraining the Members and Imagination from unlawful Objects.

(2.) An Avoiding all the Occasions of Sin.

(3.) The continual Use of all those Means whereby Sin may be entirely subdued in us.

(1.) I say a serious and firm Resolution of restraining the Imagination and Members from unlawful Objects, such as *Job* gives us an account  
of

of in himself, *Job xxxi, 1. I made a Covenant with mine Eyes; why then should I think upon a Maid?* and David, *Psal. xxxix. 1. I said I will take heed to my Ways, that I offend not with my Tongue: I will keep my Mouth with a Bridle, while the Wicked is before me.* And *Psal. xvii. 3. I am purposed that my Mouth shall not transgress. Concerning the Works of Men, by the Word of thy Lips I have kept me from the Paths of the Destroyer.* And though our good Resolutions are often found to lose of their Strength and Vigour, they must be so much the oftner renewed.

(2.) This Duty of *pulling out the Eye, and cutting off the Hand*, implies the careful declining and avoiding all the Occasions of Sin; the *not walking in the Council of the Ungodly, the not standing in the way of Sinners; the not sitting in the Seat of the Scornful; the removing far from the tempting Woman; the not coming near the Door of her House;* and the destroying the Instruments of Sin, as far as lawfully we may: As we find in the Nineteenth of the *Acts, ver. 19.* several Sorcerers converted to Christianity, that they might not lie under the Temptation of following any more those wicked Arts, nor others be tempted by their Skill, produced all their Books relating to those Diabolical Sciences, and burnt them, though they were estimated at a great Value, fifty Thousand Pieces of Silver.

(3.) It implies the continual Use of those Means whereby Sin may be intirely subdued in us. Those Means are of two Sorts; general, which serve for the Extirpation of all Sin, such as Prayer, Meditation, Self-Examination, the Study of the Holy Scriptures, Fasting, Temperance, Good Books,  
 Good

Good Company, Good Government of our Passions, and the like. And particular Means fitted for the acquiring of every particular Virtue; and perhaps adapted to our particular Occasions and Circumstances. The Manner too, *with some Pain and Violence to ourselves*, is here pointed at, in the Words, *pulling out, cutting off, and casting from us*. And so I come now to the

3. *Third* and last Thing I proposed to consider from the Words, namely, the Danger of Suffering any Member to go on in being an Instrument of Sin: *For it is profitable for thee that one of thy Members should perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell*. By this we see the vast Consequence of governing all our Members, so as that none of them may prove an Occasion of Sin. It is amazing and dreadful to think how easy and imperceptible almost the Beginnings of Sin are, but how fatal the End of it: It begins with a Glance of the Eye, a Touch of the Hand, a Sound of the Ear, a Word of the Tongue, a Motion or Dance of the Feet, an idle Visit, or some such thing: It proceeds to a sinful Delight, and then to actual Wickedness: From single Acts of which it goes on to an Habit or Custom, till the whole Soul is polluted. This bad Disposition of the Soul prevents the Influence of good Exhortations, and all the Means of Grace; or if they have any Operation, it goes no farther than some feeble Resolutions of Amendment, and these perhaps at some distant Time, which the Force of the evil Habit doth easily break through and dissipate; so that the Man is fast bound in the Fetters of his evil Customs, till Death seizes him, before he has repented and amended. And as Death seizes him,

so

so Judgment finds him, and commits him to Hell Torments, from which there is no Redemption. So that from the first to the last; a very small matter of Care in the Beginning, the restraining the Extravagancy of a Thought, the Keeping the Eye from fixing on a dangerous Object, the Keeping off of our Hands, or the declining a Visit; in short a little Good Government of the Senses and Members, might have prevented a whole Eternity of Misery in Hell. But the Mischief is, tho' all this is very Natural, the Devil doth so blind Mens Understandings, that they will not perceive or believe it, till it is too late: and then they would give a thousand Worlds, if they had them, to have their Life to begin again, that they might become New Men and Women. We may tell you over and over, till we are weary, that this Infidelity will be your Ruin; but at the same time may complain with the Prophet, *Who hath believed our Report?* O Mortify in time your unruly Members, and indulge them not in sinful Courses; better to suffer the Pain of a little Self-Denial now, than to suffer one Sin, which will certainly spread like a Gangrene, and at last, if not cut off in time, infect both Soul and Body, that they will be good for nothing but to be cast into Hell. Thus now we see what Abundant Care our Saviour has taken to stop up all the Doors and Windows, and Avenues, and Flood-Gates by which Sin enters. To Some, this Restraint upon the Eyes and Hands, and the former upon the Heart and Thoughts, may seem severe. But if ye consider the Matter right, ye will find it quite otherwise; it being much easier to keep out Sin, particularly the Sins of Uncleanness, of which our Saviour was here treating,

treating, from the Heart, and Eyes, and Hands, than indulging them there, to refrain from the outward gross Acts of Fornication and Adultery. It is easier to abstain altogether, than beginning any Sin, not to go on to the Finishing of it. So much for the *first* Sense of the Words I mentioned. The other *two* I must reserve to another Opportunity. I shall conclude with the Words of St Paul to the *Colossians*: (a) *Mortify therefore your Members which are upon the Earth, Fornication, Uncleaness, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness, which is Idolatry; for which things sake, the Wrath of God cometh on the Children of Disobedience.*

He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all Praise, Honour, and Glory, Might, Power, and Dominion, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

(a) Col. iii. 5.





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## S E R M O N XX.

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M A T T. V. 29.

*And if thy right Eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy Members should Perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell.*

Ver. 30. *And if thy right Hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy Members should Perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

**I**N a former Discourse on these Words, I shewed you that the chief Purport and Design of them, is to cut off all the Occasions of Sin, particularly the Sins of Uncleanness, of which our Saviour had been treating immediately before. This Advice he wraps up in a figurative Expression, borrowed from that Operation of Surgery, whereby we take off gangren'd Members, that the Contagion of them may not further spread to infect the whole Body. This in general is the Purport of the Words; but what particular Advices are aimed at under this general Exhortation, Interpreters are not so fully agreed. Without troubling you  
with

with any Opinions of the Probability of which I am not myself well satisfied; there were three Things I told you might very naturally fall under this general Advice; namely,

1. The curbing our Curiosity and evil Inclinations, as to the use of our bodily Members; the restraining, mortifying, and governing of them, that they should not act but by the superiour Direction of our Reason and Conscience.

2. The abandoning the Friendship and Conversation of such beloved Persons, and the Use of such beloved Things (though ever so dear and necessary, like a Right Eye, or a Right Hand) as betray us into sinful Courses.

3. The cutting off our Affection to all darling predominant Sins, which we love as well as a Right Eye, or a Right Hand.

Now having spoke to the *first* of these, the denying our selves as to the Use of the Members of our Bodies, whenever they would lead us into sinful Courses, I proceed now to the other Two Things meant by pulling out of the Right Eye, and cutting off of the Right Hand.

II. The *second* Thing then I told you might be meant by these Words, and which is likewise a cutting off the Occasions of Sin, was, that if any Person or any Thing, as dear to us as an Eye or a Hand, even a *right Eye*, or *right Hand*, should prove the Occasion of our falling into any sinful Course, that we should abandon the Friendship, Conversation or Enjoyment of such Persons or Things.

1. To begin with the *Persons*; there are many ways they may prove to us the Causes or Occasions of Sin; and many ways too they are to be cut off or laid aside; for one general Rule will not  
suit

suit all Cases. For sometimes, where we are joined in Society with evil Counsellors, if the Society be such as that we may lawfully break it off, it is the best way to abandon such Society, as soon as we can, and not to expose our selves to the Danger of being infected by their bad Company or Example. But if it is such a Society, which it is not in our Power to abandon at our Pleasure; as it may be the lot of a good Wife to be tied to a bad Husband, and of a good Husband to be tied to a bad Wife, and of a good Son or Servant to be tied to a bad Father or Master, in such cases the *pulling out and the cutting off*, is no more but the laying aside of their bad Counsel, or not obeying their sinful Commands, and the alienating our selves so far from them, as not to be seduced or influenced with their evil Advice or Example.

To comply then with the Precept of my Text, Interpreted in this Sense, we are to be guarded against several sorts of Persons, who like a Gangrene in the Body, are apt to corrupt and infect our Minds, and we are to cut off that Communication, from whence the Danger proceeds. The thing will be plainer from Examples.

(1.) *First* then, If there is any Speculative Atheist, Unbeliever, or Heretick, who is endeavouring to corrupt us in our sound Principles of Religion, whereby we are endangered, and tempted either to shake off the Fear of God in general, or to be seduced to any particular Vice or dangerous Error, if this Person have ever so many other good Qualities to recommend him, such as a pleasant Wit and Facetiousness in Conversation, a great Civility and obliging good Humour, and Temper, a great Dexterity and Skill in Business; nay, a fair  
outward

outward Shew of good Morals ; if he is a Person ever so useful, ever so necessary or pleasant to us, yet if he offends us, that is, if he proves the Instrument or Occasion of our falling off from our good Principles, or Virtuous Practice, we are to cut him off : I do not mean to kill him, or hurt him, God forbid ; but to shake off his Company and Familiar Conversation, and rather to deny our selves all the Conveniency and Satisfaction we have in him, than to run such hazard in our Souls.

(2.) If there are any of those they call Bon-Companions, who insinuate themselves into our Company, and flatter and assist us in our vitious Inclinations ; who, by their Principles and example, prove Instrumental in seducing us into the Ways of Wickedness and Vice ; as alas ! the World is full of such Agents for Immorality, these Persons likewise, though their Company may be taking and pleasant, yet are carefully to be avoided ; our Soul is not to enter into their Secrets ; we must shake them off, which cannot be better done than by forsaking their Society.

(3.) Of great Affinity with these, is another sort of Persons, with whom we are easily enamoured, and bewitched for their Wit and Beauty, and all the other unaccountable Insinuations of Love ; those of a different Sex, whom we admire, or who admire us, and have so great a Place in our Affection, that they may well be compared to a *Right Eye* or a *Right Hand*. Where Persons are thus entangled in a Criminal Love, it is impossible to reckon up how many ways they are led aside from Duty into the ways of Sin and Death. It is absolutely necessary, if we intend to save our Souls, that we break off all these Criminal Attachments,

tachments, that we *pull out this right Eye, and cut off this right Hand*; for otherwise it will quickly infect the whole Body, that is, it will poison all our good Notions and Principles, and bring us to Destruction.

All these we can cut off and cast from us; that is, we can utterly abandon their Society; and it is by much our safest Course so to do: For *evil Conversation corrupts good Manners.*

But (4.) there are other *right Eyes* and *right Hands* which we cannot cut off in that Fashion, e. g. if a Father or Mother, an Husband or Wife, one with whom we are inseparably linked in Society, which perhaps we cannot lawfully forsake, should prove the Occasion or Instrument of our Sin; in such cases it is sufficient that we lay aside Obedience to that Authority, when it enjoins ill Things, and Compliance with those dear Persons who would ensnare us in evil Practices; preserving still a superiour Love to God and our Duty, than to any of those Persons.

2. So much for the beloved *Persons*, whose Society we are to abandon, or at least whose Interest and Authority we are to reject, when they offend us. Next to the Persons, there are some *Things* which are apt to ensnare us in evil Courses, that may be resembled to *right Eyes and right Hands*, for their Dearness and Usefulness to us, which must likewise be *pulled out and cut off*. I shall give two or three Instances of this, which will make it plain what I mean, and from a due Observation of which, this Doctrine may be easily applied to all Instances whatsoever.

(1.) One shall be, a Profitable, but Unlawful Trade or Calling, by which a Man makes indeed

great Gain, but is convinced at the same Time that it engages him in divers sinful Practices.

(2.) Unlawful Arts and Ways of *getting* in a lawful Calling. It would be infinite to reckon up the many fraudulent Customs, which the Love of Gain, and loose Consciences have introduced almost into all Trades and Callings, and these, till parted with, engage Men in such sinful Courses, as prove most pernicious to their Souls.

(3.) The complying out of Interest and against our Conscience, with the sinful Terms of evil Times, or the sinful Humours of the Persons, on whom we depend for their Favour and Support.

(4.) The taking Gifts, Rewards or Services, which Byass us in administering either Commutative or Distributive Justice, and engage us either in Sins of Omiffion, or Commiffion.

In fhort, whatever it is that enfnare us in any sinful Courfe or Practice, by any lovely infinuation of Gain, or Honour, or Pleasure; or whatever it is that deters us from our Duty, by any threatning of Lofs, Shame, or Pain; though it be as hard to be parted with as a *right Eye*, or a *right Hand*, yet must be parted with, if we intend to fave our Souls. So much for the *Second Thing*, I told you was meant, by *the plucking out of the right Eye, and cutting off of the right Hand*; namely, the abandoning the Friendship and Conversation of such Persons and the use of such Things, though ever so dear and necessary, as betray us into sinful Courses. And so I go on to

III. The *Third Thing* which I mentioned as meant by this Advice; namely, the denying of our selves, by laying aside and quitting our Affection

fection to all *Beloved Sins*; which seem as difficult to part with as *a right Eye*, or *a right Hand*. In handling of this Point I shall do these three Things.

1. I will shew in what respect these Darling Predominant Sins may be compared to *a right Eye*, or *a right Hand*.

2. How apt our Affections to them are to lead us into sinful Courses.

3. How we are to *pluck them out, and cut them off*.

(1.) *First* then, Darling Predominant Sins may well be compared to *a right Eye and a right Hand*, upon this very Account, that they are so dear unto us, and that we set our Hearts so much upon them. I have told you before that the Expression is Figurative; now it is very natural to compare any Thing, that we highly value and dearly love, to such useful and necessary Members of the Body, as the Eye or Hand, especially *the right Eye* or *right Hand*. When God would express his tender care of the People of *Israel*, he says, *He kept them as the Apple of his Eye*. Deut. xxxii. 10. And when St *Paul* would express the great Love the *Galatians* once had for him, he says, *they would have plucked out their own Eyes, and have given them to him*, Gal. iv. 15. And when the Psalmist would express one dearly beloved by God, he calls him *the Man of his right Hand*. *Let thy Hand be upon the Man of thy right Hand*. Psal. lxxx. 17. And there is nothing more common in our Ordinary Language, than when we would express a huge value for a Thing, to say, *I would as soon give one of my Eyes, I would as soon part with my right Hand, as lose it*. In this respect

then those Darling Sins are *our right Eye*, or *right Hand*, because of the great Love we have for them.

(2.) These Beloved Sins are like a *right Eye* or *right Hand*, in regard of their seeming so necessary to us that we cannot live without them. Predominant Sins are often spared on this very Account, that Men think it is impossible for them to be without them: They are a necessary and intimate Part of themselves, as it were, like the most necessary Members of the Body; and therefore they never think of getting rid of them. But granting that they were such, our Saviour advises the cutting them off for all that, as we take off a gangren'd Member to save the rest of the Body.

Thus we see in what respect these Beloved Predominant Sins may be compared to a *right Eye*, or *right Hand*.

2. I proceed, as I propos'd, to shew how apt our Affections to them are to offend us, that is, to lead us into sinful Courses. There is nothing more plain than this by constant Experience: Our Inclination to Beloved Sins is like a Byass, which insensibly inclines us to the side of these Sins, whenever the least Opportunity presents. Take a Covetous Man for Example, I mean, a Man whose Heart is wedded to the World, who has that for his Beloved Predominant Sin; and it is easy to observe how it is continually ensnaring him in evil Practices. It tempts him to the neglect of Charity, Generosity, and Gratitude; and inclines him to all the Peevish, Anxious, Penurious, and even unjust ways of dealing with his Neighbours; nay with himself, and Wife, and Children, and Servants.



Servants. The first Thoughts that come into his Mind upon every Thing he sets about, are, what he shall get by it; and if he finds nothing to be got, though there be ever so much good to be done, it is most probable he will utterly neglect that Business; and if it be any thing that not only brings him no profit, but puts him to charge, it is a thousand to one, if any prospect of doing good will tempt him to it; whatever the shame of the World, or the fear that it may turn to his prejudice in other Respects may do. What I have said of Covetousness is true of Ambition, of Lust, and all other Beloved Sins; they are continually seducing Men from their Duty, and betraying them into numberless Sins of Omission, and Commission, according to the Quality and Nature of them.

3. The third Thing then I am to consider is, how we are to *pluck out this right Eye*, and *cut off this right Hand*; that is, how we are to break the force of these Darling Sins, that they may no longer prove Snares to lead us to Destruction. In speaking to this, I propose to do these *Three Things*.

(1.) To shew the Possibility of Conquering Darling Sins.

(2.) To acknowledge the Difficulty, and to consider the Causes of it.

(3.) To offer some Advices to facilitate this Matter.

(1.) *First*, I am to shew the Possibility of Conquering darling Sins. If it were simply impossible to conquer beloved Sins, God would never require it of us, and that under Pain of Damnation; for this would be exceeding Derogatory,

both to the Wisdom of God, in making Salvation to depend upon impossible Conditions; and to the Justice of God, in punishing Men for what it was impossible for them with their utmost Endeavours to help; and above all to the Goodness and Mercy of God, in requiring so very hard and impossible Tasks of Men. For I take it for granted, what I believe none will offer to deny, that God requires us to forsake all Sin, particularly Darling Sins, upon Pain of eternal Damnation, so as I need not be at the pains to prove it. And as we have a strong Argument for this from the Nature of God, who must be supposed to require nothing of us, but what with the help of his Grace is Possible to be complied with; so the many Examples of great Sinners of all sorts, who by the Grace of God have been reclaimed both of old, and of late, is a plain Demonstration of the Possibility of the Thing.

(2.) But *Secondly*; it must be acknowledged very difficult, and that for the following Reasons.

1. To make a Darling Sin, we must suppose a great Propensity of corrupt Nature; and to rectify Nature, it must be owned to be very difficult.
2. This Propensity is to be supposed to be confirmed by a vicious Course or Habit, and so to have become Customary; and Custom we know is a Second Nature; and the difficulty of breaking it off is compared to some natural Impossibilities.

(a) *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do Evil.* And though the Difficulty

or Impossibility here spoken of, is to be understood only as to Man's Endeavour, not God's; as our Saviour said in another case, *with Men this is impossible, but with God all Things are possible*; yet really there is something in the nature of Evil Habits, which makes them exceeding Difficult to be overcome beyond other Habits; for all endeavours of that nature, are like Rowing against the Stream; or like Rolling of an heavy round Stone up Hill: If ever we remit of our care, it rolls Impetuously down again; and we have all our Work to begin anew. Besides, The Pain, and Trouble, and Self-denial of it, is, literally, like the *Pulling out of an Eye, or the Cutting off of an Hand*. And yet after all it must be attempted, and perfected too, upon no less Pain than that of being cast into Hell, as my Text saith. And this leads me to

(3.) The *Last* Thing I proposed; namely, to offer some Advices to facilitate this Matter, and I shall have done.

1. The *First* Advice is, to be fully persuaded of the Necessity of parting with our beloved Sins, under the pain of our eternal and final Destruction. There is nothing has more kept Men from using Vigorous Endeavours this way, I mean against their Predominant Sins, than that they have fed themselves with false Hopes of being safe without it. In the Church of *Rome*, by Confession to a Priest, and obtaining his Absolution, and complying with some slight Penances, they hope to obtain Pardon of Almighty God, though they never forsake their beloved Sins. Many among our selves have such slight Notions of Repentance, that a bare Sorrow for Sin, without Amendment, passes for it, which

if joined with some warmth of Devotion, and slight Resolutions of Amendment, they think enough. Some are willing to Compensate for these Sins, by doing of Alms Deeds, and Compounding the Matter as it were some other Way. But all this is daubing with untempered Mortar; there is no such Thing as true Repentance, except we actually break off our Sins by Righteousness. The rest is all but some Imperfect beginning of Repentance: Sorrows, and Resolutions, and Wishes of Amendment; nay, faint Aiming at it, and feeble Endeavours after it, are far short of Repentance itself, which is a thorough Change of Heart and Life. It is called (*a*) *Repentance from dead Works*; which shews us, that if the Heart and Mind are ever so much Changed, unless our Sins are actually forsaken, it is no true Repentance. Let this then be believed as an Infallible Principle in the first Place; that there is no getting to Heaven while we continue in the Practice of these our Darling Sins.

2. Let us believe, that the longer we indulge our selves in Vitious Practices, so much the harder it will be to get rid of them. And therefore the sooner we begin, and the more diligently we hold on, our Success will be so much the surer.

3. Let us firmly believe, that there is no Impossibility in overcoming our most Favourite Sins. That it is very Difficult, I will grant; nay, Impossible purely by our own Strength; but there is nothing Impossible unto God; and we shall be able to do all Things, as the Apostle says, *through*

(*a*) Heb. vi. 1.

*Christ Strengthening us.* And the Grace of God will not be wanting to them who earnestly pray for it, and diligently use it.

4. Our chief care then must be to apply our selves diligently to the use of all the Means of Grace; Prayer, Temperance, Fasting, Studying the *Holy Scriptures*, Frequenting the Word and Sacraments, Avoiding the Occasions and Opportunities of Sin, and the seeking and embracing the Opportunities of the contrary Virtues, and by a Multitude of contrary Acts of Virtue destroying our evil Habits of Sin.

5. By all means we must not be discouraged, if we obtain not the Victory at First: No Foils will totally overcome us, if we are not Disheartened, but return Vigorously to the Combat. And this Combat must last as long as we Live; for our Lusts are never so totally subdued in this Life, but that they will be ever and anon endeavouring to rebel. We shall therefore have much Occasion for Patience, and for hope in God, that he will at last give us an entire Victory, and *tread Satan under our Feet*. In the mean time let us be still going on, and advancing towards higher and more perfect Degrees of all Duty; especially such Duties as are most directly Opposite to the Sins we are most endangered by. And let this very Consideration, that we are so Low in Grace and Goodness, and that we are so often surprized with Temptations, be improved to the Increase of our Humility, and to the enlarging of our Desires and Longings after Heaven; where our Victory over all our Lusts shall be most compleat, and we shall be entirely delivered, not only from all Sin, but from all Temptation to it; where our

Joys

Joys shall not be as here mixed with Sin and Sorrow, and frequent Interruptions of our good Courses; but there shall be an Eternal settled Habit of Consummate Holiness, and consequently pure and unmixed Joy and Happiness, of which there is little or none to be found in this Vain World. O could we be sensible of this now, we should think all the Acts of *Self-denial*, *the pulling out of a right Eye*, and *the cutting off of a right Hand*, the parting with our Dearest and most Beloved Sins, infinitely well bestowed, as being the sure only way to rescue us from Hell, and to bring us to the Possession of Heaven and Happiness. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant to us all, for the Merits, and through the Mediation of *Jesus Christ* our Blessed Lord and Saviour. *To whom, &c.*



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## S E R M O N    X X I .

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M A T T . V . 3 1 .

*It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his Wife, let him give her a Writing of Divorcement.*

Ver. 32. *But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his Wife, saving for the cause of Fornication, causeth her to commit Adultery: and whosoever shall Marry her that is Divorced, committeth Adultery.*

The First Sermon on this Text.

**T**HIS Subject of *Divorce* is of great Affinity with the Doctrine immediately going before, concerning the Duty of Chastity and Purity of Heart. For no doubt it is a great Part of Chastity to preserve the Institution of Marriage Sacred and Inviolable, to which the Limitation of *Divorces* has a mighty Tendency.

In the Words which I have read we have,

1. An Account of the Doctrine of *Divorce*, as it was Taught by many of the Jewish Doctors.
2. Our Saviour's Correction and further Explication of that Doctrine.

I. As to the *first*, the Doctrine of *Divorce*, as Taught by many Jewish Doctors; we may observe

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serve these two or three Things concerning it, from the Words.

(1.) That in the Manner of Introducing it, the Phrase is altered ; instead of *Ye have heard that it was said to them of old Time*, here is nothing but *It hath been said* ; intimating plainly that this Doctrine our Saviour is now Preaching against, has not such a Title to Antiquity or Universality as the other Doctrines he had explained before out of the Moral Law. *Divorces* at this time were become so frequent, contrary to the Primitive Design of them, that they were in use for any slight Cause : and this our Saviour notes, not as an Ancient, or an universal Doctrine, but only as a late Opinion of some loose Doctors among them.

(2.) After this Introduction, we have the Error itself touched at in these Words, *whosoever shall put away his Wife*, that is, *whosoever is minded to put away his Wife*, he need not trouble himself to find a just Cause to dissolve the Marriage, let him but observe the Law-Forms, and *give her a Bill of Divorce*, all the rest is of course. In short the Error was, that so they observed but the Forms of Divorces, which were very easily granted, and for very slight Causes in those Days, they had nothing further to answer to God or their own Consciences in that Matter.

(3.) In this great Contempt and slighting of the sacred Institution of Marriage, we have one good thing which was retained among them ; namely, the external Form of Divorce, which was a Deed in Writing, *let him give her a Writing of Divorcement*. It was not upon any sudden hasty Words that this solemn Contract was to be dissolved ; it was to be done gravely and deliberately

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in Writing, under Hand and Seal, before a Magistrate and Witnesses; and there were divers Things in this Practice, which tended to the Discouraging of it. For 1. Though it was permitted, it was never thought a reputable Thing, but had been marked by God himself, as a Thing that he hated, *Mal. ii. 15. Let none deal treacherously against the Wife of his Youth; for the Lord the God of Israel saith, that he hateth putting away.* 2. The Bill of Divorce was to contain the Cause of the Parting; which, if it was a slight one, as often it was, was only a Record of the Persons Ill-Temper, that would part so needlessly or groundlessly. 3. Though for the hardness of their Hearts, the Parties were permitted to marry again, yet Care was taken in the Law, that they should be for ever separated from one another; and therefore it is to be presumed, the Law designed that Divorces should not be made use of rashly and inconsiderately.

So much for the Doctrine of Divorce, as it was taught by the *Jewish* Doctors.

II. I go on next to our Saviour's Correction and further Improvement of that Doctrine. *But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his Wife, saving for the Cause of Fornication, causeth her to commit Adultery: And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth Adultery.* In which Words there are these three or four Things, which offer themselves to our Consideration.

1. We have here a total Prohibition of the parting of Man and Wife, excepting in the Case of Infidelity to the Marriage-Bed: For Interpreters generally mean **that** by the Word *πορνεία*, which we translate Fornication.

2. We have here a charging of all the evil Consequences of this parting, upon the Husband that turns away the innocent Wife; *he causeth her to commit Adultery.*

3. That notwithstanding the Strictness of the Bond of Marriage, the Covenant thereof is mutual, the Foundation of it being the Conjugal Fidelity they promise to each other; and where that is broken, the Marriage may be dissolved.

4. That it is unlawful to marry the divorced Person, who, if innocent, ought to return to her Husband; if guilty, is to be punished by the Deprivation of the further Benefit of Marriage while her Husband lives.

I. I begin with the first, and most considerable Doctrine contained in the Words, which I suppose will be enough for our Meditation at this time; namely, the Prohibition of the parting of Man and Wife; for it is no less than a Prohibition of putting away the Wife, to tell us that it cannot be done without such and such sinful Consequences as here follow. In speaking to this difficult Doctrine concerning Divorces, I propose to do these three Things:

1. To offer something by way of Explication, for our clearer understanding of it.

2. To offer something by way of Argumentation for shewing the Reasonableness of it.

3. To answer the chief Objections against it.

4. *Lastly*, if time will allow, I shall draw some Inferences and Corollories from it.

*First* then, For our better understanding of this difficult Doctrine, let us consider that our Saviour was not here treating of the Impediments of Marriage from the beginning, but only of the Dissolution

tion of lawful Marriages; particularly he is here correcting the too great Liberty the *Jewish* Husbands took, to put away their Wives for slight Causes. So that our Saviour meant not to intermeddle upon this Subject with other Things that are out of this Case; such as are many things that are brought as Objections against this Doctrine. For from this one Observation, it will follow; that all such Causes of Divorce are out of this Case, as would make Marriages null and unlawful from the beginning; such as marrying within the prohibited Degrees of Affinity, or Consanguinity, or Pre-contracts; or marrying with one that hath an Husband or Wife alive. For the sole Case our Saviour had here under his Consideration, was that of lawful Husbands and Wives; that they ought not to part, unless the Foundation of the Marriage Covenant be dissolved by Conjugal Infidelity. And for the same Reason we may account for the not excepting of divers other Cases, besides those which would make Marriage void from the beginning; such as are all the Effects of sudden Passion, which if it runs to such high Degrees, as that the Law will take hold of it, as Murder or Felony, such a Person will be cut off from Human Society; and therefore there was no need to mention a liberty of Divorce in such a Case. But if the Passions go not to such an height, as that the Law would take hold of them, there is Hope as long as the Parties keep true to one another, that they may be reconciled; at least, it is better that under a great many Hardships and Inconveniences, they should exercise the Duties of Patience and Self-Denial, than to open a Gap for the Dissolution of Marriage upon every Exorbitancy of Humour

Humour and Passion, which would have a great deal worse Effects, as shall be shewn by and by.

And further I dare not take upon me to determine, whether our Saviour allows of Divorce upon every single Lapse into the Crime here mentioned ; or whether he means it only of the Habit of it. It seems by the Words, that there is no direct Command, but only a Permission of Divorce ; for the Man is blamed here, if he flee to Divorce for other Causes ; but it is not expressly commanded to use it in this Case ; which looks as if the thing were left very much to the Consideration of a wife Husband, and the Circumstances of the Case, constituting the Degrees of Guilt, and determining the Consequences, by a prudent or imprudent Use of Indulgence or Severity. So that upon the whole Matter, our Saviour seems to have determined as much in this Case as it was fit in Prudence to determine : namely, That the Liberty of Divorce for any lighter Cause than the Marriage Infidelity, should be prohibited : But that even in that Case it should not be commanded, but left to the greater or lesser Aggravation of the Crime, from the various Circumstances of it ; and the Consideration of the Consequences of Severity or Indulgence, to himself, and his Wife, and Children, and the World abroad. I speak thus cautiously on this difficult Subject, because, as far as I can perceive, there never was, nor is any positive Command for Divorce. Even among the *Jews* it was but a Permission, and that Permission our Saviour here limits and restrains to the Breach of the Marriage Covenant ; but still it is but a Permission, and not a Precept : And in the use of Permissions, a great deal is left to Prudence and

and Discretion, and the Variation of Circumstances, and the Consideration of Consequences.

2. Having thus opened and explained our Saviour's Doctrine of Divorce, I shall need to say the less in Vindication of it, as carrying it's Reasonableness along with it. But for our further Satisfaction in this Matter, I shall lay before you some Grounds and Reasons for both Parts of our Saviour's Opinion, both that which cuts off the Permission of Divorce for all other Causes, and that which allows it for this of the Breach of the Marriage Covenant.

(1.) To some it may seem very hard, that for no other Fault but that of Adultery, a Man can put away his Wife. It is certain there are many other things, which make the married State very uneasy; some long Sicknesses, and natural Infirmities, as they wear out the Patience of the sick Party, so they prove often very uneasy to those that are about them, especially to the Husband or Wife, on whom the greatest part of the Care and Trouble is supposed to lie. Some Degrees of Impatience and Ill-humour, occasioned by the mutual Provocations given to each other, or the Difficulty of managing Children and Servants, and the many Troubles and Misfortunes attending Human Life, which do often exceed the Steadiness and Constancy of our Minds, are apt to occasion Melancholy and Discontent, and other more fierce and angry Passions. All Wastefulness, Prodigality, Slothfulness, Drunkenness, Tale-bearing, Scolding, Sluttishness, and Negligence, and divers other Vices and Infirmities, are commonly attended with abundance of evil Consequences, that bring on Poverty, and other Troubles, which fret

Peoples Minds, and make them uneasy to themselves, and all that are about them. In short, if some Men had their Will, they would have it as easy a thing to put away a Wife, as to turn out a Sojourner or Boarder, whenever they prove uneasy to them. But how unreasonable, and generally inconvenient such a Practice would prove, will easily appear, among other, from the following Considerations.

1. The great Ends of Marriage could never be attained, if Marriage were to be dissolved upon every slight Account. Let us consider a little what those Ends are, and whether they are generally attainable any other way than by making Marriage a mutual Contract for Life. (1.) As to the Procreation and Education of Children; could that be so well minded, if their Mothers were to be turned off at Pleasure, and they left to the Care of any strange Woman, that would look upon them as so many Encumbrances upon the Estate, and so many Rivals of her own Children? The World is very sensible already of the great Trouble and Inconveniency attending those Families where there are several sorts of Children, by divers Fathers and Mothers, which are but a few, occasioned by the natural Death of one of the Parents, and the surviving Parent marrying again, to what they would be, if every Humour, or common Infirmary, were judged a sufficient Cause of Divorce, and of flying to another Marriage. (2.) As to the being a Remedy of Lust, which is another good End for the Institution of Matrimony; if Marriage were such an uncertain loose Thing, subject to be dissolved upon every Humour and Caprice of the Partics, and new Wives as frequently

quently brought in, this would be no Confinement of Lust at all; but loose Men would change their Wives as frequently as they do their Mistresses, and Marriage would be only a Cloak for Whoredom, under a more specious Name. Certainly God Almighty's Design in the Institution of Marriage, among other things, was to confine that natural Inclination of Lust, that it should not be vagrant like that of the Beasts, but limited to the Ends of raising an Holy Seed, and likewise of living according to the Principles of Purity. (3.) If we consider married Persons as they are mutual Helps to one another, in managing a common Estate for the benefit of themselves and their Children; there is nothing can so well qualify them to answer that End, as the being linked together by an inseparable Bond, which joins their two Interests in one, and helps them to go on sweetly Hand in Hand together for their common Advantage, the Wife having no Prospect of thriving, but by the thriving of the Husband, nor the Husband, but that the Wife must be admitted to a share of his Prosperity; so that by this Christian wise Constitution, they are not so much as under the Temptation of drawing two contrary Ways, their Interests being perfectly one and the same. But now, upon a Supposition of these frequent Dissolutions of Marriage, each Party would have a different Interest to carry on; The Woman upon the Prospect of parting, nay, upon the bare Supposition of the Probability, or even Possibility of it, would think it but Prudence to provide for that time, and to feather her Nest, by pilfering and purloining from her Husband's Estate, as much as she could, while they are together. (4.) Marriage was instituted

for the mutual Love and Comfort of the Parties, that such a sacred Friendship might ease and sweeten the several Troubles and Uneasinesses of Life. Now its being a perpetual lasting Bond of Amity, contributes very much to this: They know now if they have any Differences, their best, nay their only way, is to make them up, for that they have no other Door to creep out at; and therefore, instead of driving on the Quarrel to a Rupture with a Person to whom they are tied for Life, their Reason teacheth them to be reconciled as soon as is possible, and to make each other happy in their Cohabitation, since it cannot be by their Parting: Whereas if it were otherwise, Quarrels will be made and fomented on purpose to make way for a final Breach.

2. As the Ends of Marriage could not be attained, (and then Marriage would be little better than a State of Concubinage) so this discrediting, and making light of Marriage, would be attended with divers other very great Inconveniencies. Particularly the weaker Sex, after having left Father and Mother, after having been deprived of their Portion and their Honour, must be turned off like a cast Mifs, to strive with Solitude and Discontent all the rest of their Life. The most Sacred Friendships must be dissolved, and in old Age, to be sure, when the want of Charms, and abounding of Infirmities, do most call for Help and Comfort, then should Mankind and Woman-kind be left most destitute. And which of the two, may it be presumed, would prove the better Help meet; Whether the Companion for Life, the inseparable Friend for better, for worse, or the Temporary Companion? But I have said enough



enough for this first part of our Saviour's Doctrine in this Matter, to account for the forbidding of Divorces for every light Cause.

(2.) I suppose there is no Occasion to say much for the other part of it, the permitting them in case of the Breach of the Marriage Covenant: for as in all Covenants, when one of the Parties breaks the fundamental Articles, the other is absolved if he pleases; so it is very fit that it should be in this great Marriage-Covenant; especially considering what an intolerable Hardship it would put on the innocent Party, to be obliged to love and trust one that betrays him; to maintain and provide for an adulterous Brood, and to have his Right made away to Strangers. It is certainly very necessary that something should be left in his Power to distinguish between a true and a false Wife; and there is no reason they should be both treated alike; and there is reason too, that a Distinction be made between such lesser Failings, which are consistent with Conjugal Honesty, and that Grand Treason of being unfaithful to the Marriage Covenant.

3. From what has been said, it will be no hard Matter to solve any Objections that can be brought against this Doctrine of our Saviour's. For, *first*, If it should be objected, that there are many other Causes of Divorce besides the Breach of the Marriage Covenant, such as natural Difabilities, Pre-contracts, the being within the Degrees of Affinity or Consanguinity, set by the Laws of God; Snares laid by the Wife to the Life of the Husband; insuperable Ill-nature, and proud imperious Behaviour. All this, upon the Doctrine already explained, may easily be accounted for: *first*, as for Pre-contracts, natural Difabilities, and Kindred

within the prohibited Degrees, it may suffice to remember what has been said, that our Saviour is not discouraging of the Impediments which hinder Marriage from being lawfully contracted, but of the Causes which are sufficient to dissolve a lawful Marriage. *Secondly*, As for Pride, Passion, Peevishness, and Ill-humour, while these common Infirmities do not extend to an Enmity to the Husband, or to a Breach of Fidelity to him, they are a proper Subject to be managed and cured by Patience, Good-humour, and a Mixture of Love and Authority, and the Advice of Friends; but the last Remedy must be reserved for the Fundamental Breach of the Marriage-Covenant. As for Attempts upon Life, they are such Odious and extraordinary Cases, that they ought not to be put; for I believe they scarce ever happen, but where the Woman's Affection is totally alienated, and she is likewise guilty of the other sort of Transgressions, for which Divorces are permitted: or if they break out into Overt-Acts, human Laws have provided other more severe Punishments for them, which will set the innocent Person at Liberty; or if they have not broke out into any dangerous Facts, but consist within the Bounds of angry Words, though very provoking, there are other ways of a Man's securing himself, and working a Reformation in her, provided she be true to him in the main, without going to the Extremity of a Divorce, or Total Separation.

I should now, in the last Place, draw some Inferences or Corollaries from what has been said; but that I may not too much exercise your Patience, I shall but briefly name them, leaving the further Improvement of them to your own Meditations.

I. First

1. First then, from our Saviour's retrenching a Permission concerning a great Liberty of Divorce, which, because of the Hardness of their Hearts, *Moses* had made to the Jews; we may observe, that our Saviour doth not only act the Part of a good Interpreter of the Law, but sometimes makes use of the Authority of a Legislator too.

2. From the Prohibition to part, except on the Account of Adultery, which dissolves the Marriage-Bond, we may observe how sacred and inviolable our Saviour would have the State of Marriage to be. He makes it a Covenant for Life; and this should teach us two Things. 1<sup>st</sup>. With what Deliberation, Prudence, and Circumspection, we should enter into that lasting State. If we be but to make a Voyage of six Weeks, or two Months, with a Master of a Ship, we inform ourselves carefully whether he is a Man of a good Temper or not; and if he is of a surly morose Disposition, we do not care, even for so little a time, to put ourselves in his Power; how much more Reason is there for this nice Enquiry in choosing a Companion for Life? 2. After we are engaged, this Doctrine teaches us with what Sweetness and Friendliness of Temper we ought to behave ourselves, so as to make the Journey of Life pleasant, both to ourselves, and to this our inseparable Companion. What a deal of Patience, and Good-humour, and Self-denial, is requisite to bear with the Uneasinesses, and to go pleasantly through the Difficulties of such a Relation, where, when we are once engaged, we must make the best of it; there is no Help but cultivating of it into a perfect Friendship to make it easy and pleasant. If this were duly considered, instead of snarling

and striving to thwart one another, married Persons would strive to win one anothers Hearts more and more, with all manner of Kindnesses and Endearments.

3. Since our Saviour has left such a Blot on that sort of Uncleanness committed by married Persons, that on Account thereof he permits the Dissolution of the Marriage, let this Doctrine deter us from all Approaches to those Sins. Let Husbands and Wives beware of every thing that may in the least create any Dryness or Alienation of Affection from one another. Let them beware of those pretended Friends, but really worst Enemies, that bring Oil to inflame, instead of Water to quench the Fire of Strife and Contention, when it is kindled between them and the Companion of their Life. Let every Approach of criminal Adress, so soon as it is perceived, be rejected with Abhorrence. As this is true Honour, so I am sure it is their true Interest, both with relation to this World, and that which is to come.

So much for the first Thing I observed from our Saviour's Doctrine of Divorce, namely, That it is totally prohibited to us Christians, except in case of Adultery. The other Things I observed from the Words, I must refer to another Opportunity.

Now God bless what ye have heard, that it may take Root in your Hearts, and bring forth Fruit in your Lives, to his Glory and your Edification and Salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. *To whom, &c.*

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## S E R M O N    XXII.

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M A T T. V. 31.

*It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his Wife, let him give her a Writing of Divorcement.*

*Ver. 32. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his Wife, saving for the cause of Fornication, causeth her to commit Adultery: and whosoever shall Marry her that is Divorced, committeth Adultery.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

**H**A V I N G, at the last Occasion, discoursed to you from these Words, there were two Things I observed to be contained in them.

I. The Doctrine of Divorce, as taught by many of the *Jewish* Doctors.

II. Our Saviour's Correction, and further Explication of that Doctrine:

After I had spoke to the *first*, the Doctrine of *Divorce* as taught by the *Jewish* Doctors, I came to the *second*, our Saviour's Correction and further Explication of that Doctrine. And in it, there were *four* Things I observed as worthy of our Consideration.

I. That

1. That our Saviour totally prohibits the Parting of Man and Wife, except in the Case of Infidelity to the Marriage-Bed.

2. That he charges all the evil Consequences of such a Parting, except in the Case aforeſaid, upon the Husband that turns away the innocent Wife ; *he cauſeth her to commit Adultery.*

3. That notwithstanding the Strictneſs of the Marriage Bond, the Foundation of it being the Conjugal Fidelity they promiſe to one another, where that is broken, the Marriage may be diſſolved.

4. That it is unlawful to marry the *Divorced* Wife ; who, if innocent, ought to return to her Husband ; if guilty, is to be deprived of the benefit of Marriage, while her Husband lives.

Now having at that time ſpoke to the firſt of theſe, our Saviour's prohibiting the Parting of Man and Wife, except in the Caſe of Infidelity to the Marriage-Bed ; I intend now to conſider the other Three as they lie in order : Which, together with ſome Practical Inferences, ſhall be the Subject of my preſent Diſcourſe.

II. The *Second* Thing then contained in the Words, is, that our Saviour charges the evil Conſequences of *Putting away the Wife*, except in the Caſe of Infidelity to the Marriage-Bed, upon the Husband that turns her away. *But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, ſaving for the Cauſe of Fornication, cauſeth her to commit Adultery.* From which Part of my Text, there are two Things we may obſerve. And I think they are both of great Uſe in a Chriſtian Life.

1. The *Firſt* is more general ; namely, that whoſoever commits any Sin, he is anſwerable,  
not

not only for all the Necessary, but for all the Probable Consequences of that Sin.

2. The *Second* is more Particular; namely, that those Quarrels of Man and Wife, which are attended with Parting, have very Terrible Consequences.

1. *First*, I say, whosoever commits any Sin, is answerable not only for all the necessary, but for all the Probable Consequences of that Sin. This I think is plain from the Words; for the Woman that was unjustly *Divorced*, might, notwithstanding, have abstained from Adultery; but yet, because by the turning her away from her Husband she was exposed to the visible Danger of that Sin, my Text saith, *he causeth her to commit Adultery*. We see here what Consequences of our Sins we are responsible for; not all the casual Consequences which no Forecast could foresee or prevent, but the natural and probable Consequences attending them. This, if duly considered, would be a mighty Preservative against all manner of Sin; for every Sin is attended with a great Train of evil Consequences, though at the same Time we are so blinded that we cannot see, at least cannot see beforehand, the Connexion between our Sins, and those evil Consequences. For Instance, in the Sin of Drunkenness, who can reckon up all the imprudent Words, and foolish indiscreet Actions, and dangerous Accidents that attend it; yet the Drunkard is answerable for them all. Nay, whether they do all actually happen or not; forasmuch as the Drunkard exposeth himself to them all, he is responsible for all: And in this Sin of the Text, he that by ill Usage, and Turning away, exposes a Wife to all the most desperate Shifts, though  
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by her own Virtue, and the Grace of God, she may be preserved from many of those Temptations, yet forasmuch as he does what in him lies to expose her to them, they may well be charged to his Account. And in this Sense it may well be said in my Text, *he causeth her to commit Adultery*: that is, he doth what in him lies to make her an ill Woman, though, by the Grace of God, she may chance to be preserved from it.

2. The *Second* Thing I observe from this Part of my Text, is, that those Quarrels of Man and Wife, which are attended with parting, have commonly very terrible Consequences. Our Saviour mentions one here of driving the Wife upon ill Courses, and desperate wicked Shifts. But some may perhaps reply, that though the Husband abandons and turns her away, he does not desire *her to commit Adultery*, but had rather, perhaps, that she should abstain from it. Yet while it is through his Means that she is driven into such Temptations, as are incident to one in her Circumstances, he is in a great Measure the Cause of both her Sin and Misery; not that she is to be excused from any Sin she is guilty of, but that he is Accessory to the chief part of the Criminalness of it. It is no hard Matter to Account how the unjust Husband, who turns away his Wife, is thus Accessory to the Crimes which commonly follow upon such an abandoned State. For, 1. The Dishonour and Disgrace of it, is apt to throw her into Despair, that she does not care what becomes of her; and is consequently tempted to lay aside that Vigilance and Guard she had formerly upon her Honour. 2. The Excess of Injuries and ill Usage perhaps is greater than any ordinary



nary Patience can bear; for Men and Women have commonly Patience but to a certain Degree, and if they are overloaded beyond their Strength, they can not deal with the Burden at all, but it perfectly masters and conquers them. It is true, Persons endowed with an eminent Degree of Holiness perform incredible Things in the way of Patience; to that Degree, that they learn, with St Paul, *in whatsoever State they are, to be therewith content; and they can do all Things through Christ strengthening them.* But these are rare Persons indeed; the far greater number of Mankind, nay, of People of an ordinary Measure of Goodness, are quite broke with an Excess of Hardship and ill Usage; and when their Patience is gone, they become an easy prey to Temptations. 3. The great want to which such an abandoned State exposes poor Women, and the Helplessness of their Circumstances, often drives many of them upon ill Courses, who, if they had continued in the favour of their Husbands, and had been supplied with the Necessaries and Comforts of Life, as other honest Women are, would never have thought of such desperate Shifts as they do then take to, when exposed to extream Want, without either Money or Credit. And now, though the Woman, although ever so Innocent at first, is not to be justified, if any ill Usage drives her to vitious Courses; yet who can deny that the Unjust Husband, who has abandoned her to all this Misery, and consequently to all these Temptations, is the principal Cause of her Sin, and as our Saviour says in my Text, *causeth her to commit Adultery.*

III. The *Third* Thing I observed to you in the Words, was, that notwithstanding the Strictness of

of the Marriage-Bond, yet if the conjugal Fidelity, which is the Foundation of that Covenant, comes to be overthrown, the Marriage may be dissolved. This is gathered from our Saviour's Limitation of *Divorces*, to the Case of Conjugal Infidelity. This is a mighty Blot our Saviour has left upon this Sin, and though he has not positively Commanded, but only permitted, in this particular Case, *the putting away of the Wife*; this sufficiently shews, that in his Esteem, it is one of the Heinousst of Crimes. For besides the Breach of Chastity, of which I had Occasion to Discourse at large from our Saviour's Doctrine upon the *Seventh* Commandment, there are so many other heinous Aggravations of this Sin, that it is no easy Matter to reckon them up. It is a Breach of the greatest Trust, entered upon by the most solemn Covenant; it is the injuring a Man in the tenderest Part, that which of all worldly Things, is dearest to him by God's own appointment; it is the doing what in her lies to bring in a spurious Brood into his Family; it is the Purloining from him all that goes to the Maintenance, Education, and Portioning of such Adulterous Brood; it is loading her self, and her Husband, and all her Relations, with Infamy and Disgrace. In short, it is such a Complication of Crimes, that no Reparation can be made for it: And therefore it is no wonder our Saviour leaves Room for this one Expedient, partly by way of Punishment of the Guilty, partly out of Relief and Compassion to the Innocent, partly for a Terrour to others, to scare them from the like Crimes: He leaves Room for it, I say; does not command, but permit it, that if the injuring Party can, by her Repentance and Amend-

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ment, make Peace with the Injured, it may be in his Power to shew Mercy as well as Justice.

IV. The *Fourth* and *last* Thing I observed in the Words, is, that it is unlawful to marry the *Divorced* Wife. This is Grounded on these last Words of the Text; *And whosoever shall marry her that is Divorced, committeth Adultery.* This at first may appear to be a harsh Saying; for if the Marriage is dissolved, why should not the Parties be free to marry again? But on the other Hand, the Reason of the Case, as well as our Saviour's Authority, is on the other side. For no Person can suffer by this Doctrine, but by her own Fault; for our Saviour would have none *Divorced* but for her Infidelity to the Marriage Covenant. Whoever is separated from her Husband on any other Account, is not lawfully separated, and therefore according to St Paul's Advice, let her be reconciled to her Husband: She is by our Saviour's Doctrine his Wife still, and therefore, *whoever Marries her commits Adultery*; and as it is in St Luke, *the Husband, if in that Case he marries another, committeth Adultery.* But if the Woman is *Divorced* for her Adultery, there is no Reason at all that she should be admitted again to another Marriage, during the Life of her Husband; for that would be to encourage all Wives, who are discontented with their Husbands, *to commit Adultery*, and get *Divorced*, that they might have another Husband when they please. It is certainly much better that such Criminals should endure this Punishment, to be deprived of the benefit of Matrimony, than that a Door be left open to all wicked People, to creep out of it when they please. And  
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therefore, though the Marriage is dissolved as to the innocent Party, yet a Restraint is still left on the Guilty by the Laws of *Christ*. There is some difficulty indeed to apprehend how the Marrying such a one should be the Sin of *Adultery*; it may be prohibited among the Sins of *Uncleannefs*; but how should it be properly *Adultery*, when perhaps the innocent Party is Married again; how the Marriage should be dissolved as to one of the Parties, and not as to the other, is not so easy to apprehend. But in answer to this Doubt, the Original Word *μοιχεύω*, which we translate to *commit Adultery*, as I told you before, is often used in a more general Sense for all Sins of *Uncleannefs*, and therefore may very well be applied in this place, to him who Marries a Person, that, by the Law of God, is debarred from Marriage.

Thus now I have gone through the several Parts of the Text; there are some Things I would briefly infer from the Doctrine which has been delivered, for encreasing our esteem of the Christian Religion, and for exhorting to a more careful Practice of several of the Duties of it.

1. *First* then, it ought to encrease our venerable Esteem of Christianity, that it takes such a particular care, above all other Religions in the World, of regulating that brutish Passion of Lust, and for the Procreation of Children in a way so Sacred, by making the Christian Marriage a Covenant of perpetual Chastity and Friendship. It is plain to any wise considering Man, how much the Christian Religion, in this respect,

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is preferable both to Paganism, Mahometism and Judaism. As for Paganism, the Generality of those of that Religion, were so far from contriving any Thing on this Subject that was Wise or Useful to Mankind, that their Religion is stuffed with Fables of the Whoredoms and Adulteries of their very Gods; and by their Example, they encouraged themselves in all manner of Lewdness: Not excepting the most unnatural Mixtures, such as the very Brute Creatures abhor. Some of the learned Greek Philosophers were so Brutal in their Notions of these Things, that they recommended a promiscuous use of the Female Sex, and gave loose reins to Mens Lusts: So that of a whole Country, they made a general House of Debauchery, by this Means not only corrupting the Minds and Manners of Men, but hindering both the Procreation and good Education of Children. And indeed they had so little Love to their Children, that it was a common Thing, most unnaturally to expose them to Perish. The Jewish Religion, it is true, rectified a great many of those Abuses, yet gave great Indulgences to the irregular Appetites of Mankind; for it allowed them, because of the hardness of their Hearts, both a plurality of Wives at one time, and the Power of putting away their Wives by a Bill of *Divorce*, for every trivial cause, and so does Mahometism at this Day. But the Christian Religion goes to the Root of all these Evils, and digs them up. It forbids wandering Lust in the very Heart and Thoughts, so far is it from approving the Practice of it. It sets up a sacred lasting Friendship between Man and Wife, as much more becoming

ing the higher Degree of Christian Holiness and Virtue; and forbids the Dissolution of Marriage by any Thing else but Infidelity to the Marriage Covenant. It is an easy Thing, at first Sight, to see which of all these Institutions is the most perfect; which does most equal Justice to both Sexes; which enjoys most of the Happiness of Friendship, and which tends most to the careful Education of Children, and the good Provision for the Family, and the quiet Government of it.

An happy Institution, where Christians live up to it; but where they take the Liberties of Heathenism under the name of Christians, this sacred Religion serves only for their greater Condemnation.

2. This Observation concerning the more exact Rules of Christianity, with Relation to the difference of Sex, doth naturally lead us to another Inquiry, why our Saviour thought fit to abridge Christians of those Liberties which were indulged to God's own People the *Jews*? This is plainly to be gathered from our Saviour's Doctrine. For those Liberties were not allowed them, because they were most rational in themselves: God who made all in the Beginning, designed one Help Meet, one Female to one Male, and he has wisely ordered it in his Providence since, that there is much about an equal Number of both Sexes born into the World; a sufficient Indication that by the Voice of Nature, equal Measures should be dealt to both Sexes, and that Polygamy and Divorce ought not to be allowed to one Sex, more than to another. What was the Reason then of that greater  
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Indulgence to the Jewish Men? Our Saviour tells us elsewhere, it was *because of the Hardness of their Hearts*. For God fits his Precepts to our Capacities. The *Jews* being bred up in greater Ignorance of a future State, it is no wonder if they were more carnal, and had they been tied up to such strict Rules, it would have drove them to more desperate Courses, of Poison and Murder, to get rid of their Wives. But the Light of the Gospel being far greater than that of the Law of *Moses*, the Promises and Threatnings of it much clearer, the Precepts more Spiritual, the Grace accompanying it more Plenteous, the Spirit of it, not the fierce Spirit of *Elias*, but the mild and gentle Spirit of *Christ*; we are likewise more capable of being weaned from the more Brutal Liberty indulged the *Jews*, and of being confined to the Primitive Institution of Marriage, which is a sacred Friendship for Life: And therefore this teaches us another part of our Duty and Character, which is, to Govern and Bridle our unruly Passions, and to become more fitted for Friendship and Society for Life.

3. It being very plain here, that the unruly Passions of Men are charged with all the terrible Consequences of them upon others, as it is said here, that *he who putteth away his Wife, saving for the cause of Fornication, causeth her to commit Adultery*; this should teach us to be very Serious and Considerate, and endeavour to have in View all the Consequences of our Actions, that we may see as far into them as is possible, and contrive them accordingly. Most of the Errors of those who are not down-right Unbelievers,

are owing to a short-sightedness, and want of Consideration. It is not much to be doubted, that if, when we are about to do an ill Action, we could have a clear Foresight of all the evil Consequencs that attend it, such a fearful Prospect would scare us from the Commission of it. But the Devil dresses up the Bait of his Temptations so Artificially, that we cannot discover the fatal Hook which is under them. Yet this is mostly our own Fault, for God has taken care to acquaint us that the *Wages of Sin are Death*; and the Experience likewise we have, both in our selves and others, is sufficient to fill us full of ghastly Apprehensions of the bad Effects of our sinful Courses; but we do not exert our Faculties; we suffer our selves to be so blinded with the present seeming Satisfaction there is in a sinful Course, that we look no further. It is true, this blindness is often from Unbelief, as it is said, 2 Cor. iv. 4. that *the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not*. But it is true likewise, that want of Sense and Consideration, is a great part of Unbelief, or of that which we call a dead Faith, a Faith which operates no more upon us, than if we had it not. This Incogitancy and Inconsideration is frequently occasioned by some strong Passion, which, like a mighty Torrent, carries the Thoughts all violently one way, that the Man cannot use the sedateness and calmness which is necessary to Consideration. It should be our part then to observe these strong Passions and Inclinations in our selves, and by giving our Minds a contrary By-ess, to bring them as near as we can to a calmness and coolness of Thought, by which we  
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may be enabled to View as far as may be, into the Consequences of our Actions, both upon our selves and others, that by that Means we may nip Sin in the Bud, before it produces its Fruits of Shame and Misery.

4. I shall make but one Inference more from the Subject of my Text; and that is, Since all Divisions between Man and Wife have such fatal Consequences, and seeing the Christian Religion encourages so much their Friendly Living together, and discourages so much their Separation; let all who are engaged in that State, study by all the Arts of Conjugal Love and Friendship, to make it easy and pleasant to each other. And in order to this, let them endeavour to possess themselves with a dreadful Apprehension of the Terrible bad Consequences of their having any lasting differences with one another: For besides the intolerable Uneasiness of such a Temper, it is attended with such a train of Evils, that I am sure the gratifying of no Humour or Passion can compensate. From hence it is, that being weary of their Home, they take to a perpetual gadding Abroad, to the Neglect of their Family and Business: This exposes them to ill Company and Temptations, and one Vice brings on another, and repeated evil Actions beget evil Habits. All this is followed with Loss of Honour, Disgrace, the Frowns of Friends, Want, Poverty, further Alienation of Affection, an irreconcilable Temper, Jealousy, Rage, Revenge, and all the bad Shifts which an abandoned, forlorn, desperate Condition puts them upon. All which might be prevented by a little Consideration, joined with Humility and good Tem-

310 *The Evil Consequences of parting, &c.* [SERM.  
per. To conclude, it is true in this, if in any  
Thing in the World, that our Duty and our  
Interest are closely linked together; and that,  
(a) *Godliness is profitable for all Things, having  
the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that  
which is to come.* If ye know these Things, hap-  
py are ye if ye do them.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy  
Ghost, let us render, as is due, all Praise, Ho-  
nour, and Glory, Might, Power, and Dominion,  
for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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(a) 1 Tim. iv. 8.



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## S E R M O N XXIII.

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### M A T T. V. 33.

*Again ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.*

Ver. 34. *But I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne,*

Ver. 35. *Nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool : neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the great King.*

Ver. 36. *Neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black.*

Ver. 37. *But let your Communication be, yea, yea ; nay, nay ; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.*

#### The First Sermon on this Text.

**I**N these Words, our Saviour gives us another Instance wherein the Righteousness of Christians must exceed that of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* ; namely, in the Matter of Oaths, to which these five Verses which I have read, do appertain. In them, for Methods sake, we are to consider these three Things.

1. What was good in the Opinion of the *Jewish* Doctors concerning this Third Commandment.

2. Wherein our Saviour finds it faulty and defective.

3. What further Improvements he makes on this Subject.

I. As to the first, it was certainly good in general that they condemned Perjury. *Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.*

II. As to the Second, our Saviour finds their Doctrine defective in the following Particulars.

1. In that they thought nothing else was prohibited in the Third Commandment, but the Sin of Perjury, which was a very lame Account of the Matter.

2. It was faulty in their Doctrine, that they allowed of Oaths by Creatures; of which four are here mentioned, Heaven, and Earth, *Jerusalem*, and their Head.

3. It was another Fault in their Doctrine, that they reckoned such Oaths as were not by the Name of God, not binding: whereas, though they were not in God's Name, yet they had so near a Relation to him at least, as having the Formality of a Promise upon Oath, that on that Account they ought to have been observed.

4. It was another Fault in their Doctrine, that by the Looseness of it, they had brought in a Practice of swearing in Conversation, and so made way for rash, idle, customary Oaths.

III. As

III. As to the third, our Saviour's further Improvements on this Commandment, they may be reduced to these four :

1. In that he condemns all rash customary Swearing in Conversation.

2. In that he disallows of all swearing by the Creatures.

3. In that he asserts the Obligation of such Oaths, as to Men, though defective in point of Duty to God.

4. In that, in general, he recommends such a Veracity, Honesty, and Sincerity in Speech, that we may be trusted upon our bare Word, without an Oath.

These are the Heads of our Saviour's Doctrine on this Subject, which, for your Memories sake, I thought fit to propose, designing likewise to bound my Discourse by the same Method, that it may not wander beside the Purpose.

I begin, first, with what was good in the Opinion of the Jewish Doctors on this Subject of Oaths, namely, that, in general, they condemned Perjury. *Again, says he, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.* This was their Sense of the Third Commandment; and though it was an imperfect one, there being several other things prohibited therein besides Perjury, yet in so far it was true, and deserves a particular Consideration, especially considering the great Abuse of Oaths in these latter Days, which have so debauched the Consciences of Men, that some want Instruction, and others Admonition in this Matter.

In order then to dissuading from the Sin of Perjury, which falls in properly to be treated of from this first part of the Text, I shall

1. Describe wherein Perjury consists.
2. Enquire what it is that leads and tempts Men to it.
3. I will shew the Heinousness of this Sin.
4. I will consider what salves us from Perjury, though we cannot always perform our Oaths.

I. First then, in order to the Description of this Sin, Perjury is either a swearing to a false thing at present, or afterwards, a voluntary Breach of a lawful Promise upon Oath.

To understand it then aright, we must know what an Oath is, and when we may be said voluntarily to break it.

An Oath is the calling God to witness the Truth of what we say, and it implies always in it, the exposing our selves to his Curse and Vengeance, if we swear false, and therefore it is justly reckoned the highest and strictest Bond or Tye among Men. The chief use of it is for finding out, and clearing the Truth in doubtful and controverted Matters: and those must be Matters of some Consequence, not light and trivial, in which such a solemn Act of Religion is used. Divines agree that the chief Properties of an Oath, are those three mentioned by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, ch. iv. 2. *Thou shalt swear the Lord liveth in Truth, Judgment, and Righteousness.* The first Condition *Truth*, excludes not only all Lying, but all Trick, Deceit, or Equivocation; and therefore it is necessary that Oaths be taken in the plain and most obvious Sense of the Words, such as is honestly understood by both the Giver  
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and Taker of the Oath. The *second* Condition is *Judgment*; for it is not sufficient that what we swear be true, unless it be a thing of that Weight and Importance, that it require the Gravity and Deliberation of an Oath. This Condition is an Act of Prudence, from which we determine whether the thing we take our Oath of, be a thing of that Consequence, that it deserves to be proved with so great Solemnity. They transgress this Condition, who swear rashly and customarily, and without due Consideration and Reverence of that holy Name of God which they invoke. The *third* Condition is *Righteousness*; for it is not sufficient that it be true, and a thing of Weight that we swear, unless it be likewise a just thing in itself; and therefore *David's* Oath to cut off *Nabal*, and all his House, and *Herod's* Oath, in the Sense he meant it, as extending to all things just and unjust, were certainly unlawful Oaths, as being unrighteous in their own Nature.

Some further Light into the Nature of Oaths may be afforded, by considering the common Division of them into Assertory and Promissory ones. The *Assertory* relate chiefly to the Time present and past, and require no more but a present Truth in him who takes them; but the *Promissory*, besides the present sincere Intention to perform what we promise upon Oath, require also our after-Care and endeavour truly to perform it, according as we have promised.

From all which, it will be no hard matter to determine wherein the Sin of *Perjury* doth consist: For as, in general, it is the calling of God to be Witness to a Lye; this in particular is done these several Ways. (1.) When we as-

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sert and testify, upon Oath, a thing to be true, which we know to be false; when we swear, for Example, that we saw, or heard, such things done or spoken, which we know we did not see or hear. (2.) When we assert and testify upon Oath a thing to be true, of the Truth of which we are not fully assured; nay, though the thing should happen to be true, yet if we swear it as of our own Knowledge, when we know no such thing, we incur the Sin of Perjury, because for ought we knew, it might have been false. (3.) When we declare upon Oath, such a thing to be our Judgment and Sense of our Minds, which really is not so. (4.) When, in giving our Testimony as to any matter of Fact, we wilfully suppress some material part of the Truth, and aggravate other parts of it, or endeavour so to disguise, and change our account of Facts, as that the Judges and Juries may not have a right Notion of the matter in question, (5.) They that Promise upon Oath, what they do not intend to perform, are *ipso facto*, guilty of Perjury, because they call God to witness a false thing, where the Intention of their Minds does not concur with the Words and Meaning of their Oath. (6.) They are likewise guilty of Perjury, who, though they promise with a sincere Intention to perform, do afterwards, of their own accord, fall off; when the thing they promised, is both lawful, and in their power to perform it. 7. *Lastly*, They are guilty of Perjury, who make use of Tricks and Equivocations, and put forced Senses on the Words of an Oath, or look for Evasions, contrary to the plain and genuine Sense of the Words.



So much for the Description of Perjury.

II. The Second Thing I proposed to consider, is, What it is that leads and tempts Men to it. And here now to omit that grossest Temptation of Bribery, by which a Man barefacedly sells himself to work Wickedness; There are these three too common Occasions of this Sin, Rashness, Partiality, and Self-Interest.

(1.) *Rashness*; and this is the most incident to your common customary Swearers, who are ready to back every thing they say with an Oath, without considering either the Truth or Importance of it. Such People, as often as they tell a Lye, if they perceive it is not readily believed, are apt to back and confirm it with an Oath, and so must frequently be guilty of this horrid Sin of Perjury; a Consideration which, I think, ought to be of great Weight to deter every one from the Sin of common Swearing, because it does so naturally lead to Forswearing.

(2.) Another great Inducement to the Sin of Perjury, is that of *Partiality*; when we come to take our Oaths, with our Minds byassed with Hope or Fear, Favour or Hatred, Affection to one, or Prejudice to another; for all these we ought to be fortified against, whenever we go about to take an Oath in Judgment; for if we find they are apt to blind and byass us, we should either decline giving of our Evidence, or at least confess the Byass that is upon us, that it may have its due Weight with Judges and Juries. But,

(3.) The most common Temptation to Perjury, is that of Self-Interest; some Place of Profit or Trust, which cannot be come at without taking such

such and such Oaths, contrary to a Man's own Sentiments, and binding him, perhaps, to such Things as he has no Mind to perform. How many State-Hypocrites are there, who take Oaths to the Government which they inwardly hate, and would be glad of an Opportunity to pull down, and make no more of an Oath, than if it were a common Ceremony? Nay, some have steeled their Consciences to that Degree of Hardness, that it is really not possible to contrive any State-Oath that they will not swallow; and when they have done it, they are no faster bound than they were before; for they have learned to play fast and loose with all Oaths whatsoever, and to be swayed by no other Consideration in them, than that of Self-Interest. One unhappy Occasion of this debauching of Mens Consciences, has been the many contradictory State-Oaths which have been imposed for these last Seventy or Eighty Years; which are found by Experience to catch only some of the more strict and conscientious sort of People, from whom there is the least Danger, while the more Atheistical swallow all, and keep none. It were much to be wished, the Publick were more tender in imposing, and private Men more conscientious in keeping their Oaths, that the Religion and Veneration of an Oath might be retrieved; and that Men of Principles might be, at least, upon as good a foot in this World, as others that have none; and that instead of the Tests of Oaths, which have been found to be so slender, the Trial were rather put upon Mens actual Obedience or Disobedience to Governments. But God forbid that we should reckon all perjured, who have been obliged to take the Oaths to several

ral Governments, though very unfriendly to one another; for though an Oath, generally speaking, is a very strict Bond, yet there are several things that save from Perjury, when the Matter of the Oath is changed, without any fault of ours, as shall be shewn by and by, when I come to the last Head I propos'd on this Subject. But to go on in our propos'd Method.

III. The third thing to be consider'd, is the Heinousness of the Sin of Perjury. In order to which, I offer the following Considerations.

(1.) That it is a great Proof of a profane Atheistical Mind. Other Sins seem to proceed more from a Forgetfulness of God, and a Want of a due Sense of him; but this invoking him directly to be a Witness to a Falshood, doth necessarily suppose a much higher degree of Impudence in sinning, and affronting God, as it were, to his Face. More directly it attacks his *Veracity*, since he is called in to witness a Lye; it attacks *his Omniscience*, since he, the Searcher of Hearts, is appeal'd to, on purpose to cover our vile Hypocrisy; it attacks *his Justice*, by appealing to him to conceal and cover Injustice; and it attacks *his Power, his Omnipotence, and his Vengeance*, by challenging him, as it were, to exert them upon this so provoking Occasion. *Lastly*, It attacks him as he is *Governour of the World*; for an Oath being the last Result or Appeal to God the supreme Governour, when all other Human Proof fails, Perjury is, as it were, a Defying of him in that Capacity, and a downright rebelling against the King of Kings.

(2.) As it is highly affronting to God Almighty, it is likewise highly injurious to Mankind;

kind; for an Oath being of so universal Use among Men, in transacting Matters of the highest Consequence, whosoever goes about to make it vile and cheap, does what in him lies to destroy the highest Bonds of Faith and Truth among Men. If the Religion of an Oath is once prostituted, what way is there left for Princes to confirm their Leagues and Treaties, and Articles of War and Peace with one another? Have they any other Superiour to appeal to than God? or any firmer thing to depend on than an Oath? The very Heathen were so sensible of this, that let the loss be what it would, they would observe the Religion of an Oath in their mutual Promises, though to their Enemies. There are some famous things to this purpose in the *Roman History*. *Regulus* returned to the Enemies, rather than he would break his Oath, though he was sure to be put to a cruel Death; and some that promised the Enemy upon Oath to return; and would have eluded it by a Trick, (for pretending to forget something, they immediately returned unto the Enemies Camp, and this they would have past for the Accomplishment of their Oath) but it was rejected by the Senate as an unworthy Trick, and they were sent back to the Enemy. If Perjury once takes place, how shall the Oath of God bind between Prince and Subjects? Or how shall Controversies be decided, or the Truth be found out in doubtful Cases? Nay, if Perjury prevails, then farewell all Truth, and Honesty, and Sincerity among Men; for he that will not regard his Oath, to be sure will as little, or less regard

regard his Word; so that this one Vice tends to the utter Diffolution of Human Society.

(3.) As no Sin has a worse Influence on all Parts of our Duty, whether to God or Man, so there is no Sin more expressly forbidden, or more grievously threatned in the Law of God. It is observed, that Idolatry and Perjury are the only two Sins to which an express Threatning is annexed in the Decalogue. And particularly it is observed, that Perjury is threatned with the Destruction, not only of the Man's Person, but of his House and Family; nay, brings great Calamities on whole Countries, as by these Texts may appear; *Mal. iii. 9. I will come near to you in Judgment, and be a swift Witness against the Swearer.* And *Zech. v. 4.* Speaking of the Curse that goeth over the whole Earth; God, says he, *will bring it forth, and it shall enter into the House of him that sweareth falsely by the Name of God, and shall remain in the Midst of his House, and shall consume it:* which is interpreted, by good Commentators, that the Judgment of God, for this Sin, undermines Estates and Families to the utter Ruin of them. And elsewhere it is said, that *because of Oaths the Land mourns.* And in the New Testament, to keep us from all approach to this Sin of Perjury, our Saviour utterly forbids all Oaths in our common Communication or Conversation.

IV. And thus now I am come to the *fourth* and *last* Thing I proposed to consider on this Head, namely, What saves us from Perjury, though we cannot always perform our Oaths.

And this Consideration belongs only to promissory Oaths, which besides the sincere Intention at present, require a future Care and Endeavour to perform. But yet, notwithstanding our best Care and Endeavour, sometimes it may not be in our Power, by any lawful Means, to bring it to pass; and sometimes, if it were in our Power, the Circumstances may be so altered, that it is not fit to execute what we have promised, if we would. I shall, out of the best Casuists, lay down some Rules for this Matter, and so have done.

1. *First*, They who are under the Command of a lawful Superiour, cannot execute an Oath or a Vow, in any thing to which his Consent is required, if he expressly dissents from it; and the Reason is plain, because by no Oath of ours we may injure another; as it would be a plain injuring him, if, not being at our own Disposal, we should take upon us to dispose of ourselves as free Persons. In the 30th *chap.* of the Book of *Numbers*, there is a Case put of a Maid's Vow while she is in her Father's House, and of a Wife's Vow; and it puts it expressly in the Power of the Father of the Maid, and the Husband of the Wife, to null those Vows. And, by a Parity of Reason, all our Oaths and Vows must be understood to be meant with this tacit Limitation, *as far as it is in my Power*: For my Oath gives me no new Power which I had not before, nor deprives my Superiour of any Power he had over me before I swore.

2. When the Matter, or Substance of the Thing, fails, about which the Oath was given, then the Oath it self is no longer binding, *e. g.*  
If

If a Man, at his Entry upon any Office of Trust, should take his Oath that he will faithfully discharge that Office, there is no doubt, when he comes to be turned out of that Office, or when he lawfully resigns it, he is likewise free from the Obligation of that Oath. So a Soldier that takes the Military Oath to any Prince or Commonwealth that employs him, when Peace is made, and he comes to be disbanded, he is likewise free from that Oath.

3. When we give our Oath to another, and promise him something for his Benefit, if he pleases to forgive that Obligation in whole or in part, no doubt we are then absolved from our Oath, or such a part of it, provided no Harm be done to any other. But this holds only in such Oaths and Promises, where no Sin or Scandal will follow upon the Dissolution of them. For if it be a Sin to dissolve them, it is not the Consent of the Party with whom we contracted, that will make it lawful; as in the Case of Marriage, which God has given us leave to contract, but not to dissolve, even by the Consent of Parties.

4. If the Oath we take to another, be either expressly, or in it's own Nature, conditional; that is, with a Proviso that something be done of his part; then, upon his failing as to his part of the Condition, we are likewise absolved from ours.

But it is otherwise where both Parties absolutely promise one another, and not conditionally, for there the Failing of one, doth not absolve the other.

5. *Lastly*, Whatever we promise, even upon Oath, must be understood with a Proviso that it

be both possible and lawful for us, and that no unforeseen thing happen, which may make our observing our Oath an Evil, or uncomely, dishonest Action: For Example, if I swear to make such a Man my Heir, but find afterwards that he is in a Plot against my Life; if a Man swears to marry such a Woman, and afterwards she proves with Child by another Man; for if there be nothing of Fraud of his side who breaks his Oath, but all the Fault is from such Variation of the Circumstances as never fell under the real Design and Intention, but perhaps contrary to the real Design and Intention, it is no Perjury.

But it is needless to insist further in reckoning up such Cases. The best way to avoid Perjury in all Cases, is first to abstain from all rash customary Oaths of our own. *Secondly*, To be very grave and deliberate in what we affirm or promise upon Oath, at the Command of our Superiours. *Thirdly*, To take Oaths in the plain genuine Sense of the Words. *Fourthly*, To endeavour sincerely and honestly, in our several Stations, to keep them, but not to think our selves obliged to flee to unlawful Means, or to raise Rebellions, or make any Disturbance in Governments upon that account. *Lastly*, When we are in Places of Power, to be tender of other Peoples Consciences, that we may have no hand in driving them to Perjury. So much for the *first* thing I observed in the Words, What was good in the Opinion of the *Jewish* Doctors, in their Interpretation of the Third Commandment, namely, that they condemned Perjury. As for the other two, wherein they were faulty, and what further Improvements our Saviour makes on this Subject, I must refer



XXIII.] *of Perjury.* MATT. V. 33. 325

refer them to some other Opportunity. God of his Mercy keep us in the fear of his Name, and direct us to all Truth, for his dear Son Jesus Christ's sake. *To whom, &c.*



Y 3

S E R M.

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## S E R M O N XXIV.

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M A T T. V. 33.

*Again ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.*

Ver. 34. *But I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne,*

Ver. 35. *Nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool : neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the great King.*

Ver. 36. *Neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black.*

Ver. 37. *But let your Communication be, yea, yea ; nay, nay ; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

**I**N a former Discourse on these Words, I summed up the Contents of them in these three Heads.

I. We have here what was good in the Opinion of the *Jewish* Doctors concerning the Third Commandment.

II. Wherein our Saviour finds their Opinion faulty or defective.

III. What

III. What further Improvements he makes on this Subject.

As to the *First*, it was certainly good in general that they condemned Perjury. *Ye have heard, it hath been said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.* But having discoursed of this, at the last Occasion, I shall not spend time in Repetition, but proceed to the

*Second* thing contained in the Words; namely, wherein our Saviour finds the Doctrine of the Jewish Teachers faulty or defective, in what they taught upon this *Third* Commandment. And it was faulty or defective in these four Particulars: Which I intend to speak to at this time.

1. In that they taught, that nothing else was prohibited in the *Third* Commandment, but the Sin of Perjury: Which was a very lame Account of the Matter.

2. It was faulty in their Doctrine, that they allowed of Oaths by Creatures, of which several are here mentioned.

3. It was another fault in their Doctrine, that they reckoned such Oaths by Creatures not binding, a very few excepted; whereas, notwithstanding the defect of their not being in God's Name, they ought to have been observed.

4. It was another fault in their Doctrine, that by reason of the looseness of it, they had brought in a practice of Swearing in common Conversation, and so made way for Rash, Profane, Customary Oaths.

I. The *First* Thing I take notice of, as defective in their Doctrine upon the *Third* Commandment, is, that they Taught that nothing else was

prohibited in it, but the Sin of Perjury: Which was a very lame Account of the Matter. For though I confess the Words of the *Third* Commandment, *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*, signify principally, thou shalt not swear falsely; they signify likewise, thou shalt not swear vainly or unnecessarily. So that all rash, trifling, superfluous Oaths, are forbidden as well as false ones. The Reasons of this Doctrine may be gathered from the Consideration of God, whose Testimony we invoke; from the Sacredness of an Oath, which ought not to be prostituted to common Uses; and from the Consideration of our selves, who ought to keep up better the Gravity and Dignity of our Speech, than that it should need to be backed with a common use of Oaths. Let us consider these a little more particularly.

(1.) *First*, I say, the Consideration of God should deter us from the common use of Oaths: for he is not a common Witness to be called in upon all trivial Occasions. For as among Men, we choose rather to lose a small trifling Business, than to give a great Man the trouble to come in, and be an Evidence to it; so it is much more for the Honour of God, that he be not called in, except in a Matter of Weight and Difficulty. This the very Heathens saw by the Light of Nature, and therefore prescribed it as a rule in all their Plays, and Poems, or other Compositions, never to introduce any of their Gods, but upon a very weighty Occasion.

*Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus  
Inciderit.*

Two or three Things, at least, for the Honour of God, should be minded in this Business of an Oath.

Oath. 1. That it be a matter of Weight and Consequence. 2. That it be a matter of Difficulty, which cannot be cleared by other Proofs. 3. That it be a matter necessary to be decided, and that we have no other way left to do Justice, or to make an end of the Controversy. For if it be a trifling Business, it is a lessening of the divine Majesty, to invoke his Testimony. Or if it be a Thing easy in itself, and capable of other Proof, that other Proof should be made use of, and the Appeal to God reserved for the last Result. Or if it is a Thing no way necessary to be decided, it is then in the Nature of those Secrets which are not to be published; or those small Things for which an Action doth not lie.

(2.) The Sacredness of Oaths should deter us from making them cheap and common: For as in Human Judicatures for small Matters there are inferiour Courts, and it is not allowed that the superiour Courts be troubled, except in Cases of Moment or Difficulty; so God hath set such an Honour upon an Oath, which is an Appeal to himself, that it must be a matter of great Consequence, in which this last Result is allowed. For to make Oaths cheap and common, is to make a Sacred Thing Profane, and directly to spoil an Oath of all the Reverence due to it, and consequently to make it an useless Thing in the World.

(3.) A due regard to our own Dignity and Reputation, should make us abstain from unnecessary Oaths; for he who has strictly kept up his Honour and Reputation, will be believed upon his Word without an Oath; and there is nothing will sooner prostitute any Man's Credit, than if he himself seems so doubtful of it, as to think all his Words want to be backed with Oaths.

II. The *second* Thing I took Notice of as faulty in the Doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees in the Text, is, that they allowed of Oaths by Creatures, of which several are here mentioned, particularly *Heaven*, and *Earth*, *Jerusalem*, and *their Head*. As far as I can gather, there were two Occasions of this part of their teaching. One, that they were convinced it was an excellent Thing to make use of the Name of God in Oaths, as in the Eagerness of their Mind, they sought it to make use of an Oath. They thought (so far thought justly) that the Name of God himself was to be reserved for their most solemn Sorts of Oaths, such as were those they took in Judgment. But the using of inferiour Oaths for lesser Matters, was a Thing purely of their own Invention, not only without, but expressly contrary to God's Prescription. Another Reason for their flying to these inferiour Oaths, was, that they took them to be not so binding, and therefore made bold, upon a Pinch, easily to break through them; so that they were a commodious Invention to colour their Fraud or Falshood. But now, that this swearing by the Creatures was a fault, may be easily shewed, both from Scripture and the Reason of the Thing. As for Scripture, I shall quote but that one Passage, *Jer. v. 7. How shall I pardon thee for this? thy Children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no Gods.* As to the Reason of the Thing, it must be confessed, that no Creature can be proper to be invoked as a Witness of the Sincerity of one's Heart, because it has not those Properties requisite for it, such as Omniscience to know, and Omnipotence to execute Vengeance, and unerring Justice to decree Righteously.

ously. Whenever then Creatures are sworn by, it must not be with relation to themselves, but to the Creator of them; and it is acknowledged that it is safer not to swear by them at all, since it cannot be done but in a figurative Manner, which it is not easy always to distinguish.

And as for the Reasons of this Practice. I. That it is an indecent Thing, for every Thing to make an Appeal to God, and therefore in smaller Matters they would do it to the Creatures; it is indeed a very good Reason why in small Matters we should not swear at all, but content ourselves with a bare Affirmation, or Negation: but it is no Reason for our finding out an inferiour Sort of Beings to swear by, for we may as well, for the like Reason, pretend that it is necessary in all our ordinary Addresses to pray unto Creatures, reserving our more extraordinary Devotions for Almighty God. And the other Reason for swearing by the Creatures, that such Oaths might be easier broke, is yet worse; as being both more highly Derogatory to Almighty God, and more Injurious to Men, by making that an Instrument of Fraud, which is the great Bond of Truth. And this leads me to the third Thing which our Saviour faults in the Jewish Doctors, namely,

III. That they reckoned such Oaths by the Creatures (a very few excepted) not binding. It is true, this is here but by Implication; for our Saviour, while he brings his Reasons for the Obligation of all these Oaths, supposes that they thought they were all to be eluded, as having no relation to God. This Doctrine we have more expressly elsewhere, *Mat. xxiii. 16. Wo unto you, ye blind Guides, which say, whosoever shall swear by*  
*the*

*the Temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the Gold of the Temple, he is a Debtor.* And it follows there how they made their Oaths, *by the Altar, and by Heaven,* nothing; that is, thought they were of no Obligation. It may perhaps seem strange, that though our Saviour condemns these Oaths by Creatures, as to the form of them, he should yet stand up for the Obligation of them; but if we consider the great Corruption which was brought into Mens Morals, by making elusory Oaths, we shall not at all wonder at this Doctrine. For where there was a Promise or Vow, seemingly confirmed by an Oath, the Person to whom the Promise was made, depended on the faithful Performance of it; but then, truly, by a secret Doctrine which these Doctors reserved among themselves, like some of our loose Casuists, they slunk their Neck out of the Collar, and put a trick upon the Person to whom they seemed thus to promise upon Oath. It can be no Disparagement, but a very great Commendation of the Christian Morals, that they discourage and condemn every Thing that looks like Trick, and Fraud, and Deceit; for if it were but a simple Promise, cloathed with no Ceremony of an Oath at all, it ought to be observed; and much more where an Oath intervenes, though defective as to the essential Forms of it. If a Heathen should swear by his false Gods, and promise us any thing upon such an Oath, we should no doubt expect the Performance; and though he is guilty of Idolatry, in swearing by them that are no Gods, he would be further guilty of Perjury, if he should not take himself to be bound by such an Oath. Thus we find *Isaac*, a Believer, entering into a Co-

venant



venant with *Abimelech*, King of *Gerar*, an Unbeliever, which Covenant was mutually ratified by Oath, *Gen.* xxvi. 28. And another Covenant we find between *Jacob* and *Laban*, confirmed too by Oath, though *Laban's* false Gods are expressly mentioned. But we need not flee to such Shifts for Justification of our Saviour's Doctrine in this particular; for most of the Creatures, by whom the Jewish Doctors allowed their Profelytes to swear, had some relation to the true God, as our Saviour here argues, and therefore the Oaths made by them, terminated in him. But this will fall in better, when we come to speak of our Saviour's Improvements upon this Commandment. I hasten now to the fourth and last Thing he faults in the Doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees upon this Commandment, namely,

IV. That by their loose Doctrine about Oaths, they had brought in a Practice of Swearing in common Conversation, and so made way for Rash, Profane, customary Oaths. This I take to be the principal of their Errors on this Subject, and that to which all the rest, which I have spoken of, had an immediate Tendency; and which consequently our Saviour sets himself chiefly to rectify, by forbidding all customary Oaths in Conversation: All their other Errors, I say, about the *Third* Commandment, had an immediate Tendency to this. For, First, what was the natural Consequence of their Doctrine that nothing was prohibited in the *Third* Commandment, except the Sin of Perjury? Was it not plainly this, that they might swear as much as they pleased to any thing that was true? And, Secondly, what was the Consequence of their Swearing by the Creatures,

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but to lessen the natural dread and fear of an Oath, where the Name of God himself is invoked? And is not that fear of an Oath, one of the best Curbs and Restraints of that profane Practice? Take this off, and you let Mankind loose to as much rash Swearing as they have a mind to. And Thirdly, this was certainly the Consequence of their Doctrine concerning the Non-obligation of several Oaths by Creatures. They kept it as a Secret in the Breasts of their Doctors, which of these were, and which were not binding. Had they taught that none of them were binding, then no Body would have been cheated with them; the Credit of them would have sunk, for no Body would have believed them: And so probably they might have run into defuetude. And had they taught that they were all binding, Men would have been afraid to have taken them, for fear of the after-reckoning of Performance. But while the People were made to believe, that their Doctors had some secret Distinctions, by which they thought they could absolve them from all those most common Oaths by the Creatures, they thought themselves safe enough in the common Use of them.

But now, that this was a very dangerous Practice, the Practice I mean of common Swearing in Conversation, and that it deserves our Saviour's following Improvement upon this Commandment, is what I shall now endeavour to evince from the following Considerations.

1. It was then, and is still acknowledged by all, that an Oath is a part of Religious Worship, and a very solemn Part of it, and therefore should be gone about as such, that is, with Seriousness and

and Gravity, and with a due Belief and Consideration of the Majesty of God. And therefore the Rule which the Wise Man prescribes, as to God's Worship in general, is particularly applicable to this of Oaths, *Eccl. v. 2. Be not rash with thy Mouth, and let not thine Heart be hasty to utter any Thing before God.* How this Rule is observed by the customary Swearer, who in his Wrath, or Drink, or heat of Dispute, and Impatience, or upon no thought at all, lets flie Voleys of Oaths, every one must be sensible.

2. They could not be Ignorant, that it was given as a Character of a bad Man, that he is a Swearer, that is, a common Swearer; and as the Character of a good Man, that *he feareth an Oath*, *Eccl. ix. 2. As is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an Oath.* Now certainly, there is nothing more Inconsistent with the tearing of an Oath, than the Rash and Inconsiderate venturing upon it.

3. An Oath is not prescribed as a common Duty, but as a Duty in a Case of Necessity. It is like Physick, which is not to be turned into daily Food, That would be the way to make it lose all it's Virtue; but it is to be reserved for more extraordinary Occasions. As at Law, here among us, Appeals to the King in Council are allowed of, but not ordinarily nor frequently, but in Weighty Causes, and after the Justice of other inferiour Magistrates has been tried; so it is with Oaths, they are an Appeal to God, and like a last Result, ought not to be made use of, but in Cases of weighty Consequence and Concern, and when other ordinary Proofs by Reason and Argument do fail. For,

4. As

4. As it is an Honour to the King, to have recourse to him *as the Supreme*, and that he should have the controuling of all other Judges; but it would be an intolerable Dishonour, in the first Result, to trouble him with every inconsiderable little Cause, such as might be decided by any ordinary Justice of Peace: So it is an Honour to God, in Matters of the greatest Weight and Consequence, to invoke him as the Judge and Witness, and to appeal to his Decision; but to flie to it for every trivial Matter, is a great Dishonour to his Holy Name, and a Vilifying and Prostituting of his Sacred Authority.

5. If we use Rashness and Precipitancy in swearing, it is impossible to observe the common Conditions I told you were required in an Oath, by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, *Truth, Judgment, and Righteousness*; for all these require great Deliberation and Attention. *Truth* is lost, if we do not recollect it carefully in our Memory, and keep up a Presence of Mind, and restrain our selves from all Byass and Self-Interest. *Judgment*, in its own Nature, requires a serious weighing the Importance, as well as the Truth of what we Assert or Promise upon Oath. And *Righteousness* requires an Inspection into the Merits and Consequences of what we swear, that we do not involve our selves in any Bond of Iniquity, by a rash general Oath, from which many Cases may arise that we were not aware of: As in the case of *Saul's* Oath, which ensnared his Son *Jonathan*; and in the Case of *Herod*, which led him to the Murder of that excellent Man, *John the Baptist*. And therefore, since great Deliberation is requisite to the observing the Conditions of an Oath, we  
may

may conclude, that all sudden common swearing in Conversation is out of Doors.

6. It is worth Consideration, that rash Oaths engage Men in many Inconvenient, and in many sinful Practices. First, I say, inconvenient Practices, which tend very much to their Loss and Prejudice. For if what we have sworn be ever so Detrimental, so that it be not sinful, by Virtue of our Oaths we are to comply with it, this being one Part of the Character of *the Man that shall abide in God's Tabernacle, and dwell in his Holy Hill, that he sweareth to his own Hurt, and changeth not.* Psa. xv. 4. But that is not the worst of these rash Oaths, they lead to Perjury, and other Sins, as appears by *Saul's* and *Herod's* rash Oaths, one of which, *Saul's*, was broken, and indeed better broken than kept, and yet there was the Sin of forswearing; and the other kept, and was attended with the Sin of Murder.

7. Rash, or common Swearing, is a great lessening to the Person that uses it; for the Meaning of it is, (if it has any Meaning) that he is not a Person fit to be credited upon his Word, and that he is so sensible of this himself, that he has recourse to Oaths; which yet, of all Things that ever were practiced, are the worst Remedy for a broken Credit: For it is not the Oath that gives Credit to the Man, but the Man that gives Credit to the Oath. The common Swearer, by giving such plain Demonstration that he has no fear of God, deserves no Credit with Men; for in all probability, such a one will be no better in Morals than the Law will make him; for if he were governed by any inward principle of Religion, that would keep him from the Profaneness of

common Swearing, as well as from the Immorality of Dishonesty.

8. This Sin of common Swearing is a great piece of rudeness to the Company, especially where there are any present, that have any Sense of Religion or the Fear of God. To them it is like the abusing of a Man's Friends to his Face. The Injury of the Calumny and the Back-biting is to them, but the affront is to him, and so he must needs take it. But it not being proper for him in a private Capacity to avenge it, God Almighty takes the Vengeance into his own Hands, and commonly makes terrible Examples of such profane Wretches.

9. It is a great Aggravation of this Sin of common Swearing, that it has not the excuse of strong Temptations, as most other Sins have. It gratifies no Appetite, it brings in no Profit, Pleasure, or Honour; if it is at any time fashionable, it is such a wicked Fashion, that none will take upon them to Justify, far less to praise and commend; and therefore it is the being wicked for wickedness sake, it is the selling of our selves to the Devil for nought; naturally, no Man is inclined to such a Sin; it is only the effect of wicked Habits, and as common as it is, it is hard to tell from whence it proceeds, except from bad Example, which the Devil has taken care to propagate from one Generation to another.

The only Reason one can imagine for this Practice, is, that we may be the better believed; but it has commonly the quite contrary Effect. A Man that is known to fear God,

God, will be sooner believed upon his Word, than a common Swearer upon many repeated Oaths.

10. *Lastly*, If one were to examine the Occasions of these common Oaths, it would be found true what our Saviour observes in the Text, that *they come of Evil*; whether the Meaning of that be, as some Interpret it, that they come of the evil one, that is, the Devil, or that they are occasioned by some bad Principle, or some wicked Temper of Mind, or some other Vice; such as Pride, Anger, Impatience, Discontent, Self-conceit, Rudeness, a Defect of Reason, and Want of better Proof, or Atheism, and down-right Profaneness; and yet one would think that it should be the most impertinent and absurd Thing for an Atheist, to invoke the Name of God, when he does not believe any such Being.

These and many more Reasons there were for reprehending this wicked Practice in our Saviour's Days; and Christianity has made great Improvements in the Doctrine upon this Commandment, notwithstanding the shameless profane Practice of many that are called Christians. And this is the last Thing I proposed to consider from the Text, and will be properly the Subject of another Discourse upon it. I shall conclude, at present, in the Words of St James, which are properly Applicable to these Oaths in Conversation. (a) *But above all things, my Brethren, swear not, neither*

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(a) Jam. v. 12.

*by Heaven, neither by the Earth, neither by any other Oath: But let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into Condemnation. From which, God of his infinite Mercy deliver us all, for his dear Son, Jesus Christ's sake. To whom, &c.*



S E R M.



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## S E R M O N XXV.

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### M A T T. V. 33.

*Again ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.*

Ver. 34. *But I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne,*

Ver. 35. *Nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool : neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the great King.*

Ver. 36. *Neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black.*

Ver. 37. *But let your Communication be, yea, yea ; nay, nay ; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.*

#### The Third Sermon on this Text.

**I**N two former Discourses on these Words, I considered, *first*, what was good and commendable in the Doctrine of the *Jewish* Scribes on the Third Commandment. *Secondly*, Wherein their Doctrine on this Commandment was faulty or defective. I come now, in the *third* and *last* place, to consider our Saviour's Improvements upon this Commandment; and they may be reduced to these *four*.

I. In that he condemns all rash customary Swearing in Conversation.

II. In that he disallows of all Swearing by the Creatures.

III. In that he asserts the Obligation of several Oaths, which they made void and elusory.

IV. In that he enjoins such a Veracity and Sincerity in Conversation, that we may be trusted upon our Word, without an Oath.

Now in handling of these Points, I shall purposely decline several Things, which would not be improper, but that I have had occasion already to mention them in some of the foregoing Heads on this Subject.

I. I begin with the first Observation concerning our Saviour's Improvements upon this Commandment; namely, that he condemns all rash customary Swearing in Conversation. This is to be gathered from the *four* last Verses of the Text that I have read; *But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne, nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool, neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the Great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black. But let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of Evil.* In speaking to which Words, because they are not without a very palpable Difficulty, which has occasioned the judging of all Oaths unlawful by some Sects of Men, it will be necessary, first negatively, to consider what is not, then positively, what is prohibited in them.

I. First then negatively, Judicial Oaths are not here prohibited.

2. Nor

2. Nor voluntary Oaths upon grave weighty Occasions, where the Conditions of an Oath, Truth, Judgment, and Righteousness, are observed.

1. First, I say, Judicial Oaths, administered by Judges for finding out the Truth, and for deciding of Suits and Controversies, are not here prohibited. The Quakers, and Anabaptists, are of another Opinion, concluding, chiefly from this Text, that all sorts of Oaths, in all Cases whatsoever, are prohibited by our Saviour. And I must confess the Words, if we take them separately by themselves, without any Consideration of the Scope and Purport of the Discourse, or of the original Phrases, or of the Errors of the *Jewish* Doctors, which our Saviour is here rectifying, sound very much that way. Yet I doubt not, when this Matter is set in its true Light, it will appear, that in these Words our Saviour had no regard to Judicial Oaths at all, and that they were, in no respect, the Subject of this Prohibition. I shall distinctly propose to you the Reasons which convince me of this; some of which are not ordinarily observed or considered.

1. One Reason that weighs very much with me, is taken from a general Observation, That our Saviour, in this whole Sermon on the Mount, is only teaching the common Duties of Christians in their private Capacity, without meddling either with the Duty of Magistrates or Ministers, or any other particular Station of Men; and therefore it was not his Design to abridge Judges and Magistrates of their Power of obliging Men to answer upon Oath, or to exempt Men from their usual Obedience in these Cases. Now, howsoever general

neral our Saviour's Precepts may seem, we ought not to stretch them beyond this; for if we do, we shall go into things that he never designed, and make mad Work, and vent Doctrines inconsistent with all Governments, and with our Saviour's and his Apostles Precepts and Practice elsewhere. For Example, because our Saviour, in this Sermon, has these Words, *judge not*; by which he forbids the rash Censures of Men in their private Capacity; shall we from thence conclude, that he condemns the Office of publick Judges and Magistrates, to which we know elsewhere he and his Apostles require all due Submission and Obedience? Or because in this Sermon he recommends Peaceableness and Peace-making, and a Patience in bearing, and a Readiness in forgiving of Injuries, shall we conclude from thence, that Princes, and Magistrates may not execute Justice, or punish Transgressors, or make War upon just Occasions? Or because it is said, *Thou shalt not kill*, and *resist not Evil*, shall we conclude that the Power of the Sword is taken away even from Magistrates? So here where our Saviour is guarding private Men against the common Sin of Swearing, which they had been taught they might lawfully use, provided they brought not in the Name of God himself in those common Oaths, but swore by inferiour Things, such as Heaven, and Earth, Jerusalem, or the Temple, their Head, or their Life, or the like: No, says our Saviour, swear not at all in your common Conversation, neither by God, or any of his Creatures; it is a profane evil Custom, therefore beware of it; God is dishonoured by all such Oaths: But use your selves to such a Veracity in Speech,

XXV.] *not Prohibited.* MATT. V. 34, 35, 36. 345  
Speech, that there may be no need of them. The same Observation will hold of *the Love of Enemies*; an excellent Doctrine to restrain our private Animofities and Enmities: But if it should be stretched to the corresponding with the publick Enemies of the Government, and to the fupplying them with all Neceffaries, it would make mad work indeed.

2. *Secondly*, That it was not our Saviour's Intent to condemn Judicial Oaths, appears to me from hence, becaufe the Words, *ſwear not at all*, do not in their utmoſt Extent reach it, if we conſider what was the manner of thoſe Oaths among the *Jews*; which was not, as it is with us, by making the Perſon pronounce the Words of an Oath; but by the Magiſtrate's adjuring him, that is, commanding him, in the Name of God, to answer to the Truth; and his answering this Adjuration, though in ever ſo plain Words, was among them *the witnessing upon Oath*. And if either they refuſed to answer upon ſuch Adjuration, that is, if they then ſuppreſſed the Truth by Silence, or if they answered any thing that was falſe, they were reckoned guilty of the Sin of Perjury. Their own Abſtinance then from Swearing, according to our Saviour's Precept here, could never ſave them from this judicial answering to Adjuration, that is, from their Judicial Oaths; and therefore it could be none of our Saviour's Intent here, to prohibit the Uſe of Judicial Oaths.

3. It is highly probable, ſince our Saviour inſtances here in no Oaths, but thoſe raſh and eluſory ones, which they uſed in their Converſation one with another, (for their Judicial Adjurations were all in the Name of God himſelf) It is highly probable,

probable, that he was speaking only of those vain, rash Conversation Oaths; *q. d.* you have been taught, that there is nothing prohibited in the Third Commandment but Perjury, and you make nothing of Swearing in common Conversation, so it be not by the Name of God himself, but by the Creatures; but all this Practice I utterly forbid, as dishonourable to Almighty God.

4. The Antithesis here; *but let your Conversation be yea, yea; nay, nay*; shews plainly, that the Discourse related only to those Conversation Oaths; for if it had related to all Oaths in general, the Antithesis must have gone further than to Conversation or Communication, even to all Judicial Proceedings likewise.

5. Grave Judicial Oaths are every where in the Holy Scriptures honourably spoke of; and there is never any the least Intimation, that either they were allowed because of the Hardness of their Hearts, or that they were Types and Shadows of Things to come; which are the only Reasons I know, why any thing allowed by the Law of *Moses*, is abolished by our Saviour. (1.) First, I say, they are every where honourably spoke of: It is challenged, as a particular Honour to God, that Oaths be taken in his Name; *Deut. vi. 13. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his Name.* And *Deut. x. 20. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his Name.* They are particularly forbid to give this Honour to any false Gods. It is part of *Josuah's* Exhortation before his Death, *Josh. xxiii. 7. That they should not make mention of the Name of these false Gods, nor cause to swear by them, nor serve*

XXV.] *not Prohibited.* MATT. V. 34, 35, 36. 34<sup>7</sup>  
*serve them, nor bow themselves unto them.* So that  
it is plain, it is reckoned a part of the Honour  
and Worship particularly due to Almighty God.  
(2.) We find too the best Men, on Occasions of  
great Weight and Importance, have always made  
use of Oaths. *Abraham* exacted an Oath of his  
faithful Servant *Eliezer*, in a Business of great  
Trust, the providing a Wife for his Son out of  
his own Kindred, who lived very remote. *Jo-*  
*seph* took an Oath of his Brethren, concerning  
the Transportation of his Bones into the promised  
Land. *Jonathan* took an Oath of his Friend  
*David*, concerning his Kindness to his Posterity.  
(3.) As to the Evangelical Times, it was prophe-  
sied concerning the Propagation of the Gospel;  
*Isa. xlv. 23. Unto me every Knee shall bow, every*  
*Tongue shall swear.* Our Saviour himself, when  
adjudged by the High-Priest in the Name of the  
Living God, *Matt. xxvi. 63.* which was the  
Manner of a Judicial Oath among the *Jews*, an-  
swered upon that Oath, and confessed the Truth.  
And *Heb. vi. 16.* the Apostle says, *an Oath for*  
*Confirmation, is an End of all Strife.* And why  
there should not be an End of Strife under the  
Gospel, as well as under the Law, I cannot ima-  
gine. So much for our first Assertion, that Ju-  
diciary Oaths are not prohibited by these Words  
of our Saviour; for this is to be remembered as a  
Rule in the Interpretation of all Scripture, and  
indeed of all other Authors, that if Expressions  
are ever so general, they are not to be interpreted  
in that general Sense, if there is any thing in the  
Context, or the Scope and Purport of the Dis-  
course, that limits the seemingly general Expres-  
sions, to any particular Species that the Discourse  
was

was about: *e. g.* when St Paul says, that he became all things to all Men; that to the Jews he became as a Jew; to them that were under the Law, as under the Law; to them that are without Law, as without Law. This, to look no further than these Words, sounds like a fawning, flattering, time-serving Temper; but if we examine the Context, 1 Cor. ix. 19, &c. we shall find all this Complaisance is to be restrained to things indifferent, and that all this time the Apostle limited it within the Laws of God and Christ, *ver.* 21. then there is no Difficulty in the whole Matter. This very thing has occasioned the Error of the Quakers and Anabaptists in this Place, that they have run away with the general Sound of the Words, *swear not at all*, without considering the Occasion or the Context, or even the particular Subject Matter our Saviour was upon; and far less the other Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, with which their Doctrine is irreconcilable.

But now, because there is one Text more which seems to favour this Notion of theirs, concerning the Unlawfulness of Oaths, which they have mistook the very same way, for want of considering the Context, I shall give you a brief Solution to that Difficulty too, and so have done with this of Judiciary Oaths: The Text is, *Jam. v. 12.* which sounds very full to their Purpose; *But above all things, my Brethren, swear not, neither by Heaven, neither by the Earth, neither by any other Oath: but let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into Condemnation.* In the Context, the Apostle St James had been exhorting to Patience, and for that End recommends the Prophets



phets as great Examples of that Virtue, particularly he recommends the great Patience of *Job* under his sharp Affliction: then immediately follow these Words which I quoted, *But above all things, my Brethren, swear not*, q. d. But though ye cannot presently arrive at such a high Degree of Patience, as that of *Job* was, yet some lower Degrees of it, at least, may be expected from you; particularly, that you should so far curb your Passion and Resentment, as to abstain from all manner of Oaths, according to our Saviour's Advice in that Particular, lest ye fall under the Judgment of God denounced against profane Swearers. This seems to me to be the most natural Sense of the Words; and if it is, it is only rash, impatient, passionate Oaths the Apostle is there treating of; and it seems not in the least to be his Intent to speak of Judiciary Oaths. I have insisted so much the longer on this, because as we have some that venture boldly and profanely on all Oaths, so we have others that make all Oaths unlawful, though administered by lawful Authority, and ever so innocent as to the Matter of them; which tends mightily to the Obstruction of Justice, the Encouragement of Knavery, and Disturbance of Government.

2. Our second Assertion was, That voluntary Oaths taken in a grave serious manner, and upon weighty Occasions, in which the due Conditions of an Oath are observed, are not forbid in this Text. Some grave Authors indeed, and that are not led away by the Enthusiasms of the former, are of Opinion, that all voluntary Oaths are prohibited, and no other lawful but such as are enjoined by Authority. But from the Context, which

which we have had under our Consideration, it is only the rash Oaths in Conversation, which, over and above the false ones, our Saviour here prohibits. For upon grave and weighty Occasions, we find St *Paul* often takes God to witness, which is the formal Definition of an Oath: Thus *Rom. i. 9. God is my Witness, that without ceasing, I make mention of you in my Prayers.* To the *Galatians*, after an Account of his Conversion and Apostleship, he confirms it with an Oath, thus, *Gal. i. 20. Now the things which I write unto you, behold before God I lie not.* And so having given the *Corinthians* an Account of his great Sufferings, he concludes thus, (a) *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, knoweth that I lie not.* Several other Instances might be brought of the like Nature, where, without any external Compulsion, only for Confirmation of the Truth of what he says, that Apostle backs it gravely with an Oath.

So much for the negative Part, what is not prohibited in these Words: I come next to the positive Part, what is prohibited in these Words of our Saviour; and that, in short, is all rash customary Swearing in Conversation, particularly all Oaths which are used only for idle Additions in Speech, all Oaths about such Things in which there is no Necessity to call in God, to attest the Truth of what is asserted or promised; where the End would be as well answered, and the Thing as well believed, by a bare Affirmation or Negation. I shall not again trouble you with the Rea-

(a) 2 Cor. xi. 31.

XXV.] *not Prohibited.* MATT. V. 34, 35, 36. 35†  
fons of this Doctrine, having, at the last Occa-  
sion, in reprehending the loose Doctrine of the  
*Jewish* Scribes in this particular, shewed you the  
Evil of the Practice of Swearing in common Con-  
versation, and therefore the Reasonableness of this  
Prohibition.

II. The next Thing I observed in our Saviour's  
Improvements on this Commandment, is, that  
he disallows of all Swearing by the Creatures.  
Now, though under the last Head of the Errors  
of the *Jewish* Doctors on this Commandment, I  
shewed you briefly the Unreasonableness of this  
Practice; yet having then been straitned in Time,  
I will add a little more distinctly on this Head.

That the Swearing directly by any Creature, so  
as to give that Creature the Honour of being the  
Witness or Judge of our Veracity in such an Oath,  
is highly criminal, I cannot in the least doubt,  
both because that Honour is every where in the  
Holy Scriptures peculiarly limited to God himself,  
and because the Reason of the thing does neces-  
sarily require it, for it is both Nonsense and Im-  
piety, in such Secrets as Oaths are to confirm, to  
appeal to any Person or Thing that is not omni-  
scient to know, and omnipotent to inflict that  
Vengeance which the prevaricating with an Oath  
doth tacitly imprecate. But where the Creatures  
are invoked only figuratively, so as there is a plain  
Reference to Almighty God himself, and not to  
the Creature, there it does not seem to be unlaw-  
ful to that Person who means and intends it in  
that manner. So if one should swear by Heaven,  
meaning God, as that Word is often used by Au-  
thors in that Sense; as when the prodigal Son is  
brought

brought in saying to his Father, (a) *I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee*, the Meaning is, I have sinned against God and thee; there, I say, the Intent being not to swear by the material Heavens, but by God in Heaven, in such a figurative Sense the thing is allowable, provided it be truly so meant and understood. And such Manners of Speaking are common in all Languages. So an Appeal to *Rome*, every one understands to be an Appeal to the Pope; an Appeal to *Whitehall*, is well enough understood to be an Appeal to the King; and so the swearing by Heaven, is the swearing by God. But where there is any doubt whether God is understood to be referred to, not only by the Taker of the Oath, but by others that might be misled by such a Doubt, it is certainly much safer not to swear by the Creature at all. But then here is another Danger, even where the Honour is not designed to the Creature, but to the Creator, namely, that where the Creature is named, it is reckoned an inferiour sort of Oath, and so both takes off the Dread and Reverence of an Oath at present, which is apt to make Oaths more common, cheap, and customary; and to lessen the Obligation of them for the future. And this was the Case here in those Oaths by Creatures in my Text; they had so worn off the Dread of them, that at last they were elusory, and they did not think themselves obliged to perform them, unless they had been made in the Name of God himself; the evil Consequence of which our Saviour perceiving,

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(a) Luke xv. 18.

seis himself to rectify this part of their Doctrine and Practice; and this was

III. The third Thing I observed in our Saviour's Improvements upon this Commandment, namely, that he asserts the Obligation of several Oaths, which they reckoned elusory, and did not think themselves obliged to perform. Now, as to this Error of theirs, our Saviour had them under an unanswerable Dilemma; for either these Oaths by the Creatures, had a reference to God, or not. If they had no reference to God, then it was an high piece of Sacrilege to put this divine Honour upon them, to swear by them; an Honour which the very Light of Nature, as well as their Law and their Prophets, taught them was peculiar to Omniscience and Omnipotence, that is, to God alone; and of this sort of Oaths, I think our Saviour gives an Example here, in their swearing *by their Head*. But if the Oaths had a reference to God, then they ought religiously to be performed as to him, and not evaded. There was no answering of this Argument, but the Truth was, that by a supine Neglect, countenanced by the corrupt Doctrine of their Teachers, the relation which most of these Oaths had to God, (*viz.* the Oaths *by Heaven* and *Earth*, and *Jerusalem*) was quite forgotten, and so the Performance of them came to be neglected, and therefore our Lord puts them in mind how that relation to God was in these customary Oaths of theirs, and so concludes for the Obligation of them. I shall briefly clear up that part of the Text, and then in pursuance of the Design of it, dehort from all evasive, elusory Oaths whatsoever, and so con-

clude; for I perceive the main Rule which our Saviour substitutes for avoiding these inferior Oaths, namely, a Simplicity and Honesty in Conversation, I shall not have time now to enter upon.

As to the Relation between some inferior Oaths then in Use, and God Almighty, our Saviour himself here clears it in three of these Oaths, by *Heaven*, and *Earth*, and *Jerusalem*.

The Oath by *Heaven* had an express relation to God, for it is God's Throne. Now this is very intelligible, for it is customary by the Throne, to understand the King or Queen that sits thereon; such a thing was spoke from the Throne; that is, was spoke by the King sitting on his Throne.

The same Account is to be given of an Oath by *Earth*, which our Saviour elegantly calls God's Footstool; and so said God in the Prophets, *Isa. lxvi. i. Thus saith the Lord, Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool.* It is a part of the same Throne, but an inferior part of it, and therefore still reference must be had to God himself, who fills Heaven and Earth.

The third Instance is in *Jerusalem*, which was the chief Place of the Divine Presence upon Earth; there was the Temple, and the Holy of Holies; there God was said to dwell between the Cherubims; and therefore in these three, *Heaven*, *Earth*, and *Jerusalem*, the reference to God is very plain.

The fourth is a little more obscure; *Neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black.* This seems

to me an Example of the other part of the Dilemma, namely, of those Oaths which have no reference to God, and therefore should not at all be made use of, being an Oath by an infirm Creature, that cannot make one Hair white or black.

Now what our Saviour intends by all this, is to shew, that none of these, or such like Oaths, is to be jested with, and broken at pleasure; but that some of them, namely, such as do not signify God, are to be totally avoided, and those that do, are all binding: and if *they* are broke, that it is Perjury, as if the Oaths had been made in the Name of God himself.

From all this, we may conclude how much our Saviour abhors all false, elusory Oaths. After-Ages have invented a great many more than are here mentioned, and upon the same Design, namely, that they may have the appearance of the Confirmation of an Oath, to impose upon the Hearers Credulity, but at the same time may make no Impression on the Taker's Conscience, so that he makes no Scruple of breaking through them. But there are two Things very immoral in all such Practices; one is the designed Trick or Falshood; the other, the backing that Trick with the Solemnity of an Oath, or something like an Oath; which, if it has any Sense at all, must reflect Dishonour upon Almighty God, to call him in, either directly or indirectly, to help out with such Fraud. And therefore let us be guarded, not only against the more deep, but likewise against the more slight sort of Swearing in Conversation. Let us aim at nothing but Truth, and content our selves to deliver it in a

modest way of Affirmation or Negation, without backing it with any thing like an Oath.

And this would lead me to the last thing in the Words, Our Saviour's Direction, (for avoiding of common Swearing) to the Veracity and Simplicity of Discourse. But this, for want of time, I must refer to another Opportunity.

*Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
be all Praise, &c.*





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## S E R M O N XXVI.

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### M A T T. V. 37.

*But let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay;  
for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of  
Evil.*

The Fourth Sermon on this Text.

**H**A V I N G, in some former Discourses on our Saviour's Explication of the *Third* Commandment, observed both what was good and commendable, and what was faulty and defective in the Doctrine of the Jewish Teachers upon this Commandment; I came at last to our Saviour's Improvements upon it, of which I took Notice of these Four,

I. That he condemns all rash customary Swearing in *Conversation*.

II. That he disallows of all swearing by the *Creatures*.

III. That he Asserts the Obligation of several Oaths which they made void and elusory.

IV. That he enjoins such a *Simplicity and Veracity in Conversation*, that we may be trusted upon our Word without an Oath.

Now having spoke to the *Three* first of these, I come now to the *Fourth* and *Last*, our Saviour's

Doctrines concerning the *Simplicity and Veracity* we are to use *in Conversation*, from these Words which I have read; *But let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.* In which Words we have,

1. *First* a Precept; *but let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay.*

2. *Secondly*, The Reason of this Precept; *For whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.*

I. I begin with the Precept, in which, for finding out the Meaning of it, we must enquire what is to be understood by the Word *Communication*, and then what by its being *yea, yea; nay, nay.*

1. As to the Word *Communication*, it is in the Original *λόγος*, *Speech, or Discourse.*

2. And as to its being, *yea, yea; nay, nay;* there are two things which I take to be meant by that; first, as to the Form of our Speech, that it should be plain and simple, not involved in Equivocation, not stuffed with Compliments, or interlarded with Oaths; but by bare Affirmations or Negations expressing our Mind. Secondly, as to the Matter, that our Speech be True and Sincere, not flattering, false, dissembling, or inconstant, but that we be Men of our Word; which will so establish our Reputation, that there will be no need of backing our Words with Oaths.

From the Words of the Precept then, thus explained, there are these Three Things worthy of our Observation.

1. That our Saviour's Doctrine about Oaths is to be restrained to *Speech or Discourse*, and not  
to

be 'extended, as the Quakers and Anabaptists do, to the whole Life and Conversation.

2. That it is our Duty to use a Simplicity in Discourse, by plain Affirmation or Negation.

3. That it is our Duty to be True and Sincere in our Speech and Discourse; contrary to Flattery, Falshood, Inconstancy, and all other Species of Insincerity.

I. That our Saviour's Doctrine about Oaths, is to be restrained to *Speech or Discourse*, and not to be extended to the whole Life and Conversation; for which I will offer briefly these two or three Reasons. 1. That the Original Word *λόγος*, signifies *Speech*, but never the Life and Conversation. 2. That there are several Sentences and Precepts in Scripture, which, taken alone, are manifestly too general, and must be limited by the Antithesis or opposite Sentence which follows. I will give you an Instance or two of this for your clearer understanding it. *Solomon* says, *Prov. xv. 15. All the Days of the Afflicted are Evil.* To take this Sentence alone, it is a very strange Doctrine; and seems utterly Inconsistent with one of our Saviour's Precepts, where he commands us to *rejoice and be exceeding glad*, when we are persecuted for Righteousness sake: But the following Antithesis clears the whole Matter, which is in these Words; *But he that is of a merry Heart hath a continual Feast.* By which we understand, that by *the Afflicted* in the former part of the Sentence, is to be meant only the Melancholy, Dejected, Heart-broken Person, of whom it is certainly true, that he has never a good Day; for he it is who is the opposite to him that is of a *merry Heart*: So when our Saviour says, *Lay*

*not up for your selves Treasures upon Earth*, Matt. vi. 19. This would be very strange Doctrine, that Parents are not to lay any Thing up for their Children; that in a Year of Plenty we may not lay up for a Year of Scarcity; or that in those Callings which require great Stocks to manage them, Men may not lay in such Stocks. But the following Antithesis clears the whole Thing; *But lay up for your selves Treasures in Heaven*; from which we understand, that the preceding Prohibition relates only to such a laying up of Treasure upon Earth, as withdraws our Hearts from Heaven. So when our Saviour says, *Job. vi. 27. Labour not for the Meat which perisheth*; This would be a strange Precept, as if we were forbid Diligence in a lawful Calling; but the following Antithesis explains it, *but Labour for that Meat which endureth to everlasting Life*; for this shews us, that the Meaning of the Precept, is only that the Labour forbid, is such a Labour as hinders our Labouring for Heaven. So here, to look on the first Part of the Discourse, one would think all Oaths whatsoever are forbid, till we come to what our Saviour sets in Opposition to it; *but let your Speech or Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay*; which shews us that his Intent was only to banish the common Oaths which Men bring in, in their ordinary Speech one with another: Oaths being to be reserved for graver Purposes, than our common Talk and Discourse. 3. And that this must be the Sense, and not a total Prohibition of all Oaths, appears from several other Passages of Scripture, where they are Honourably spoke of, and made a Part of the Honour peculiarly due to Almighty God. But having spoke to this at the

last Occasion, I shall not insist upon it now, but go on to the second Thing I observed from this Precept, namely,

II. That it is our Duty to use a Simplicity in Speech, by plain Affirmation or Negation, *But let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay.* This Simplicity is designed to prevent the Fraudulent use of Speech; and particularly I take it to be a Prohibition of these four Abuses of Speech.

1. A Multiplicity of Words. 2. A designed Double-ness or Equivocation in them. 3. Vain Compliments and Flattery. 4. Oaths and Imprecations. And on the contrary, an Injunction that our Words be Few, Plain, Sincere, and Modest.

(1.) This Expression, *let your Speech be yea, yea; nay, nay;* signifies, that we should not use many Words, or rather that we should be at a Word. Solomon observes *Prov. x. 19. That in the multitude of Words, there wants not Sin; but he that refraineth his Lips is Wise.* And *Eccl. v. 3. That a Fool's Voice is known by multitude of Words.* And St James advises us *to be swift to hear, but slow to speak.* And so our Saviour here seems to aim at the same Thing, that we should quickly come to the Point, to an Assent, or Dissent; an Affirmation, or Negation; a yea, or a nay. And indeed there may be very good Reasons against a multiplicity of Words: For, 1. It presently involves us in that Rashness, which is the Mother of Lies and Oaths, and Calumnies, and Blabbing of Secrets, and every other thing that is bad in Discourse; for the Tongue is such a nimble Mover, that it wants a Bridle, rather than a Spur, and like an Hog'shead down Hill, will run too fast

fast of its own accord, if it is not strongly curbed and restrained. 2. This Multiplicity of Discourse, and Volubility of Tongue, is a great Enemy to serious thinking; it is a mighty Obstruction of both Judgment and Memory, which ought to guide the Tongue in all its Motions: For as a Clock, or Watch, if you take off the Pendulum or Balance, runs presently into a precipitate noisy Motion of the Wheels, but is of no manner of service for measuring of Time, which is the proper use of it; so the Tongue, if we do not make use of our Judgment and Memory, only rattles off Foolish, Vain, Impertinent, False, Profane, and injurious Words; and if they meet not with a ready Reception and Belief, most commonly backs them with rash Oaths and Imprecations. 3. I need not tell the dreadful Consequences of this unguarded Talkativeness in Atheistical, Profane, Obscene, Calumniating, Malicious, detracting Discourses, enflaming Men's Passions, and setting whole Neighbourhoods by the Ears; for I might as well attempt to tell all the mischief that Fire would make, if it were not restrained within Bounds, as to Enumerate the dreadful Consequences of an ungoverned Tongue. But for Remediating of this, our Saviour's enjoining a bare Affirmation and Negation, is a very useful Precept; not literally that we are to use the Word *yea*, or *nay*, to every Thing; but that we are quickly to come to the Point, to speak to the Merits, without endeavouring to impose upon one another by Oaths, or false Flourishes of Rhetoric.

(2.) Our Saviour's Precept of *yea and nay*, may signify the plainness we are to use in our Speech,

as that is opposite to all equivocal Senses, double Meanings, and ensnaring Obscurity. Our Saviour forbids here all fallacious, dark, tricking, and designing ways of Expression, by which Men endeavour to outwit and over-reach one another. A Plainness and Ingenuity in the manner of our Expressions, joined with a Sincerity and Honesty, of which I shall say something by and by, is the best way to induce Trust and Belief, without Oaths in our ordinary Conversation one with another: Whereas dark and equivocal ways of Expression occasion Mistrust and Jealousy, as a Remedy of which, recourse is commonly had to Oaths; and too often false Oaths are swallowed to help out with the Fraud, where Equivocations, and dark Expressions will not do. There is no Virtue in Speech, perhaps, more commendable than this of Plainness, in so far as it avoids all Trickiness and sinister Designs. Nor is it always necessary that this Plainness be accompanied with a rough Bluntness; it may very well be joined with true Friendship and Civility, without feeding our Neighbour with false Hopes, by Words of dark and doubtful Meaning; a Practice that borders upon Knavery and Dishonesty, and is therefore very unbecoming this Christian Simplicity.

(3.) A third Thing which I take to be prohibited in this Precept about Christian Simplicity, is, the Practice of vain Compliments and Flattery, which, because they are very often doubted or disbelieved, occasion Swearing to confirm them. This Vice might perhaps better be reserved for the last Observation I made from this Precept concerning the material Truth and Sincerity of Speech,

Speech, *that our yea should be yea; and our nay, nay*; that is, that we be stanch Men of our Words; and not brought in here among the forms and manners of Speaking. But because Compliments and Flattery are the most directly contrary to that Simplicity of Speech which is here recommended, and are Errors against the Form, the Decency, and Simplicity of Speech, they justly fall in here to be reprehended. I shall not at present enter into those odious Characters, of which Flattery is commonly composed, Falshood, Servility, Treachery, Contempt of the Persons Understanding whom we thus think to Bubble, Trickiness, and Self-love; because these belong more to the Matter of the Vice, than to its formal Inconsistency with Simplicity, which now I am upon: And therefore all I shall urge on this Head, shall be, that this way of Compliment and Flattery, doth exceedingly deviate from the Original and native Use of Speech, which is sincerely and frankly to Communicate the Sentiments of our Minds to one another; and the more we depart from this Sincerity, so much the more do we pervert the true Use of Speech. Not that Christianity is against an handsome, neat, proper way of expressing our selves, no more than against Cloathing our selves in a decent Garb, and keeping our selves clean and sweet; but this way of Compliment and Flattery, is like disguising our natural Complexion, and Painting with Artificial Colours on purpose to deceive; than which nothing can be more contrary to the genuine Simplicity required here by our Saviour, in our Communication one with another.

(4.) The



(4.) The last Thing which I take to be prohibited by this Christian Simplicity, is the deep Aggravation of Speech by high Affeuerations and Oaths. For the Tendency of all these, is, that we should not be wrought upon by the unbyass'd Consideration of the truth of the Things propos'd; but that we should have them crammed down our Throats by mere Force and Exaggerations of Expression. This diverts our Consideration from the Merits of the cause, to the way of Anticipating our Judgment in favour of the Person, who pawns his Faith, and Soul, and Conscience, for the Truth of it. This very Aim has occasioned more rash and false Swearing than any other thing whatsoever: For when Men have once laid aside Modesty to that degree, as to swear to Uncertainties, they will not long stick out at any piece of Impudence in Speech, by which they think to carry their Point: So that, by degrees, these rash Oaths, instead of being any Proofs or Marks of Truth, are only Signs of Impudence and Profaneness, and of a Mind steeld against all Considerations of God and Religion. And to be sure, when Men are gone thus far, there is no depending either on their Honour or Honesty. Their Oaths then are only Significations of Profaneness in themselves, and Traps to ensnare others. To reclaim Men from this wicked Practice, our Saviour here banishes all Oaths out of our ordinary Discourse, and calls us back to the Modesty, as well as Sincerity of Speech, that there may be nothing to byass our Understanding in its Consideration of the Truth, or Falshood, Reasonableness, or Unreasonableness, of the Things propos'd, and that therefore all high Affeuerations,

Oaths,

Oaths, and Execrations, be banished out of our common Conversation: It remains then, that our Words be Few, Plain, Sincere, and Modest; and this is the Christian Simplicity required in Speech by this Precept, *Let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay.*

III. And so now I am come to the last Thing I observed in this Precept of our Saviour's; namely that it is our Duty to be exactly true and honest in our Speech and Discourse: For this likewise I take to be meant by these Words, *let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay;* as if he had said, let your Words and your Heart go together; let your Promises and Performances exactly answer one another. Thus St *James, Chap. v. 12.* seems to give the Sense of this Precept; *But above all things, my Brethren, says he, swear not, neither by Heaven, neither by the Earth, neither by any other Oath: But let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into Condemnation.* There is another Reading of these last Words, preferred by many Learned Men, where, instead of ὑπὸ κρίσειν, which we render *into Condemnation*, it is, εἰς ὑπόκρισιν, *into Dissimulation*, q. d. *let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay;* that is, be Men of your Word, lest ye be found Lyers and Dissemblers. And this Sense agrees with a common Maxim of those Times, that the *yea* of the Righteous is *yea;* *Justorum etiam est etiam*, that is, his Promises are always attended with Performances. And on the contrary, when they would describe a Man whose Word and Deeds were not alike, such a one's Word was said to be *yea and nay; backward and forward;* that is, a thing not to be depended on. And this we may plainly gather from St *Paul's* Dialect.

Dialect, 2 Cor. i. 18, 19. *As God is true, says he, our Word towards you was not yea and nay, that is, it was not wavering or uncertain; but as it follows there, The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Sylvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea: For all the Promises of God in him, are yea, and in him Amen.* Where it is plain, that *yea and nay* is put for Inconstancy and Uncertainty; and *yea* for Constancy and Certainty. Now in this Sense it will answer our Saviour's Design as well as the other. For *Veracity*, as well as *Simplicity*, makes Oaths needless; the accustoming our selves to Modesty, and to Truth, is the best way to set a value on our Word, and consequently to make Oaths in Conversation superfluous.

This truth and sincerity in Discourse, so much recommended by our Saviour, should chiefly guard us against these Vices. 1. Flattery. 2. Vain-Glory. 3. Lying and Equivocating. 4. Calumniating. 5. Inconstancy and Perfidy. For there is a general Falshood runs through all these, and they all tend to lessen a Man's Reputation and Credit: For the repairing of which, he flies to Oaths, that he may be believed. But I shall not enter upon the particular Consideration of these Vices, but shall content myself in general, to tell you that Truth is from God, who Styles himself *the God of Truth*; and Lies and Falshood are from the Devil, who is the Father of them. And this leads me to the

II. *Second Thing* in the Words; namely, the Reason annexed; *for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of Evil*: Of which Words there are two very

very commodious Senses given, and no way inconsistent with each other. 1. One is, that if we exceed the Plainness and Veracity of Speech, this flows from some bad Principle or other. For example, from a Principle of Pride and Vanity, we depart from the Truth in speaking of our selves, and set off all our own things, by making them much finer and better than they truly are. And from a Principle of the same Pride, mixed with a Spice of Malice to others, we depart from the Truth, by detracting from their Worth, and by throwing in some spiteful thing or other to lessen them. From a Principle of Covetousness, or Ambition, we coax and flatter our Superiours, and others from whom we have any Expectations, and care not what aggravating Speeches, or Oaths, we use to gull and deceive them. When we have done an ill thing, from a Spirit of Obstinacy and Impenitency, we either deny and abjure it, or we justify and defend it, instead of taking Shame to our selves, and confessing our Error, or our Fault. In the Heat of Dispute, instead of being convinced by our Adversary, we do obstinately contend for Victory, be the Cause ever so bad, and to help out with it, misrepresent Matters of Fact; and perhaps when we are not readily believed, help them out with Oaths and Imprecations. And especially, Anger is a common Principle and Occasion of Oaths. What our Saviour means then, when he says, that whatsoever is more than a modest Affirmation or Negation, *cometh of Evil*, is this, That it is not only the running into a new Sin, but that it proceeds from some evil Principle. 2. Another Sense of the Words is this, *for whatsoever is more than these,*

*cometh*

*cometh of the evil one*, meaning the Devil, who, in the New Testament, is often called *the evil, or wicked one*: as *Matt. xiii. 19.* *The wicked one cometh and catcheth away the Seed*; and *ver. 38.* the Tares are said to be *the Children of the wicked one*: and it follows immediately, *The Enemy that sowed them is the Devil.* What we are to learn then from this, is, that whenever our Discourse exceeds the due Bounds of Simplicity and Modesty; particularly, when Anger, or Malice, or Pride and Vanity, or any other Lust, or Passion, stirs us up to great Aggravation of our Matters, we are immediately to take the Alarm, as beginning then to be under the Temptation of the Devil; and to what Intemperance of Language he may carry us, from one Degree of Passion to another, till at last he involves us in Oaths and Imprecations, no body can tell. The surest way is to keep our Ground, for if once the Devil moves us from our calm steady Temper, and gives us a push down Hill, it will be a very hard Matter to stop till we tumble headlong to the bottom.

Thus now I have done with my Text, and have, in four Discourses, explained to you our Saviour's Doctrine concerning the Third Commandment; but I am afraid I have done no good all this while, and that the evil one, from whom this Spirit of Swearing and Lying comes, will be abundantly too hard for all that I can say or do to fortify you against his Devices. Learn, I beseech you, this easy part of Christianity, to be Men of your Word, and to refrain from this evil Custom of Swearing, and to refrain from it out of a right Principle of the Fear of God. I know no Vice brings more Scandal to our Church of

*England*; the Church may be in danger from other Enemies, but perhaps she is not so much in danger from any Enemy, as from the great Number of profane Persons that pretend to be of her, enough to make all serious People afraid of our Society, and to bring down the speedy Judgments of God upon us, for *by reason of Swearing the Land mourns*. But be not deceived, our Church has no Principles that lead to Swearing, more than the Dissenters; but whatever Church is uppermost, there are always a great many who have no Religion at all, crowd into it, and bring it under Disgrace and Disreputation. But the time is coming, when the Tares shall be separated from the Wheat, and they shall be cast with the evil one, the Devil that sowed them, into Hell; but the Angels shall carefully gather the Wheat into God's Barn. *If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be all Praise.



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## S E R M O N XXVII.

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### M A T T. V. 38.

*Ye have heard that it hath been said, an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth.*

Ver. 39. *But I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other also.*

Ver. 40. *And if any Man will sue thee at Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also.*

Ver. 41. *And whosoever shall compel thee to go a Mile, go with him twain.*

Ver. 42. *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.*

The First Sermon on this Text.

**I**N these Words our Saviour goes on to another Branch of Duty, wherein our Righteousness is to exceed that of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; and taking occasion from the Law of Retaliation, which, in some Cases, was permitted to private Persons by the Law of *Moses*, and in many more by their corrupt Interpretation, teaches his Disciples much higher Degrees of Charity, both in forgiving of Injuries, and in giving and lending

to our Adversaries in Distress, than these Doctors taught. It is only the first of these, namely, the Forgiveness of Injuries, or the foregoing the Privilege of Retaliation, which I shall now treat of, leaving the other of Giving and Lending, to another Opportunity.

The Doctrine of Forgiveness, or foregoing the Privilege of Retaliation, is described here in the first four Verses which I have read, the Sense of which I take to be, as if our Saviour had said, Ye have heard of the Law of Retaliation, and of the Sense which is put upon it by the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; but notwithstanding that Doctrine, which was partly indulged you for the Hardness of your Hearts, and which has been extended by these Doctors, much farther than was intended in the Law of *Moses*, I forbid you all private Revenge. The publick Magistrate is the Officer appointed by God for that Purpose, who is to do Justice, and give Reparation of Injuries between Man and Man, without Malice or Enmity to the Party offending: But it is not for every light Affront or Offence, ye are to trouble the Magistrate, or to seek Reparation of your Neighbour offending; It is an higher Degree of Charity I require of you my Disciples, namely, that ye be readier to pardon, than to avenge Injuries, though in a lawful way. Ye may perhaps fancy, that by pardoning one Injury, ye shall invite another; but if it is so, rather venture that, than give way to a revengeful Temper; for Persecution is like to be your Lot, Judges and Magistrates are like to be your Persecutors themselves, and therefore study Patience more than Reparation of Injuries.

From



From the Words thus paraphrased, there are these three Things I shall briefly handle.

I. I shall enquire wherein the Doctrine of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* was defective in this Matter.

II. I shall endeavour to explain what higher Degrees of Duty our Saviour requires of us Christians, in the Point of Retaliation of Injuries.

III. I shall solve some Doubts and Objections which have been raised against this Doctrine, and conclude with a short Application.

I. To begin with the Doctrine of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, as to Retaliation of Injuries; it is true, it took its Rise from something in the Law of *Moses*: There seems to have been a Permission to the Avenger of Blood, being one near of kin to the Person killed by Manslaughter, while his Heart was hot with Indignation, if he could overtake the Manslayer before he got to a City of Refuge, or if he caught him afterwards without the Bounds and Privileges of the City of Refuge, to avenge himself of him, and to kill him. And there were Directions for Punishments too, established by the Law, *an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth*, but by the Jewish Doctors grossly perverted in the following Particulars. 1. Though *Moses* is very express in it, that it was the Judges and Magistrates who were to inflict this Punishment of Retaliation, they allowed the injured Parties, either to avenge themselves, or to sell off the Punishment, by accepting of a pecuniary Mulct, or some other Reward and Compensation, to the great Discouragement of publick Justice. 2. They allowed of Retaliation for every the smallest Injury, leaving

no room for the Virtue of Patience. 3. They took no care to teach with what Spirit this Reparation was to be sought, not distinguishing between a just Defence or Reparation, and a Spirit of Revenge. In opposition to which Doctrines,

II. Our Saviour teaches these Three Things.

1. That we are to abstain from all private Revenge, let the Affront and Injury be ever so great; there are publick Persons whose Office it is to be the Ayengers of Wrong, and these are to be applied to, if we will needs right our selves. 2. But, *Secondly*, our Saviour goes on, and teaches his Disciples a better way how to demean themselves under the many Provocations and Injuries he foresaw they should meet with from the World, in the way of their Profession and Practice, and that is, the way of Patience and Forgiveness. 3. *Thirdly*, he obviates an Objection, which is very natural to be started, namely, that this way of Patience will expose us to be abused and affronted still more and more, when Men know they can do it unpunished. To this Objection our Saviour answers, that of the two; returning of Injury for Injury, or hazarding the being farther injured, we should chuse rather to venture the being farther injured, as being liable to much fewer Inconveniencies than the other; at least, that in all lighter, more tolerable Injuries, this is the Course we ought to take, rather than to prosecute our Right at Law, and by that means involve our Neighbour and our selves in much greater Trouble.

This is the short of our Saviour's Doctrine concerning Retaliation of Injuries, in opposition to the Doctrine of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* on that Subject. But it will be necessary to explain it  
more

more distinctly, partly, because it is not obvious to every one that this is his Meaning, and partly because if it is, it will require some Pains to reconcile it to the Reasons and Opinions of the World.

The *first* Thing I asserted of our Saviour's Doctrine concerning the Retaliation of Injuries, is, that we are to abstain from all private Revenge, let the Affront or Injury be ever so great. This is the least that can be meant by these Words, *But I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil*; or rather, as it is in the (a) Original, *that ye resist not the Evil or injurious Man*; which is well explained by St Paul, by not (b) *rendering Evil for Evil*, not repaying one Injury with another. For Understanding the Meaning of this Precept, as opposed to the Doctrine of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in this Particular, it will be requisite to acquaint you, that though by the Law of *Moses*, these Retaliations were not to be made, but by the Sentence of the Judge, as is plain from *Deut.* xix. 18, and 21. compared together; yet the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, for their By-ends, allowed of private Revenges, particularly under Pretence of compounding and making up of Injuries, had found ways to exact great pecuniary Mulcts from the injuring Person, in lieu of this *Eye for an Eye, and Tooth for a Tooth*; nay, in some Cases, as I told you, the Law itself allowed of private Revenge, as in Case of Manslaughter, if the Manslayer could be overtaken before he made his Escape to one of the Cities of Refuge. But now our Saviour pro-

(a) Μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ ὀνειδιζομένῳ.  
B b 4

(b) Rom. xii. 17.  
hibits

hibits all private Revenge, reserving the Office of Vengeance entirely to the publick Magistrate, who is God's Avenger, and is possessed of the Sword of Justice for the Punishment of evil Doers. But,

*Secondly*, I take our Saviour's chief Design here, to be the instructing of his Disciples in that better way, namely, the way of Patience and Forgiveness, that they should not only abstain from taking Satisfaction themselves, but also forbear seeking and prosecuting the legal Satisfaction before the Judges, which in strictness of Justice is lawful. This is certainly the Meaning of these Words, *But I say unto you, that ye resist not the evil or injurious Man*; especially if we consider the several Instances of these sorts of Injuries immediately mentioned, bodily Injuries by smiting on the Cheek; Injuries in our Estate, by taking away our Coat; and Injuries in point of Liberty, by compelling us to go a Mile; all which our Saviour advises us to bear, though with the hazard of having a second Injury offered us, rather than avenge.

But because this Doctrine is liable to very great Exceptions, and therefore may be judged improbable by some, to be the true Sense of our Saviour, however favoured by the Letter of the Words; I shall therefore briefly consider, both the Inconveniencies and Conveniencies of it, after I have first added an Observation or two, tending to the better Explication of it.

The *first* Thing I would observe, is, that our Saviour in these Words, *But I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil*, is preparing his Disciples, that is, all Christians, for that State of Persecution which  
he

he knew they were to meet with in the World; *q. d.* Although this Privilege was allowed the *Jews*, that when they were injured, they might repair to the Magistrate, who was to do them right upon their Adversary, according to the Proportion of Wrong they had suffered from him; *Life for Life, Eye for Eye, Tooth for Tooth*; yet ye, my Disciples, are to expect no such thing; I foretell you that Persecution shall be your Lot, without any Privilege of Retaliation; and therefore ye are to prepare your selves to bear Injuries, without either avenging your selves personally, or expecting that the Magistrate will avenge you in the way of publick Justice. And if this be the Sense, (as it is highly probable) then this Doctrine of suffering all manner of Injuries without Reparation, relates chiefly to Christians under a State of Persecution, when the Laws and Magistrates are against them, but not to Christians who enjoy the Protection of Laws and Government; for no doubt they may be righted by those Laws, as well as the *Jews* under the Law of *Moses*. So that our Lord is here only preparing Christians for what was then immediately, and often afterwards, like to be their Lot, namely, the State of Persecution.

But then there is another thing I must likewise observe, which will justify this Doctrine, though it should be extended to all times of the Church; prosperous as well as adverse, peaceable as well as persecuted; namely, that the Injuries here mentioned, are such as were reckoned the smaller sort of Injuries, such as none but a litigious Person would go to Law for; and some of these too, Injuries inflicted by the Oppressiveness  
of

of the Law itself, in both which Cases we may safely pronounce that Retaliation is prohibited. First, I say, in the case of light, tolerable Injuries; for to seek to right our selves by Law for such, shews a very impatient litigious Spirit; and besides, the Remedy is worse than the Disease, it being much easier to bear with small Injuries, than to undergo the Charge and Trouble of righting our selves by Law. But then, *Secondly*, if the Injury is such as is brought upon us by Course of Law, as no doubt there be many such; one instance of which, is this taking away the Coat by Suit at Law in the Text, then there remains nothing but Patience; for the resisting the Laws, or the Judges, and Magistrates, in the Execution of them, though they happen to err, and to be guilty of Acts of Hardship and Oppression to particular Men, is certainly unlawful in itself, and prohibited by our Saviour to all Christians.

Having premised these Observations, for the better understanding of our Saviour's Doctrine in the Text, I come now, as I propos'd, briefly to consider the Inconveniencies and Conveniencies of it, the better to reconcile it to the Reason and current Opinions of Mankind. The present Inconveniencies of suffering a light Injury, can be but small to the injured Person, consisting all in a little Self-denial, and Mortification of his Pride and Passion, which are much more tolerable than what follow upon the ways of Contention. And as to the future Inconveniencies; whereas some may be apt to suspect that the patient bearing of one Injury, may invite another, I believe it will be found quite otherwise, that the revenging of one  
Injury

Injury brings on another; the one is like the withdrawing of Fewel or combustible Matter, which will soon put out the Fire; and the other is continually furnishing fresh Fewel, mixed with Oil and Gunpowder, and such enflaming Materials, as are apt to spread the Fire of Contention, but not to extinguish it.

So I am led insensibly to the third thing in our Saviour's Doctrine, which is his obviating of an Objection very natural to be started, namely, that this way of Patience will expose us to be abused and affronted still more and more, when Men know they can do it unpunished. Our Saviour answers this Objection very briefly, by advising us to venture the being further injured, *the turning the other Cheek, the losing the Cloak as well as the Coat, the going two Miles instead of one*, rather than flying to Revenge or Retaliation. For this I take to be the Meaning of all these Expressions, that we should rather venture the receiving of a second Injury, than revenge the first; for the Words are not to be interpreted literally, the turning of the Cheek being a proverbial Phrase for exposing one's self to an Injury, and patiently bearing it; so *Lam. iii. 30. He giveth his Cheek to him that smiteth him*, i. e. he patiently beareth Injuries and Affronts. But that it is not to be understood literally, when we are smitten on one Cheek, that we are to turn the other, appears from the Examples of our Saviour and of *St Paul*, who did not turn the other Cheek when they were smitten. Now that we had better venture the suffering a second Injury, than revenge the first, will appear, if we consider these two Things. 1. That the Evil of Suffering is not to

be compared with the Evil of Sin. The Preparation of the Mind to bear a second Injury, can at worst expose us only to the Evil of Suffering; but the Study of Revenge exposes us exceedingly to the Evil of Sin. 2. Even as to the Evil of suffering Injuries, the not revenging pacifies the Wrath of the Adversary, and so makes an end of the Strife; but retaliating of Injuries perpetuates Strife, because then they study who shall have the last ill Word, and who shall do the last ill Action.

III. I come now, in the last Place, as I proposed, to answer some Doubts and Objections which rise from this Doctrine and to make Application of it. There are many Doubts of great Consequence have been started, and many dangerous Errors have been broached from this Doctrine of our Saviour's misunderstood and misinterpreted; and these not speculative, but practical Errors, which are therefore the more necessary to be guarded against.

1. *First*, From this Doctrine of not resisting Evil, or the evil and injurious Man, some have inferred the Unlawfulness of Self-Defence in any Case whatsoever. But this Doubt may quickly be removed, by considering the Force of the Original Word, as it is explained by the most skilful in that Language; for it doth not signify to defend, but to resist by way of Revenge; and therefore I conclude, that it is not lawful Defence, but Revenge, or retaliating Injury for Injury, which is here prohibited; the same which St Paul calls *rendring Evil for Evil*.

2. *Secondly*, There are some Enthusiasts, Quakers, and Anabaptists, who, from this Doctrine, conclude



conclude the utter Unlawfulness of all punishing of Malefactors, even by the publick Magistrate, because we are here forbid to resist the injurious Person. But this Mistake may easily be removed, if we consider who the Persons were, to whom our Saviour address'd all this Discourse, namely, private Christians, and others in a private Capacity, without offering one word of the Magistrate's Office, or any other particular Relation of Men. What our Saviour is here prohibiting, is only private Revenge, without any the least Design of encroaching upon the Magistrate's Office, as indeed this Enthusiastical Doctrine would cut it off altogether, and so dissolve all Governments, and reduce the World to a State of Anarchy and Confusion. It were an easy thing, by many Arguments, to confute this false Interpretation; but, for Brevity's sake, I shall only refer you to that one Passage of *St Paul, Rom. xiii. 4.* where he tells Malefactors what they are justly to expect from the Sword of the Magistrate, as he is the Minister of God: *But if thou do that which is Evil, says he, be afraid, for he beareth not the Sword in vain; for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil.* And our Saviour, by confessing that (a) *if his Kingdom had been of this World, his Servants would have fought,* grants plainly the Power of the Sword to earthly Princes.

3. *Thirdly,* There are others who, acknowledging the Necessity of the Magistrate's Office, and likewise that the punishing of Criminals is his

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(a) John xviii. 36.

Duty, deny that it is lawful for Christians to exercise that Office, ~~they~~ being forbid by our Saviour to resist Evil. But this proceeds from the same Mistake, namely, from their not considering that our Saviour is here only teaching the Duty of private Christians, and forbidding private Revenge; he is only exhorting to a patient bearing of the Injuries offered to ourselves, without aiming in the least to exempt us from the Duty of protecting and defending others, where it is our Duty so to do, as it is certainly, if we are Magistrates, and for that very End invested with the Power of the Sword.

The same Answer will serve them, who, by these Words, *Resist not Evil*, think all War is prohibited to Christians; for if our Saviour is only teaching the Duty of private Christians, without meddling with the Office of Rulers and Magistrates, all that can be gathered from hence, as to this Matter, is, that private Persons are not to usurp the Magistrate's Office, or to rise in Arms, without the Command of the lawful Magistrate, whom they may certainly obey in the execution of Justice.

4. *Lastly*, Some have made a Doubt from these Words of my Text, whether we are not totally prohibited going to Law, since our Saviour requires us rather to bear with Injury after Injury. To this Doubt, I have these two or three Things to answer. 1. That our Lord seems to me to recommend, *first*, the way of Patience and Charity, if by that means Quarrels can be made up without a Suit at Law. 2. That many tolerable Injuries ought to be passed by, without seeking legal Reparation; and it is chiefly of these

these lesser Injuries our Saviour seems to treat in this Text; and the Example of *St Paul* confirms it, who though in smaller Injuries he troubled not the higher Powers, yet when his Life was in danger, once accepted of a Guard of Soldiers (*a*); another time appealed to *Cæsar* (*b*). 3. That when in Matters of great Importance, we are necessitated to go to Law, we do it only with an Eye to Justice, and our own Reparation, without any malicious revengeful Design against our Adversary. In observing which Rules, we shall be so far from going contrary to this Text, that we shall directly answer the Design and Intent of it.

Having thus answered the Doubts which occur from the Text, my last Business is to exhort you seriously to comply with the main Scope and Purport of it, namely, to correct that vindictive Temper which inclines us to private Revenge and Retaliation of Injuries, and to put in practice the much neglected Duty of forgiving one another, as we expect Forgiveness at the Hand of Almighty God. It is a very sad thing, that we Christians are so great Strangers to the true Spirit of Christianity; that in this particular of resenting and revenging Injuries, there is no *Heathen* or *Jew* acts more contrary to the Spirit of Christ and the Gospel than we do. We think it below us to put up the least Injury or Affront, and do even much exceed what our Saviour reprehends in the *Jews*, who would have *Eye for Eye, Tooth for Tooth*; for as if these were low Revenges, by the Maxims

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(*a*) Act. xxiii.

(*b*) Act xxv. II.

established among some that are called Christians, our Neighbour's Heart's Blood is thought but a reasonable Satisfaction for a rash injurious Word, or any the least contumelious Action. I wonder upon what Hope such Persons can expect Remission of the many thousand Talents of their Sins at the Hands of Almighty God, when they will not forgive their Christian Brother a few Pence of his Failings to them. I shall conclude with that most Christian Exhortation of St Paul to the *Colossians*; (a) *Put on therefore (as the Elect of God, holy and beloved) Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a Quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* To which I cannot forbear adding another Exhortation of his to the *Ephesians*, to the same Purpose; (b) *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil speaking, be put away from you, with all Malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.*

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all Praise, Honour, and Glory, Might, Power, and Dominion, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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(a) Col. iii. 12.

(b) Eph. iv. 31.

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## S E R M O N XXVIII.

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M A T T. V. 42.

*Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

**W**E heard, at the last Occasion, from the Words immediately preceding, how our Saviour, in correcting the Abuses which the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had put upon the Law of Retaliation, taught his Disciples much higher Degrees of Charity, both in forgiving of Injuries, and in doing Good for Evil, by giving and lending to their Adversaries in Distress.

Of the first of these, the Forgiveness of Injuries, or the foregoing the Privilege of Retaliation in that respect, I then discoursed, and intend to proceed now to the other, the doing Good for Evil; *Give to him that asketh thee, says he, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.*

The Words I understand as belonging to the same Subject, *q. d.* In order to the Christian treating of an Adversary, it is not enough, not to retaliate his Injuries, but ye must further gain him

with Kindnesses, by giving, or lending, or shewing any other Kindness in your Power, as his Circumstances shall require.

In speaking to the Words, there are these three Things I shall endeavour to shew.

I. In general, from the Context, that it is the Duty of Christians to do Good for Evil.

II. That if our Adversary is in Want, we ought to bestow our Bounty upon him, as upon other Objects of Charity and Beneficence.

III. That if he is not in such Want, as to need our Bounty by way of Charity, yet if his Circumstances are such, that he wants our Help out of any Straits and Difficulties, by lending, or any other Favour and Courtesy, we ought readily to afford it, and not shew our selves hard-hearted, difficult, or morose, upon such Occasions.

I. In general, that it is the Duty of Christians to do Good for Evil. This is to be gathered chiefly from the Connexion and Purport of this Discourse; for all this is brought in upon the Law of Retaliation, in which the first thing recommended by our Saviour, is the not revenging or retaliating of the Injury, the *not rendering Evil for Evil*. But we are not to stop there, but to proceed to *do Good for Evil*; or as the Apostle St Paul excellently words it, *Rom. xii. at the last Verse, to overcome Evil with Good*.

This, no doubt, at first sight, must appear a very strange Doctrine to the unrenewed Nature of Man, which delights in nothing more than in contriving and executing all Mischief against an Adversary. And indeed it seems a little hard and unreasonable,

unreasonable, that we should not only not retaliate Injuries, but likewise treat the injurious Person with all manner of good Offices. If this be the way of treating him that injures us, how must we treat our Friends and Benefactors? For clearing of this Difficulty, there are a few things I would offer to your Consideration.

1. That there are many good Offices we owe to all Mankind, from which the Injuries of others to us do not exempt us; and yet that these come far short of the more exalted Love which we owe to our Friends: For if it were a sufficient Excuse from Duty to our Neighbour, that he has injured us, it might be in the Power of the injurious Man to suspend all the Laws of God, which teach us our Duty to one another. All then that we plead for, when we exhort you to render Good for Evil, comes to this, Not that you should immediately chuse the injurious Man into the Number of your Friends, till, by his after-Expressions of Kindness, he shews himself worthy of such a Trust; but only that ye do him those good Offices which we owe to all Men, or to that particular Station and Relation in which he is placed.

2. Let us consider when our Neighbour has injured us, that though the not retaliating the Injury, is a most excellent Christian Duty, yet the Work of gaining and recovering him entirely, is not compleated, unless we go on to pay him all the good Offices which are due from one kind Neighbour to another. The bare negative part of good Neighbourhood, that is, the abstaining from doing Evil to the injurious Man, though it be a

good beginning, it will be apt to miscarry, except it is pursued with following Acts of Beneficence: and therefore, as we reckon him an unwise Man who does his Work by halves, who begins his Building, but stops short in the middle, and never finishes; the same may be applied to the bare not retaliating of Injuries, if we do not proceed to back that good beginning with farther Acts of Charity, Courtesy, and Kindness, such as are due from one Christian Man to another.

3. Let us consider that the regaining of an Adversary, being a Work of very great Difficulty, requires a steady diligent Hand to carry it on, till he is entirely recovered from his Enmity and ill Temper of Mind. Such a great and difficult Work as this is, must not be stinted by the Punctilio's of Honour, falsely so called, but must wade through good Report, and bad Report, through many Affronts, Neglects, and Provocations, towards the finishing of it.

So much for the general Doctrine, *That we are to render Good for Evil.*

II. I proceed now to the *Second*, which relates more particularly to our Adversary in Want; *Give to him that asketh thee; or rather, give to him when he asketh thee;* for by the Connexion, I am induced to believe the Discourse goes on still of the injurious Man, concerning whom we are directed, first, not to retaliate his Injuries, but rather to venture the receiving of a second Wrong, than avenge the first. Then we are commanded not to neglect any Acts of Beneficence that he may want, and is willing to accept at our Hands. And those Wants are here described to be of two sorts, such as may be supplied by giving, and by lending;



lending; and in both Cafes, our Duty to our Adversary is directed: *First*, if he is in Want, and will vouchsafe to ask, or accept of any Supply from thee, give it him. But if his Circumstances are such, as put him rather upon borrowing than asking, shew not thy self averse from his Relief in that sort of Courtesy or Obligation. But we are now upon the first of these, *give to him when he asketh thee*; the Meaning I take to be, *q. d.* If he that has formerly injured thee, comes to be in Want, so as to ask any Supply of thee, let not any Resentment of Injuries hinder thee from performing the same Acts of Charity to him, as if he had not injured thee. It is no wonder that Charity is reckoned up in the first place, as a very proper thing to gain an Adversary, there being no Duty whatsoever more endearing, than a Readiness to relieve our Neighbour in his Distress, especially such a Neighbour, who, by his former Behaviour, had Reason to expect rather Disservices, than Acts of Kindness and Charity from us. But the great Difficulty is, to bring our corrupt Natures to perform this endearing Duty to our Adversaries; for it meets with several Impediments, both on the part of him from whom this Charity is expected, and on the part of him on whom it should be bestowed; which therefore ought to be removed.

1. First, on his part who should shew this Charity, there are his own real or pretended Occasions; there are Remainders of Covetousness; and especially in this Case, there are Remainders of Malice and Resentment, all which do easily step in to hinder this noble piece of Charity in relieving of Enemies, and such as have injured us.

As to the first of these, our own real or pretended Occasions; this is a bottomless Gulph, which as it obstructs all Charity in general, so more especially this to our Enemies, and those who have injured us, because it is an easy thing for such Persons to pretend, if they have any thing to spare, which they seldom have, it must go to their Friends, and not to their Enemies. There is nothing more easy than to find Reasons and Pretences for not parting with what we have. For either Mens Rank, and Quality, and Station in the World, or at least the Compliance with all the expenceful Fashions that are brought up, will require it for their present living, or something must be laid up for Sickness and Old Age, and other Accidents incident to Human Life; or their Children, or other Relations, must be provided for, and that not Moderately, so as by God's Blessing on their own Industry, to procure them an honest Livelihood; but Estates must be purchased, or laid up for them, and nothing trusted to God's Providence. If these be good Reasons to keep what we have, then the Door is shut to all Charity, not only to Enemies, but to all others whatsoever. But on the other Hand, if we can learn to confine our Wants within the Bounds of Nature and Grace; if we can trust Providence with the future, and in the mean time are desirous to do good to all, as we have Opportunity: If we can observe the Rules of Frugality and Contentment, without aiming after the top of the Fashion, which will engage us deep in extravagant Expences; we need never want something more or less to give for the occasions of Charity, to help not only our Friends  
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and Benefactors, if they should come to be in want, but likewise to gain and recover our Adversaries. But, 2. *Secondly*, the next Impediment I mentioned, is, from remainders of Covetousness, which is a greater Enemy to Charity than the other. For our Occasions, though a little extravagant, may be all answered and satisfied at last; but Covetousness will never be satisfied, it is an unquenchable Thirst after the World; and what comes from the Covetous Man, comes so aukwardly and unwillingly, that the least shew of an Impediment obstructs it, and therefore it will hardly amount to Charity to Friends, far less to this noble Degree of Charity to Enemies. But as to this Principle of Covetousness, I shall only say this, that whoever is in the least acquainted with the Christian Religion, as it is taught in the Gospel, must see the absolute necessity of Conquering and Overcoming it, before he can hope to get to Heaven. Our Saviour argues this excellently in this same Sermon on the Mount, in which he has many touches at it; but particularly it is handled at large in the *vi. Chapter* of this Gospel, from the *19. Verse* to the End of the *Chapter*, to which I refer you, as being full of excellent Arguments against this Vice, and so I leave it. 3. But lastly, among the Impediments of this Duty in my Text, I reckoned the remainders of Malice and Resentment, which often lie hid in the Bottom of the Heart, and are not easy to be discovered, till we find this backwardness to relieve him that has injured us, in his Distress. For it is a much more easy thing, verbally to forgive an Injury, and, for our own ease, to forbear Revenging of it, than it is by any costly Acts of Charity, to shew our

Adversary that we are perfectly reconciled to him. But then is the proper Time, and these are the surest Circumstances, in which we can both satisfy our selves and the World, that we have no Malice and Resentment; namely, when our Adversary wants our Assistance, and we are in a Condition to afford it, if we shew our selves then to be of a generous bountiful Disposition to him, and easily exorable to all his just Requests of that Nature.

2. These are the usual Impediments of this bounty, on the part of the injured Person from whom this Bounty in the Text is required. There are some other Impediments of it likewise on the part of the injurious Person who wants this Relief; my Text says, give to him *when he asks thee*. Now some there are so stout, that they would sooner starve, than either ask or accept of a favour from one they have disobliged. It is often observed, that they who have done the Injury, are the hardest to be reconciled, and are so far from being gained by the offer of a kindness, that it doth but renew the Enmity; and while they continue in that irreconcilable Temper, perhaps it is better to let them alone, till they come a little to themselves, and the fury of the Storm is spent: With these Men we must choose the easy Times of Access; the *Mellia tempora fandi*, before we offer them so much as a Gift or Courtesy. It would seem, by my Text, there must be some advances on their Part; they must, by themselves, or their Friends in their Name, desire favours, before they can expect they will be bestowed on them by their Adversary whom they have injured. *Give to him when he asketh thee, or desireth*

*desireth a favour of thee.* So much for the giving or desiring part.

III. I come now in the *third* and *last* Place, to shew, that though our Adversary is not properly in such indigent Circumstances as to want our Charity to supply him by the way of Gift, he may perhaps want our help by way of Loan, or other such like Courtesy; and in that Case, *we are not to turn away from him*, that is, we are not to treat him in a Scornful, Hard-hearted, Inexorable, or unfriendly Manner, but in a Courteous and Friendly way, readily to afford him our Relief. *Give him when he asketh thee, and when he would borrow of thee, turn not away from him.* For still, as I observed before, I am of Opinion that our Saviour is pursuing the same Subject of Discourse concerning the way of behaving our selves to one that has injured us. For besides downright giving, there are many ways by which Men deal in good Offices one with another, affording their mutual Help and Assistance by lending Money to one another, and laying out their Credit, Authority, Countenance, and Interest for one another's Benefit. Now in all this sort of traffick of good Offices, our Saviour wills us to be ready to assist the Man who has injured us, and by that means to perfect the Friendship and Reconciliation. The Expression too of not turning away, when we are addressed to upon these Occasions, points at the Manner in which such Services are to be done. For sometimes Men turn away in a Passion from those who desire favours of them; the contrary of which is here enjoined; namely, that in a kind, gentle, courteous Way, such Persons and their Addressees should be received. Again, turning a-  
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way implies a Stiffness, and Inexorableness, a Resolution not to yield or grant one's Request; the contrary of which is here recommended, namely, that our favours to them who have injured us be real in good Deeds, as well as in good Words; thus to distinguish them from the kindness of the World, which evaporates in Complement, but there is nothing real under it. Thirdly, turning away implies at least a Backwardness and Unreadiness to grant, an off-put and want of Determination; which often spoils the Gracefulness of a Grant; in opposition to which, a Readiness and good Grace in granting is recommended; which is often more taking and obliging than the Grant itself, and tends exceedingly to gaining the Heart of the Adversary.

I have now explained what I take to be the true Scope and Design of the Text: My next Business shall be briefly to exhort you to a study of this excellent Temper, that instead of revenging Injuries, ye reward Good for Evil. I shall offer you a few Arguments to this purpose, and so have done.

1. *First*, We have the Example of Almighty God, who, notwithstanding our great Provocations, treats us with a marvellous Kindness, in heaping upon us all sorts of Mercies and Favours. But I shall not insist upon this Argument at present, because it will properly fall in to be considered shortly, at the 45th Verse, where it is brought in by our Saviour, as an Argument for the Love of Enemies.

2. A *Second* Argument I shall use to the same purpose, is the Efficacy of this Method towards the reconciling an Adversary. The not revenging  
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of Injuries is a good Beginning of this Work, but the following it with a constant Train of other good Offices, carries it on to perfection. If the Adversary is ever so obdured, this melts him down to Repentance and Reconciliation : Whereas, by neglect, the old Enmities sprout out like Weeds in a neglected Garden ; or by the least Repetition of Injuries, all old Quarrels are revived.

3. This kind treating of an Adversary in his Want or Distress, is reconcileable enough with the Customs and Maxims of the more generous Sort of Combatants in the World ; who so soon as they have subdued their Adversary, and brought him to any Terms of Submission, immediately forgive him, and afterwards shew him what favour and kindness lies in their Power. What is this but extending Charity to him if he is in want, and other good Offices, as he has Occasion for them ?

4. This is one of the best Signs of the good Temper of our own Souls, and that we are in a right State of Grace, especially if we do it with a single Eye to God, in Obedience to his Laws, and not from a Prospect of any worldly Benefit or emolument it will fetch in to ourselves. St *James* tells us plainly, that without Works of Charity, *Faith is dead, being alone*, James ii. 17. And the Works he is there speaking of, are the very same Works I have been describing. *If a Brother, or Sister, says he, be naked and destitute of daily Food ; and one of you say unto them, depart in Peace, be warmed and filled ; notwithstanding ye give them not those Things which are needful to the Body ; what doth it profit ? Even so Faith, if it hath not Works, is dead, being alone.*

5. Let

5. Let us consider that we have the greatest Assurance that all Actions of that nature shall be amply rewarded ; and the contrary Uncharitableness and Hard-heartedness punished (a). *If ye forgive Men their Trespases, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you : But if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.*

6. *Lastly*, It will be found, that the contrary Practices proceed always from some base Principle or other ; such as Pride, Frowardness, Cruelty, Jealousy, Cowardise, Ingratitude, Moroseness, and the Want of Generosity. But I shall not spend your Time now to describe it in it's proper Colours : Our Saviour insists more fully on our Duty to Enemies in the Words immediately following ; and therefore I shall here dismiss this Text, after I have drawn this one Corollary or Inference, namely,

That if we are to carry ourselves so kindly and obligingly to our very Enemies, as to supply them when they are in Want, and to lend our Help and Assistance to them, according to their several Occasions and Necessities ; then surely we are much more obliged to do so to others, particularly to our Friends, to whom we are under greater Obligations of Gratitude. Some indeed do not restrain the Words, as I have done, to our Duty to those that have injured us, as I think the Context directs, but interpret them in a greater Latitude, for a general Duty to all Men, and so perhaps our Interpreters understood them. But though I think the other the righter Way, this you see will fairly

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(a) Mat. vi. 14, 15.



follow from it by way of Consequence; and so I recommend it, and leave it with you. *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.* I shall conclude with that excellent Collect of our Church.

*O Lord, who has taught us that all our Doings without Charity are nothing worth, send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our Hearts that most excellent Gift of Charity, the very Bond of Peace, and of all Virtues; Without which, whosoever Liveth, is counted Dead before thee. Grant this for thy only Son Jesus Christ's sake.*

*Now to him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Praise; &c.*



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## S E R M O N    X X I X .

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### M A T T . V . 43 .

*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour and hate thine Enemy.*

*Ver. 44. But I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

*Ver. 45. That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, for he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil, and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust.*

*Ver. 46. For if ye love them which love you, what Reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same?*

*Ver. 47. And if ye salute your Brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the Publicans so?*

*Ver. 48. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

The First Sermon on this Text.

**W**E are come now to the last Instance our Saviour gives of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, their defective Interpretation of the Law of *Moses*; namely, in the Matter of Love and Charity, which

which they restrained to their *Neighbour*, in the narrow Notion they had of that Word, understanding thereby one of the same Nation or Religion; which love our Saviour commands here to be extended to all Mankind, even our bitterest Enemies.

In the Words I have read, we have these three Things to be considered.

I. The corrupt Interpretation of the Duty of Love and Charity, as it had been taught by the Jewish Doctors at the 43<sup>d</sup> Verse. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy Neighbour and hate thine Enemy.*

II. Our Saviour's Correction and Improvement of that Doctrine, by extending it to all, even our bitterest Enemies, at the 44<sup>th</sup> Verse. *But I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

III. The Confirmation of this Doctrine, by some Arguments taken from the Example of God, and the greater Perfection required of Christians, than of either *Jews* or *Heathens*, from thence to the End of the Chapter.

I. I begin with the corrupt Interpretation of the Duty of Love and Charity, as it had been taught by the Jewish Doctors. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy Neighbour and hate thine Enemy.* As to the loving of our Neighbour, it is expressly found in the Law of *Moses*. But for the hating of our Enemy, there is no such Thing expressly to be found there; and therefore it is most probable, this was the Comment of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, which they put upon  
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the Law, rather than found in it. Yet that there was somewhat to give Colour to this Sense, cannot be denied. For, 1. The *Jews* were expressly commanded to treat the ancient Inhabitants of the Land as Enemies. They were forbid to make any Covenant, or to enter into any Affinity with them; nay, they were commanded to Smite and Destroy them utterly, and not shew them Mercy; as ye may see in the vii. *Chap.* of *Deut.* at the Beginning. And as for the *Amalekites*, they were commanded to blot out the Remembrance of them from under Heaven (a). 2. The Reasons given for these Severities, extended a great deal farther than the hating and destroying those particular Nations; for, by a Parity of Reason, they would reach to all that injured their Nation, and all that were not of their Religion, but addicted to any Idolatrous Worship, so as to endanger their spreading of their Idolatry among them, or their *Children*; for these were given as the Reasons of the Severity to those Nations appointed to Destruction. The Reason of the Severity against *Amalek*, was the Opposition they had met with from him, when they came out of *Egypt*, *Deut.* xxv. 17. *Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the Way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt: How he met thee by the Way, and Smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary: And he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee Rest from all thine Enemies round about, that thou shalt blot out the Remembrance of Amalek*  
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(a) *Deut.* xxv. 19.

from under Heaven; thou shalt not forget it. Now, by a Parity of Reason, they might argue, that they were to root out all their Enemies: All that had, or should do these, or such like Injuries to them. Another reason for destroying these accursed Nations, was the danger they were in of being led away with their Errors and Idolatry, as *Deut.* vii. 4. where, after the command to Smite them, and Destroy them, and to contract no Affinity with them, the reason is added, *for they will turn away thy Sons from following me, that they may serve other Gods.* Now, by a parity of Reason, they might think themselves obliged to hate, and oppose, and destroy all that were of a different Religion from them. And indeed it is very probable that they Acted upon this Principle; for it is observed of the *Jews*, both by Christians and Heathens, that though they shewed great Friendship to one another, they were utter Enemies to Persons of all other Nations and Religions; and would not so much as converse with them: As we may see by *St Peter*, before he was undeceived by the Holy Ghost, *Act.* x. 28. where he thus addresses *Cornelius* and his Friends. *Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a Man that is a Jew, to keep Company, or come unto one of another Nation: But God hath shewed me, that I should not call any Man common or unclean.* *Tacitus* gives this Character of the *Jews*; *Apud ipsos Fides obstinata, misericordia in promptu: sed adversus omnes alios hostile odium*; that is, they had a stanch Honesty, and a ready Charity among themselves, but hated all others like Enemies. And so *Juvenal* tells us, it was their Custom to deny even com-

mon Civilities to all that were not of their own Nation and Religion, such as the shewing a Traveller the way, or directing him to a Spring where he might have a draught of Water.

*Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti ;  
Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos.*

So that it is not to be wondered at, that our Saviour tells them they had heard such Doctrine, as *that they were to love their Neighbours, and hate their Enemies.*

If it be objected against this, that they were Taught in the Law of *Moses*, to perform several Acts of love and kindness to Enemies, particularly *Exod. xxiii. 4, 5.* where it is said, *if thou meet thine Enemy's Ox, or his Ass, going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the Ass of him that hateth thee, lying under his Burthen, and wouldst forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help with him.* It is very true; but they limited all this to such an Enemy as was one of their own Nation and Religion, an *Israelite*, or a Profelyte at farthest, as the same Law seems to be explained, *Deut. xxii. 1.* where the Words of the Law run thus; *Thou shalt not see thy Brother's Ox, or his Sheep, go astray, and hide thy self from them: Thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy Brother.* And *v. 4.* *Thou shalt not see thy Brother's Ass, or his Ox, fall down by the way, and hide thy self from them: Thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.* And so it is explained, *Lev. xix. 18.* *Thou shalt not avenge, or bear any grudge against the Children of thy People; but thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And if there was such Colour from the Law itself for this Interpretation, our Saviour had

had much more Reason for this censure from the Doctrine and Practices current among the *Jews* in those Days: For their Books are full of it; nay, they thought it Meritorious, and a good Service to God, to persecute to Death such as were not of their Religion, as it appeared afterwards that the Christians had not any more mortal Enemies than the *Jews*.

So much for the first Thing I proposed to consider, the corrupt Interpretation of the Duty of Love and Charity, in confining it to those of their own Nation and Religion, as it was Taught by the Jewish Doctors; for that was what they meant by *loving their Neighbour, and hating their Enemy*.

II. I proceed next to our Saviour's Correction and Improvement of this Doctrine, by extending it to all, even our bitterest Enemies; *But I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.* In which Words we are to consider,

1. The extended Object of our Love and Charity, *our Enemies; those that curse us, and hate us; those which despitefully use us, and persecute us.*

2. The Acts of Charity which we are to exercise towards those our Enemies; we are *to love them, to bless them, to do good to them, and to pray for them.*

1. *First*, we are to consider here the extended Object of our Love and Charity, which in the Text is described to be *our Enemies, those that curse, and hate us, those that despitefully use, and persecute us.* The great Perfection of this Doctrine, is apt to dazzle the Eye of our Understanding so

much, that we do not readily see through it, or apprehend it. For clearing of it, we may observe, that as there are two Sorts of Inducements to the Love of other People; *first*, common Inducements, taken from some common Considerations of what we owe to them as Men, as Christians, as our Countrymen, and Neighbours, and the like; then particular Considerations of Kindred, Friendship, and other Relations, and their present Circumstances and Necessities: So there are two sorts of Inducements to the Love of Enemies, *first*, the common Inducements as they are Men, or Christians, or good Men, or our Domesticks, or Kindred, or any other way related to us; *secondly*, the Consideration of them as Enemies, and wanting some present Exercise of our Love and Beneficence. Let us consider both these a little more particularly.

(1.) As to the *first*, The Consideration of our Enemies, not as Enemies, but as Men, and Christians, and Neighbours, and Kindred, or whatsoever other Relation they may stand in to us; we are to consider, that their Enmity to us doth not cancel those Obligations, which rise from these other Considerations and Relations. The Duties of Humanity we owe to all Men, and some further Duty we owe to the Household of Faith, *i. e.* to all Christians. Whatever Duty of Justice or Charity we owe to a Neighbour, his Enmity doth not supersede it, it being a most certain Truth, that we should render to all their Dues, though they were our bitterest Enemies. There are indeed monstrous Practices, quite contrary to this Doctrine, made use of by some wicked Men, who quarrel with their Friends,



on Purpose that they may be discharged from all Obligations of Gratitude, and so they pay all former Arrears; and for all future Duty, they think no fair play is due to an Enemy; and upon that Maxim, allow themselves, without Remorse of Conscience, to do him all manner of Injuries. Whereas there is really no Obligation Enmity discharges us from, but that of Friendship, that is, an intimate Trust and Familiarity: But as for Justice, Honesty, Civility, Gratitude, Humanity, Charity, and Relief in Distress, and all other Duties whatsoever, due to the Community of Men, or Christians, or Neighbours, or Relations; and all the Esteem and Love due to Wisdom, Learning, Diligence, Courage, Patience, Purity, or any other Virtue possess'd by an Enemy, we owe it as much as if it were possess'd by a Friend. And we should take a great deal of care, that our Enmity do not so byas or blind us, as to hinder us to perceive, honour, and reward the commendable good Qualifications and Actions of an Enemy. Now from this way of regarding an Enemy, there are a great Number of Duties incumbent upon us, which, if we faithfully discharge, they will go a great way in this difficult Duty, the Love of Enemies. But you will object perhaps, that though Justice obliges you not to wrong an Enemy, yet you cannot imagine how it should command your Love, your Heart being alienated with Enmity. To this I answer, that your Enemy may be possess'd of so good Qualities, and endowed with such excellent Virtues, and may have done such worthy Actions, as deserve both Esteem and Love. Grant but this, and that our Enmity is not to blind us, but that

we ought to see these good things in an Enemy, and it is not possible but that both Esteem and Love will actually follow. The Enmity then must be restrained to something that is of an odious Nature in itself, and that must be laid in the balance with all his other good things, and must preponderate, before we suffer our Enmity to fix on the Person. And indeed, before we suffer it to rest upon him at all, there are a great many previous Truths we should be well assured of, *e. g.* We must be assured, that it is an ill Thing we pretend to fault in him, before we fasten our Enmity upon it; for many of those Things are innocent Opinions, and if duly canvassed, very void of that Venom, which at first we took to be in them. There are, I say, a great many such, which by the Prejudice of Education, we have look'd upon with a hideous Aspect, which when we pull off the ugly Vizard in which they were shewed us, are very innocent, nay sometimes useful and necessary Truths. I do not know whether it be not further a reasonable *Postulatum*, that no Enmity be fixed on any Man on account of his Opinions, those not being in his Power. All the Enmity due to Persons on account of the worst Opinions, is, perhaps, only because of their Stubbornness and Obstinacy, and refusing to use the Means of Information: For suppose they have done all that in them lies, to find out the Truth, but cannot find it, we may charitably judge it is something in their Make and Constitution, some Flaw or Weakness of Understanding, something that is more their Mistortune, than their Fault. This one Consideration would cut off more than one half of the Enmities that are in the World,  
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and would reduce them into a narrow Compass, *viz.* That of Immoralities, in which Men act contrary to the Convictions of their own Mind and Conscience. But even in these, there are great Abatements and Allowances to be made. Mens Enmities to us, are often the mere Effect of Misinformation. Often we our selves have given just Provocation, either by offering the first Acts of Hostility, or by doing something liable to Misconstruction; sometimes all the Offence is owing to a sudden Passion, or Inconsideration, which our Enemy, in cool Blood, repents, and would be glad of a fair Offcome, if ~~we~~ we would allow it him. His grossest Immoralities perhaps are such as he is heartily struggling against, and condemns himself for them; he undergoes a severe Punishment from his own Mind and Conscience, and if he recovers, we know not what an excellent Person he may prove. At least, the Consideration of Human Infirmary should dispose us to treat our Enemies with a great Mixture of Compassion, remembering that ~~we~~ we have all of us our own Infirmities of some kind or other, and do all want Forgiveness both from God and Man.

2. But, *Secondly*, Let us consider our Enemies with relation to their Enmity, and try if that Consideration of them will not afford some Work for our Love and Charity. It is true, it is a vexatious thing to have any one's Enmity, and a thing apt to provoke our Anger and Resentment; but yet if this Anger is governed as it should be, it is not inconsistent with Love and Prayers, and diverse Acts of Beneficence. Are we not angry with our Children when they commit Faults, and do we not sometimes punish them? yet we love

them for all this, and pray for them, and do them all the Good that is in our Power. So that there is no such Impossibility as is pretended in loving an Enemy; for though we are troubled at the Injuries they do us, yet we may at the same time have an hearty Desire of reconciling them, and of being reconciled to them, which is not to be done any way so readily, as in the way of Love and Kindness to them. I hope then I shall not be guilty of any Contradiction to good Sense and Reason (however contrary it may be to the wicked Opinions and Practices of the World) if I assert there is something in an Enemy, even considered with relation to his Enmity, that may stir up our Love and Affection; and that whether we consider the Causes or the Effects of this Enmity. As to the Causes of it, if it is occasioned either by our selves, or him, both ways it calls for our Bowels of Love, and Pity, and Relief. If we our selves occasioned it, then it concerns us extremely, as we would not be the Authors of so great a Mischiefe, and chargeable with all the evil Consequences of it, to make haste to reconcile the Matter, which cannot be done so well any other way, as by Acts of Love and Kindness. Again, if the Enmity is not occasioned by us, but by our Adversary, then indeed his Condition is so much the more dangerous and deplorable, and calls more loudly for our Love and Charity, to extricate him out of these dangerous Circumstances; which cannot be done so well any other way, as by recovering his Friendship in the way of Love. Then if we consider the Effects of Enmity, what dismal Consequences it is usually attended with, if not timely  
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stoppt and prevented; and that there is no way to stop it so effectual, as by not retaliating of Injuries, and by doing Good for Evil, and all this from a Spirit of Love, and unfeigned Sincerity, not Hypocrisy, we shall still find great Inducements to this Duty. If it be urged, that though the doing good to Enemies, is a ready way to reclaim them, yet it is impossible inwardly to love an Enemy, considered as an Enemy. This being granted, yet let us love him, both for his other good Qualities, and particularly as capable of being made a Friend by good Usage. So much for the Object of our Love and Charity, *our Enemies, those that curse, and hate us, despitefully use and persecute us.* But how are such Persons to be approached? Or how is it possible to make any good Impression upon them? Is not all Communication cut off, and is it not the best way to manage such People, if we would enjoy Peace and Quiet our selves, to let them alone, and have nothing to do with them? I confess this is a much better way, than to incense them more and more by Acts of Hostility. Yet our Saviour shews us a better way than this, which leads me to the second Thing I observed in this Duty to Enemies, namely,

2. The Acts of Charity, which we are to exercise towards them; *We are to love them, to bless them, to do them good, and to pray for them.* I shall be but short upon these, both for want of time, and because in speaking of the Object of these Duties, *our Enemies*, I have shewed how they may be considered in such a way, as to make all these Duties very reasonable to be performed to them. The Duties here mentioned, are these *four*:

1. Inward Love. 2. Blessing, or good Words.  
3. Good Deeds. And 4. Prayers for them.

(1.) The first, is the *inward Love of our Enemy*. By this I do not understand that highest Degree of Love, *Friendship*; that we are to trust an Enemy with the inwardest Secrets of our Hearts, and to communicate to him all our Counsels, and to take a mighty Pleasure and Delight in his Company and Conversation. The chief Exercise of the Love of Enemies, is in that common Love which is due to all Men, that we wish them well; that we be ready to do them all Acts of Justice, Charity, and good Neighbourhood, that we suppress the Spirit of Malice and Revenge; that we observe, and honour, and esteem whatever good Qualities they are possessed of; that we acknowledge, love, and commend whatever good Actions we know they have done; that we be glad to embrace all Opportunities of removing the Occasion of Difference, and of coming to a good Understanding, and perfect Reconciliation.

(2.) The second Duty here mentioned to an Enemy, is *Blessing*. The Original Word, *εὐλογεῖτε*, seems to be of a larger Extent of Signification than our *English*; for it signifies all sorts of good Words, whether in speaking of them, or to them. Accordingly it is a very commendable thing to speak well of an Adversary; and likewise as commendable when we speak to him, not to retort one ill Word for another, but to use civil, peaceable, and kind Speech; as St *Peter* says, *1 Pet. iii. 9. Not rendering Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing, but, contrariwise, Blessing.*

(3.) The third Duty to Enemies, is *Beneficence*, *Do good to them that hate you*; whether they be  
good

good Actions of Justice, or Charity, or Civility. *First*, I say, *Justice*. It is an abominable Principle of some Men, (as I touched before) that Justice is not due to an Enemy ; or, as they word it, that an Enemy deserves no fair play ; whereas the true Principle is, that Justice is not to regard the Persons of Men, but is equally due to all, Good and Bad, Friend and Foe. Secondly, *Charity* ; *If thine Enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him Drink* ; that is, whatever Straits or Necessities he is under, help him out. Lastly, *Courtesy and Civility* ; for *we are not to salute our Brethren only*, as it here follows, but are to be courteous to all ; that the good we do, we may do it in a winning way, in a loving and obliging manner, which often takes more than the good Turn itself which is done.

4. The last Duty to Enemies here mentioned, is *praying for them*. This was exemplified in our Saviour, who in the midst of his Pain, prayed for his Persecutors ; *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do* : and in St Stephen, whose dying Words, when they stoned him, were, (a) *Lord, lay not this Sin to their Charge*.

So much for the Description of the Object of our Charity in the Text, our Enemies, and the Acts of Charity required towards them. The Reasons of this Duty which follow, I must refer to another Opportunity.

Now God bless what we have heard, and to this great God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all Praise, &c.

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(a) Acts vii. 60.

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## S E R M O N    X X X .

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M A T T . V . 45 .

*That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, for he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil, and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust.*

Ver. 46. *For if ye love them which love you, what Reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same?*

Ver. 47. *And if ye salute your Brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the Publicans so?*

Ver. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

**H**AVING, in a former Discourse on these Words, considered the defective and corrupt Interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees, as to the Duty of Love and Charity, together with our Saviour's Correction and Improvement of that Doctrine, by extending our Love to all, even our bitterest Enemies; I proceed now to the next thing in our Saviour's Discourse on this Subject, namely, the Confirmation of this his Doctrine concerning the Love of Enemies, by some Arguments



ments taken from the Example of God, and the greater Perfection required of Christians, than of Jews or Heathens. To which is subjoined a general Corollary to all this Discourse, concerning the Interpretation of the Law in the perfectest Sense; *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

I. I begin with the Arguments here used by our Saviour, to persuade us to the Love of Enemies; which are two.

1. The first is taken from the Example of God, *who makes his Sun to shine on the Evil and the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and Unjust;* and our imitating him in this good Quality, is a Proof of our being his Children; *That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven; for he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil, and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust.*

2. The second Argument is taken from the Commonness of shewing Kindness to Friends and Benefactors, among Men of the most indifferent Character; and that higher Degrees of Duty may justly be expected from Christians.

I. The first Argument taken from the Example of God, goes upon these two Premises:

1. That it is our Duty to imitate God in all imitable Perfections, particularly in his Mercy and Goodness.

2. That God, in this Life, shews great Beneficence, Goodness, and long-suffering Patience to all, Good, and Bad, *i. e.* Friends, and Foes; and therefore so should we.

1. That we are to imitate God in all his imitable Perfections, particularly in his Mercy and Goodness;

Goodness; *That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven.* This was the great Happiness of Man, could he have kept it, that he was made after the Image of God; and the more he recovers of this Image, which is done by advancing in all moral Perfections, so much the more doth he grow like to God. But whatever is to be said of some other Perfections, certainly there can be no doubt, but that we are encouraged to imitate God in those of Patience, Mercy, and Beneficence, since the Imitation or Resemblance in the Text, doth most particularly point at these: *That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, for he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil, and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust.* Which leads me to the

2. Second Proposition upon which this Conclusion of the Love of Enemies is built, namely, That God, in this Life, shews great Beneficence, and long-suffering Patience to all, Good and Bad, instanced here in the Blessings of Sun and Rain, promiscuously communicated to all. There are several important Truths couched in this Proposition, which will require a more particular Consideration. As

(1.) That the Providence of God exerts itself in governing the several Parts of the Creation, and in directing them to such Uses as he thinks most proper; for he maketh his Sun to rise, and Rain to fall, where he thinks fit.

(2.) That Good Men are God's Friends, and bad Men his Enemies. This follows plainly from the Force of the Argument; otherwise, how could

could the Duty of Love of Enemies be deduced from this Practice of God's shewing Kindnesses to Good and Bad.

(3.) That there are many common Mercies, which God, in this Life, bestows promiscuously upon all, Good, and Bad, Friends, and Foes. All which, with the Influence they should have on our Practice, it will be fit to touch at more particularly.

(1.) The first thing we have to consider here, is the Providence of God in governing the several Parts of the Creation, and in directing them to such Uses as he thinks most proper. For the Text doth not say only, the Sun rises, and the Rain falls, but *he maketh his Sun to rise, and Rain to fall.* We are apt to look no higher than to second Causes, but our Saviour teaches us here to look up unto God, as the principal Author of all our Mercies and Comforts. Or if we look to God as the Creator of Sun and Rain, and our other Blessings, we little mind him as the providential Disposer and Manager of them, and directing them to the various Uses of Life; otherwise we should be much more assiduous in addressing him, both by Prayer and Thanksgiving for them. Rare Miracles of Providence indeed we are apt to take notice of; but such daily Mercies, as the constant rising and setting, and Influences of the Sun, the Seasonableness of the Weather, the sending of refreshing Showers, the regular Productions of Grass and Corn, and a thousand other daily Benefits we take no notice of at all, except we come to be pinched with the Want of them. But the wise Considerers of God's Providence, take all as from his Hand, and  
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are thankful to him for them. (a) *Sing unto the Lord with Thanksgiving*, says the Psalmist, *sing upon the Harp unto our God, who covereth the Heaven with Clouds, who prepareth Rain for the Earth, who maketh Grass to grow upon the Mountains. He giveth to the Beast his Food, and to the young Ravens which cry.* And so we are taught by our Saviour in some following parts of this same Sermon, that (b) *our heavenly Father feeds the Fowls of the Air, which neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into Barns; and that God clothes the Grass of the Field, which to Day is, and to Morrow is cast into the Oven.* It would be endless to quote all the Passages to this purpose, in which the Holy Ghost doth elegantly set forth this Care of the Divine Providence. You may, at your leisure, read the 140th, and the 136th *Psalms*, which are employed throughout on this Subject; and the 38th, and 39th Chapters of *Job*; the serious Meditation of which, is apt to give us very noble Thoughts of God, and to stir up our Devotion and Obedience to him.

(2.) The second thing couched in this Proposition, is, that good Men are God's Friends, and bad Men his Enemies. For if it were not so, the Argument could be of no force towards proving the Duty of the Love of Enemies, which it is here brought for. The same Definition our Saviour gives of his Friends, *Matt. xii. ult. Whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother.* And *John xv. 14. Ye are my Friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

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(a) Psal. cxlvii. 7.

(b) Matt. vi. 26, &c.

This is a plain and easy Notion of the Friends of God, and may serve both to correct divers false Marks and Signs of God's Friendship, and likewise to encourage us in the ways of Holiness and Virtue, since the greater Progress we make therein, we are sure to be admitted to higher Degrees of Friendship with God. Many are apt to go by other Marks; some conclude their Friendship with God, from a strong Imagination of their Election and Predestination from all Eternity; but without this Mark of Goodness, or Respect to God's Holy Laws, it is impossible that other can be known. Some, with the *Jews*, conclude their Friendship with God, because of their being Members of the true Church. We have *Abraham* to our Father, said the *Jews*; we are safe in the Church of *Rome*, think some; and we are safe in the Church of *England*, think others: But it is not the Authority of any Church, nor the Orthodoxy of any Opinions, that will entitle us to God's Friendship, except these Orthodox Opinions work in us a real Change of Heart and Life, and make us good Men and Women.

This Doctrine should encourage us mightily in the Study of true Piety and Virtue, since that Study leads us into all the Felicities of God's Friendship, which are unspeakable, even in this Life, much more in the Life to come. Every Degree of Goodness admits us to more Grace and Favour; and every Degree of Grace both facilitates our Duty, and makes it more pleasant and relishing.

Before I leave this Notion of good Men, their being the Friends of God, there is one farther Im-

provement I would make of it, namely, as a Direction to us in the choice of our Friendships; in which we want Advice, as much as in any other thing whatsoever. Men commonly choose their Friendships from a Similitude of their own Mind and Manners, such as they are in their vicious State, not such as they ought to be. "And this is the true Cause that instead of reaping any Benefit from that Sort of Friendships, they are only more encouraged and confined in their evil Practices, and do many more ill Things by the Example, and at the Instigation of their Friends, than they would otherwise from their own corrupt Inclinations. Whereas would we choose the best of Men and Women for our Friends, as we see God does, we should find an infinite Comfort and Benefit in that Relation, and should have a great Spur and Encouragement to Virtue. And indeed if the Matter be more thoroughly examined, it will be found that there can be no firm Friendship but among Good and Virtuous People. For if our Friend is addicted to any one Vice, there is presently a way to come at him to make him act contrary to the Rules of Friendship; if he is Covetous or Ambitious; then for his Interest he will not stick to desert his Friend; if he is addicted to Drink or Censure, he will then neither spare Friend nor Foe; if he is wedded to his Lust of any kind, he will sacrifice all other Interests for compassing it; if he is given to Flattery, or is carrying on any selfish Design of his own, be it ever so bad, he expects his Friend should be only a subservient Tool in promoting it, instead of using an honest Freedom in dissuading him from it.

it. So that I do not wonder that even *Tully* a Heathen, from the mere Force of Reason, in a Treatise of Friendship lays it down as a Principle, *Hoc primum sentio, nisi in bonis Amicitiam esse non posse.* In the first place, says he, *I am of Opinion there can be no Friendship but among good People.* but I have insisted too long on this, especially falling into the Text by the bye, and therefore I shall leave it, and proceed to the third Thing contained in this Proposition. Namely,

(3.) That there are many common Mercies, which God in this Life bestows upon all, Good and Bad, Friends and Foes. Two of these are instanced in, in the Text; *he makes his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust.* There is an infinite Number of others which might have been mentioned, such as the sweet Influences of the Moon and Stars; the Temperature of the Air; the Fertility of the Earth for natural Productions; the Commodiousness of the Sea and Rivers for Navigation; the Multitude of Creatures of all sorts for Use and Ornament; nay, which is of much greater Value, the Means of Grace; and the Cails of Providence; and the Admonitions of Conscience; and the Blessings of Education and Government; and many more than I can enumerate; all which with a bountiful Hand, God bestows promiscuously upon all, Good and Bad.

Now from this Example of God, particularly here recommended to our Imitation, there are several Instructions may be gathered with relation to our Duty. I shall insist on these Three, which I judge to be of the greatest Importance.

1. The *first* is that recommended in the Text, for the sake of which indeed this Argument from God's Example was made use of; namely, that we should so far love our Enemies, as to be wanting to them in none of the common Duties, which we owe to the Generality of Mankind. And this goes a great way; for here's the whole Duty of Man due to our Enemies. We are exempted it seems, from no Part of it, by their being our Enemies; whatever we owed them before, either as Men, or Christians, or Neighbours, or as wise Men, learned Men, good Men, as Parents, Brethren, Magistrates or Subjects, or whatever other Relation they may have to us, we owe it them still. There is none of those Obligations cancelled by any private Enmity they may have to us. And therefore whatever we owed them in Justice before, we are to pay them still; for we are to render to all their Dues; whatever we owed them in Charity, we owe them still; *if thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him Drink*: And whatever we owed them in Civility and Courtesy, we owe them still; *if ye salute your Brethren only, what Reward have ye?* So if ye salute your Friends only, what Reward have ye?

But further, as the pressing Circumstances of a particular Object oblige us to turn our Thoughts to the Consideration and Relief of that Object; so the Consideration of our Enemy, as an Enemy, ought to stir us up to several Duties towards him, considered under that Capacity; such as to pity him, to pardon him, to pray for him, to give him good Words, to pursue him with good Deeds, to endeavour a Reconciliation, to remove his Prejudices, to give him all reasonable Satisfaction, to  
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abstain from retaliating ill Words, or ill Actions, and the like.

But that we should go further than these, further than the common Duties we owe to all Men, and the particular Duties we owe to Enemies; even to the higher Duties we owe to intimate Friends, such as Trust and Familiarity, and venturing our Lives and Fortunes for them, and espousing their Interests with a particular Zeal and Concern; this I do not find required. For though God makes his Sun to shine, and his Rain to fall on Good and Bad, Friend and Foe; yet there is no Body will deny that there are many peculiar Favours, which he reserves for his Friends and Children, to which others are perfect Strangers. There is we know a great Addition of particular Grace and Talents upon the good Improvement of the common Grace bestowed upon us at first.

2. A *second* Instruction I would recommend from this Example of God's in the Text is, that we ought not to set any such high Value on these common Mercies, which God bestows promiscuously on Good and Bad, as to think our selves ever the more in his Favour on account of them. As some Writers of the Church of *Rome* make worldly Prosperity one of the Marks of the true Church, so there are a great many who pursue worldly Wealth and Grandeur with such Eagerness, as if their chief Felicity consisted therein. But these are but among the common Mercies, and such indeed as fall more frequently to the Lot of wicked than good Men; and therefore we are not to reckon our selves either more or less in God's Favour as to our eternal State on account of them.

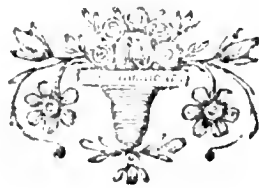
3. A *third* Instruction we are to learn from this Example in the Text, is, that we are to aim after such Blessings as distinguish the Good from the Bad; inward Graces are the Jewels which God reserves for his own Children, those Graces which adorn the Soul with all Manner of Virtue. It is certain that God values Faith, Humility, Charity, Purity, Meekness, Patience, Courage in resisting Temptations, Justice, Peaceableness, Repentance, Sincerity, and all the other Christian Virtues, far before Riches, Honour, Learning, Eloquence, Power, Beauty, Strength, the Favour and Applause of the World; and all those other Things which are in so much esteem among Men. And therefore above all Things let us apply our selves to God, the Giver of all Grace, through the Mediation of *Jesus Christ*, for those best of Gifts. Grace to subdue our Corruptions, and to persevere in the diligent Exercise of all Virtue, is infinitely preferable to all that this World can afford. And therefore let us be both very diligent in asking, seeking and knocking, that is, in an holy Importunity at the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain it; and likewise careful to abstain from all those Things which may extinguish it, or provoke God to withdraw it; improving it so, as to lay up Treasures in Heaven of all sorts of good Works, that may stand us in stead, when all these worldly Blessings shall leave us.

So much for the first Argument in the Text for the Love of Enemies; the Example of Almighty God. Time will not allow my entering on the second Argument taken from the higher Degrees of Duty expected of us Christians, than from other Men, especially Publicans and Heathens, who had  
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but a very indifferent Character in the World. Only before I have done, because there is one Evasion Men have from the Argument I have been managing, and consequently from the Duty it presses; it will be necessary to afford it a short Consideration. The Evasion is this; though we are commanded to love our Enemies, and after God's Example to do a great many Duties to them, yet sure, say they, if they are God's Enemies, there lies no such Obligation upon us, but we may hate and persecute them. But in answer to this Subterfuge, the same Argument of my Text, *viz.* God's Example, which obliges us to love our Enemies, that is, to perform the common Duties to them which are due to other Men, will oblige us likewise to pay those Duties to God's Enemies. For, does he not make his Sun to rise, and his Rain to fall on Good and Bad, Just, and Unjust; *i. e.* both on his Friends and Enemies? And are not we called upon to imitate him in this particular? And a great deal of Reason there is for this Duty, if I had Time to insist upon it. For, 1. How come we to take upon us to know, who are God's Friends, and who his Enemies? Is not this to encroach upon God's Prerogative, who is the Searcher of Hearts? 2. Suppose we knew who are God's Enemies at present, I hope we do not pretend to know what Change may be made upon them before they die. 3. In order to the making of this Change, which is the most effectual Way, the Way of Love, or the Way of Hatred? 4. If wicked Men deserve ever so much to be punished, who gave us Authority, (I speak of private Christians) who gave us Authority, I say, to do it? 5. Which is most like to God's Example, which

is the Argument in the Text? He has suffered them hitherto patiently in his World; he has afforded them the common Benefits of Nature, and perhaps the Means of Grace, and Time to repent. And shall we take upon us to cut off their Day of Grace, and so have a Hand in their final Impenitency and Condemnation? Had these Things been duly considered, what Abundance of bloody Persecutions, and other Effects of blind Zeal might have been prevented? Let us learn what manner of Spirit we are of, and remember that we are the Disciples, not of a fiery *Elias*, but of the meek *Jesus*, who came not to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them.

*Now to him with the Father and the Holy Ghost,  
be all Praise, &c.*



S E R M O N XXXI.

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M A T T. V. 46.

*For if ye love them which love you, what Reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same?*

Ver. 47. *And if ye salute your Brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the Publicans so?*

The Third Sermon on this Text.

**O**UR Saviour having, a little before my Text, recommended the rare and difficult Duty, the Love of Enemies, presently backs it with two Arguments; one taken from the Example of Almighty God; the other, from the Obligation lying on Christians to aim at higher Degrees of Duty than other Men, especially such Men as had no great Reputation for Sanctity in the World, but quite otherwise, *Heathens* and *Publicans*.

Now having, at the last Occasion, spoke to the first of these Arguments, taken from the Example of God, I come now to consider the Second, contained in the Words which I have read, *For if ye love them which love you, what Reward have ye? do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your Brethren only, what do you more than*

*than others? do not even the Publicans so?* q. d. No great Thanks to you, if you are only kind to them who are kind to you; Self-Love, and common Gratitude, which Men of the lowest Rank of Goodness put in practice, will carry you thus far. But if ye intend to be my Disciples, and think to get to Heaven, ye must not content yourselves with an ordinary Degree of Virtue, nor propose to yourselves the ordinary Patterns of the World, but must imitate God himself as far as human Frailty will allow, particularly in this extraordinary Duty of the Love of Enemies.

From the Words thus briefly explained, there are several Things I would observe, and recommend as worthy of our Consideration and suitable Practice.

I. *First*, I observe, that Gratitude is here recommended, not as a peculiar Virtue of Christianity, but as a common Virtue all the World over, judged necessary to be put in practice by all, even Men of the lowest Figure for Reputation: *If ye love them which love you, what Reward have ye? do not even the Publicans the same?*

II. I observe, that the shewing Courteousness, and Civility, and Acts of Kindness to those of our own Sect or Party, is a very low Degree of Virtue: *If ye salute your Brethren only, what do ye more than others?*

III. I observe, that mere Principles of Self-Love, without any thing of Religion, will carry a Man to be kind and courteous to those who are so to him. This is implied in those Words, *do not even the Publicans the same?*

IV. I observe, that upon occasion of any good Thing we see in other Men, we should stir up  
our-

ourselves to an holy Emulation to equal, or exceed them, as the Principles and Duties of our Religion do require; as here, from the Example of the very *Publicans*, our Saviour excites us to the highest Degrees of Duty.

V. *Lastly*; I observe, that if we would approve ourselves true Christians, and expect to go to Heaven, we must not content ourselves to live like other ordinary Men of the World; but even in those things wherein they seem to give us good Examples, should outstrip them, and distinguish ourselves, by endeavouring after the highest Degrees of all Christian Virtues. This is implied in these Words, *What do ye more than others?*

I shall endeavour to bring all these within the Limits of this present Discourse.

I. The first Thing I observe from the Words, is, that Gratitude is here recommended, not as a peculiar Virtue of Christianity, but as a common Virtue all the World over, and judged necessary to be put in practice by all, even Men of the lowest Figure for Reputation. *If ye love them which love you, what Reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same?* Not that it is our Saviour's Design to speak diminutively, or contemptibly of this great Virtue of Gratitude: Quite otherwise, he takes it to be a Virtue so conspicuous by the very Light of Nature, that all Men, even they who have a very indifferent Character otherwise, think it necessary to put it in practice. There are none but some of the very worst of Mankind, who do not love their Friends, and think themselves obliged to reward one Kindness with another; and therefore it is no wonder that our Saviour insists so little on this Duty; for pressing

so much as he does the Love of Enemies, this of Friends is included. And there was indeed little occasion to press a Duty which all Mankind agreed in, at least, as to the Theory, whatever they may do as to the Practice. There were not, among the *Jews*, any Men more generally odious than the *Publicans*, who were Gatherers of the publick Taxes; whether it was that the Taxes were much hated, being payed to the *Roman* Conquerors, and so being Signs of their Subjection and Servitude; or whether these *Publicans*, who were an inferior sort of Farmers of the Taxes and Customs, stretched their Power to exact more than their due of the poor People; yet as large Consciences as they had, they would go so far into the Duty of Love and Charity, as to be loving and kind to their own Friends. Our Saviour thought it a great Disparagement, both to his Disciples and himself, that they should be no better than those who were reckoned among the worst of Men.

II. The second Thing which I observed, was, that the shewing of Courteousness, and Civility, and Acts of Kindness to those of our own Sect and Party, is a very low Degree of Virtue; *If ye salute your Brethren only, what do ye more than others?* It is a certain Sign of a little narrow Soul, which thus confines Love and Charity. This was a Vice the *Jews* in general were guilty of, and a Vice that all Sects of Christians, especially the most heretical and schismatical, do most notoriously espouse. One of the surest Effects of our different Opinions in Matters of Religion, is, that they straiten and confine our Charity within so very narrow Bounds, that it destroys the Duty  
indeed,



indeed, as to the far greater part of those to whom it is due ; which is often a much worse Evil, than the Error in Opinion which occasioned it. I know not how all our strictest Sects have been deluded into so gross and so dangerous a piece of Immorality. There can be nothing more contrary to the Laws of Charity, which, by the Rule of the Gospel, is to be extended to all Men, even to our bitterest Enemies ; nor to the Duty of brotherly Love, which is due to all Christians, than that proud, narrow-soul'd Temper. And therefore it is no wonder that our Saviour did so particularly guard his Disciples against it, and as it were shame them out of it, as he does in the Text.

III. The third Thing I observed from the Words, is, that mere Principles of Self-Love, without any thing of Religion, will carry a Man to be kind and courteous to those who are so to him. This is implied in these Words, *Do not even the Publicans the same ?* He doth not say, do not even the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* the same ; for they were People who pretended to be governed by religious Principles. Two Things will be necessary to make us sensible of the Force of this Argument.

1. That Principles of Self-Love will carry us thus far.

2. And if so, then our Love, if limited to Friends, is no Part of Religion, but only Self-Love or Compliance with the Fashion, or our worldly Interest.

1. Now the first of these, it can be no hard Matter to convince us of, that Principles of Self-Love will carry us to the Love of Friends, or those that love us. A Man that would have Friends,  
must

must shew himself friendly; and that Friends are a very great Help in furthering us, and all our Affairs in the World, there can be no manner of Doubt. Now worldly Men being, as our Saviour observes elsewhere, in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light; that is, minding and prosecuting their worldly Interest closer than Men of Piety and Religion, must be supposed to observe and follow every Thing that makes for their Purpose, with an equal, at least, if not with much greater Application and Diligence. And there is nothing the whole World is more sensible of than this, how necessary Friends are towards the Promotion of their several Interests. We may observe that the greatest Princes, States, and Potentates upon Earth, do not think themselves safe alone, except they strengthen themselves with Friendships and Alliances; and in order, both to the engaging and keeping their Friends and Allies, they find themselves obliged mutually to protect and defend them. And so it is among private Men, they being yet more sensible, as they have reason, of their own Weakness, have invented many Ways to strengthen themselves by Friendships and Alliances; for often they betake themselves to great Men, and try, by all Means, if they can insinuate themselves into their Favour: Often they enter into Societies and Fraternities, for their mutual Support; and besides, they study by all the Arts of Civility and Complaisance, to get into the Favour of as many particular Persons as they can, by that means to enlarge their Estate, and secure their Interest. But on the other hand, if they have any formidable Enemy, they set themselves, by all means possible, to crush and vanquish him.

2. This

2. This being the Case, that Self-Love leads Men so much to cultivate Friendships, in order to their own Subsistence and Security, it follows plainly, that if we go no farther in this Duty of Love, than to direct it to our Friends, and them that love us, we are governed in it, not by Principles of Religion, but by Principles of Self-Love and worldly Interest : And therefore if we would be sure of our own Sincerity, that we are acted by Considerations of pure Religion, and an eye to God, it will be necessary, that to our Love of Friends, and of those that love us, we add the Love of Enemies, of those that hate and persecute us, that revile us, and do us all the Harm they possibly can.

By the way, this may account for a pretended Defect, which a late (*a*) Favourer of Deism thinks he has discovered in the Gospel, namely, that the Duty of Friendship is not recommended there. For taking off this Aspersion; not to insist now that the Duty of *brotherly Love*, which is made the Badge and Cognizance of Christians, is nothing else but an exalted Friendship, as appeared by the Practice of the first Christians, who joined their Hearts, and Souls, Tongues, Pens, Purfes, and Estates, in such a firm Friendship, as the World never saw before ; not to say any thing of this, but to confine my self to my Text ; does not the pressing the more exalted Duty of the Love of Enemies, *a fortiori*, include the Love of Friends? Is not the Love of Friends presupposed here as a lower Form of Goodness, which not

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(*a*) *Lord Shaftesbury's Memoirs.*

only the *Jews*, but even *Heathens*, went into. It is here approved by our Saviour; only we are commanded not to rest there, but to go on to greater Perfection, even the Love of Enemies. By this false Way of arguing, they might as well pretend, that our Saviour says nothing against Murder when he condemns all Anger in the Heart, and all Provocations of affronting Words; and they might pretend that he says nothing against Fornication and Adultery, when he condemns the inward Lusting in the Heart; and that he says nothing against Blasphemy and Perjury, when he banishes all Oaths out of our Conversation; for by forbidding the lesser Sins, he doth much more forbid the greater; and by requiring the higher and more perfect Duties, he doth much more require the more common and ordinary ones. But to return from this Digression, which yet has not led us one Step out of the Way of the Text, I proceed to

IV. The *fourth* Thing I observed from the Words, namely, that upon occasion of any good Thing we see in others, we should stir up our selves to an holy Emulation to equal or exceed them, as the Principles and Duties of our Religion do require; as here, from the Example of the very *Publicans*, our Saviour excites us to the highest Degrees of Duty. We are all so apt to forget what we ought chiefly to mind, that it is a Piece of good Spiritual Husbandry, to take all the Assistance we can from the Examples of others, to admonish our selves, and to stir us up to a more diligent Performance of Duty. Sometimes the very brute Creatures are taken notice of as Patterns of some kinds of Virtues which Men neglect:

glect: So *Solomon* sends the *Sluggard* to the *Ant*, to learn *Diligence* and *Providence*, *Prov.* vi. 6. *Go to the Ant thou Sluggard, consider her Ways, and be wise: which having no Guide, Overseer or Ruler, provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harvest.* So to convince the *People of Israel* of *Ingratitude* and *Inconsideration*, *God* brings in the *Examples* of the *Ox* and the *Ass*, *Isa.* i. 3. *The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib, but Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider.* And the *Prophet Jeremiah* makes use of several *Birds* and *Fowls*, to reprehend *Israel* for neglecting the *Time* of their *Visitation*. *Jer.* viii. 7. *Yea the Stork in the Heaven knoweth her appointed Times, and the Turtle, and the Crane, and the Swallow observe the Time of their coming; but my People know not the Judgment of the Lord.* And so our *Saviour*, in the next *Chapter*, sends us to the *Fowls of the Air* to learn a chearful *Dependance* on *Providence*. Sometimes again we are shamed into our *Duty* by the *Examples* of the *Heathen World*; So *Jer.* ii. 10. *Pass over the Isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a Thing. Hath a Nation changed her Gods, which yet are no Gods? But my People have changed their Glory, for that which doth not profit.* And so in my *Text*, the *Example* of the *Publicans* is made use of to shame us into some higher *Degree* of *Love* than theirs, which was the *Love* of *Friends*. and the shewing *Courtesy* and *Civility* to their *Brethren*; that is, all that were of their own *Sect* and *Party*. Thus we see *Examples* are brought in both for *Imitation* and *Caution*; *Imitation*, as that of the

*Reckabites*, who payed such a Deference to the Commands of their Father *Jonadab*, as God would have his People pay to his Commands; and Caution, as that of the disobedient *Israelites*, that we may take Warning, and avoid it; *Now these Things were our Examples*, saith St Paul, 1 Cor. x. 6. *to the Intent we should not lust after evil Things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye Idolaters, as were some of them. Neither let us commit Fornication, as some of them committed. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured.* So here, the very *Publicans*, Men of the lowest Character for moral Goodness, shew Courtesy and Kindness to their own Friends and Party; and therefore let not us Christians rest in that low Degree of Goodness, but extend our Charity, Courtesy, and Beneficence to our Enemies. And this leads me to the fifth and last Thing I observed in the Words, namely,

V. That if we would approve our selves true Christians, and if we expect to go to Heaven, we must not content our selves to live like the common Men of the World, but even in those Things wherein they seem to give us good Examples, should outstrip them, and distinguish ourselves by endeavouring after higher Degrees of all Christian Virtues. This is implied in these Words, *What do ye more than others?* It is a fatal Mistake, that we do not usually consider so much, what the Duty and Dignity of our Profession requires, as what will satisfy the present Customs and Demands of the World; whereas we should indeed have much higher Notions of Christianity, as being the most perfect Dispensation; and so be possessed  
with

with that only commendable Piece of Ambition and Emulation, to outstrip all others in all manner of Virtue. *What do ye more than others,* is a Question which should continually be sounding in our Ears, and spurring us on to greater Perfection in Christian Graces. The Reason of this Doctrine is taken from the many Advantages of Christianity beyond any other Dispensation, towards the planting an accomplished Virtue in the World. I shall name a few of the chief of them, and leave it to your selves to consider whether they ought not to have another manner of Efficacy, in leading us to an higher Degree of Virtue, beyond what could be expected from the World before, or from any other Institution since.

1. *First* then, consider how little the rest of the World knew of any Reward of Virtue, to what we Christians know from the Principles of our Religion. We find *Socrates*, and *Tully*, and *Seneca*, and such other Heathen Moralists, as had the best Apprehensions of a future State, talking of it very conjecturally, as if they hoped for some such Thing, but knew not certainly whether it would be so, or no. Only they had some confused Apprehensions that good Men would be rewarded, and bad Men punished in the future State; which, if it made any little Impression upon them, they were taught to trust so much to the various Sacrifices, and other Rites of their false Religions, for expiating their Crimes, that these Principles could have no great Influence, towards the sanctifying their Hearts, or the Amendment of their Lives. Most of the Promises which were made to the *Yezus* were temporal, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, Wealth, and Peace, and

Victory over their Enemies; Arguments more fitted to work upon them in a Politick, than in a Religious Capacity. By the Kingdom of Heaven, they understood generally nothing but the Messiah's great temporal Kingdom. So that till the Christian Religion discovered it, and proved it beyond all Exception, by the Resurrection of our Saviour from the Dead, and his Ascension into Heaven, the World had very little certain Knowledge, or firm Belief, or lively Sense of a future State of Happiness, as a Reward of a virtuous Life. Judge now what Effects such a wonderful Discovery as this, where it is firmly believed, must have upon Men; and how easily they might contemn the short Pleasures of Sin, in comparison of an Eternity of spiritual Joy; and what exalted Degrees of Virtue, such a Discovery, and such a Faith, would lead them to: (a) *This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith, saith St John.*

2. As the World never had such a clear Discovery of a future State, till Life and Immortality were brought to Light by the Gospel; so neither had it ever such a perfect Description and Revelation of Duty, as the Gospel has made. We may see from the Improvements our Saviour has made upon the Law in this same Sermon on the Mount, what a mere Shell and Outside of Duty the Law was, at least according to the Interpretation of the *Jewish* Doctors, before he gave us the true spiritual Meaning and Interpretation of it; and what a Door was opened to Mens Lusts

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(a) 1 John v. 4.



and Passions, by the Indulgences to that carnal People, through the Liberty of Divorce and Retaliation, which our Saviour has now cut off. Understanding then our Duty, at least being put in a Capacity to understand it, infinitely better than ever the World did before, may it not reasonably be expected that we should do something more than others?

3. Was there ever such a plentiful Effusion of the Spirit in Gifts and Graces, either of Sanctification or Edification, as in the days of the Gospel? Was there ever such a Thing known or heard in the World, as was seen at, and after that wonderful Pentecost upon our Saviour's Ascension into Heaven? What a strange working was there then upon the Spirits of Men, and accordingly what a wonderful Change was made both in their Faith and Manners? All this was the Effect of our Saviour's powerful meritorious Intercession in Heaven. And where all this Assistance was afforded, might it not justly be expected, that those Men should do something more than others? But ye may say, those were rare Times indeed, the Days of Miracles, like those of the Church in the Wilderness, when it daily rained Manna. But now we are put to our Shifts, as they, when they came into Possession of the Land of *Canaan*; then it ceased raining Manna, and they were put to ploughing, and sowing, and reaping, and nothing was to be got but by hard Labour. So it is with us now, what was delivered in those Days by immediate Inspiration, we are fain to Labour hard to find out by painful Study, to find out the right Sense and Meaning of the Divine Oracles; and instead of those miraculous Preparations and Dis-

positions of Mens Hearts, we must now take abundance of Pains by Meditation and Application, to bear home Divine Truths upon our own Spirits, and rub up our Memories, that we do not lose and forget what we have heard and learned. And instead of those wonderful Draughts of Souls into the Net of the Gospel, which the Apostles made, our Ministers often toil all Night and catch nothing. All this is true, but where lies the Fault? Is it to be expected that God should govern his Church by perpetual Miracles? If a Man has good Land to work upon, and God sends kindly Weather, yet if he will sleep, or drink, and idle away his time, when he should be at Work; if he lets all the Season slip, and has nothing ready, neither his Ground, nor his Plants, whose Fault is it, if he makes no Crop? If ye have good Doctrine in your Bibles, but will not read nor consider it; if ye have edifying Sermons in your Churches, but will not be at the Pains to come and hear them; or if ye hear them so carelessly, that ye never think more of them to put them in Practice; if ye may obtain good Things for asking them of God by assiduous Prayer, but will not trouble your selves to bow a Knee from one Weeks end to another; if ye have Sacraments which confer Grace, but will live gracelessly without ever receiving the Sacrament, or without ever preparing your selves for it; is it not plain that all this Barrenness is owing to your selves, and that Christianity is not to blame for it?

4. *Lastly*, It may well be expected that we Christians should do something more than others, considering what Encouragement we have from the new Gospel-Covenant, beyond what the  
World

World had from the Covenant of Works. Now there is a powerful and a gracious Mediator, by whom we may have Access to God. Now there is an Act of Pardon and Indemnity obtained by what he has done and suffered for us, upon the easy Terms of the Gospel. Now Repentance is accepted instead of Innocence, and sincere instead of perfect Obedience. Now we have an Intercessor at the Father's right Hand ready to present and back all our Petitions, and to bestow upon us more Grace upon our Application to him, and our diligent Improvement of that Stock of Grace which we have already. And surely after all this, the Question of my Text may well be asked, *What do ye more than others?* But how to answer it, I leave between God and your own Consciences, beseeching him to give us all Grace to walk worthy of our holy Calling, and to be fruitful in every good Work, to his Honour and Glory, and our own eternal Comfort in the great Day of Accounts. For which God of his infinite Mercy prepare us all, through the Mediation of *Jesus Christ.* *To whom, &c.*



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## S E R M O N XXXII.

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M A T T. V. 48.

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

The Fourth Sermon on this Text.

**T**H E S E Words are a Corollary or Consequence drawn by our Saviour, immediately indeed from the subject Matter of the last Duty he had here recommended, *the Love of Enemies*, and the Arguments wherewith he had prest that Duty; but it is not improbable, this being likewise the Conclusion of his Vindication of the Law from the imperfect Glosses and Interpretations of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, that this Exhortation to Perfection may have an Aspect too, to all those other Duties which he had taught in a perfecter Sense. As if he had said, Be ye therefore perfect in your way as God is in his; study the highest Measures of Sanctification, by which Means ye shall best resemble your Heavenly Father, who is holy to the highest Degree of Perfection. These two Senses not being inconsistent with each other, I intend briefly to consider them both.

*First*

*First* then, the *therefore* here seems to be drawn from the Words immediately going before, which commanded their exercising the Duty of Love in a perfecter Degree than other Men, and recommended the Pattern of Almighty God himself in that Matter. And what makes it so much the more probable that they are to be restrained to this Aspect, is, that St *Luke*, vi. 36. concludes the like Discourse concerning the Love of Enemies, with these Words: *Be ye therefore Merciful, as your Father is also Merciful.* From whence it would seem that the Perfection here enjoined, is only a Perfection of Love and Mercy; and that not so much to the Degrees of the Acts of Mercy, in which there is no Proportion between God's Mercy and ours, as to the Extent of the Object to both Friends and Foes, in which we are expressly required to imitate him. And as to the Doubt arising from this Interpretation, how this can be called Perfection, since a Man may extend his Charity to both Friend and Foe, and yet be vitious in other respects; it may be easily answered, if the Words are taken in this Sense, that it appears plainly from the Context that the Perfection spoke of is not an absolute, but a comparative Perfection, and that the Comparison lies between the Love enjoined by the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, which was restrained to Friends and Brethren, and the Love of God, which was extended to all; the more perfect of which is here recommended, being that of which God has given us the Example. I cannot but approve of this Sense, as being both subject to the least Difficulty, and most agreeable to the Context, and to the Harmony of the two Evangelists

gelists who give us the Account of this Sermon. But then,

*Secondly*, The other Sense of Perfection is not to be past by, whereby it is extended to all moral Perfections in general; first, because by a Parity of Reason, if the Example of God is to be followed in Patience, and Love of Enemies, it ought likewise to be followed in all other Parts of Holiness. And secondly, because this being the Conclusion of this Discourse concerning the perfecting the Law, it is no way improper that it be extended to the whole, since the Words will fairly bear it: Especially since Perfection in other Passages of *Holy Scripture* is Interpreted in this comprehensive Sense; we being frequently exhorted, *to be Holy as God is Holy*, and *to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*, &c.

I. To begin with the *first*, that the Love of Enemies is here called Perfection comparatively, to wit in respect of the Love of Friends, which to it is but a lower Degree of Duty. For clearing of this Point it will be requisite to make out these two Things.

1. That there are several Degrees of Virtue, and several Forms as it were of Proficiency in it.

2. That the Love of Enemies is one of the highest of those Degrees, or Forms of Proficiency.

1. *First*, That there are several Degrees of Virtue. If we observe our Saviour's Discourse from the *20th Verse* to the End of this *Chapter*, we shall find that for these *28 Verses* together, he is only pointing out to his Disciples, that is, to all Christians, the higher and more perfect Degrees of Duty, in which it was necessary, *that their*  
*Righteousness*

*Righteousness should exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees.* For instead of abstaining only from the gross Sin of (a) Murder, they are strictly prohibited angry Thoughts, and affronting Words against their Neighbour. Instead of the outward ceremonious Way of (b) Worship, they are commanded to approach to God, with Hearts clear from Malice, Hatred, and Contention. Instead of abstaining only from the gross Sins of (c) Fornication and Adultery, he teaches them how to restrain the inward Lustings of their Hearts, and to govern their Eyes, and all their other Members, that they be not Instruments of Uncleaness. Instead of dissolvable (d) Marriages, and the frequent Changes, which under Pretext of the Liberty of Divorce were in use among the *Jews*; he enjoins a perpetual strict Band of Friendship between Man and Wife, and takes away the Liberty of Divorce, except in Case of Infidelity to the Marriage-Bed. Instead of abstaining from (e) Perjury, he teaches a strict Abstinence from Oaths in common Conversation. Instead of the (f) Retaliation of Injuries, he teaches them to forgive them, and to return Good for Evil. And lastly, instead of the Love of (g) Friends, and being kind only to those of our own Sect and Party, he teaches the Love of Enemies, in Thought, Word, and Deed. And then shuts up all with this (b) Exhortation to Perfection, whereby they

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(a) Ver. 21, 22. (b) Ver. 23, 24, 25, 26. (c) Ver. 27, 28, 29, 30. (d) Ver. 31, 32. (e) Ver. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37. (f) Ver. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42. (g) Ver. 43, 44, 45, 46, 47. (b) Ver. 48.

they might grow up into a more perfect Resemblance of their Heavenly Father. So that there is nothing plainer than that all along these 28 *Verses*, he shews them both the lower and the higher Degrees of Virtue ; and exhorts them not to rest in the lower, but to come up to the higher and more perfect Degrees of it. I do not quote these only to prove this of the Degrees of Virtue from our Saviour's Authority ; but the Instances he gives, and the Reasons with which he clears up and Asserts this Doctrine, are so convincing, that it is a full Proof, both from Authority and Reason, of the Point we are now upon, that there are several Degrees of Virtue, and several Forms of Proficiency in it. And so I pass on to the next,

2. That the Love of Enemies is one of the highest of those Degrees, or Forms of Proficiency. I observe there are some very noble but difficult Duties, which are praised as Instances of Perfection, or Signs of a Man who has made a good Progress in Holiness and Virtue : Such as Humility, for it is said, *Mat. xviii. 4. that he that humbles himself is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven* ; so is a Readiness to part with all for Christ's Sake. Our Saviour said to the young Man in the Gospel, *Mat. xix. 21. who had carefully kept the Commandments from his Youth, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven.* Such likewise is a Spirit of Unity and brotherly Love : When our Saviour prayed for this Grace to his Disciples, he words it thus, *that they may be perfect in one, John xvii. 23.* Such likewise is great Patience, *Jam. i. 4. But let*  
*Patience*



*Patience have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* Such likewise is the good Government of the Tongue. *If any Man offend not in Word, the same is a perfect Man, Jam. iii. 2.* And lastly, to name no more, such is Love and Charity, *Col. iii. 14.* Where after the Apostle had enumerated a great many Virtues, he adds, *and above all these Things put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness.* Now the very Top of Charity is this, of *the Love of Enemies*; as the Force of our Saviour's Argument in my Text plainly implies, where after he had set the Love of Enemies as something peculiar to Christianity, as *the doing something more than others*; the Corollary he draws from that Discourse is: *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect*; having a little before taken notice of that part of God's Perfection, *that he makes his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sends Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust.*

And as we have the Authority of Holy Scripture for this, that the Love of Enemies is a great Part of Christian Perfection, Reason is consonant to Scripture in this matter, whether we consider the great Dignity or the great Difficulty of this Duty.

As to the Dignity of it, St Paul tells us that *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*, as working no ill to our Neighbour, neither in the Sins of Commission or Omission. But some perhaps may object, that though a Man does his Duty to his Neighbour, he may be very deficient in his Love to God. I answer, that no Man can love his Neighbour as he ought, but must love him for God's sake, and with an Eye to him. The giving

ing a Disciple a Cup of cold Water *in the Name of a Disciple*, that is, as he stands related to *Christ*, is an excellent Work; but the Excellency of it consists neither in any Worth of the Disciple considered in himself, nor in the Value or Seasonableness of the Water for quenching his Thirst; but in the Relation he has to *Christ*, as being one of his Disciples; and therefore it is the superiour Love to *Christ*, which chiefly constitutes the Dignity of the Duty. So in this Duty of *the love of Enemies*, there can be no such Loveliness in the Object of an Enemy, if it were not for God's Command, and for some good Things in the Enemy with relation to his Service, or at least whatever he is at present, that we hope hereafter he may prove a chosen Vessel in God's Service, that we love him; and therefore the Love though immediately directed to our Enemy, terminates in God, and is chiefly on God's Account. From all which we may easily gather the great Dignity of this Duty, *the Love of Enemies*; for it includes in it *a fortiori* both the Love of Friends and Strangers, consequently of all Men, and it includes in it *the Love of God*; for it is only with an Eye to him, out of regard to his Service, that we can love our Enemies, as we ought.

And as the Dignity of this Duty makes it a principal Part of Christian Perfection, so does the great Difficulty of it: Whether we consider our corrupt Natures, or the depraved Opinions and Customs of the World we must contradict in discharging this Duty. As to corrupt Nature, there is nothing more contrary to Flesh and Blood, than *the Love of Enemies*; it is plain, if we did not consider more our Duty than our Inclination,

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we should eagerly run into all Acts of Revenge. Then the wicked Opinions and Customs of the World, blackening Forgiveness of Injuries, and *the Love of Enemies* as a pusillanimous Thing, and taxing it with the opprobrious Name of Cowardise, it requires a firm and steady Degree of Virtue to comply with the Duty, notwithstanding all these Discouragements. He must therefore be no Novice, but a well grown Christian, *a perfect Man in Christ Jesus*, who can come up to this Duty of loving his Enemies, and of doing good to them that hate him, and of blessing them that curse him, and of praying for them that despitefully use him and persecute him.

So much for the first Sense of Perfection in my Text, as it is restrained to *the Love of Enemies*, being a comparative Perfection in respect of the love of Friends and Brethren, which the Jewish Doctors taught.

II. I come next to consider this Duty of Perfection in a larger Sense, as relating not only to this, but to all other Duties. Where I shall shew

1. That the Words will fairly bear this larger Sense.

2. What is the Duty of Christian Perfection; as it is enjoined here in Imitation of God.

3. I shall conclude with an Application to our selves with regard to our either totally neglecting the Duties of Christianity, or taking up with lower Degrees of them than are consistent with Christian Perfection.

1. *First* then, I am to shew that the Words, *Be ye therefore perfect*, will fairly bear this larger Sense; as Perfection is applicable not only to *the*  
*Love*

*Love of Enemies*, but in general to all other Duties. In order to this let us consider, 1. That supposing these Words to have no further Retrospect than the immediate Duty, to which they are adjoined, *the Love of Enemies*, and the Argument immediately going before, that it became *Christ's* Disciples to do something more than others; yet there is no Absurdity at all in it, that our Saviour should take Occasion from thence to recommend the highest Degrees in all Duties, instead of those low scanty Measures of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, he had been reprehending. But secondly, it is highly probable that these Words, *be ye therefore perfect*, being brought in as the Conclusion of that large Discourse, which is insisted on for 28 Verses together, from the 20th Verse to the End of the Chapter, has Reference to the whole. *q. d.* I have now in a great many particulars shewed you how defective Degrees of Duty the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* content themselves to enjoin: And therefore be not satisfied with their Righteousness which is so imperfect, but study the highest Degrees of all Duty; for the holier ye are, ye shall so much the more resemble your Heavenly Father, God Almighty himself, the only perfect Pattern of Holiness.

2. I am to enquire in the next Place what is this Duty of Christian Perfection, as it is enjoined here in Imitation of God. *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect*: In order to which we are to limit this Perfection to the Subject Matter of Discourse, namely, the Duties enjoined by the Moral Law, or Moral Duties. We are not to imagine that by these Words we are called upon to imitate God in all his Perfections

tions whatsoever; for many of God's Perfections are incommunicable to any Creatures, such as his Self-sufficiency and Independency; others of them it is not lawful for Creatures to aspire to, but in some very limited Measure and Degree, such as his Omniscience and Omnipotence. But the Discourse here was concerning such Moral Duties as were perverted by the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, and vindicated by our Saviour; these Words of St *Peter*, 1 Pet. i. 15. explain it very well. *As he who hath called you is Holy, so be ye Holy in all Manner of Conversation.* Nor are we to fancy that it was our Saviour's Design here, to enjoin such an high Degree of Perfection in these moral Duties as is in God, it being utterly impossible for Creatures to come near to that. All then that I apprehend to be enjoined in these Words is, that we should aim at as high Degrees of moral Virtue as in this imperfect State we are capable of; and teaching us withal that the higher Measures we attain to in Holiness, we shall so much the more resemble our heavenly Father. But to conclude this Description of Gospel Perfection; it is not such a Perfection as is capable of no higher Degrees of Holiness; the utmost Degrees of Holiness which the greatest Saints arrive at here upon Earth, being still capable of further Increase; as St *Paul* says of himself, Phil. iii. 12. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: But this one Thing I do, forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things which are before, I press towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.* And he adds, *Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded.* The Gospel Perfection I take to consist in a sin-

cere Endeavour to do the Will of God in every Thing, and to abound more and more in all Goodness, carefully watching against Sin, and repenting of it quickly so soon as we perceive that we have transgressed in Thought, Word or Deed ; and doubling our Diligence for the future, to cease to do Evil, and to learn to do well. But precisely to tell what Degrees of this Perfection we may attain to in this Life, is no easy Matter. That we may by the Grace of God break ourselves of all Habits, and even Acts of gross Sins, so that the Love of God may become the most prevalent in our Hearts, and that we may be enabled by Watchfulness and Prayer to prevent most of the Sins of daily Incurfion, there is little Doubt ; tho' there remain still the Dregs of Sin to be purged out, and higher Measures and Degrees of Devotion, and all Virtue to be aimed after.

3. And so I am come now to the last Thing I proposed, which is to make Application of this Duty to ourselves, with regard to our either totally neglecting the Duties of Christianity, or our taking up with lower Degrees of them, than are consistent with Christian Perfection.

(1.) *First* then, Does our blessed Saviour require Perfection in moral Duties from all his Disciples and Followers ; a Perfection above and beyond what the best Jewish Doctors required of their Disciples ; *Be ye therefore perfect* ? This may serve to reprehend the vulgar Sort of Christians by Profession, who are so far from endeavouring after the highest Degrees of Virtue, as they are here and elsewhere described by our Saviour and his Apostles ; that they are not as yet got out of the

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Mire of those gross Vices, which were condemned even by the slight Interpretations of the Jewish Doctors. For to our Shame and Reproach, perhaps, there are not more actual Murders and Manslaughters; there are not more slight and unprepared Addresses to God; there are not more Fornications and Adulteries; there are not more Jarings and Discords in Marriages; there are not more Oaths and Perjuries; there are not more Revenges and Retaliations of Injuries; there is not more Ingratitude to Friends, and Neglect of common Duties, among *Jews* and *Mahometans*, and I think I may add more civilized Heathens, than among most of those that are called Christians. It is certain the greatest Part are Christians by Birth, not by Choice; from Fashion, not from Principle; and that they blindly follow one another's Example, and neither the Precepts nor the Example of *Christ* and his Apostles. We have almost forgotten what manner of Spirit we are of; and are not like to be awakened to a Sense of it by any of the ordinary Means of Grace. Sermons pass for Things of course; no Body minds them, so as to be touched or reformed, by them; Sacraments are almost totally neglected, and I believe chiefly out of Fear, lest they should lay Men under Obligations of living more strictly and circumspectly, than they have a mind to live; I am afraid if the ordinary Means will not work, we shall provoke God to try some Extraordinary ones. Ye know how God's Judgments by Means of a Barbarous Enemy have fallen very severely once and again on our Neighbours of *North* and *South Carolina*, and yet we are no better than we were before. What remains but that if the Rod

on our fellow Sinners Backs will not awake us to a Sense of our Duty, that it be next tried upon our own, and if we will not hear the Word, *we shall hear the Rod and him that hath appointed it.* I pretend to no Prophecy, yet I have Authority to assure you that *without Repentance ye shall all likewise perish*: If not in this World, most certainly in the World to come.

(2.) But then, *Secondly*, besides the nominal Christians, who have little more than the Name, this Text requires an Application to a better Sort of People, who tho' they make Conscience of abstaining from gross Sins, yet do not endeavour after the Perfection of Christianity. *Be ye therefore perfect.* There is a particular Emphasis in this *ye*; ye my Disciples, ye who pretend to the Kingdom of Heaven, ye who have so many Obligations, so many Encouragements beyond others; do not content yourselves with such a low Degree of Duty, as is observed under the inferiour Dispensation of the Law, and the corrupt Interpretations of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, but study such a Perfection of it, as suits the higher Dispensation of the Gospel, with the more perfect Interpretations I have now given you. We are now-a-days Christians of a lower Form, and there is little to be observed in our Lives, to distinguish us from the better Sort of Heathens. To this Sort of Christians, I shall very briefly offer a few Advices, and have done. 1. That Zeal which we spend about Matters of dry Opinions, and on Ceremonies, and Matters circumstantial in Religion and Worship, which have little or no Influence on Life, let us spend in the advancing ourselves and others in Christian Morals. 2. Let us not content ourselves with



with the Shell or Out side of Duty, but study that inward Purity of Heart, and true Love to God and Man, which our Saviour recommends in all the Precepts that he explains. 3. Whatever we do, let us do it with an upright Intention, with a pure Eye to God, and our own Salvation, and not upon any selfish By-ends of this World. 4. Let us aim at the more noble and difficult Parts and Degrees of Duty, of which our Saviour, in this Discourse, gives us many Instances; and which in all Duties, if we carefully study the New Testament, it is no hard matter to find out. 5. *Lastly*, Let us not content ourselves with a few single Acts of Virtue, but repeat them so frequently, till they grow habitual, and till we acquire a Firmness and Constancy in them, as the Apostle exhorts the *Corinthians*, (and I shall conclude with it) *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

*Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all Praise, Honour, and Glory, Might, Power, and Dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.*



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