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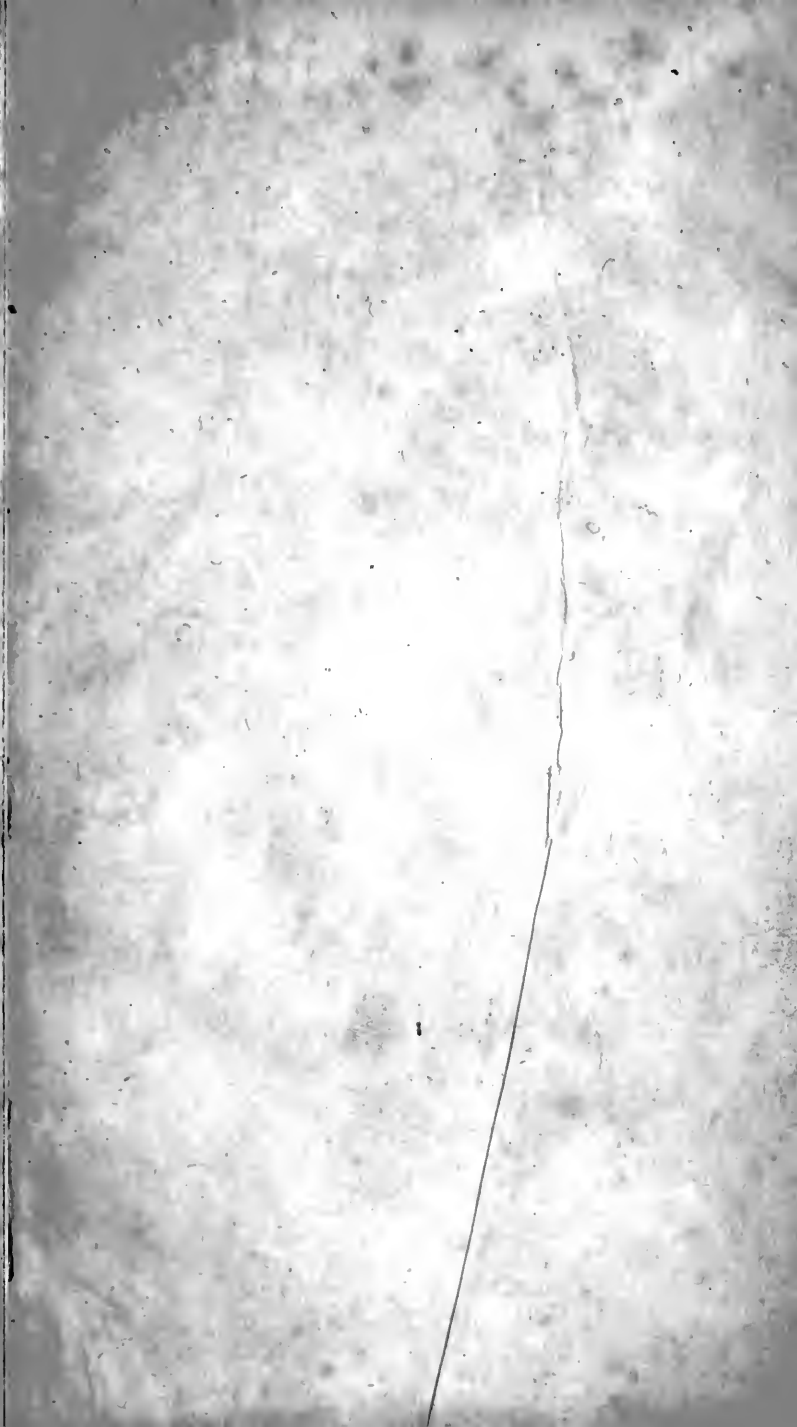
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PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES

On Several

Important Subjects :

V I Z.

A Discourse of the Children of Holy Parents.

Eight Discourses of the Covenant of Grace.

To which are Added,

A Brief Discourse of Infant-Baptism.

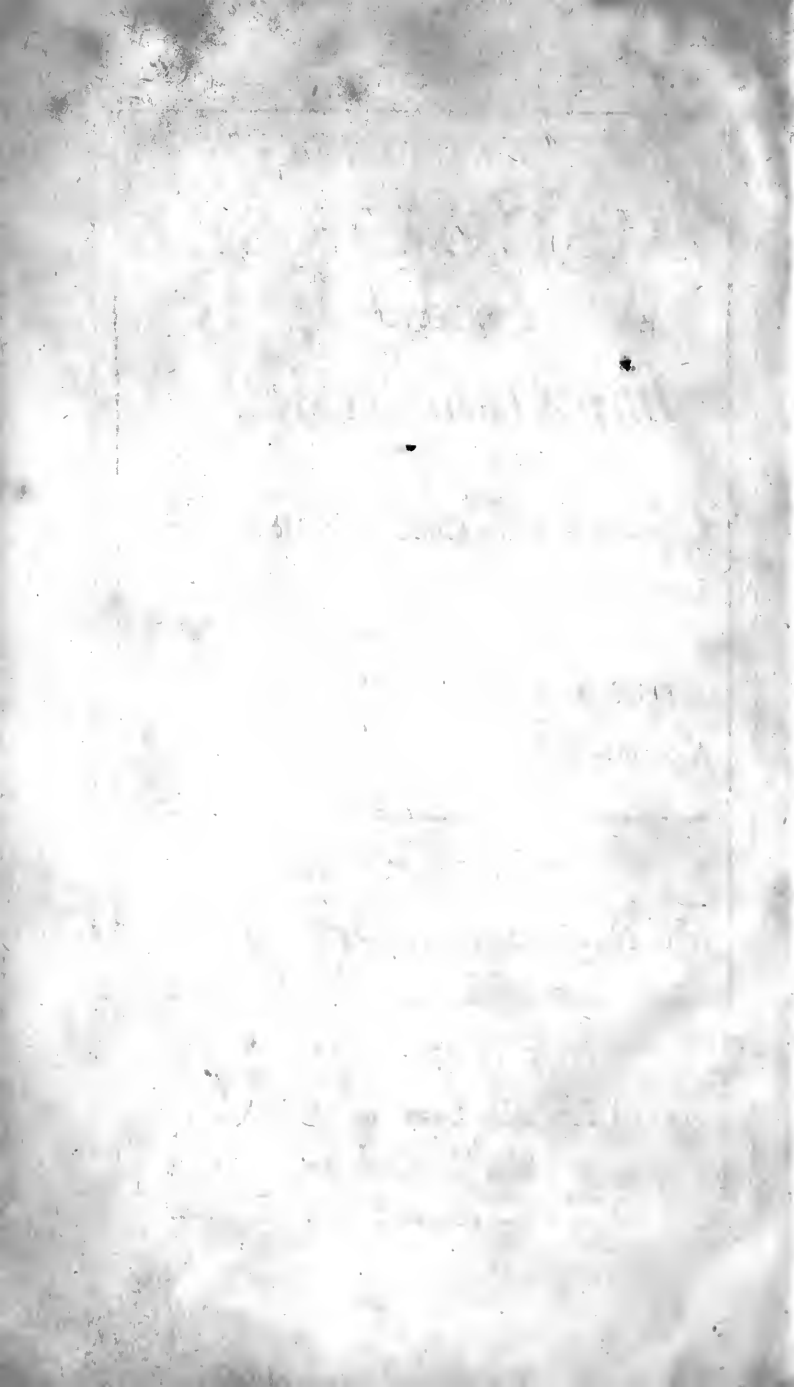
A Sermon before the *Lord-Mayor*.

By the Late Reverend,

Mr. NATHANAEL TAYLOR.

L O N D O N, (WB

Printed for John Lawrence at the Angel in
the Poultry. 1703.



T O T H E
R E A D E R.

THE Posthumous Papers of the Reverend Author, were committed to my care by his Executors, and appear in Publick at the desire of many. The Arguments are Singular and Important, and managed with an Admirable Clearness and Strength.

The Discourse concerning the Children of Holy Parents, was left fairly Transcribed with his own Hand, and was designed for the Use of his own Children. And as this was a Subject peculiarly agreeable to his Temper, who in Imitation of his Blessed Master, was always observed to express a particular Tenderneſs towards Little Children; So there ſeems to be more of his true Spirit and peculiar Way in

To the Reader.

this than in any other Part of his Writings.

The Discourses upon the Covenant were his last Sermons at the Merchants Lecture at Salters-Hall, and were all Transcribed by himself, except the two last, which were recovered out of Characters, and are not so Exact and Perfect as the rest. And though they had not the finishing Strokes of his Masterly Hand, and he lived not to Preach the last he intended upon the Subject ; Yet they seem to be distinguished from common Writings, by the Solid Characters of a True Judgment, and the many Bright Images and Lively Strokes of a Sprightly Fancy and a Judicious Wit : And I believe they will be allowed as far as they go, by any Indifferent Judge, to be the best Practical Discourses extant upon that Weighty Argument.

I shall only farther remark concerning these Discourses ; That as they are the only Remains he left behind

him,

To the Reader.

him, like the *Mantle* drop'd from the Prophet when he was suddenly snatched to Heaven; So they contain in them a double Portion of his Spirit, and seem more fitted for common Benefit and capable of a more extensive Usefulness than those more Learned and Elaborate Treatises Published by Himself; that were Writ upon more Nice and Contentious Arguments, and designed especially for the Service of the more Intelligent and Curious.

The Two last Discourses were Published in his Life, and were thought fit to be added, because of the Affinity of the Subject, and to preserve them from being lost.

I shall not undertake to draw the Character of this Excellent Person, which is already done by a fitter Hand. He has left more Lasting Monuments of his Real Worth to the World, than a Fading Picture drawn by the Ablest Hand with the Brightest Colours of Eloquence. But I hope I may be al-

In his
Funeral
Sermon
by Mr.
Shower.

To the Reader.

lowed to say upon this Occasion without any Suspicion of Vanity or Presumption ; That He was a true Friend as well as an Admirable Pattern to Younger Ministers. He was Accessible and Communicative ; always used a Generous Freedom and an Undisguised Sincerity ; and understood the Pleasures as well as the Secret of true Friendship. And I know several who think themselves highly obliged to his Excellent Labours, even in his Younger Years, both for the right forming their own Minds, and for proper Measures for their own Performance.

The Skilful Management of a well Chosen Subject ; The just Decorum of Behaviour ; The Beautiful Turns of Expression ; The Inimitable Force and Commanding Air with which he always spoke, did at once mightily Please and powerfully Instruct ; First the Attention and raised the Esteem, And gave an Admiration as well as
Delight

To the Reader.

Delight to the more Judicious and Discerning.

He acted with Judgment and Conscience in the Choice of his Way, and in the Conduct of his Life. He preferred the Service of the Altar, and submitted to the Disadvantages of Nonconformity, when his great Abilities would have rendered him Considerable in any Communion of Christians, and Capable of any other Profession of Learning in the World; And as he was perfectly satisfied in the Cause he espoused; so he was a Bright Ornament to it, and an Able Defence; as Pillars of Shining Marble or Polished Brass at once Support and Adorn the Building to which they belong.

If any think he indulged either to his Fancy or his Spleen, and that he exceeded at any time in the Dress or the Freedom of the Style he used; I shall only humbly offer in his Defence; That as Propriety and Strength

To the Reader.

run through all his Composures ; so he seems to have used no other Liberties than what were Natural to him and Undesigning, and perhaps after all, no more different from other Mens, than the Airs of his Countenance, or the Postures in which he moved.

The surprizing Removal of so accomplished a Person, furnished by Nature and Art ; ripened by Study and Experience ; in the Strength of his Days and in the Midst of many useful Designs ; was a Severe and an Afflicting Stroke, and prevented the farther Expectations the World had conceived from so valuable a Life.

But He is removed to Infinite Advantage to Himself, though to the great Loss of the World. He is advanced to a State of Nobler Service, and to the Enjoyment of a more perfect Happiness. He was a Lamp in the Sanctuary of God, and a Star
in

To the Reader.

in the hand of Christ, to give Light to a Dark World, and guide Wandering Souls to Heaven. But He moves in a Higher Orb, and shines with a Brighter Glory. He is a Sun in the Kingdom of Heaven, and a Pillar in the Temple of God above.

May the great Lord of the Harvest send forth many Faithful Labourers, and give a more Plentiful Increase, that so this Dark and Barren Wilderness, may become again the Garden of the Lord, and the Face of Paradise may every where appear in all the Fruits of Knowledge, Righteousness, Purity and Peace : And may many Souls be prepared for the Paradise above, where there are Rivers of Pleasures, and no forbidden Fruit ; where perfect Innocence and purest Joys unite ; and every one shall taste of the Tree of Life as well as the Tree of Knowledge, without the danger of a Second Fall, or the fear of a Flaming Sword.

If

To the Reader.

If the following Discourses may be serviceable to such a purpose, under the Influence of the Divine Spirit, to any one that reads them, it will probably Increase the Triumphs and Reward of this Blessed Saint in Heaven, as I am sure it will add to the Satisfaction and Pleasure of those on Earth, especially such as were concerned in the Publication.

W. HARRIS.

T H E

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said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of
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and hast revealed them unto Babes; even
so Father, for so it seemed good in thy
sight.* p. 305.

All the rest of the Papers of this Re-
verend and Learned Person, are in
Characters; by which means, the World
will be deprived of many useful and
valuable Tracts.

E R R A T A.

PAge 18. line 15. read *neq* *facily*. p. 25. l. 20: add, *fo*.
p. 46. l. 2. add *it* p. 97. l. 7. r. Jota. p. 102. l. 20.
r. *excessive* p. 114. l. 20. r. *rem*. p. 115. l. 4. r. a *very*.
p. 116. l. 18. r. *special* p. 118. l. 18. add, *had*. p. 149.
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r. *Channel*.

Books Written by the Reverend
Author, and Printed for *John
Lawrence* at the *Angel* in the
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— At the Funeral of the Reverend Mr. *Nathanael Vincent*. 4to.

— At the Funeral of *John Lane* Esq; and the Lady *Mary Lane*. 4to.

A

DISCOURSE

Concerning the Children of Holy Parents.

CHAP. I.

The Children of Holy Parents receive Temporal Blessings for their sakes, and stand fairest for Spiritual ones. This latter open'd in Six Things.

THAT 'tis a very great and valuable Privilege to be Born of Holy Parents, will appear from these Two Considerations.

I. God frequently bestows many Temporal Blessings on them for their Father's sakes. I.

II. They stand fairest for Spiritual and Eternal ones. II.

I. God frequently bestows many Temporal Blessings on them for their Father's sakes. I.

* B The

A Discourse concerning

The Curse of God, like the *Air of a Pestilence*, enters invisibly into the Families of the Wicked : And the Blessing of God breaks in like the *Light of Heaven*, silently and without noise, on the Habitation of the Just. He hath threat'ned that he will visit the Iniquities of the Fathers on their Children to the third and fourth Generation ; but he hath more amply promised Mercy to thousands of the Generations of them that love and fear him. The sweet and gentle Streams of his Mercy towards the one run a much greater way, several hundreds of Miles ; when the bitter ones of his Wrath reach but three or four at the furthest. 'Tis true indeed, both the Threatning and the Promise do imply this, that the Children do tread in the Steps of their Parents ; and particularly that the Posterity of Holy Men do so, without which God is not obliged to shew favour to them. But yet however God many times acts according to the highest Laws of Friendship, and shews a great deal of Kindness to the degenerate Off-spring, out of respect to their pious Ancestors from whom they descend. The Blessing of God on the Parents, like the anointing Oyl pour'd out on *Aaron's* Head, flows down to the very *Skirts* of the Garment, the meanest Member in the Family, yea even to the *uncomely* and *dishonourable*

dishonourable parts of their Body, those wicked Children that are indeed the very *shame* and *nakedness* of their Father. *Ishmael* had cast himself out of the Covenant, and *Abraham* had turn'd him out of his House; but God however doth not wholly cast him out of his care. He takes this *unclean*, as well as *wandering Bird*, that was driven from his Nest, under the Wings of his special Providence, and resolves to multiply him into a great Nation, for this very Reason as he told *Abraham*, be- Gen. 21.
 cause he is thy Seed. For his Servant *Da- 13.*
vid's sake he continued the whole King-
 dom entire all his days to *Solomon* tho'
 he was turned an Idolator, and Idolatry
 in *Canaan* was no less than High Treason
 against the Theocracy. Yea on the same
 account he settles *One* Tribe on *Rehoboam*,
 tho' a mad young Rebel against God and
 a wicked Tyrant over his People. He
 broke off *Ten* of the Lamps from that
branch of Gold, but continues *One* of them
 to him, that so therein his Servant *David*
 might have a *Light burning always before* 1 Kings,
him. How often did he take up his *Pen* 11. 34.
 into his Hand to *blot* the whole Name of
Israel out of his Book: But when he
 open'd it in order thereunto, he saw the
 Names of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, in
 the beginning of it; and for the sake of
 those *Letters of Gold* that were in the

front of the first Page, the whole *Volume* was spared, tho' fill'd with many gross and foul *Erratas*.

II. II. The Children of Holy Parents stand fairest for Spiritual and Eternal Blessings. This I will evince by these Six following Considerations, shewing the many Advantages they have to this end above the Children of others.

I. They have the advantages of a Covenant Relation to God, of being Members of the visible Church, and of having the initiating Seal of the Covenant applied to them in their Infancy. I join these together, because like the Links of a Chain they have a mutual Connexion, and take hold one on the other. All three of them did belong to the natural Posterity of *Abraham* till God broke them off; and believing Gentiles are engrafted into the same Olive Tree in their room; and the Grace of the Gospel is not sure narrower, but much larger than it was under the Legal Dispensation. 'Tis the whole Scope and Design of the Apostle throughout the Third Chapter to the *Galatians*, to prove, that the Covenant of *Abraham* is still in force and being; and that *his Blessing* is come upon us. Now this was the Blessing wherewith our Father was blest, and that wherein all his Happiness was summ'd up, *I will be a God*

God to thee, and to thy Seed after thee. And that there might be no doubt of this matter, he tells us, that the descending Blessing which he means, was that great Promise wherein these Words are, *And to thy Seed.* Now there is no other Promise made to him upon Record wherein those Words are, but that, *I will be a God to thee and thy Seed,* except that other of inheriting the Land of *Canaan*, which no one can imagine to be here meant by the Apostle.

Further, that the Privilege of being Members of the visible Church of Christ doth still belong to such Children, is evident from the Discourse of the same Apostle in another Epistle, where he treats of the rejection of the Jews and calling of Rom. 11. the Gentiles. He tells us, that not all, but only *some* of the Jews were broken off from v. 17. the visible Church : And they were broken off meerly on the account of their positive unbelief or rejection of Christ. Consequently the Infants of the believing Jews were not broken off. For if they were so, it must be either for their *own* unbelief, a (Sin which by reason of their Age, they are not capable of being guilty of) or it must be for their *Parents unbelief*, which could not be, because we do suppose them to have been Believers. Their Children therefore did keep their

ancient standing ; now in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile ; the natural Posterity of Believers, whether of the Circumcision or Uncircumcision stand on even ground.

u. 21. Again ; That Church-state which the unbelieving Jews were broken off from, they shall, on their Conversion, be restored to afresh : For then they shall be grafted into their own Olive Tree. Now in the Judgment of our Adversaries themselves, it would not be their OWN, but ANOTHER Olive Tree, and ANOTHER Church of a quite *differing* Constitution, if their Infants were not included as Members of it. And yet

Again, Believing Gentiles are grafted in to the SAME Olive Tree, or the SAME Church state wherein the believing Jews did remain, and from which the others were broken off ; (for v. 17. *some of the Branches were broken off, and thou being a wild Olive Tree wert grafted in AMONG them, and WITH them partakest of the Root and fatness of the Olive Tree.*) And therefore into such a Church as the natural Children of Holy Men are included in as Members of it.

Further, That the Privilege of a Baptismal Dedication unto God doth belong to them, as it naturally follows from the Two foregoing Particulars ; so it will further

ther appear from those known Words that have been often urged to this purpose, *Thou shalt keep my Covenant therefore, thou and thy Seed after thee in their Generation.* This is an universal Command laid on all the Seed of *Abraham*, and consequently reaches believing Gentiles under the Gospel; for they are *Abraham's* Seed. And 'tis inferr'd from the Promise of being a God to him and his, as appears from the Word **THEREFORE**. Consequently if that Promise belong to Holy Men in these Gospel days, (as was before proved it doth) this Duty doth oblige them too. And by the **KEEPING** of the Covenant we are in part to understand the putting the initiating dedicating Sign of the Covenant, for the time being, whatsoever it should be, will appear hence, because the **NOT** putting of that Sign upon their Infants is called a **BREAKING** of the Covenant. If the not applying that Sign to their Children be in the judgment of God himself a breaking of the Covenant, then the applying it is in part a-keeping of it. And 'tis observable, that this is a General Command, distinct from that Particular one of Circumcision, which comes after it in the following Verse. 'Tis, I say, a General Command, enjoining the putting the Sign and Seal of the Covenant on Infants

whatever it should be, which once was Circumcision, but now is Holy Baptism. So that here is an express Command to all the Seed of *Abraham* (and believing Gentiles are his Seed) for the Baptizing their Infants; tho' not in the particular term of *Baptism*, yet under this general Notion of the *token* of the Covenant, and keeping of it.

Now all these three things are very considerable advantages and helps to such Children. For if they stand in a *Covenant Relation* to God, if they are *Members of the visible Church*, and have the *Sign and Seal of the Covenant* on them, then they are a People *nigh* unto God, whereas others are *afar off*. Their very Names are in the Bond. They are parts of that Society to which the Promises are made; Members of that Body whereof Christ is the Head and Saviour; have a special Interest in the Prayers of all God's People, who tho' they intercede for all the World, yet do so in a particular manner for those that belong to the same Society with themselves; and they are under the special providential Care of Christ, who is the Lord and Ruler of the World indeed, but the Head over all things to his Church. Hereby God's Right to us is signified; we are in the beginning of our days pre-engaged to him; his Mark

upon us, we are his Sons and his Daughters; he hath a special Interest in us; we are not unclean, but federally holy to God. Such Children are born in and belong to those Houses, to whom Salvation in an especial manner doth belong. For so said Christ to *Zachens*, *This day is Salvation come to thy House*, because he the Master of it was a Child of *Abraham*. And saith St. Paul to the Jaylor, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy House*. Implying, that some special Privilege hereby would redound to his House, *i. e.* his Children, above what the Children of his Neighbours did enjoy.

And as a Sense of all this hath a natural tendency in it to make deep and awful Impressions on our Minds while we are young, and as we grow up; to draw forth our love to God and Christ; to increase our confidence in them; to engage us to walk obediently before them that have shewn such tender Mercies towards us in our tender Years, when we were not capable of thinking of them, much less of performing any actual Service to them; and furnish us with stronger Pleas to urge them withal in Prayer for renewing Grace than the Children of others can make use of: So it lays a mighty and powerful Obligation on Religious Parents
to

to train us up for God by a holy Education, which is the

2d. Advantage of such Children. And a Religious Education is certainly a very great one. You have been trained up in Knowledge, others in Ignorance. You have had good Examples, and they have had very bad ones. You have from your Child-hood been nurs'd up in a good Opinion of the truths and ways of God ; they have had wicked Prejudices against both instilled into them betimes, and riveted in them by insensible degrees ; and neither of these are easily shaken off. You have ('tis to be presumed) many seasonable Corrections, Counsels, Admonitions, Exhortations and Prayers which they have wanted. You are kept out of the Road of Temptation, so are not they. You can't sin at so easie a rate ; Modesty and natural Conscience, Shame and Fear are powerful restraints on you : Whereas they were bred up as they were born, like a wild Asses Colt, and never had this Bridle put into their Mouths. You are brought to sit under the means of Grace, and the ministry of the Word, which they are taught to slight, and deride, and turn their Backs upon. And having all these Advantages from a pious Education, hence it follows.

3. Such

3. Such God usually begins to work on more early, waits on them longer, follows them with more offers of his Grace than he doth others, and don't use to cast them off, till they are wholly desperate.

He begins *more Early* with them. Ye are the children of the Prophets, and of the Covenant which God made with our Fathers, saying unto *Abraham*, *In thy seed* Acts 3. *shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed.* 25. And then it follows *unto you FIRST.* *God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning you away from your Iniquities.* Our Lord himself in the days of his Flesh, preached not to the Gentiles, but to the lost Sheep of the House of *Israel*; and forbids his Apostles going to the former when he sent them to the latter. And after his Resurrection, tho' their Hands had been embued in his Blood, he commissions his Servants to go to them in the *first* place, and they had the refusal of the Gospel. These he calls Children, and counts the others as Dogs; offers Bread to the one, but can hardly be perswaded to afford a few Crumbs to the other. Indeed the Spirit of God is wont to be dealing with the Hearts of such young ones very betimes; working many a good Inclination in them, impressing many a serious Conviction very deep upon them, and notably stirring up their Affections,

Affections, so that all that know them are apt to conceive very great hopes of them.

And tho' they break away from under the Spirits hand, yet he pursues after them, and lays hold on them again and again; shoots many an Arrow of Conviction after these Birds as they are upon the Wing flying away from him; follows them with many repeated offers of his Grace, many calls of his Gospel, many motions of his Spirit, and many checks of their own Consciences, being most unwilling that these Men should perish, because he would not have the ancient Relation between himself and the Families whence they sprung, broken off: And sometimes when he hath taken up his Axe into his hand, as tho' he would fell them with one blow, and so put an end to the day of their Lives and Grace both together, immediately he repents of what he thought to have done, lays the fatal Instrument down, and resolves to wait yet another Year or two. The patience of God waited on the Jews after their Crucifying of Christ, tho' that heinous sin seem'd to have fill'd up the Measure of their Iniquities, no less than 40 Years, and caused his Gospel to be preached in all their Cities with the expence of the Sweat and Blood of his Messengers, to see whither at last they would

would hearken to it. And if in all that time they would but have suffer'd themselves to have been gather'd under his Wing they had been safe there, and the Roman Eagles had never seized upon them as their Prey. He could not find in his heart to destroy them, till he was quite tired and worn out, and groan'd under the burden of their Provocations, and could bear no longer with them. Such God is not wont to give over, till there's no hope of doing any good upon them. *Ishmael* was a scoffer, which argues a very vile and depraved temper of Mind, and *Eſau* a prophane Person that despised and sold his Birth-right for a trifle, before God cast them off.

Now from hence it follows, as might rationally be expected that,

4^{thly}, Saving Grace uses to be bestowed on such more frequently than on the Children of other Men.

I don't say 'tis *always* given to them. *Abraham* had an *Ishmael*; corrupt and rotten Fruit that dropt from a good Tree.

Nor do I say 'tis always denied to others. Vile *Jeroboam* had an *Abijah*, in whom was some good thing towards God, that sprung from his Loins, like a young green Tree sprouting out of a Stone Wall. By the former God shews the soveraignty
and

A Discourse concerning

and liberty of his Grace, by the later the Riches, and the mighty power of it.

But a little Observation will convince you, that generally Religious Families are the Nurseries of the Churches of Christ, which are upheld chiefly by a supply of new Members drawn from them. Converts come in but slowly, then consider,

5. When others are converted, 'tis for this Reason (among the rest) to fill up the room of those ungodly Children of Holy Parents that would not turn to God, and to provoke them to come in at last. *Abraham* must have a Seed some where; and if the Children of the *Flesh* do degenerate, rather than he shall want, God will raise them up to him out of the very *Stones*. If the Children of Holy Men prove obstinate and rebellious, the Spirit of God departs from them, but then he doth it in such a manner as shews some remains of Affection to them that do so unkindly drive him away. For when he leaves them, he resteth on the Children of ungodly Men, that he may, if possible, hereby provoke them to Jealousie by them that were *no People*, when they see their Privileges taken away from them, and given to the most unlikely persons before their Faces. Remarkable is that saying of *Paul* and *Barnabas* to the Jews, *It was neces-*

necessary *that the word of God should first* Act. 13.
have been spoken unto you ; but seeing ye 46.
 put it from you, and judge your selves un-
 worthy of everlasting Life, Lo, we turn to
 the Gentiles. The natural Branches run
 quite wild, and therefore are cut off ;
 and for that reason other Branches are
 grafted in their room and stead ; but 'tis
 contrary to Nature ; because God will do
 Miracles but that he will have some to
 bring forth good Fruit. The falling of
 the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles, Rom. 11.
 and through it Salvation came unto them: 11. 12.
 the casting away of them was the reconciling v. 15.
 of the World ; and the Gentiles v. 30.
 obtained Mercy through the Jews Unbelief.
 And one design of God in all this, and of his
 Apostle in insisting so much on it, was, to
 provoke these Jews hereby v. 11.
 to Jealousie, and to Emulation, that he v. 14.
 might save them. *That, saith he to the*
believing Gentiles, through your Mercy they v. 31.
also may obtain Mercy, i. e. By the Grace
 of God shewed to you in the Conversion
 of so many of you, they might be stirr'd
 with a holy Indignation at themselves,
 seeing the advantage you have gotten of
 them whodid once so far exceed and so
 much despise you, to embrace Christ and
 his Gospel, and recover their dear, but
 now lost Privileges again. And if by
 these

these or any other means they are but wrought on at length, then,

6. and Lastly, When such do return, of all Sinners they are the most readily and the most kindly received by God. For of *all the pieces of Silver* that were lost in the Dust and Rubbish of this World, God is most pleased when those are *found* again that had his *Superscription* upon them of old, after they have been missing for a long while.

The Apostle speaking of the calling of the Gentiles, that were formerly strangers to the Promises and the future Conversion of the rejected Jews, once the Children of the Covenant, *If (saith he) thou wert cut out of the Olive Tree which is wild by Nature, and wert grafted contrary to Nature* Rom. 11. *into a good Olive Tree, HOW MUCH* 24. *MORE shall the natural Branches be grafted in again? i. e. upon their sincere return unto God, and Faith unfeigned in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

C H A P. II.

The foremention'd Privileges will not avail the wicked Posterity of Holy Men. The Covenant Promises have a double Condition; this sadly broken. God hath not promis'd absolutely such effectual Grace as infallibly to prevent it. Hereupon God is at perfect liberty to reject them if he please, without any just Reflection. He doth so as to many of'em. They deserve and shall meet with the severest Condemnation.

IN the former Chapter I have largely shewn the very valuable Privilege of being descended from Holy Parents, and that such as are so, stand fairest upon many accounts of all Men for Spiritual and Eternal Blessings. What I have there said on that Argument may fill them all with Hopes; what I am now entering upon may fill them with Fears, *viz.* That all these Privileges will in the issue be of no advantage to them, nor save them from Hell, if when they grow up, they prove workers of Iniquity. I will open this in Six Propositions.

I. The promise of being a God to the Seed of his People (and so all others of that nature) hath a double Condition annexed to it.

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1. On the part of the Parents during the Minority of their Children,

2. On the Children's parts when they grow up to Maturity.

Gen. 18
19.

1. On the Parent's part during the Minority of their Children. No Parent now can pretend to a better tenure than our Father *Abraham* had, to whom the original Grant was made. Now saith God expressly concerning him, *I know Abraham, that he will command his Children and his Houshold after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham the thing which he hath spoken of him.* Wherein 'tis necessary implied, that if *Abraham* did not so do, God would not hold himself obliged to make good his part of the Covenant. And by his commanding of them by a *Synechdoche*, we are to understand all the Branches of a holy Education, *viz.* Instruction, Exhortation, Prayer, good Example, and godly Discipline. And when the Parent hath thus conscientiously discharged his Duty, there is a Condition.

2. On the Children's part when they are grown up to Maturity. And that is personally to lay hold on the Covenant, consent to the Terms, and walk according to the Tenor of it. For when we are Adult, our Infant-title ceases, unless it be

be this way continued. Our Parents Will shall no longer go for OURS, when we have the use of our Judgments and Wills, and are capable of a personal Transaction with God for our selves, if we do not surrender and give up our selves to him, upon his putting in his claim to us: If we will not do so, we turn Apostates; we do in effect abjure and renounce the God of our Fathers, we do reverse that Dedication which they made of us, and by the course of our Lives and Actions say, that now we are come to years, and are capable of judging what they did, we think they did not do well when they devoted us to God in our Infancy as far as it was in their power: for we will not be for him, but for another. And so we cut our selves off from God, to whom they gave us; we upon deliberation cast our selves out of the Covenant by our own Act and Deed whereinto they entred us, and forfeit all the Blessings and Privileges of it.

Our Parents own Right and Title to the Promise is continued to them upon this Condition, as it was to *Abraham*, provided they *walk before God and be perfect*; otherwise he will not continue to be their God. And when we are come to years of Discretion to choose for our selves, we can't reasonably expect he

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should continue to be our God, but upon the same Terms. We can't rationally think to have a better Tenure than they under whom we hold. Tenants at second hand can't hope for better Terms, than the original ones under whom they claim. 'Tis enough that when we come to write Men, we be as our Parents. *David* sure understood the Terms of this great Covenant, which was in his dying Hour *all his desire and all his Salvation*: And he expressly tells *Solomon*, *If thou forsake the God of thy Fathers, he will cast thee off for ever.*

II. This double Condition is notoriously broken by Multitudes. And

i. The Condition on the Parents part is so during the Minority of their Children.

How little care do the generality of them take to season the Hearts of their Children with a saving Knowledge in their tender Years? Many Families even in this our *Goshen* that would be accounted religious ones, are like the Houses of the Egyptians, covered with blackness of darkness, and a palpable Ignorance in the things of God, wherein not only their First-born, but all their other Children too lye dead in a spiritual Sense. Where are the Men that command their Children to keep the way of the Lord, and in that respect

respect tread in the Steps of their Father *Abraham*; that give a Charge to their Children to this purpose, both living and dying? Where are the daily Counsels, Admonitions, Instructions and Exhortations, which God expects you should give them when you rise up and when you lye down, in the House and in the Field? What between a negligent Father on the one hand, and a fond foolish Mother on the other hand, godly Family Discipline is almost lost. Men content themselves with a few formal lazy Prayers for them (and I doubt that is more than many of them do too) or with putting up a few Bills to desire the Prayers of the Congregation for them; but in the mean time a holy Education of them is wofully neglected in some one considerable Branch of it, or it may be in all. And when they themselves have Murdered their own Children, they bring them to the Prophets of the Lord to pray them to Life again. 'Tis here as in the Paschal Solemnity of old, the Blood of these Lambs of Christ's Flock is sprinkled, not on the Posts of their Doors, but on the Skirts of the Garments of these unnatural Parents in whose Houses they dwell. But I doubt it will not prove the Lord's Pass-over to them; God awaken them, that the destroying Angel do not enter in there and slay the wicked

Authors of so great a Mischief. And as the Parents are grossly faulty, so

2dly, The other Condition on the Children's part, when they are grown up to Maturity, is manifestly broken by multitudes of them. For the proof of this I appeal to the Tears and the Groans of many Holy Parents over their Sons of *Belial*; who may well invert the Proverb of old, and say, *Our Children have eaten sower Grapes, and the Teeth of us their Parents are set on edge.* 'Tis but too plain that thousands of the Children of the Covenant have made themselves the Children of the Devil, for his Works they do, and that openly too. They are like their Father in other things, only they are not as invisible as he is. And tho' I hope they are not so numerous, yet I am sure their Name is *Legion*,

III.

III. God hath no where absolutely promised to bestow such a measure of Grace either on Parents or Children, as infallibly to prevent the breach of either of these Conditions. This I am sure of, because if he had, he would certainly give it; for he is faithful and cannot break his word. The heart of a godly Parent may be right as to the main, and yet he may be too negligent in this part of his Duty; and tho' in time he may reform, it may be too late before he doth it to prevent
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or retrieve the Mischiefs he hath done hereby to the Soul of his Child. This fatal Negligence of his that draws such a black Train of sad Consequencies after it, is not through any defect on God's part, but purely on his own: Not for want of sufficient Grace to discharge this part of his Duty, but of a diligent use and improvement of it. And if Men will not stir up the Grace of God that is in them, they can't charge God with a breach of any Promise he hath made to their Posterity; nor justly blame him if he be as careless of them as they are; for they don't do what he hath commanded them, as a means on their part for the entailing Covenant-bleffings upon them. When they grow up they depart from the good old way instead of walking in it. But what's the Reason? They did not train them up in it while they were Children, and direct their steps into it, tho' God engaged to bestow Grace on them on no other terms than these; and tho' this was no more than what they had a power and ability thro' Grace to do; and were often call'd on by his Word, Spirit, Providence and Ministers so to do, yet they would not. Is God now to be blamed for this? No surely. For tho' he hath said, he will Circumcise the Heart of his Servants and their Seed after them; yet he

Deut. 30.
6, 10. he expressly requires, *that they hearken to the Voice of the Lord, and keep his Commandments, and turn to the Lord their God with all their Heart and with all their Soul.*—

Hence it follows,

IV. That God is at perfect liberty to reject and cast them off if he please. For this is the nature of all Covenants, that when one Party doth not perform, but notoriously break the Condition which he stood engaged to, the other Party is discharged, and if he please, may, without any just Reflection, refuse to do what upon that supposition only he obliged himself unto. And surely we will allow to God, what we so reasonably claim to our selves; *i. e.* to speak in a Modern Phrase, to *abdicate* them that wilfully *break the Original Contract*, and especially if they obstinately persist in so doing. * He can't be charg'd with *Injustice*; for 'tis a righteous thing in him to reject those that in such a manner first of all reject him: Nor with want of *Truth* and *Faithfulness* to his Word; for 'tis but the doing what in such cases he hath told and threatned that he would do. 'Tis only Divine Goodness that can be called in Question.

* Remarkable to this purpose are the Words of Metellus, *Dij immortales plurimum possant; sed non plus nobis velle debent quam Parentes. At Parentes, si peccimus errare, suis bonis nos exheredant. Quid ergo nos a Dijs immortalibus divinities expectemus, nisi errationibus finem faciamus? His demum Deos propitios esse æquum est qui sibi adversarij non sunt.* A. Gellij noct. Attic. l. 1. c. 6

It would be too great a Diversion to shew that this Attribute doth not oblige God to bestow special, effectual, saving Grace on this or that Man. For *de facto*, 'tis evident he doth not do it to Multitudes. He never design'd to represent himself either in his Word, or his Actions as a Being of meer Grace and Mercy. Divine Goodness, as to its Actings, is under the regulation and conduct of his other Attributes, of Justice, Holiness, and Wisdom; and 'tis for the honour of God that it should be so. He is to be conceived by us not only under the Notion of a very gracious *Benefactor*, but also under that of a Wise, Righteous, Sovereign *Ruler* over *Rational Beings*; whom he governs according to their *Natures*. The Former Notion renders it infinitely decorous for him bestow effectual Saving Grace on some, even tho' they have forfeited it and rendered themselves utterly unworthy of it; that he may have some everlasting Monuments of the Riches of his free Love, and some to be a peculiar People to himself, actively glorifying, loving, serving of him, and designedly promoting his Honour and Interest here below in their several Generations: That he may have some dutiful loyal Subjects, and his Son may have a Seed to serve him as a Recompence for his bitter Sufferings. For the honour of the

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the divine Name and Government. But then 'tis fit he should use his own Liberty, and shew his Mercy on whom he will ; it being such a marvelous Instance of Bounty as none can justly claim, and all have a thousand ways and times rendered themselves utterly undeserving of it.

But then consider God as a Wise, Righteous, Sovereign *Ruler* over Rational Beings, whom he governs according to their Natures as Free-Agents, so 'tis infinitely decent and becoming of him to use such Providences, Helps, Means internal and external, the calls of his Word, Motions of his Spirit, checks and rebukes of their own Consciences, &c. as have a visible aptitude in them to make powerful Impressions upon Creatures of such a Make and Frame, and lead them to Repentance ; and then refer it to their *own choice*. But if they will from time to time wickedly, and obstinately, and madly resist the natural, and the mighty force and tendency of these proper Means, their own Consciences, and all impartial standers by will highly justifie God, that he would have purged and saved them, did what lay on him, and what was meet and fit for him to do in order thereunto : But after all they *would* madly undo themselves in despite of him.

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Here was all the goodness of a *Governour* shewn to them, and that in very high degrees and repeated Instances of it: Yea, even the goodness of a *gracious Benefactor* too, in very great measures, tho' not in that particular height as to bestow effectual Grace upon them, which he was no ways obliged unto; nay, rather was obliged to *deny* it to the *generality* of such Creatures, tho' for the fore-mentioned Reasons he did give it to some few of their number. For as a Rector he is concerned at length, *generally speaking*, to withdraw present and deny further Favors to those that have so *insufferably* abused them, and recompence them according to their Works.

And of all the Men in the World Divine Goodness is least of all to be Impeached for denying saving effectual Grace to the profligate Children of Holy Men, to whom he hath vouchsafed such peculiar Privileges, mentioned at large in the foregoing Chapter, above what are commonly granted to others; and who yet do so horribly affront and provoke him, *reject the Counsel of God against themselves*, and of all the Sons of Men render and judge themselves most unworthy of any other Instances of the Divine Grace and Bounty. Hereupon,

V.

V. God doth reject and disown them with the greatest Indignation and Scorn. He will not do them so much Honour as to look upon them as related to, or descended from such holy Men. *Not they that are the Children of the Flesh, i. e.*

Rom. 9. 8. those that are only so, *but the Children of the Promise are counted for the Seed.* As tho' the ungodly Israelites were none of *Abraham's* Posterity. Such are to him as the Children of the Heathens, yea and those

Amos 9. 7. the vilest of Heathens too. *Ye are all to me as the Children of the Ethiopians, O Children of Israel ;* or as the *Arabians*, as some Learned Men think the word signifies : A base and thievish, a bloody and savage People, cursed of old in their Progenitors by *Noah*, hated, and despised, and abhorred of all their Neighbours, as the very dregs and scum of Mankind. Nay, yet worse, God compares them to the people of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*. Such filthy Wretches which God's Soul did so loath and abominate, that he rained down Fire and Brimstone from Heaven upon

Isa. 1. 10. them. *Hear the word of the Lord ye Rulers of Sodom, and ye people of Gomorrhah:* They are the wicked Posterity of *Abraham* that are there spoken to. And when we are arrived at *Sodom*, we are on the very brink of Hell ; and thence doth Christ fetch the Parentage of the wicked Jews : *You*

say

say you have Abraham to your Father ; but John 8.
I say you are of your Father the Devil, for
his works you do.

Now from all that hath been said it follows,

VI. Lastly, That so far are the wicked VI.
Children of Holy Parents from being
saved because of their Relation to them,
that they shall receive a sorer Condemna-
tion than the Children of others. And
very good reason there is for it. For
they sin against all the fore-mention'd
various Means, Helps, and Advantages
which they enjoy above others.

God is more dishonoured by them.
They tempt Men to think there's no great
matter in being visibly in Covenant with
God. They harden Men in their mistaken
Belief, that our Doctrine of Infants Church
Membership is the Foundation of, and an
Inlet into Ignorance, Looseness and Pro-
faness.

They are greater Scandals to the Men
of this World ; and a greater Comfort
and Encouragement to them in their evil
ways.

They contradict the great End and De-
sign of God, who expects to have his
Church and his Interest upheld and pro-
pagated by those that are Born to him,
and bred up for him in Religious Families.

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When they prove bad, they are generally the vilest of Men, and therefore shall prove the most forlorn miserable Creatures in Eternal Torments.

C H A P. III.

An Address proposed to be made to Three sorts of Persons. Two of them, viz. Ministers, young ones especially, of Holy Parents, applied to in this Chapter.

FROM what hath been said in the two foregoing Chapters, I shall take an occasion to address my self to three sorts of Persons.

- I. I. To Ministers.
- II. II. To Holy Parents.
- III. III. To the Children of such.

I. To Ministers. And I beseech them to suffer the word of Exhortation from one that is more conscious to himself, than any other can be of his great unfitness in all respects to be their Monitor.

But a Pipe, tho' made of a very ordinary piece of Wood, or a Trumpet, tho' a very plain and common one, and a thing without Life, may serve to raise the Spirits of a skillful and valiant Soldier, and quicken

quicken him to the Battle. The thing that I would humbly stir you up unto by way of remembrance, speaks it self, how little soever I may be capable of saying to it. For 'tis to be imitators of God, and like him to have a special Eye upon and peculiar regard unto the Children of the Covenant in general, and particularly those of them that are the Off-spring of the Members of those several Churches of Christ wherein the Holy Ghost hath already settled any of you, or shall do so for the future.

This seems to me to be the peculiar Province wherein young Ministers are most likely to serve their Master and their Generation. For as for the old Grey-headed Sinners they will be too apt to despise your Youth. Your Arms are too feeble to make the Sword of the Spirit pierce thro' the thick Scales of the over-grown Leviathans. These bones are not only dead, but have been so for so long a time that they are even dry too. And is it likely you should Prophecy so as to make them live? But yet *Abba Father*, all things are possible unto thee.

As for the aged Believers, the main Work was done on them many years, -it may be, ere you were born: They were in Christ a long time before you were in the World. They whose Grey Hairs in
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the way of righteousness, make them look like Ears of Corn ripe for the Harvest, and even ready to be carried into the Garner, need little cultivating or watering from any Hand.

As for the Children of ungodly Men, you seldom converse with them; and when you do, they will hardly give you the hearing when you offer to speak seriously to them of the things of God. These are a Generation of Vipers, and will be ready to hiss and sting that charitable Hand that doth but touch them, tho' never so gently. Or if you do make any impressions upon them, they are quickly stifled and blotted out again by the Agents of Satan, among whom they live and converse withal.

But as for those young ones that dwell under the Roof of a holy *Abraham*, and sprang from his Loins, you have more opportunities of dealing with them, and more hopes of prevailing upon them. They are more soft and yielding, more capable of and likely to receive *impressions* from your hands, here therefore may you most rationally expect some Seals of your Ministry. You have in them some little handle to take hold of, some imperfect knowledge of the Principles of the Oracles of God, which their Parents have been dropping into them; and some good af-

affections which the Spirit sometimes stirs up in them; like a few streaks of Light in the Air before the rising of the Sun, the happy presages of a fair day. You have some little share in their affections and esteem; they have learnt from their Parents to shew some respect even to the meanest of Christ's Embassadors. There are many little Arts whereby you may easily slide and wind and insinuate your selves into their Affections for their good, and get within 'em. They will be apt it may be to speak more freely to you, when the gravity of an aged Minister will damp and over-awe them. Possibly they may more readily hearken to you, when you speak against youthful Lusts, than they would to elder persons; who they may be apt to think do talk against them because their Age hath mortified them, and made them at once incapable of remembering the former pleasures of Sense, as well as of tasting them for the future. The Wisdom of God appears in commissionating not only Angels to preach the Gospel to us, but Men like our selves, subject to the like Passions and Infirmities as we are. And if any little beginnings of a good Work appear as the Fruit of what you say to them, their holy Parents under whose Wings they are, will be ready to cherish the vital heat that you

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have imparted to them ; with joyful Hearts will take up the matter where you left it, and carry it on.

'Tis evidently the grand design of the Devil and his Instruments, and which God especially calls you to countermine, to seduce and debauch these. The roaring Lyon that goes about seeking whom to devour, longs for the young Kids and the tender *Lambs* of Christ's Flock as the sweetest Prey that he can fasten upon. God quicken you, and prosper your Endeavours to pluck them out of his Jaw who is swallowing them at this day with open Mouth. Notwithstanding all their Privileges, they will as certainly and more fatally perish than the Children of other Men if an especial care be not taken of them. And where will you employ yourselves, if not among these young and tender Plants, in those Houses that are the *Nurseries* of the Church, whence there is the greatest likelihood of a supply of fit Members for the Plantations of Christ, when the old Trees are removed? *Our Fathers where are they? Where?* praising God in Heaven, and their places on Earth shall know them no more. Our ancient Disciples are marching apace after them, wearing away and dropping off one after another. And where, in a few years, shall Christ have a Generation to serve him

him, if you do not from among these raise up a spiritual Seed to our Elder Brother. If we have not some new ones to come up in their room (and whence can they be so reasonably expected as from such Families?) If our *Burials* exceed the number of our *Births*, we cannot long subsist; but the Churches of Christ which he hath set you to look after, must sink, and in a little while come to nothing.

II. I shall apply my self to Holy Parents, a little to direct and perswade them to take a special care of the Souls of their Children. And,

II.

I. Begin betimes, and continue unwearyed in a godly Education of them in all the Branches of it, using all means and helps to make it successful. Study their Tempers and Inclinations, that you may the better manage them. Keep them duly to Family Prayer, and put them upon seeking God apart by themselves. Bring them to the Publick Worship as soon as may be without disturbance to the Assembly. Examine them what they remember of every Sermon they hear, and let them know you expect an account. When any affecting Passages drop from the Mouth of the Preacher, whet them upon their Minds, and make a particular Application of them to their Souls; This, O my Child, is thy Duty and Danger as well

I.

as mine ; my eternal Salvation and thine depend on the doing what we have heard this day. Keep them, O keep them from *Evil Company*, infectious *Books*, and places of Temptation and Danger. Maintain your *Authory* over them, and yet don't deal imperiously with them, *provoking them to wrath*.

But especially let me recommend two Branches of a Holy Education, which I doubt are much neglected, or at least not performed aright.

1. The exercise of a strict Family Discipline in a prudent and pious manner. Indeed it looks like a piece of *Popish Penance* for a Man to Correct his own Child ; 'tis to lash *himself*, and scourge his *own Flesh*. But remember the express Command of God, *Chasten thy Son while there is hope, and let not thy Soul spare for his crying*. 'Tis better they should cry a little under your Rod, than roar for want of it for ever in Hell, and be lashed with Scorpions there to Eternity. Only let this be done prudently, seasonably, calmly, soberly, convincing them first of their Fault, and your necessary Duty in chastising of them by some pertinent Scripture, and with Solemn Prayer either before or after, or both, that God would Sanctifie it as his own Ordinance to the good of their Souls.

2. Cate-

2. Chatechize and instruct them duly both as to Matter and Manner.

As to *Matter*. See that the foundation of Christianity be well inlaid in their Souls.

For 'tis a lewd Age, wherein many whose own Souls are canker'd with Principles of *Atheism* and *Infidelity*, endeavour by slye Insinuations gradually to taint and corrupt first the Minds and then the Manners of the Youth of this City. And it would make a Man's Heart bleed to think how far they have prevail'd on many of them. Tho' they are but *thin Cobwebs* that they weave, yet they have been strong enough to hold many of these little *Insects*: and when once they have entangled them, they never cease instilling their Venome till they have totally poison'd and ruin'd them. 'Tis wonderful to observe how soon some of these Novices have set up for *Doctors* in the Devil's Schools, and seating themselves in the *Chair of the Scorners*, can deride all revealed Religion, arraign and condemn Christ as an Impostor, and besmear him again with their Spittle; Burlesque the Holy Scriptures, and laugh at immaterial Substances and everlasting Flames. And tho' many of them evidently do not understand the Atheistical, Infidel Cavils and Objections they have heard, yet they will be *hammering* at them, and repeat some-

what of them, like an *Eccho* in an empty and hollow place, that reverberates the last words that were spoken, but in such a broken imperfect manner that there is no Sense to be made of them. But above all to run down the **MINISTRY**, is at once both the easiest and the pleasantest thing of all. And every *dull young Fool* fancies he can be very smart and witty upon them. *Balaam's* Miracle is repeated every day ; There is no *Ass* so stupid but can open his Mouth to rebuke the *madness of a Prophet*. And how can the Servants of Christ do any good upon them, when they are despised in their Eyes ; and when the very **Topicks** whence their Arguments of persuasion are drawn, are not only disbelieved but derided by 'em too.

In short, Atheism, Ungodliness and Debauchery lie at the bottom of all this, and therefore especially fortifie their Minds against them in their young and tender Years.

Moreover, give them a clear understanding of their *Native Corruption* wherein they were born ; of the nature and necessity of *Regeneration* and the *influences of the Spirit* and *Repentance* towards God and *Faith* on our Lord Jesus Christ, which are the vital practical fundamentals of the Gospel : The meaning of their *Baptism*, and the *Covenant* of God whereinto you entred

entred them : What *advantages* they have thereby ; what *Obligations* and *Encouragements personally to lay hold on the Covenant*, and yield up themselves unto God fully, sincerely and deliberately ; and that their Lives and their Souls, and their eternal Salvation, and their *ALL* doth depend on their so doing.

And then as for the *Manner* of your Instruction, let it be frequent, with a becoming *Gravity*, *Seriousness*, and a visible holy *warmth* of Soul ; and mingle with your Teaching the most pathetic Exhortations, Counsels, Admonitions, Perswasions and Commands. Not only inform their *Judgments*, but apply your selves to their *Affections* too. The Ministers of God are fain to study how to reach both these for the Conversion of grown persons ; and so must you as ever you hope to be happy Instruments in the Conversion of your Children : 'tis as necessary, and more easie to reach their Hearts. Not only ply the Oar, but fill the Sails too, or else these little Vessels will hardly be moved up the Stream and against the Tide. And be sure to add to all the rest a holy Example ; there is a Reverence due from you to your Children, as well as from them to you. Do nothing that is unseemly before them, least they learn it of you, and resemble you more in such

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Actions than in any of your *Features*. *Worse Marks* and *Signatures* are hereby made by many Parents on their Children *after* their Birth, than by some of them *before* it. I must not forget, and hope you will not neither, the offering up daily fervent Prayers to the God of all Grace in their behalf.

II. II. Follow them close when at any time you perceive them under Convictions, or any good Affections stirring in them.

Then are you most likely to succeed, when God and you are workers together.

III. III. Have a care what Servants you take into your Houses. These will be much with them, and it will lye in their power to do them much good or harm while they are attending on them. As not only the Stars, but even the Planets that move in an inferiour Orb, have either a benign or a malignant Influence on this Earth while they are ministering to it.

IV. IV. Prudently make a visible distinction in the distribution of your worldly Goods among them according to the appearances of serious Religion in them. When once they see by your Carriage towards them, that you are resolv'd to put as few Weapons as well you can into the Hands of those that are the *Devil's Children* more than *yours*, it may keep them from open wicked-

wickedness, bring them to a due attendance on the publick Ministry, make them a little thoughtful and considering ; and who knows what the blessed Issue of that may be in time ? God himself makes Promises and Threatnings about things of this nature to allure Men to Religion : The giving or denying temporal Blessings is one means that he makes use of to prevent Sin and to reclaim Men from it. 'Tis not in it self the *best* and the *strongest* Argument, but it may be the most effectual in some cases and on some Tempers : And a wise Man will use that means which is the most likely to attain his End, not that which abstractedly consider'd is most noble. A wedge of *Gold* is more valuable than a great quantity of *Iron* : But a wise Man that is assaulted by his Enemy, had rather at that time have and use even a *rusty old Sword*.

V. Prepare them for and bring them to a full Communion with some or other of the Churches of Christ. I shall toward the end of this Discourse call upon them to join themselves to such Societies. I now mind you to fit and to call upon them to do it. You can't imagine what an Advantage it would be if you did but thoroughly prepare them for, and prevail upon them to come and solemnly and personally to renew their Baptifimal Covenant

V.

nant at the Table of our Lord, and put themselves under the inspection, care, prayers of such a Christian Society, and the evangelical Discipline of the Officers thereof. By Parents neglect of so doing that little good thing that was (it may be) in the Hearts of their Children towards the Lord God of *Israel*, withers and decays: They degenerate into an indifferency of Spirit, luke-warmness and carelessness about the things of God and of Religion: And all good Impressions that once were made on them, are so far worn out, that it becomes a very doubtful thing whither they have any thing at all of the Grace of God in their Hearts: Like the Inscription of an old neglected Monument, so batter'd and defac'd that 'tis scarce legible, and 'tis very difficult to pick out what and whose remains are within. To this 'tis owing that so many join themselves to no Church; content themselves with an *Attendance* on the publick Sermons only, with a general *Profession* of Christianity at large; or it may be with a bare *Morality*; and too many drop off wholly into the World, being altogether transform'd into the way and manners, and are totally lost in the Vanities and Corruptions of it: Like dead pieces of Wood, that once were parts of living Trees, falling into some Waters of a

petrifying nature, that are thereupon changed into the likeness and hardness of Stones.

VI. Deal very seriously with them when your End is visibly approaching. Let some of your last Breath be spent for God's Glory and the good of their Souls. Tell them your own experiences of the goodness and faithfulness of God; the advantages of an early serious Religion; the vanity and folly of Sin, the happiness of an interest in Christ, and charge them as ever they expect to see God's Face and yours with comfort, diligently to look after it. The words of a dying Man, especially of a *dying Friend or Parent*, enter deep, come with a great weight and authority, and may be remembered by them to very good purposes, after you your selves are pass'd into the Land of forgetfulness.

VI.

The taking a special care of the Souls of their Children in such Instances as these, might be urged with variety of Motives. I will mention but one, and that is a very affecting one, *viz.* the Groans of a godly Parent over a wicked Child. And could we but get near enough, we might hear him venting his Passion in some such words as these; *viz.* 'Oh this ungodly Wretch, 'this Son of *Belial*! He will break my 'Heart sure, and bring down my grey
Hairs

‘ Hairs in sorrow to the Grave. I trained
 ‘ him up for God ; but he is resolved to
 ‘ be for the Devil in despite of God and
 ‘ me. When he was an Infant, I remem-
 ‘ ber he was a pleasant Child : When he
 ‘ was a tender Plant, I hoped he would
 ‘ one day have flourish’d like a Branch of
 ‘ Righteousness that the Lord had bless’d.
 ‘ But he is now a grieving Brier, and a
 ‘ pricking Thorn in my Eyes, my very
 ‘ Heart and Soul. Alas! Woe is me mis-
 ‘ erable Man that I am; that ever Hell
 ‘ should be the fuller for me! That from
 ‘ my Loins should issue one that is a dis-
 ‘ honour to God, and a scandal to Reli-
 ‘ gion, the plague and burden of the
 ‘ Earth, and a Fire-brand for eternal
 ‘ Burnings. O my Bowels, my Bowels!
 ‘ I am pained at the very Heart. Now is
 ‘ my Soul exceeding sorrowful even unto
 ‘ death. Happy is the Womb that never
 ‘ bare, and the Breasts that never gave
 ‘ suck. Would to God I had been writ-
 ‘ ten down Childless in his Book. Was
 ‘ ever any sorrow like ———

And then the swelling Passion grows
 too big to be vented by Words: a Flood
 of Tears gushing out stops the good
 Man’s Speech ; and he expresses (as the
Egyptians in their Hieroglyphicks did, by
 things not by words) the remainders of
 his grief in sighs and deep groans, enough
 to

to break his own Heart, and the Heart of any Man that doth but hear him.

How sad would it be if this should be your case another day ; and how heavy would it lye upon you if your own Conscience should reproach you, All this hath come to pass thro' your own fondness, neglect and folly ?

C H A P. IV.

*An Address to the Children of Holy Men
in Five Things.*

MY Discourse in this Chapter shall, like the Divine Blessing, descend from Holy Parents to their Children. And there are these Five Things I shall propose to them.

I. Seriously bethink your selves. Consider each of you in particular in how many Instances you have broken with God, and (from what hath been said in the fore-going Chapters) the greatness of your guilt and danger in so doing. What degenerate Wretches have you been to strike in with the avowed Enemy of your Father's House, and so stain the Honour and Glory of it ? How often is it mention'd in Scripture as a mighty aggravation of Mens sins, that they forsook the
God

PROV. 27.
10.

God of their Fathers? And this thou hast done. Is not the Voice of Reason as well as Scripture, *Thy own Friend, and thy Father's Friend forsake thou not?* God took you into his Family before you were capable of doing him any Service; and since you have been capable of it, you have rebelled against him that was your God from your Mother's Womb, and that sustain'd you in the Arms of his merciful Providence when you hung upon your Mother's Breasts. Be astonisht O Heavens, and tremble O Earth! the Lord hath nourisht and brought up Children, and they have lifted up their Heels against him. You have been as a Beast before him; yea more brutish than any of them. For the Ox knows his Owner, and the Ass is not so dull but he knows his Master's Crib. What Iniquity have you found in the God of your Fathers? Testifie against him if you are able. Hath he been a dry Land or a barren Wilderness to you? For which of his good Works have you dealt thus with him? And for what? For the sake of lying and destructive Vanities, of which you have cause to be ashamed, and dread what the issue of them may be. Know thou that for all these things God will speedily bring thee to Judgment. And do but suppose him speaking to you in some such words as these.

You

‘ You are the Seed of my ancient
‘ Friends ; and you should have savour’d
‘ of the Stock whence you sprang. For
‘ your Father’s sake I gave you many of
‘ the Blessings of my Left Hand ; and I
‘ reached out my Right Hand too to em-
‘ brace you ; but you rudely put it by,
‘ and madly flung away from me : In
‘ your Infancy I entred into Covenant
‘ with you and sware to you : I took you
‘ into my House and set my Seal upon you.
‘ I gave you many helps which others
‘ never enjoy’d ; and freed you from ma-
‘ ny hinderances that others were ham-
‘ per’d withal. I well remember the Care,
‘ the Commands, the Prayers, the Tears,
‘ the Pains which yonder Parents of yours
‘ took about you ; and I declare before
‘ all the World, that I take it kindly at
‘ their Hands. They did the duty of a
‘ Father and a Mother to you. And I
‘ was not wanting to you neither. I be-
‘ gun, as you can’t but remember, very
‘ early with you ; I waited long upon
‘ you ; I follow’d you Year after Year
‘ with Offers and Entreaties. I water’d
‘ you with the Dew of Heaven till I was
‘ quite weary of you, for you still proved
‘ dead Trees. I expected you should have
‘ been a Diadem and a Crown of Glory
‘ to me, a credit to Religion, an honour
‘ and a comfort to your Parents, and have
‘ pro-

‘ promoted my Interest in the Earth. But
‘ on the contrary, you have been a blot
‘ and a reproach to me, a scandal to the
‘ Men of the World, a comfort to the
‘ Children of wicked Men, by shewing
‘ them there were some that could be viler
‘ than the vilest of them ; a shame and a
‘ grief to the Souls of your Parents. You
‘ did eat out the Mark that I so early set
‘ upon you, that when your Fleeces were
‘ a little grown, it was not discernable ;
‘ as tho’ you design’d that my Servants
‘ when they sought you out might not
‘ know you, or so much as suspect that
‘ ever you belong’d to my Fold. I put
‘ you to feed in green Pastures, by the
‘ still Waters among my Sheep ; and you
‘ were not stoln out of my Grounds, but
‘ you your selves *run astray*, broke thro’
‘ my Enclosures, leapt over my Hedge,
‘ tho’ you knew it was a very high and
‘ thorny one, and the Briers thereof did
‘ often run into your Flesh. And now
‘ therefore, O ye Angels, the Executioners
‘ of my Vengeance, bind these up in Bun-
‘ dles, for they are the Tares that grew
‘ in my Field among my good Corn, and
‘ throw them into unquenchable Flames.
‘ Of all Sinners, I am resolv’d these shall
‘ never see my Face.

Lord,

Lord, what fear, what shame, what blushes, what confusion, what agonies of Mind, and horrors of Conscience will seize you when God shall thus speak to you out of the Whirl-wind of his Wrath, with a Voice louder and more terrible than Thunder! There will be weeping and howling in that day among all the workers of Iniquity; but among none so great and so loud as among the Children of the Kingdom when they shall be thrust out, and plung'd into the fiery sulphurous Lake; when at the same time they that were Strangers, and in a double Sense took Heaven by violence, shall in their very sight, and before their Faces, enter into the Kingdom with *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob*. What gnashing of Teeth will there be among you for madness *before* you sink into that doleful place, as well as for excessive torment *after* you are in it to see your selves excluded and them admitted. Then shall the fullest Vials of Wrath be poured out on your Heads: And if you will not *now*, you shall *then*, lay to Heart such things as these throughout the vast and endless ages of Eternity, and your own Consciences and Thoughts shall be perpetually falling upon you like a fresh Millstone, or talent of Lead, dropt upon your Heads every Moment.

*

E

Oh

Oh that you were wise, and understood this before it be too late! Shew your selves Men, and prevent all this by a present serious Consideration while things may be helpt. And if you would but take this first Step you would not need much perswasion to take the

- II. *Viz.* Earnestly plead the Covenant of God with your Fathers for his pardoning and renewing Grace. Alas! it may be, some of you will say, God help us, this Advice comes too late to us. For we have many Years neglected the ratification of it since we have been at Age, and so the time is slip'd and elaps'd. Nay, which is yet worse, we have notoriously broken it; forfeited all our Interest in it, and can't rationally expect any benefit by it; but rather on the contrary, that God should deal worse with us than with others that have been strangers to the Covenant and the Promises.

A very deep and serious Sense of this would do well. But be it so; This is an Argument indeed that you should plead this Covenant with a great deal of Humility and godly sorrow, but 'tis no Argument that you should not plead it at all. For if now at last you are but serious and in earnest, you have a gracious God to deal with, who is ready to renew his
Cove-

Covenant with you, and you may yet apply your selves to him with a greater confidence than the Children of others can rationally do, under all your sinking fears on the account of the great guilt you have contracted, the great danger you have incurr'd, and the dismal wrath you have deserv'd. For after all, you have more to say for your selves than the Children of Strangers have ; for you may apply your selves to him under such a Notion as they cannot, as *your Father's God*, as many have done under the like fears and distresses of Conscience, and found relief by it. God was just on the very point of rooting up the whole Nation of *Israel* at once ; and of the two Arguments that *Moses* urges God withal to spare them, tho' a provoking People, this, as the strongest, is put last, *Remember Isaac and Israel thy Servants, from whom they are descended.* Exod. 32. And this made his Repentings to kindle faster towards them, than ever his Anger did against them. What a prodigious Sinner was *Manasseh*? And yet when in his great Affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Fathers, 2 Chron. 23. 12. he was entreated of him.

You have played the Harlot, saith God to the Jews, with many Lovers. Jer. 3. 1. And tho'

in that case Men would give an everlasting Bill of Divorce, *yet return unto me, saith the Lord.* And wilt thou not from this time cry to me my Father, thou art the guide of my youth? Will you not at last return unto me, who have been so early espoused to you, and stood in a Covenant-relation to your Ancestors when they were but a small handful of People, as the words *thy youth* are explained else-where. And then you have the Answer which God himself, by way of Prophecie and Encouragement, frames for them, *Behold we come unto thee, the Lord our God.* q. d. We are the Posterity of thine ancient Servants, by Birth related to thee, and that encourages us to come to thee as the Lord our God, tho' we are unworthy to be called thy People. Special Mercies in a time of great discouragements are promised to them, *because ye are, saith God, the seed of Abraham my Friend.* And when they were not only under sore distresses, but sad declinings too, they had *erred* from God's ways, and their Hearts were *hardened* from his Fear; they plead this Argument with God for reasonable Relief, *We are thine; thou never bearest Rule over them, they were not called by thy Name.*

Take

Take therefore to your selves words,
 and say, ‘ Lord wilt thou not shew spe-
 ‘ cial favour to us, seeing thou hast been
 ‘ an ancient Friend to, and Confederate
 ‘ with our Family ? Why, this is an Ar-
 ‘ gument that is wont to prevail upon
 ‘ Men, even those that are ill-natur’d,
 ‘ whose Bowels are but Flints and Ada-
 ‘ mants in comparison of thy tender Com-
 ‘ passions. And ’tis a *vertuous* Disposition,
 ‘ a thing commendable and praise-worthy
 ‘ in the Judgment of all : And as such ’tis
 ‘ recorded in thy Book in sundry Instances.
 ‘ ’Tis so of *David*, that he enquired whi- ^{2 Sam. 9.}
 ‘ *ther there were any of the house of Saul yet* ^{3, 7.}
 ‘ *alive, that he might shew the kindness of*
 ‘ *God to him,* ‘ and he shewed very confi-
 ‘ derable respect to *Mepheboseth* for *Jona-*
 ‘ *than* his *Father’s* sake, because of the
 ‘ strict league of Friendship that had been
 ‘ between them. *Asa* prevailed on *Ben-*
 ‘ *hadad*, tho a very wicked and selfish
 ‘ Man, to joyn with him in his distress,
 ‘ because there hath been, said he, a
 ‘ *League between thy Father and my Father.*
 ‘ And ’tis mention’d as a Reproach to
 ‘ *Joash*, that he remembred not the kindness ^{2 Chron.}
 ‘ that *Jehoiada* the *Father* had done, but ^{24. 22.}
 ‘ *slew his Son.* ‘ And shall the same thing
 ‘ be charg’d on thee ? Far be this from
 ‘ thee, O Lord. True, indeed, I have
 ‘ neg-

' neglected thy Covenant, and sadly bro-
 ' ken it. But yet thou hast said to the
 ' Children of the Covenant, *Return ye*
back-sliding Children. Behold, I return
unto thee, heal all my back-slidings, for thou art
the Lord my God; my God from my Mo-
ther's Belly: Save me for I am the Son
of thine Hand-maid, ' And if thou art
 ' ashamed to be known by the Name of
 ' MY God; yet, O Lord God of my
 ' FATHERS and thy *Friends*, look upon
 ' me, and be gracious unto me, as thou
 ' usest to be to the returning Posterity of
 ' them that loved and feared thy Name.

III. III. Plead your Holy Baptizm, and the
 many Promises of God to the Children of
 holy Men.

' Lord, my Parents have solemnly dedi-
 ' cated me to thee in my Infancy. See
 ' whose Character and Supercription it is
 ' that I bear upon me. O help a poor
 ' Creature that is willing *to render unto*
 ' *God the things that are Gods.* Save me,
 ' for I am thine, and let not one of thy
 ' own perish eternally for want of thy
 ' help. For hast thou not said, *I will be*
a God to my People and their Seed? That
 ' thou wilt *Circumcise their Heart, and the*
Heart of their Seed after them? That thou
 ' wilt *pour out thy Blessing on their Off-*
spring? ' True indeed, these are but gene-
 ' ral

‘ral indefinite Promises. I can’t say thou
‘hadst a special Eye upon me in particu-
‘lar, infallibly to make all this good to
‘me. But then on the other hand, I
‘can’t say the contrary. Nay, I have
‘good hopes thro’ Grace, that I was par-
‘ticularly intended by thee, because thou
‘hast put it into the Heart of thy Servant
‘to pray this Prayer before thee this day.
‘Thou usest to be found of those that
‘seek thee. They that hunger and thirst
‘after spiritual good things, are not wont
‘to be sent empty away, but to be libe-
‘rally filled. O let my Fleece also be
‘wet with the Dew of Heaven. If thou
‘hast no regard to me *a dead Dog*, yet
‘have some respect to that word of thine
‘wherein thou hast made me to hope.
‘Let Heaven say *Amen* to the Requests,
‘which if I know my self, in the sincerity
‘of my own Heart, I offer up here on
‘Earth.

IV. Add hereunto a personal solemn
Dedication, and surrender of your selves
to God as his Covenant-Servants with
your whole Heart and Soul. Nothing of
reason can be urged against this ; a great
deal of reason may be urged for it. Be-
ing now come to years of understanding,
you are capable of such a Transaction.
Your Parents dedication of you will pass

IV.

for nothing, if you don't ratifie and confirm it by your own Act and Deed. God by these Papers at this time puts in his claim to you. If you don't comply, he may take it for a flat denial. Have you not manifestly broken Covenant with him; and is it not high time to renew it? How exprefs, punctual, and serious are you in all your Contracts with Men in Matters of an infinitely lower nature and concern? And why should you not be the same when you are to transact with the great God, and give up your selves Body and Soul to be his for ever? Such a Covenanting with God would strike a mighty awe into your Breasts; fix your volatile Spirits; leave a grateful relish and savour on your Souls; comfort you under fears, help to clear up your doubts; check you when you begin to wander; recover you when you are fallen, if reflected on; quicken you to the discharge of your duty; fortifie you against temptations; the making and the keeping of it will be life to you in the hour of death. When a Man is brought to this in sincerity, this is saving Conversion; and somewhat of this will follow upon that great Change. If there be indeed any thing of the renewing Grace of God within you, that will naturally incline
you

you to it, and there will not need much persuasion. The divine Flame in any Soul will of it self point upward, and its natural tendency is toward that Heaven from whence it came. O that the Divine Spirit would breathe upon you; then would you readily say, ' Lord, I here
' return to thee a poor wandring Crea-
' ture, even my own Soul : I restore to
' thee that which I have robbed thee off.
' Now in the Name of thy Son, and by
' the Spirit of thy Grace, I yield up my
' self to thee, to be thine, to be ruled as
' well as to be saved by thee.

V. Lastly, having done all this, join
your selves as Members to some particular
Church of Christ or other. For the bet-
ter edification of his Body, our Saviour
hath appointed the erecting of particular
Churches : And wherever a sufficient num-
ber of persons were called, it was the
constant practice of the primitive times to
unite in such Societies as stated Members
of them, under the guidance and conduct
of those Pastors and Teachers, which with
their own consent, the Holy Ghost had
set over them to rule and feed them. This
is a Constitution of Christ which is di-
rectly thwarted and opposed by a Gene-
ration of loose and rambling Christians,
that content themselves with bare *Hearing*,
and

V.

and that too in a very odd way. For they are a sort of volatile Auditors, perpetually frisking too and fro, and can fix no where. Were all Men of this humour, there could be no such thing as particular Churches, which Christ hath appointed for the edifying of his Members. And how they can rationally expect to flourish either in Grace or Peace, while they live in a direct opposition to a manifest Institution of our Lord Jesus, which was not more an effect of his Authority than of his Wisdom and Goodness, I wish Men would seriously consider. Are any of you so self-sufficient, that you need no Pastor, nor the assistance of your fellow Christians to watch over, admonish, rebuke, exhort, comfort, strengthen, and counsel you? Are there none of the Churches of Christ that are *pure enough*? None of them that have *latitude*, or *strictness* enough for you? None of them worthy enough for you to join your selves unto? When our Lord hath given such variety of Gifts to his Ministers, is there none of them whose Abilities suit you, and please your curious Palates, that by settling under them you may be edified? I may say to such Persons as *Constantine* once did to such a self-conceited Man, *Take a Ladder, and climb up to Heaven by thy self alone.* In short,

short, a Society of Believers walking together in Gospel Order, is like the excellent composure of Syllables, Words, and Sentences, that have a great deal of Sense and Signification in them. But a separated and divided Christian, that will join himself to no Church, is like a *single* Letter, or a *disjointed* Syllable that is perfect Nonsense.

EIGHT



E I G H T
DISCOURSES
O N

II SAM. xxiii, 5.

SERMON I.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, altho' he make it not to grow.

THE words contain'd in this Chapter, from the third to the end of the seventh Verse (whereof my Text is a part) are introduced in the first, second, and

and part of the third Verse, with a lofty Preface, the better to engage our Minds to a due consideration of 'em: In order whereunto Three things are mention'd.

I. I. That these are the *last* Words of *David*. Now the last Words of a Man in his dying Moments, are wont to be observed more than any others. For as the Flame of a Lamp, whose Oil is almost wasted, just before it goes out, sometimes shoots up higher than before: So the Soul, just as 'tis ready to be loosed from the Body, sometimes has nobler Flights than ordinary. However, to be sure that's no time to trifle or play the Hypocrite. And therefore the Speeches of dying Men are wont to be very weighty and serious, mightily affect the standers by, and make a deep Impression upon 'em.

But yet the Wisdom of the Poor Man both living and dying too, may be despised; because of the meaness of him who utters the Oracle, and the Folly of them that hear it. And therefore,

II. II. The Character of *David* is added to recommend what is spoken to us. *David, the son of Jesse, said, and the Man, who was raised up on high, the Anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said.* He was a mighty Prince, one of great *Experience*, and a famous *Author*,

thor. He was a mighty Prince : God had advanced him to the Throne of *Israel*. Now the wise and grave Speeches of a King have a sort of Majesty in them, like him from whom they proceed, carry Authority with 'em, and command Respect and Attention. And *David* was moreover a Man of great Experience, He was originally the Son of *Jesse*, a private Man, but from a mean State God had raised him up on high, and here in my Text we find him brought very low again, having a sad Prospect of the great Calamities of his Family : So that he hath fully tried both states of Life, God having *lifted him up and cast him down*. And besides he was a known and famous Author, *the sweet Psalmist of Israel* ; highly esteem'd in the Church of God for his many holy and useful Composures of Spiritual Hymns, who was wont to lead the People in their Devotions as well as in their Battles, could handle the Instruments of Musick as well as the Weapons of War, and was as considerable in the Temple as ever he had been in the Field.

If any thing further be necessary to engage our Attention, it must be an Inspiration from Heaven, that so the Instructions may not be the Issues of meer Humane Prudence, but the Dictates of
Divine

Divine Wisdom. And this is not wanting. For,

III. 'Tis further added, *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his Spirit was in my Tongue : the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake unto me.* Seeing therefore he who speaks to us was a dying Man, a great King, of large Experience, and of an established Reputation for Skill and Piety, full of Days and of the Holy Ghost too, let *him that hath Ears to hear,* hearken to what he says.

And the things which he delivers, abstracting from all the fore-going Particulars, are so great in themselves, that they may make way by their own weight, and sink down into the Hearts of wise and understanding Men. For he begins his Discourse with the Duty and Character of a good King, as to the two main Points, *viz.* Justice and Piety. *He that rules over Men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord.* And elegantly describes the happiness of a People who live under such a *Phoenix*, by two natural and easie Figures of *the light of the morning wherein there is no cloud,* and *the tender grass springing out of the earth by the clear shining of the sun after the rain.* But then considering how unlike to this the present state of his Family was, and how much worse in all probability

bility matters would go with 'em; he turns his Thoughts to the Covenant of God as a rich Cordial to support his fainting Spirit. This he does in the Words I have now pitcht upon.

Altho' my House be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure; for this is all my desire, and all my salvation, altho' he make it not to grow.

In which Words we have these two Parts.

I. A sad supposition which holy *David* makes, with which he begins and closes the Verse. *Altho' my House be not so with God*, so he begins: *Altho' he make it not to grow*, so he ends. The doubling the Expression, setting it in the Front and Rear too, shews that his Family Afflictions had created many uneasy Thoughts in his Mind, and went very near his Heart.

I.

q. d. I and mine have not been so good as we should, nor so prosperous as we might have been; we have neither so ruled others, nor governed our selves, but that many disorders have broken forth among us, and many Afflictions have befallen us; and there's a long black train of

†

F

Evils

Evils yet behind. We have not been like the *light of a Morning without any Clouds*; but many a sad Providence hath overshadowed my Family and darkened the Glory of it: And I foresee, that after my approaching decease, instead of flourishing like the *springing Grass* by the warm Beams of the Sun after a refreshing Rain, they will wither away like the Grass by the scorching heat of Summer.

II. We have the Course holy and dying *David* takes to support himself under these melancholly Thoughts and Circumstances. *Yet hath he made with me, &c.* Where observe,

i. What he pitches his Thoughts upon, *viz.* the *Covenant* which God had made with him. By which we are not to understand the promise of continuing the Kingdom to him and to his Seed, or the preserving his Line and Family *any further* than as the preservation of that was necessary for the Birth of the Messiah who was to descend from his House. This plainly appears from the Character of *David*, who was an eminent Saint, and to such the World is not very charming, but they are dead and crucified to it: And from what he had now in so full and near a view before him, both with reference to his *House*, that God *would*
not

not make it grow ; and with reference to *Himself*, for he had Death before him ; a greater Monarch than he himself was, the King of Terrors, who may also be called the Kings of Kings, for he hath and will subdue them all, and Reign over all Mankind, whereas *David* ruled comparatively over but a small handful. This Universal Monarch now stood by his Bed-side, and was on the point of Conquering him, and carrying him away Captive in Triumph. *David* had e'en almost done with this World, and but as a few Moments longer to live in it. Now this would have been but a very thin and sorry Comfort to so very holy a Man, especially in his last Moments, to think that his Family should continue but in a very shatter'd and broken condition. 'Tis plain it must be somewhat nobler than this, no less than the Covenant of God in Christ, the Covenant of Grace that hath Heaven in the Bowels of it, whence he draws his present Comfort, as became a Man of his Spirit and Temper, and one under his present Circumstances, who was drawing his last Breath.

2. The excellent Properties of this Covenant. They are Three. 'Tis an *everlasting*, a *sure* one, and *order'd in all things*. And therefore 'tis *well ordered*, because 'tis *sure* and *everlasting*, it shall

68 *The Reason why Family Afflictions*

never be Repealed by God, nor finally broken by Man.

3. The great value which he sets upon it. *For this is all my Salvation and all my desire.* q. d. If God would have saved me and mine from temporal Miseries, and largely bless'd my Family with the good things of this Life, I would have bless'd his Name on that Account. But seeing he has otherwise determin'd, I submit: I am at a Point: I see so little in the World, and so much in the Blessings of the Covenant, that I desire no better, I can't wish for any other Happiness than what is contained in it. My whole is wrapt up in this blessed Covenant of Grace; and being interested in that I have enough. This quiets and composes my Spirit, *altho' my House be not so with God, and altho' he make it not to grow.*

From the Words thus open'd we may observe two Doctrines.

- I. I. The great Evils which may befall the Family of a very holy Man can't but be very afflictive to him.
- II. Such is the Nature and Properties of the Covenant of Grace, that an Interest in it will give him great Relief under such very afflictive Circumstances.

I begin with the First of these, *viz.*
The great Evils which may befall the Family
of a very holy Man, can't but be very af-
flictive to him.

I will but briefly handle this Point ;
and therefore shall only,

I. Give the Reasons of it. And then,

II. Apply it.

I.
II.

I. For the Reasons of the Point. Fa-
mily Afflictions must needs make deep
Impressions on the Heart of a Saint.

I.

I. Because of that tender, and some-
times too great Affection that he bears
towards those of his own House. God
who knows our Make and Frame, and
how strongly our Pulse does beat towards
those that are nearly related to us, hath,
for that very reason, wisely enforced
Obedience to his Commands by Argu-
ments drawn from this Head, Promises of
Mercy, and Threatnings of Judgments
upon our Families. Nature teaches us
to love these, and Grace (which gives a
Heart of Flesh) does further incline us so
to do. And such is our Folly, that herein
we hardly know any Bounds ; we open
the Floud-gates and pour out our Affli-
ctions in a full Stream, and are apt to
think we do well even when we exceed.

I.

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*Harrison's
Top. Sac.*

For ought that I can observe, inordinate affection to 'em is one of the most common sins among good Men, which they are hardly cured of either by saving Grace or the severest Providences. 'Tis the *last* Evil that is mortified in 'em. When they come to die themselves, and are dead to all things else, 'tis difficult to die to them. Men naturally look back very wishly upon them, just as they themselves are putting off from the shoar of this World, and launching forth into Eternity : They have much a do then to shake Hands with them, and bid them farewell with any Spirit and Courage. What must it be then, and how will it make their Bowels to yearn, and their Hearts to turn and boil within 'em, when they see Calamities fasten upon 'em, Wants pinching 'em, Pains griping, Diseases wasting, and Death seizing 'em, and tho' they look 'em in the Face, not to be able to help 'em any other way, but by pouring out a shower of Tears over 'em, lifting up a few broken Prayers for 'em, interrupted with deep Sighs, and hollow Groans, longer than their Petitions for 'em? And all this while the life of Affection is whole and strong. To have them snacht away from us that are Flesh of our Flesh, and Bone of our Bone, dear as the Apple of our Eye, as our own Souls,

Souls, yea that are our *selves* ; This is like tearing off our Limbs while we are alive, yea rending afunder one Faculty of our Soul from another. *The Spirit of a Man will sustain his own personal Infirmities* ; but the Calamities of his *House* pierce deeper, touch him to the quick, strike like a poison'd Dagger plung'd into and thro' his very Soul, and make his Spirit to bleed and faint within him.

II. Such sad Providences are apt to bring Men's Sins to their Remembrance, and much distress serious Persons if they can't find 'em out. The Head of a Family stands in several very different relations, and is apt, like a Watch that has many different Motions, to go wrong as to one of 'em at least ; and 'tis well if it be not irregular and faulty in all. Few Men need to look long to find out the cause of those Breaches which God makes upon 'em. The Root on which our Wormwood that is put into our Cup does grow, don't lye so very deep under Ground as to require much digging to come at it. The light of Scripture will point it out, if Men have but a mind to see, and Conscience speak in a Language easie to be understood if Men have but an Ear to hear. Now tis a melancholly thing to have Troubles without and Guilt within at one and the

same time. 'Tis sad indeed when a person shall say, My Husband, my Wife, my Children are sick or dead, and my sins have wounded or slain 'em. My offences against God open'd the Door at which the Enemy enter'd, and robbed me of my dearest Treasure, and buried it under Ground.

Sometimes indeed, these and other Afflictions are not Punishments of our Faults, but meer Trials of our Graces; as is evident from the case of *Job*. You know the ample Testimony God himself gives of him. And as for his Children, to be sure they were religiously educated, and seem to be piously inclined. Or else, so many young Persons so often Feasting together, would have been guilty of great Extravagancies, and the Tidings of it would have come to the Ears of so jealous a Father as *Job* was, who, without question, had his Spies upon 'em; and he would not have spoken so doubtfully about 'em as he does, only *it may be that my Sons have sinned, and cursed God* (not with their Tongues, *Job* 1. 5. but) *in their Hearts, i. e.* have had slight and irreverent Thoughts of him.

And yet you know how sadly he was stripp'd of all.

But suppose this be the case, yet under fore Family Afflictions; a godly Man is apt to be jealous over himself with a godly
Jea-

Jealousie ; suspicious that some Sin or other is the hidden Spring of all. Whereupon he is not a little concern'd when he is forced to cry out, *Shew me O Lord,* for I am at a loss, *wherefore it is that thou* Job 10.2. *contendest with me.* He cannot but be troubled, that when God *writes bitter things against* him, 'tis in such a Character that he is sore afraid he does not read aright, nor throughly understand the sense and meaning of it.

III. This must be grievous to a Good Man, because of the difficulty of suppressing those Corruptions which are accidentally awakened by such Providences, and performing those Duties which they call for. There's a great Sediment at the bottom of every Vessel, and when 'tis much shaken, no wonder if all that is within grow thick and muddy. Unworthy suspicions of God, hard thoughts of Providence, Swellings of heart against the Decrees of Heaven, Envy at the prosperity of others, and a great many other Evils we are liable unto upon such occasions. Otherwise it would not have been so signally taken notice of as so peculiar a stroke in *Job's* Character, that *in all this he sinned not, nor charged God* Job 1.22. *foolishly.*

And

And as there's great difficulty in resisting Evil, so there is also in doing Good, and performing those Duties which such severe strokes do call for. 'Tis our Duty indeed, and 'tis our Wisdom and Interest in such cases, to humble our selves under God's Hand; fall down at his Foot; to hold our Peace, or if we do open our Mouths, to justify God and condemn our selves; to adore and love him still, and keep to this as the standing Sense of our Souls, that however it be, *God is good to his Israel, even to all that are of a clean heart.* That *all his ways are mercy and truth*, though some steps of his Providence are Dark and Intricate. To wait upon him in the way of his Judgments, and not have our hearts alienated from him by his smartest Rods. This is to Row against Wind and Tide both. We shall find there will be need of hard and continued labour, and we shall be often driven down by the violence of the Storm and strength of the Current. Sometimes we shall be able it may be to fall down and Adore, but by and by be ready to murmur and complain: be submissive one Hour, and apt to quarrel the next. Now this upon Reflection will be uneasie to a Holy Soul. When he recollects himself, the good Principle within will rise up in hatred of, and opposition against such
unto-

untoward changes as these. *Surely I have not the understanding of a Man, much less the Faith of a Christian. I have been as a Beast in thy sight, O Lord, thus to kick and tofs, fling and roar when I am wounded by thy hand.*

IV. We are often in the Dark as to our special Interest in God and his Covenant. And then such Providences as these, fill us with more gloomy Thoughts. We can't fetch that Relief from the Covenant of God that would buoy up our Spirits, because we are at a mighty loss, whither we are indeed within the Bond thereof.

V. Hereupon a Man is laid open to the furious Assaults of Satan. When the Night comes, the Evil Beasts walk about, and when we are in the Dark, they will be apt to leap out and seize the trembling Prey. Eminent Piety is no defence, but will rather enrage him, and make him fall on the more eagerly. 'Tis a Victory indeed to Conquer a Saint. This hungry Lyon would fain devour one of the Sheep of Christ, as a sweeter Morcel than many of the Dogs and Swine of this World. Now if Satan *winnow us as Wheat*, abundance of Chaffe will fly off. There's no Sin so Vile, so
Unna-

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Unnatural, so Black and Scandalous, but he who had the Face to tempt the Blessed Jesus to Self-murder, and the most horrid Idolatry, will have the confidence to tempt us unto ; and he may carry us to the very brink of the fatal Precipice, and push us down, unless the hand of Mercy reached forth from Heaven rescue and save us.

VI. VI. A Man's misery is often aggravated by the Censures of others. Many will make no allowance for any Oversight ; for the not using such methods, which it may be the sick Party could not be prevailed to submit unto ; for the deference that in some Cases a Prudent Man is obliged to pay to other Relations. Every Fool will *sit* upon the *dead body*, though he know little of the matter ; and as if he were an Officer and had Authority, will bring in a *Verdict* like himself.

VII. VII. We are apt to fix on some Circumstance or other to aggravate our Loss, and countenance our perverse Behaviour. I have lost a most dear Relative or most intimate Friend ; and 'tis no wonder when a right Hand is cut off, or a right Eye plucked out, if I be in danger of bleeding to death. I am
deprived

deprived of one whose Help I could ill spare, and whom I shall dearly miss when I am languishing under the yearly returns of my sharp Diseases and cruel Pains. Or he was cut off in the Flower of his Days; whereas had he lived till he had been Old I could have born it: Or the only Prop of my Family, the Staff of my old Age, and the Pillar to support my Name, the only Son or Heir of the Family is removed: Or he was very Hopeful, and exceeding Pious; and so we draw Darknes out of Light, and extract Bitterness out of that which is Sweet, make that the Matter of our Disquiet, which is the greatest Support and Comfort; for if it be so, they are fallen asleep in Jesus. Or else (which is the hardest of all to be born) my Child was cut off in the midst of his sins, and I can't hope or think but that he is sunk down into the place of Torment. Whereas this should have been thought on before; 'tis too late now. But yet, if for the main, we honestly did what we could, we however are free from their Bloud; if not, we should turn the Stream of our Grief into that Channel; and thankfully adore the discriminating Grace of God, that we have not been driven away in our Wickedness like Smoak before the Wind.

But

But if we have nothing else to fix upon, then we torment ourselves, because we think more proper Methods might have been used for their Recovery, when the sad Event shews we were mistaken; tho' we followed the best Light we had. This is folly indeed; for we are dejected because we are not what God never made us, *Infalible Creatures*. But yet 'tis hard in many cases to avoid this. We very imprudently cast our selves down while we give way to such vain Wishes, O that I had steered another Course, for then the Shipwrack had been avoided!

VIII. VIII. I might add the Civilities of our Friends on such Occasions. There are Fashions and Forms of Condolence as well as of other things; which a Man knows not how to want, and yet can't well tell how to receive without uneasiness. This is rubbing on the Sore, which must pain one tho' it be done with a gentle Hand; and opening the Wound, which makes it smart, tho' it be with the kind Intention of pouring in healing Balm. To be sure they refresh our Sorrows while they pretend to express their own.

Lastly, 'Tis hard in this, as well as in all other cases, (and harder to be thought to do so) to hit on the middle Path between both the Extreams, of despising

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the

the Chastening of the Lord, or fainting under his Rebukes. Either of these is sinful, and a blemish to our Profession. We take little notice of his Hand, or else we are apt to quarrel 'tis too rough and heavy. Either our Souls are as a dead Sea whose Waters do not stir; or like a stormy one whose Waves do roar. And a censorious World will be prone to reproach us for wandering either to the right Hand or the Left.

I'll close this Point with a little brief Application.

1. Let all the Members, but especially the Heads of Families, have a care how they behave themselves. Purge your Dwellings, walk in your Houses with a perfect Heart and in a perfect way. Commit no sin your selves, and allow it not in others. God sees if you wink at it, and he will punish if you do not.

2. Let those who fear or feel severe Family Judgments, see that they be Internal and spiritually within the Bond of the Covenant, clear up their Interest in it, and improve it by Meditation, Faith and Prayer. Holy *David* did so, tho' he had not the Covenant of Grace so fully open'd to him as 'tis to Believers under the Gospel. Tho' the World may count them miserable, and they may be apt, in a pang of Unbelief, to call themselves so;
yet

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yet happy Souls are they, who cannot only begin with my Text, but read on to the end of it, and upon good Grounds say, *Altho' my House be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure; for this is all my Salvation, and all my Desire, altho' he make it not to grow.*

SERM.

SERMON II.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, altho' he make it not to grow.

TWO Doctrines have been observed from these Words:

I. The great Evils which may befall the Family of a Holy Man, can't but be very afflictive to him. This I have finish'd: I wish I could truly say I had *done with* that melancholly Subject. However, I now turn my Thoughts to another that is more bright and pleasing, *viz.* The Second Doctrine.

II. Such is the Nature and Properties of the Covenant of Grace, that an Interest in it will give a Man Relief and Comfort in all his Afflictions, whether Personal or Family ones.

In the managing this Point I will do these Four Things.

- I. I. Briefly open the *Nature* of the Covenant of Grace.
- II. II. Speak to the *Properties* of it:
- III. III. Shew *how* a Man may draw Support and Comfort thence under all Afflictions, whether Personal or Family ones.
- IV. IV. *Why* a holy Man will and ought to betake himself to this Covenant of Grace in order thereunto under all his Troubles.

I. I. I will briefly open the *Nature* of the Covenant of Grace. I am not now to treat of the Covenant of *Redemption* between the Father and the Son: Nor of the *National Covenant* of the Jews, which some call the Covenant of *Peculiarity*: Nor of the Covenant of Grace it self, meerly *as it stood in David's* time: But as we have it now in the *last* and *best Edition* of it since the coming and Suffering of Christ.

And I shall endeavour to lead you into an easie and clear Understanding of, in the following Propositions.

i. The Covenant of Grace is nothing else but the Gospel, or the Promise of Blessedness by Jesus Christ cast into a Covenant Form. - The truth of this will appear from Three places of Scripture compared

pared together. Says the Apostle, *The Gal. 3. 8.*
Scripture fore-seeing that God would justify the Heathen thro' Faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham. Now what was this Gospel? It was the Promise of Blessedness by Jesus Christ. For so it follows—*preached the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee, i. e. in and thro' the Messiah, who is to descend from thy Loins, shall all Nations be blessed.* Now this which is here called the Gospel, is called the Promise and the Covenant in the seventeenth Verse. *And this I say, that the Covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law which was Four Hundred and Thirty Years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the Promise of none effect.* Add to these but one place more, *Acts 3. 25. Ye are the Children of the Prophets, and of the Covenant which God made with our Fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy Seed shall all the Kindreds of the Earth be blessed.* So that you see the Scripture calls one and the same thing by these three different Names, the Gospel, the Promise, and the Covenant.

And this word *Grace* is wont to be added to it by Divines, who usually call it the *Covenant of Grace*, to shew, that the *Blessings* promised in it on God's part, and the nature of the *Terms* required on Man's part, and *Ability* to perform 'em flow

from the free, rich, undeserved Mercy and Favour of God to wretched, sinful, miserable, undone Creatures. The fixing such *Terms* as are so very reasonable, and so very low, yea and the *Command* to lay hold on the Covenant, and perform the *Terms* of it, and also the adding of *Threatnings* as an Appendix to the Covenant, as well as the Promise of the *Blessings* of it, are signal Instances of Divine Grace. It should make our Hearts to spring and leap within us for joy, that the *Terms* of the Covenant are made *Duties*, and I am *commanded* to perform them, that I may not miss of the Blessings of it: So that to believe on our Lord Jesus Christ is not *Presumption* but *Obedience*; and if I do not do so, I am guilty of Rebellion against God, as well as of murdering my own Soul. And that I may the more effectually be quicken'd to my Duty in order to my safety, the severest *Threatnings* are super-added; because God who understands our untoward Make and Frame, knows, that were it not for the fears of Hell, Heaven would be an empty place. For there the Work does generally begin.

Grace indeed shines and *reigns* throughout the whole of the Covenant. So desirous is God of my Eternal Welfare, that he tries to do me good by all manner of
Me-

Methods. He endeavours to work on my *Ingenuity*, by his love in Christ ; for he propounds to me a Covenant of Reconciliation and Friendship, founded in the Blood of his own dear Son. And he makes use of his Sovereign *Authority*, commanding me to accept of his Covenant, that it may go well with me for ever. He allures me also to do it by the exceeding greatness of his precious *Promises*, especially that great Promise of *Eternal Life*. And to make all sure, he constrains me by the severity of his *Threatenings*, and especially that terrible one of exquisite, universal, *everlasting Misery* ; that so by the Fears of Hell, if nothing else will do, he may compel me to enter into Heaven.

Now all these Motives are the highest and strongest in their several kinds. What greater Argument can be proposed to work upon *Ingenuity*, than what is drawn from his Love in Christ ? There can be no greater *Authority* than that of God, whereby I am straitly required to Repent that I may not perish, and believe on Jesus Christ, that I may be saved. Nothing greater than Heaven can be *Promised* ; nothing more frightful than Hell can be *Threatened*. Here is GRACE, that no Method is left unattempted, that's proper to work upon a reasonable Creature.

For if all these Four greatest Weights together will not move all the Springs of Humane Action within, no Motives can make 'em stir.

2. The Covenant of Grace is of the same General Nature with Human Covenants. This I think will appear from that Passage of the Apostle, where to prove that the Covenant of God in Christ made with *Abraham* could not be destroyed by the Law that was given Four Hundred and Thirty Years after, uses this Argument, *viz. That tho' it be but a Man's Covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no Man disannulleth or addeth thereunto.* Now if it so in an Honest Man's Covenant, 'tis much more so in God's. The whole weight of the Apostle's Argument leans upon this Supposition, that the Covenant of Grace is of the same Nature with Humane Covenants; for otherwise there could be no strength in his arguing from the one to the other.

3. A Humane Covenant is a mutual Agreement between two Parties (or more) binding themselves to each other upon certain Terms. Do but consult your own Thoughts about the matter, what do you mean when you speak of a Covenant between your selves and any of your Neighbours, and you will presently see this is what you understand thereby.

There

There are certain *Terms* in a Covenant, which makes a Covenant differ from an *absolute* Promise.

And the Parties, Two (or more) do mutually bind themselves to each other; which makes the difference between a *Promise* and a Covenant. For a Promise may bind but one Party only; whither it be Absolute or Conditional. Now hence it follows.

4. And Lastly, That the Covenant of Grace is a mutual Agreement between God thro' Christ on the one hand, and fallen Man on the other, wherein they mutually Engage themselves to each other upon certain Terms. God engages in and thro' Christ to bless us; and we by the help of his Grace, engage our selves to obey him, that so we may be blessed by him. He thro' the Mediator, promises to be our God, and we consent to be his People. He promises Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal Blessings to us upon supposition of our Faith, Repentance and Perseverence, which by his Spirit he enables us to perform. And we engage to Believe, Repent, and Persevere by the help of his Spirit, as ever we hope to obtain those Blessings.

I shall have occasion hereafter to treat of these particular Blessings, and of the Terms or Condition. All that I shall

now further add upon this Head, shall be with respect to the Federating Parties, which I have said to be *God* in and thro' *Christ* on the one hand, and *fallen Man* on the other.

Gal. 3.
26.

There has been a debate among Divines, whither the Covenant of Grace were made with *Christ*: Which hath been occasion'd by that Passage of the Apostle, *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the Promises made: He saith not, And to Seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ.* Now this some understand of *Christ Mystical*, i. e. the Church. or Believers: Others, of *Christ Personal*: And others of *Both*. Not to trouble you with the Arguments on one side or t'other; a little Light will end those Debates which Heat has kindled. A good distinction will often do more than many Arguments to decide a Controversie. To state this Point clearly is to end it. Which therefore I shall attempt in these Three following Particulars.

(1) 'Tis plain, that the Covenant of Grace is not made with our Lord Jesus Christ *exclusively* of all Mankind. In the very Scripture now before us, the Apostle saith, the Promise was made to *Abraham* himself as well as to his Seed, whoever be meant by that Seed of his. And says *David* in my Text, *He hath made with ME an everlasting Covenant.* (2) That

(2) That the Covenant of Grace was made *with Christ* in some Sense is true, provided it be rightly understood. *i. e.* He must be consider'd, not in a private, but in his publick Capacity ; as the Lord Redeemer ; as the second *Adam* ; as the Head of the Elect ; and in and through him the Covenant is made with them as his Seed. The meaning of which is but this, *viz.* That God engaged to Christ, that we should be blessed by him here, and hereafter, provided that we did perform the Duties and Terms of Repentance, Faith and Perseverence in a course of holy Obedience, which by his special Grace he will enable his People to do, that so he may have a Generation to serve him here, and be saved by him hereafter, and his Soul be satisfied therein, that he has not run in vain, nor labour'd in vain. So that in all things Christ has (as 'tis fit he should have) the *Pre-eminence* ; we claiming all by and under him, by vertue of our Union or Relation to him. Which I take to be by vertue of the Covenant of Redemption, and to be one of the Articles of it : So that the Covenant of *Grace* grows out of the Covenant of *Redemption*, as a Branch from the Body of a Tree ; or is built upon it as its Basis or Foundation.

(3) If

(3.) If by the Persons with whom the Covenant is made, be meant they who are bound personally to perform the Duties, and who are to enjoy the Blessings of it, the Covenant is made with *fallen Man only*, and not with our Lord Jesus Christ. For 'tis we that are bound to Believe and Repent; Christ does not Believe or Repent for us. 'Tis we that are pardon'd and not Christ; we that are saved from Hell and eternal Ruin, which he never deserved, nor was in danger of. And if we do not Repent and Believe, we are the persons that shall neither be pardon'd here nor saved hereafter. Christ had no sins to be forgiven; and when ours were imputed to him, he was not spared, but made full satisfaction, nothing being remitted to him. The Command and the Motives are address'd to us: We are required to lay hold on the Covenant, and consent to it, or else we shall perish. For tho' God hath sworn as he lives, he desires not the death of a Sinner, yet he is not so fond of our living, as to abolish the Constitution which he has so wisely settled in his holy Gospel. We must turn or else we shall dye; we must repent, or else after all we shall perish; and believe, or else we shall be damned. Says *Bildad* to *Job*, *Shall the Earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the Rock be removed out of his place?*

place? Or the wise Counsels of Heaven, that are much more firm and stable than either of 'em, be overturn'd to humour thee in thy Lusts and Follies, and preserve thee from Perdition? The unbelieving Lord said, *That can't be if God should make Windows in Heaven.* Truly God must make new Gates to Heaven before an Impenitent Unbeliever can enter in. For tho' there be *Twelve*, yet they are all lock'd and barr'd against such Men; and a flaming Sword turning every way keeps 'em off, that they shall not be able to come near to gather any of the Fruits which grow on thee Tree of Life, that is planted in the midst of the Paradise of God above.

Having treated briefly of the Nature of the Covenant of Grace, I proceed to discourse,

II. Of the Properties of it. There are three of 'em mention'd in my Text. II.

'Tis an *everlasting* one: God will never abolish or lay it aside to make room for another; and everlasting Mercies are contain'd in the Bowels of it.

'Tis a *sure* one: Provision being made therein, that they who are once Internally and Spiritually within the Bond of it, shall never totally or finally break it, and so miss all the Blessings of it.

And

And then 'tis a Covenant Order'd in all things.

'Tis this last Property only that I intend to insist upon, in the handling whereof the rest will naturally fall in. For therefore among other Reasons, is the Covenant well order'd in all things, because 'tis a sure and an everlasting one.

Now in managing this Point, I will shew,

- I. I. The Meaning of the Word.
- II. II. The Truth of the Thing.

I. As for the meaning of the Word or Phrase, *Order'd in all things*. So is any thing said to be, when all the several Parts of it are so rightly disposed in their respective places, as happily to work together for the attaining the proper End and Design of that matter. This is what we intend, when we say of any Project, that it was order'd in all Points; *viz.* That it was not suddenly, rashly, or foolishly laid or manag'd; but all the several parts of it so wisely adjusted, so well contriv'd and prosecuted, with such a dependance of one Step upon another, that the Man gains his Point. So when we use the same Expression of a Society, or Family, we mean that Superiours and Inferiours are so fixed each of 'em in their proper Posts,

keep

keep their respective Stations, perform their several Offices, that the End of entering into such a Society, which is the Glory of God, and the mutual Benefit of the several Members of it, is happily attained. That also is the meaning of the Expression, when 'tis used concerning the Covenant of Grace. The End and Design of God therein to be sure must be, in the first place, his own *Glory*; next to that, the *Honour of Christ*; and then the securing the *Duty, Comfort, and Happiness* of Man. Now if all Points relating to the Covenant are so disposed in their respective places as most naturally tends to secure these great *Ends*, then may it be truly said of this Covenant, that 'tis *well Order'd in all things*. Now this is what in the

II. Place I undertake to prove. In II.
order whereunto I must take these Three
Things into Consideration.

I. The Mediator and Surety of the I.
Covenant.

II. The Blessings promised in it. II.

III. The Terms required by it. III.

And under these two last Heads, I shall be obliged to speak of the Threatnings annexed as an Appendix to the Covenant.

venant. For 'tis very idle to talk of Promises and Terms, if Men may enjoy the former without performing the latter. Yea the Covenant of Grace being enjoined by him who is our Sovereign Lord, as well as our compassionate Friend, and we being commanded as well as invited to accept of it; it being his Law of Grace as well as his Covenant of Grace; 'tis Sin and Rebellion, as well as Folly and Madnes, not to lay hold of it. Wherefore thereby we not only lose all the Blessings therein proposed, but expose ourselves to further Vengeance for our Ingratitude and Disobedience.

Now if I prove, that as to *all* these fore-mention'd Points, matters are so contrived in a most natural tendency to attain the aforesaid great and glorious Ends, then I shall have proved, that the Covenant is wisely and well order'd in all things.

I begin with,

- I. I. The *Mediator* and Surety of the Covenant; who is our Lord Jesus Christ, God and Man. Now it was necessary that there should be one, and such a one in all respects as he was, as will appear by these Four following Considerations.

I.

I. We

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|------|
| I. We are Sinful, | } Creatures. | I. |
| II. Foolish and Rebellious, | | II. |
| III. Suspicious, | | III. |
| IV. Treacherous & Deceitful | | IV. |

I. We are *Sinful* Creatures. Now tho' the infinite distance between Him and Us does not hinder an immediate Covenanting between God and Innocent Man; yet Holiness on his side, and Guilt on ours, does hinder it between him and fallen Man. 'Tis not becoming the Honour of God, to treat with apostate Creatures in their own Names in a way of Mercy and Grace. Nor can they with any assurance and confidence think of treating with him. We can have no other Views of God consider'd absolutely in himself, than that of *Moses*, who saw him under the Emblem of a *burning Bush*, full of flaming Thorns to wound and consume us both together. The very thoughts, much more the glorious display of his Majesty, Holiness and Justice, would shake all our Powers, striking terrour and confusion into the Center, and throughout every corner of our Souls. Hence the very sight of God, or of any thing that did but resemble his Glory, hath made Men conclude they should immediately dye; and the very remembrance of
 God

God has made the Spirits of convinced Sinners to fail within 'em.

II. II. We are *Foolish* and *Rebellious* Creatures. We are naturally unwilling to enter into a Covenant of Reconciliation and Friendship with God, tho' it be not more our Duty than 'tis our Interest. We are called Reasonable Creatures indeed, but act as tho' we were wholly void of Understanding; for we chuse to prosecute the War with Heaven, which must be ruinous in the Issue where the Hostility is continued between two Parties so very unequal, as the Almighty Being and a sorry Worm. Yet thus it lasts, till by revealing a Day of Power in our Hearts, we become a conquer'd People; for before that we will not submit nor accept of any, tho' the most reasonable and advantageous Terms.

III. III. We are *Suspicious* Creatures too. This Consideration answers the Objection made by the *Socinians*, as well as some others, *viz.* that Christ could not be a Surety for God to Us, because Sureties are required only where there is want of Fidelity or Ability, which can have no place in God. They might as well argue against God's *Oath*, saying his meer Word is sufficient. For an Oath is required only

only to assure us of their truth of which there may be some reasonable doubt, which can have no place in God. For his Word is unquestionably true, firmer than the Pillars of Heaven, or the Foundations of the Earth; for the one shall be broken down, and the other shall be pluck'd up, but not so much as one Word, one Syllable, one Jott of the Word of God shall ever drop to the ground. But yet to his Word, God hath super-added his *Oath* that we might have the *more abundant consolation*: For we are *Guilty* Creatures; and *Guilt* is a terrible thing; it makes us very jealous. For the same reason we have a *Surety*. A drowsie Sinner will not believe the Threatnings; and an awaken'd Soul is apt to doubt of the Promises of God. Wherefore in condescension to our Infirmities, God has given us full measure of assurance pressed down and running over: not because He is Weak or Unfaithful; but because we are apt to stagger through unbelief.

IV. We are *weak, treacherous* and *deceitful* Creatures. Uncertain as Weather, fickle as the Wind, *unstable as the Water*. Our Bodies do not oftner change Postures, than our Souls do. It was therefore necessary that there should be a surety

to undertake for us, that through supplies of Grace and Strength vouchsafed from him, we shall abide faithful in the Covenant to the end.

This was so much the more necessary, because Man in Innocence, though he had sufficient Power to have stood, and had no dead weight within to carry him down, no vicious Inclinations nor rebellious Affections to seduce him, yet he brake the first Covenant through want of such Provision. Now it had not been agreeable to the Wisdom of God, nor would it have answer'd his holy Ends, if he had entered into a New Covenant, design'd on purpose to relieve Man who had made himself miserable by the breach of the Old one, had not this Door been secured at which the Enemy and the Destroyer had formerly broken in. When a Man who had a large Stock to set up, proves a Bankrupt, you don't need others to call you Fools, you will call your selves so fast enough, if afterwards you should lend him Money without good security, especially while many of his old Debts still hang about him. If Man in the greatness and fullness of his strength did not secure himself, how could it be thought he should do it in that weak, maimed and
mife-

miserably imperfect State, higher than which the best of Men do not arrive unto in this World.

Now upon all these four Accounts, because we are guilty, foolish and rebellious, suspicious, weak and treacherous Creatures, it was necessary there should be a Mediator and Surety for God's Honour, and for the securing our Duty, Peace and Happiness, and by the effectual securing of these, provide for his own Honour too : All which has been done by appointing Jesus Christ to be the Mediator and Surety of this Covenant.

For whereas we are *guilty* Creatures, the Covenant of Grace is founded on the Bloud of one who was God and Man, who by his Death hath satisfied Divine Justice, and born the Curse of the broken Law, and thereby effectually purchased saving Blessings for us ; and by his powerful Intercession, prevails with the Father actually to bestow them upon us, without which he would never have cast a favourable Eye toward us, nor have open'd the hand of his Mercy to us, notwithstanding the Infinite Benignity of his Nature, the Love which as our Creatour, he bears to the work of his own hands, and the respect he hath to Souls as the Father of Spirits. Next

to the dreadful Sentence of never extending any Mercy at all to us ; that not so much as one drop of his Heavenly Dew should ever fall upon us ; next to that I say, this is the most effectual Method he could have taken to convince us how very deeply he resents the sins of Men, that he will not be gracious to 'em but upon the Interposition of the highest Favourite in Earth or Heaven it self : yea not to his meer Importunity ; Prayers and Tears alone could not prevail for us, but a most Shameful Painful and Accursed Death must be undergone by Him in our room and stead ; and Divine Blessings come swimming down to us in the streams of his Bloud. What could God have done more to fill us with a deep sense of his amazing Greatness, unspotted Holiness, and flaming Justice ? What more apt method could he have taken to strike an awe of himself into the Breasts of Men, that they no more offend for the *future*, as well as fill 'em with hopes of pardoning their *former* follies. There's a Majesty in his Countenance, even while he smiles, and a dread in his looks, even while he sits upon a Throne of Grace.

And

And whereas we are *Foolish, Rebellious* and *Suspicious* Creatures, what could God have done more to melt down our Spirits, overcome our Obstinacy, and scatter our unbelieving Doubts and Fears, than appointing Christ to be the Mediator and Surety of the Covenant, who is God-man; who is endued with infinite Knowledge and Power: whose flaming Eye doth see every fainting Spirit, and whose almighty Hand can bind up every bleeding Soul: whose Grace can as easily triumph over the most obstinate Sinner, as Light does over blackness of Darknes: who knows all the ways of Address to a Soul, and can turn all the Wheels within in a gentle and easie as well as powerful manner. Who has the compassion of a *Man*, (and such a one too who knows by Experience what Misery means more than any one ever did) and the Mercies of *God* as well as the Bowels of a Man united together. Who by his own Bloud has ratified and confirmed the Covenant. Who is exalted on purpose to *bestow Repentance and Remission of sins*: To be as a publick Fountain of Grace, *that from his Fulness we might receive and Grace for Grace*, and hath power given him over all *Flesh*; yea, over Earth and Heaven, all Things and Persons, both above and below, the Angels themselves not excepted,

to bestow Pardon and eternal Life on all those who believe on him. One whose delight it is to lift up a perishing Creature from the Pit of Destruction, and bring back a lost Sheep, a strayed Soul to God; for this was part of the Prize for which he ran, one great branch of the *Joy that was set before him*, for the sake whereof he *endured the Cross; despising the shame and torment of it.* If thou *knewest the gift of God*, said he to a Woman who was an infamous Sinner, of a vile and lewd Character, and who refused him a Cup of cold Water; yet if thou *knewest the Gift of God*, said he, *thou wouldst have asked of him*; and upon thy so doing *he would have given thee living Water.*

Hereby a most effectual Course has been taken to raise our Hope and Comfort, and to secure our Obedience too. For excessive Fear brings a Man into the condition of *Lot's Wife*; makes 'em flee from God first, and then transforms them into a Pillar of Salt, that they are not able to move Hand or Foot; and Despair turns Men into Devils, who madly fight and rage against God, because they have no hope.

And whereas we are *Weak, Treacherous,* and *Deceitful* Creatures, what more proper Method could have been taken to prevent a Revolt, than appointing him
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who is every way so able and willing, inviolably to hold us to the Terms of the Covenant required on our part ; one so abundantly qualified for that high Post of Honour and Trust, wherein his Father hath placed him.

Now seeing these things are so, it would be neediefs laboriously to shew, that all this makes exceedingly for the Glory of Christ. This follows of Course. It must needs be a mighty Honour to him, to be the Center of Union between God and Man, Heaven and Earth meeting together in him. For which very reason he is so high and precious in the esteem of God, Angels and Men. And when all, who thro' him have been brought into Covenant with God, and enabled to keep it to the end, shall meet together in one Body, and be by him presented before the Throne of his Father, *He will be admired, and glorified in 'em.* Every one in the Heavenly Choir, from the lowest Saint to the highest of all the Angels, shall sound forth Hallelujahs to him, and his Praises shall be sung by the whole heavenly Host for ever and ever.

To Conclude.

1. Labour rightly to understand the Nature of the Covenant of Grace. 'Tis a Subject fit and worthy to be studied not

only by Divines, but by Private Christians also. 'Tis a weighty Point of common and of the highest Concern; for by vertue of it we claim Eternal Life.

2. Admire the Wisdom and Grace of it. Particularly as to the Mediator and Surety of it, our Lord Jesus Christ. In order thereunto study God, Christ and your selves, and then you will admire it.

3. Labour after an Interest in him, and clear it up to your own Souls. This will bear up your sinking Spirits under the heaviest Calamities. Come what will, if you have a Lot and Portion in him, you can never be miserable; but are in better Circumstances when at the lowest, than the wealthiest Man, or the greatest Monarch upon Earth, tho' he were an Universal one. Under all your sorrows you will have reason to say, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with Spiritual, and therefore will bless us with Temporal and Eternal ones in Heavenly places in Christ, to whom be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever, Amen.*

SERM.

SERMON III.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, altho' he make it not to grow.

THE Point I have made some entrance upon from these Words is this, *viz.*

Such is the Nature and Properties of the Covenant of Grace, that an Interest in it will support a Man under the most afflictive Evils, whither Personal or Family ones.

I have open'd the *Nature* of this Covenant; and waving others, have pitch'd upon this particular *Property* of it, that 'tis wisely and well *order'd in all things*. I have explained the meaning of the Phrase, and begun to prove the Truth, by shewing you that the Covenant of Grace is well order'd.

I. With

(1.) With reference to the Mediator and Surety of it. I now proceed to shew the same,

(2.) As to the *Blessings* of it. Now these do respect either *Us*, or *Ours*, according as the Covenant runs, *I will be a God to thee and to thy Seed*. The latter of these I shall wave in this Treatise, and confine my Discourse wholly to the former, *viz.* The Blessings as promised to *grown* Persons which are of three sorts.

{ Spiritual,
 { Eternal,
 { Temporal.

I begin with the First of these, *viz.* *Spiritual* Blessings; because the main difficulty and the great stress of all lies here. For the comfort of Temporal, and the enjoyment of Eternal Blessings, depend upon our being made partakers of *Spiritual* ones; which are *Special Grace, Justification, Adoption*; and then as the result of these, *Communion with God, Peace of Conscience, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*, which are like a few Blossoms of the Tree of Life, dropt down from the heavenly Paradise, whose fragrant smell is very reviving to a weary drooping Soul. Now I shall endeavour to prove as to all of these, that the Covenant is well order'd, *i. e.*

Feb. 18.4.

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contrived with the greatest aptitude effectually to promote the Glory of God, the Honour of Christ, the Duty, Comfort and Happiness of Men. For the proof of which consider,

I.

I. How Matters stand as to the Promise of the *First special saving Grace*: The promise of a *new Heart*, and a *new Spirit*, *writing the Law in our inward parts*, which is the Seed, Root, or Principle of Repentance and Faith, which two are the initial Terms of the Covenant, upon the performance whereof, we are brought internally and spiritually within the Bond of the Covenant. This being a matter of moment and difficulty, I will open it in the following Particulars.

I. The promise of the first special Grace is not Conditional strictly and properly speaking; but may be called Absolute, provided it be rightly understood. If it were *Conditional, strictly and properly speaking*, the Condition must be, I suppose, the right use of Men's natural Faculties, serious attendance upon the Ordinances, and ready Compliance with the Motions of the Spirit, as well as humble Prayer to God. Whence it would follow, that all these were necessary at *all times* and in *all cases*, for the obtaining of renewing Grace; and that God has tied up himself from ever bestowing it upon any who
neg-

neglect or abuse these. Now this is contrary to Experience. For he has been sometimes *found of them that sought him not*, and met those who were running away from him. St. Paul is an eminent Instance of this, who *Blasphem'd* the Name of Christ, and *compell'd* others so to do, was exceeding *mad* with rage, *breathing* forth Bloud and Slaughter against the Disciples of Christ; and yet we know who turn'd him when he was traveling upon so very wicked a design, He was matter as ill prepared for the illapses of the Spirit, as *Elijah's* Sacrifice for drawing down Fire from Heaven upon it, after it had been drencht in Water over and over. But O the riches of Sovereign Grace! Christ shot this Bird of Prey *Flying*, while he was on the Wing. hastening with the swiftness and cruelty of an Eagle to devour his Followers; and in the twinkling of an Eye brought him down almost dead at his Foot, crying out, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

I do not therefore assert, that the Promise of the first special Grace is *Conditional strictly and properly speaking*. Let it pass for *Absolute*; but then let that be rightly understood. 'Tis not *so Absolute*, as to render needless the use of God's appointed *Means* for obtaining the said Grace. As is most evident from Reason and Scripture.

ture. From *Reason*. Why does God appoint Means? sure not to be neglected, but to be diligently used in order to attain the End. From *Scripture* too. We find in *Ezekiel's* Prophecy, a promise of the first saving Grace as Absolute as any in the whole Book of God. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, &c.* Chap. 36. 26, 27. But is this Promise so Absolute, as to render the use of Means on our part altogether needless for the fulfilling of it? No. The contrary is plainly laid down in the following words, *Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for all this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.* v. 37. And if Prayer be requisite, the use of all other proper Means is so too; for to use the one and neglect the other, is not to pray to God, but to mock and affront him to his Face while we bow the Knee before him.

2. The Members of the visible Church have considerable Helps and Means for obtaining this first special Grace. They have outward and inward ones: *Outward* ones; for they enjoy the Gospel, which in contradistinction from the Jewish Dispensation (tho' that too was a Religion from Heaven) is called the *Ministration of the Spirit*: and they have the advantage of a standing Ministry, and the publick Preaching of God's holy Word.
They

They have also *Inward* Helps : the use of Reason and power of Consideration, which has a mighty force in it when awaken'd by the great Truths of the Scriptures, and stirr'd up by the kindly Motions of the Spirit. They have many an Arrow of Conviction, many a Pang of Fear, many a Beam of Light, many sparkling Desires, flashy Purposes, slight Tastes, and sweet Relishes of the Word of God, and feel the powers of the World to come : So that sometimes they will tremble like a Leaf in a windy day, weep like a Cloud in a rainy Season, melt like Snow before the warm Sun ; and are brought on to the very Borders of the Kingdom of God.

Now these Means and Helps have a *tendency* towards special Grace ; for otherwise they could not be call'd *Helps and Means of Grace* (They are sure, *very odd Helps, and very unaccountable Means, which do not at all lead towards the end*) Otherwise it would be absurd to give Men *Directions* in order to Regeneration ; and these Directions among others, *viz.* That they should consider and shew themselves Men, Pray, Read, attend on the publick Preaching of the Word, and no more rebel against Conscience or the Spirit, &c. which yet are the common Prescriptions given by all sorts of Divines ; and very wholesome ones they be.

Briefly.

Briefly. Every Man under the Gospel hath this *day of Grace*; a day it is with respect to Light and Influence from Heaven. If this be wickedly fin'd away, then they have outlived all possibility of Conversion. It was possible therefore *before* this day of Grace ended, that they might have been converted. Otherwise I know not what Sense to make of those awful Words of our Saviour, where speaking of the righteous Judgment of God upon obstinate Sinners, he saith, *that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time, (i. e. any time after this heavy doom was pronounced upon 'em) they should be converted.* Why, then they might have been so before. When this day is gone, the *things that belong to Men's peace are hid from their Eyes*; therefore *till then* they were not so. Hence it follows.

3. That if those Men who have such Helps and Means, die without saving Grace it is their *own Fault*. A fault I suppose it will be granted to be. (For we are commanded to *make to our selves new Hearts and new Spirits*; and tho' we are not able to do this, yet we are righteously bound to it; and that so much the rather, because we are directed whither to apply our selves, even to one who is able

able and willing to do it for us.) Now if it be a *Fault* to live and dye without renewing Grace, only desiring Men to beware of Blasphemy, I would ask *whose Fault it is but their own?* Says *Moses* to the Israelites, such and such Methodshave
Duet. 29. been tried with you, *and yet the Lord hath*
4. *not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see and ears to hear unto this day.* 'Tis plain from the Context, that these words are brought in, not to roll of the blame on God, but to fix the reproach of it upon themselves; not to excuse, but to aggravate their sin and folly. *The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive to this day.* 'The Lord who is so very gracious, so ready to give, who is so nearly related to you, who are his professed peculiar People, and have his Word and Ordinances set up among you, and who hath tryed so many different Methods to reclaim you; yet *this LORD* has not given such a heart to you to this day: Which is a plain Argument against you that you are a very wicked, stubborn, perverse Generation; or else *such a Lord* as he *would have given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear long e'er this.*

4. No Man knows when these Helps and Means shall be withdrawn; This day of Grace shall end. - God says, *To day if*

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you

you will hear his Voice, harden not your hearts. And he hath not promis'd that he will wait for our Resolutions till to morrow comes. He hath given us no assurance, that if so much as one Sermon be despis'd, or one motion of his Spirit be baffled and quench'd, we shall have a second. We are apt to think, it may be, that if Men knew which would be the *last* Call or Motion that ever they should have, it would have been better; for then doubtless they would yield a ready compliance with it.

And we judge foolishly in this matter. For *extraordinary* Methods must have been taken to have inform'd Men of this. Either it must have been by an audible *Voice* from Heaven, or by *Revelation* to his Prophets, or by prater-natural *Impulses and Suggestions* to the Spirit of every Man in particular. But what reason is there for any of these? That God should take such Methods as are not very proper to be used with Reasonable Creatures? However, that he should go out of his usual Road, act in such extraordinary methods merely for the reclaiming of obstinate Sinners, who will not be won upon by his own stated appointed Means which he hath so wisely settled; and do Miracles every day for the saving perverse Sinners from that ruin they are madly and inflexibly

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bly bent upon. Probably it would do no good if he should. Men are not so forward to believe the Warnings and Threatnings of God, but that if he told e'm this is the *last* Summons ; they would vainly flatter themselves that still they should have more. They would perswade themselves, and one another, that if such a thing were intimated to them by a *Voice* from Heaven, or by an inward *Impulse* on their own Spirits, that this was but a fancied Sound, a black Vapour, a melancholly Fancy ; as now they do with reference to those Fears and Convictions which they have lain under, when once they are past, and return to their Health and jovial Companions. And if *Ministers* in God's Name should tell 'em this, they would say these were only the idle Sayings of a pack of sowl and morafs Wretches, who under a pretence of blowing the Gospel Trumpet, are delighted to fright Men perpetually with false Alarms, and torment 'em by repeating the dismal Dreams of their own crazed Heads, and sickly Imaginations ; as they now say when we lay before them the severe Threatnings of the Word. They would still vainly promise themselves farther Warnings from the boundless Mercy of God as now they do. Christ himself tells us, *Luke 16. 31.* That extraordinary, even miraculous Methods

thods will do no good where the usual ordinary Means of Grace have no success. And as this would answer no *good* End, so it would naturally tend to every *evil* one thro' the Corruption of Human Nature. For Men would then say (what they now do, but then with more Reason) 'tis time enough yet : So much yet we have good : We may safely venture a little longer, for there are yet so many Motions of God's Spirit behind which we shall have, tho' these be quench'd. But God would not have one of the Calls of his Word, Entreaties of his Embassadors, so much as one of the strivings of his Spirit neglected or resisted ; nor is it fit any one of them should. He would not tempt Men to do so by giving them promises of another ; but would quicken us immediately to hearken, by leaving us at an utter uncertainty whither the present, if refused, shall not be the only one, yea the very *First* be also our *Last*. But yet,

5. He is not wont to be very quick, hasty and sharp upon Men. He usually waits long, strives much, deals often with Sinners before he abandons 'em ; and then too he leisurely withdraws, that Men by feeling themselves a dying by little and little, may bethink themselves before it be too late. The motions of the Spirit are like the curling Circles in the Water,

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which

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which by degrees grow weaker and fainter, and 'tis some time ere the wrinkled Face of the Stream becomes even and smooth again. *How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? you have set at naught all my Counsels, and despised all my reproofs.* Which shews that the Holy Ghost had waited on 'em a considerable time, been frequently and very seriously dealing with 'em, but all in vain. Hereupon,

6. 'Tis just and righteous in God to deny these Men his special saving Grace. 'Tis righteous in him to withdraw his *common* Grace, which has been so highly abused by 'em. Now if it be just to take away the smaller, it can't but be so not to vouchsafe 'em that which is vastly greater, *viz. spiritual* Grace.

Every wicked Man's own Conscience preaches this Doctrine to him when he is sober and serious in a more convincing manner than I am able to do. I appeal to my *Brethren*, yea, to my *Fathers* in the *Ministry*, whither ever they met with any one awaken'd Sinner, that on his Death-bed said in a fullen manner, *If God had given me as much Grace as he gave my Neighbour, I had been as good as he, and it was owing to God that I went without it. He would not give it me, and I could not wrest it out of his Hands; and therefore 'tis his fault, and not mine.* I know indeed that

that Men will dispute boldly, and prate saucily, when they have got a few *odd Notions*, and a great deal of *Wine* in their Heads. For when the Vessel is full, the Froth will run over at the Mouth. But on their Death-bed they sing another Song. When the Fire is kindled in their Bosoms, then the Bells ring backwards. How often would God have *gather'd me, but I would not be gather'd? purged me, but I would not be purged? I would none of him. I rejected his offers, slighted his counsels resisted his motions: Ah fool, wretch, mad-man that I was, I wickedly forsook him, and was righteously forsaken by him, and given up to the lusts of my own heart.*

7. 'Tis rich, free, sovereign Mercy, if the first saving Grace be given to some, when 'tis righteously denied to others. All have deserved to go without this heavenly Treasure; for all have sinned against lower and common Grace. If therefore it be denied to some, 'tis an act of Justice; they receive within themselves that black recompence that is meet, due to 'em and deserved by 'em. If it be vouchsafed to others who are as unworthy, or it may be more so, 'tis an act of Grace. But if both these sorts of Men be consider'd *relatively* and *comparatively*, why is it given to this Man, but denied to that? 'Tis an instance of Sovereignty.

Such acts of God as these are like some artificial *Fire-works* which you have sometimes seen upon extraordinary occasions; they have some *Capital Letters* of God's Name, together with a *Crown*; I mean Justice and Mercy, and Royal Sovereignty shining with such a flaming brightness, that he who has Eyes to see can't choose but discern and read 'em. This Man has no reason to murmur or complain, nor that Man to boast and swell. The blood of the one must be on his own Head, but the Crown must not be set on the Head of the other. All Men must say, *'Tis not of him that willet, nor of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy; who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion; and whom he will he hardens;* because they first hardened themselves, made themselves Vessels of Wrath, daily fitting themselves for destruction; which at first advances slowly, but at length comes swiftly upon them.

8. Lastly, If a Man be serious, these Promises of the first Grace give great encouragement for Hope, Prayer and other Endeavours. For they are the promises of God, the rich Streams of whose Bounty flow every where: Promises of the *New Covenant* or the *Gospel*, which is the Ministration and Vehicle of the Spirit:

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Promises made (say some) to *Christ*; or (say others) to *the Catholick Church*; but others more probably think to *both* Christ and his Church as one mystical Body, consisting of Head and Members; declaring God's purpose that Christ shall have a new Generation to serve him, and the Church a fresh supply of living Members from Age to Age. And why may they not be fulfilled upon thee? There's the more hope, if thy Heart does but begin to relent. In other matters Men don't stand upon certain Assurance; but meer probable Hope is the great Engine that turns the World, and is sufficient to make 'em very industrious in their earthly Affairs. There's much more ground for it in thy case, if the Spirit of God breath upon thee, and hath any way inclined thy Soul to look out after spiritual Mercies. Fall down therefore in the dust, and plead with God as a Man, as a reasonable Being, and a Lover of thy self.

“ O thou Father of Mercies, pity thy own
“ Creature, who on his bended Knees,
“ with Eyes and Hands lifted up to Hea-
“ ven, humbly implores thy help, with-
“ out which I must shortly be in Hell;
“ and O how shall I bear that Vengeance
“ of thine for ever, the thoughts whereof
“ I cannot now endure. Thou hast plant-
“ ed a natural Love in all Beings toward
I 4 their

“ their young ones that descended from
 “ ’em, the Ostrick only excepted, which
 “ in thy holy word for that very reason
 7th. 39. “ is branded as a very silly Creature. Now
 14. “ *he that formed the Eye, shall not he see ?*
 “ *He that made the Ear, shall not he hear ?*
 “ Pity, O pity me, for my Soul is thine
 “ own Off-spring; O thou *Father of Spi-*
 “ *rits! Men that are Evil, know how to*
 “ *give good things to their Children.* Deny
 “ not thy holy Spirit to me who am thy
 “ Child by Creation, and desire to be
 “ so by Regeneration and Adoption.
 “ Thou feedest young Lions and Ravens
 “ when they cry to thee; and is not a
 “ Soul worth more than many Millions of
 “ them? Suffer not then my immortal
 “ Soul to be starv’d and famisht that rati-
 “ onally hungers and thirsts after thy
 “ Righteousness. For ’tis the life of that
 “ Soul that I ask at thy Hands. Thou
 “ wast pleased with *Solomon*, when wa-
 “ ving Riches and long Life, he as’d for
 “ civil Wisdom *to go in and out before the*
 “ *People.* Be not angry with me sinful
 “ Dust and Ashes, who cry to thee for
 “ spiritual Understanding, not to rule
 “ others, but to govern my self and obey
 “ thee. O blessed Jesus, thou most com-
 “ passionate lover of Souls, who camest
 “ down from thy Throne of Glory to a
 “ Cross of Infamy and Pain in obedience
 “ to

“ to thy Father’s Command, and in compliance with thy own tender pity to
“ perishing Creatures; assert thine own
“ Right, claim thine own Purchase, set
“ thy Mark upon thine own Goods, dearly
“ bought by thee, but wickedly stolen
“ and violently withheld from thee. A
“ Sinner indeed I am; otherwise I had
“ not needed the help I crave, no more
“ than they that are well and whole do
“ the Physician. What wilt thou do with
“ the Treasures of thy healing Grace, if
“ thou wilt not bestow them upon those
“ that are sick? To what end did it *please*
“ *the Father that all Fulness should dwell*
“ *in thee*, but for the supply of those that
“ are empty? Thou camest *not to call the*
“ *Righteous*, but Sinners to Repentance:
“ Thou wast exalted to bestow Repen-
“ tance on such, that they might not miss
“ of Remission. A great and a vile Sinner
“ indeed I am. But *where Sin has*
“ *abounded, Grace will much more abound.*
“ The more seemingly desperate the Case
“ of the Patient is, the more will the admirable
“ Skill of the Physician, and the excellency
“ of his healing Remedies appear and be magnified.
“ Thy Spirit is wont to press into those
“ Hearts that are shut against it; don’t deny
“ him to one who now begins to open to receive
“ him (which yet he could not have done
“ with-

“ without thee) panting and gasping af-
 “ ter, and longing to draw the Breath of
 “ Life from thee. Thou hast raised these
 “ Desires, and I beseech thee to gratifie
 “ ’em ; for surely thou didst not kindle
 “ this Flame that thy poor returning Crea-
 “ ture might be tormented in it. Thy
 “ Rain falls, and thy Sun shines on the
 “ Wilderness as well as on the fruitful
 “ Field: Let the Dew of thy heavenly
 “ Grace fall down upon a thirsty Land
 “ and a barren Heath, even this wretched
 “ Heart of mine, that Herbs may grow
 “ there meet for thee, and at once give
 “ Grace to me and Glory to thy own
 “ Name, *Amen*, and *Amen*.

Take up words in thy Mouth, and plead
 after some such manner as this. For is
 there not hope ? Try what may be done.
 But then see thou do not contradict thy
 own Prayers, by a sloathful neglect of
 the means of Grace, or further wicked
 Rebellion against the Spirit. And then
 go and learn what these Scriptures mean,

Prov. 2. *If thou criest after Knowledge, and listest*
 3. 4. 5. *up thy Voice for Understanding : If thou*
seekest her as Silver and searchest for her as
hidden Treasures ; then shalt thou under-
stand the fear of the Lord, and find the
knowledge of God : For the Lord giveth

Prov. 1. *Wisdom. Turn ye at my reproof and I*
 23.
 Isa. 55. 3. *will pour out my Spirit upon you. Incline*
your

your Ear and come unto me; hear and your Souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure Mercies of David.

So much for that first Point of the first special Grace.

II. That the Covenant is well order'd with respect to the spiritual Blessings of it will further appear, because therein Provision is made, that the Principle of saving Grace where 'tis once bestowed, shall never totally or finally fail. Not but that Grace in it self is a *loseable* thing. The Heavenly Plant is so weak and feeble, and the Ground is so soft and yeilding, and at best hangs so loosely about its tender Roots, that it would be presently plucked up by an easie Hand, were it not for the Almighty Power of God, where-with 'tis covered and defended. For the Covenant, as my Text tells you, is *everlasting and sure*; God will *never turn away from the doing 'em good*; his *loving kindness he will not utterly take from 'em, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail*: And to prevent a total Rupture on their side, one of the Articles of the Covenant which he has undertaken for is this, that he will *put his fear into them that they shall not depart from him*. And if they do straggle, he will reclaim 'em from the wrong Steps they

II.

*Psal. 89.
30, &c.*

they take, by his merciful and reasonable Chastisements of 'em for their Folly and Wandring.

Nor is this to be evaded by saying, that hereby is meant, not the *Infallibility of the Event*, but only the *Intent and Design of God*, to incline and dispose them to persevere, which after all may be frustrated and take no effect, thro' the perverseness of the voluble Will of Man: as will appear if you do but observe how the Apostle brings in this Promise. For speaking of that Covenant which God had made with *Israel* when he brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*, he says, God *found fault* with it, and therefore makes a new one: And this was the fault he found with it, that those with whom it was made, *continued not* in it, and thereupon, saith he, *I regarded them not*. Now in direct opposition hereunto, God promises to enter into a *new* Covenant with his People, that should be so contrived as not to have that Imperfection in it; but it should be such a one, that the Knot should be tied so fast between him and them, as never to be undone again, but the Relation should always remain.

Heb. 8.
7, 8, 9.

III. This Covenant promiseth initial Repentance and Faith, and assures us of the acceptance and reward of sincere, tho' but

but weak and mean Services. Of which I shall treat hereafter, when I come to discourse of the Terms of the Covenant.

IV. It promises continued and renewed Pardon, and standing Peace with God and Conscience, notwithstanding sins of Infirmity (truly so called, if heartily bewailed and seriously opposed.) These shall no more keep off the light of God's Countenance, than Motes that flye up and down in the Air darken the Heavens, or keep off the Beams of the Sun.

V. Tho' it don't promise standing Comfort to holy Men that commit wilful heinous Sins, yet it promises renewed Pardon of them upon renewal of their Faith and Repentance.

This I will open in both the Branches of it.

I. It don't promise standing Comfort to holy Men that commit wilful heinous Sins. We had need to have a care what we do; for our God will not be mocked.

There's no safe playing with the Thunder of Heaven. A single act of such a Sin may break our Peace, darken our Souls, terrifie our Consciences, and make miserable work within while we live, and when we come to dye too.

But yet,

2. If

2. If a Man has been guilty of such Follies, the Covenant promiseth renewed Pardon upon the renewal of his Repentance and Faith. Tho' he hath forgotten himself, let him remember Christ; For *if any Man sin* we have him as *our Advocate with the Father*; and *if we confess* and forsake our Sins, *God is just and faithful to forgive 'em*. Such a Man's Condition, so humbling himself, will be safe, tho' it may be very uncomfortable for a long time: And therefore God usually makes it uncomfortable, that it may be safe. For the Hidings of God's Face, Frowns of Providence, and Stings of Conscience are the usual Methods to recover such a Man, and constrain him to renew his Faith and Repentance, that they may not fail, and so his Soul may not be lost for ever: As Thunder clears the Air of those malignant Vapours which otherwise would be the cause of many mortal Diseases. And this Consideration alone is sufficient to wipe off that Asperion that is wont to be cast on the Doctrine of *Perseverance*, viz. That it opens a wide Gap to loose and careless walking. We must not take Truths in their *single Aspect*, but in their *Connection*. The Hand of a Man chopt off is a very unpleasing, frightful sight, tho' it looks very amiable as united to the Body. There is the *Grace*, but then there

there is the *Rod* of the Covenant too. God promises Perseverance; but withal he severely threatens wilful Declinings, which will cause very sharp Pains, tho' care will be taken they shall not *de facto*, issue in Death. He will not utterly take away his loving kindness, but the Sense of it he will; such Iniquities will he visit with a *Rod*, and such Transgressions with a *Stripe*. He will do the latter, because he will not, and that he may not do the former.

VI. Lastly, The Covenant does promise conditional Grace, to preserve us from *such* Sins, and inward Peace (ordinarily) if we thereby keep our selves from 'em. My meaning is, that there are many Duties required at our Hands, *viz.* That we Watch and Pray, stand upon our Guard, and not run our selves into Temptation, that we stir up the Grace of God, and walk in the Spirit, that we trust in God and carry it humbly, &c. Which if we do, he will give more Grace, and keep us from those vile Sins, that waste our Consciences and break the peace of our Souls: The further Supplies of the Spirit in order thereunto being given forth as a gracious Reward, when we do these things; and with-held as a just Punishment when we neglect 'em. Daily experience testi-

VI.

Owen on
130 Psal.

testifies the truth of this. Do but ask the People of God when they have been overtaken with such Faults, how did this come about? Says one, I neglected Morning Prayer; I went out Fasting, whereupon the ill Scents affected my Head, and so I stagger'd and fell. Another will tell you, It was with me as with *Hezekiah*, when his Heart was lifted up; wherefore *God left him to himself*, whereupon the *swelling of his Mind* was much more mischievous to him than that of his Body; and he carried it as tho', like his own Sign which he chose, he had been driven back (in Grace) as many Degrees as the Sun upon the Dial of *Abaz*. A third will acknowledge, I ran my self into Temptation, and so my Foot was caught in the Snare. I ventur'd near the Fire where I had nothing to do, not hearkening to the Warning that was given, and so on a sudden I was blown up in the Air.

In a word, *absolute freedom* from all Sin is not promis'd in this World: That's like an *high Hill* on the Right Hand, the top whereof a Saint cannot reach; 'tis far above him, tho' he look wishly towards it. *Total Apostacy* is provided against. That's a *steep Rock* on the Left Hand, down which he shall never fall. But then between these too, there's many a pleasant Path on this side, and many a dangerous

gerous miry Hole on that; and we many times wander from the one, and tumble into the other, to the loss of our Innocence and Peace; and the Grace of God don't keep us, because we don't *keep our selves*, but neglect those Duties which are the Means and Conditions of receiving that Grace of his in order thereunto. Whereas were we not Faulty, we should enjoy liberal Supplies of it, and then for Holiness and Comfort, we should be like a Field that the Lord hath blessed, strongly fenc'd in from devouring Beasts, and flourishing under the clear Beams and the refreshing Dews of Heaven.

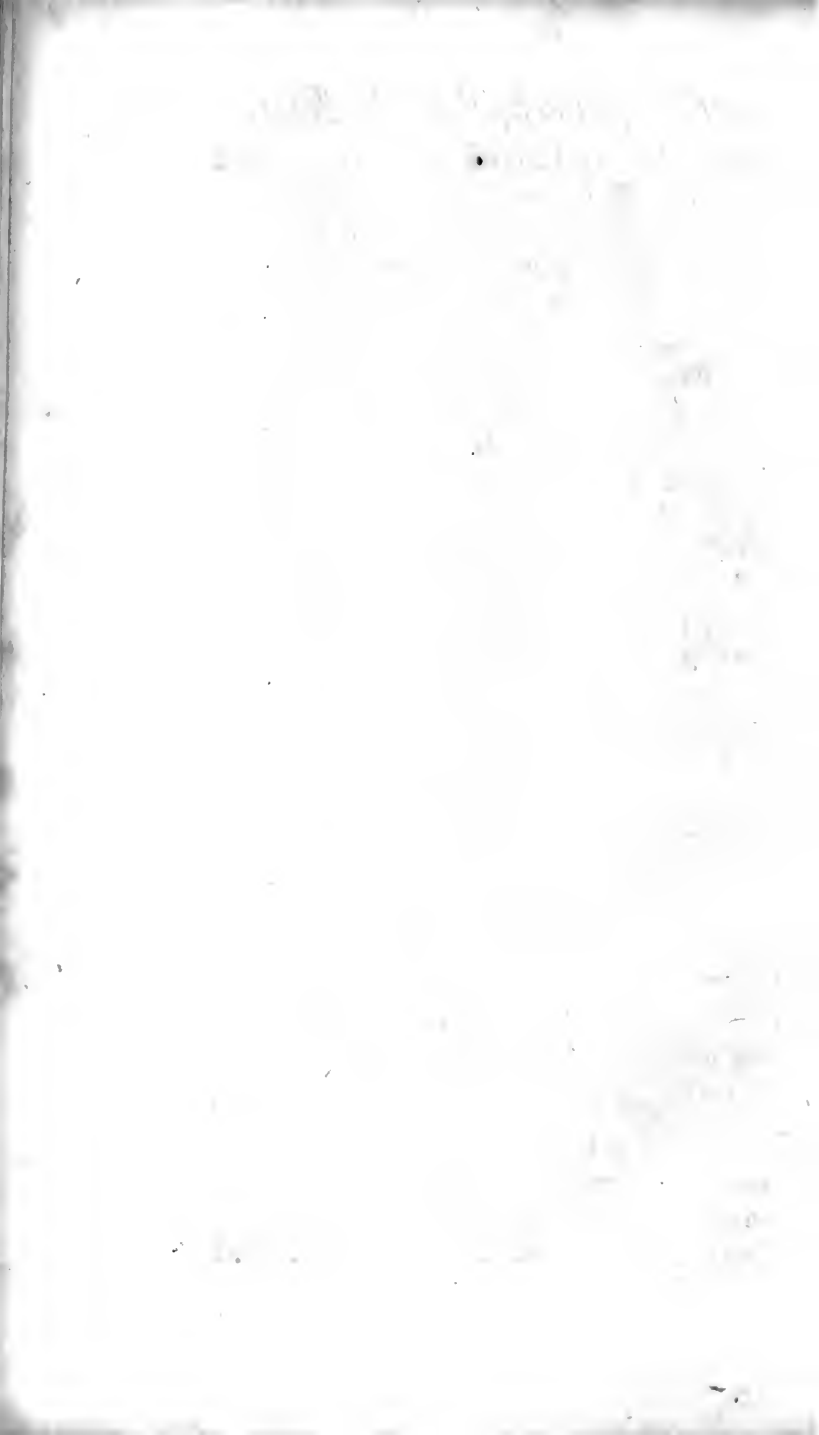
Thus have I shewn you, that the Covenant as to the Spiritual Blessings of it is well *order'd*, because excellent Provision is made therein for the Glory of God, the Duty, Comfort, and Happiness of Man. It will be needless to insist long on the proof of its being well *order'd* in the other respect, *viz.* That therein wise Provision is also made for the *Honour of Christ*. For all that *Grace* that any of us have from first to last, and all the several *degrees* of it, converting, exciting, strength'ning, preserving, recovering, supporting, chearing, comforting, ordinary or extraordinary, relative or real, is a Beam shot forth from this Sun of Righteousness, a Stream derived from this

Fountain, who purchased it for us, and conveys it to us, *in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell*, as in a common Repository, that so as *by his Poverty* so out of his Treasures *we might be made rich*.

Wherefore 'tis observable, that *St. Paul* no less than seven times at the end of his Epistles, suppressing the name both of the *Father* and of the *Spirit*, wishes the Disciples *Grace from Christ*, mentioning his Name alone. Yea, and *St. John* that great lover of Him, who lay in his Master's Bosom, shews that his Master lay very near his Heart, by closing the Bible with a passage to this purpose. The Canon of the Old Testament was shut up with this Memento, *Remember ye the Law of Moses my Servant*. The Canon of the New Testament is closed up with these words, *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all Amen*. We often forget the beginning of a Book by that time we come to the end of it; but the *last* words that Men read, stick by 'em. *The Grace of our Lord Jesus be with you*, are the very *last* words of the Bible, that whatever we forget, we may be sure to remember this, how deeply we are indebted to him for all the Grace we either have or hope for.

The Use of all is, to admire the *Wisdom* as well as the Grace of the Covenant, to labour

labour after an Interest in it, and betake our selves to it under all our Afflictions. When our Spirits are ready to sink at the thoughts of those losses we have sustained, let us endeavour to raise 'em up again with such Thoughts as these, what tho' God has deprived me of my nearest Relations, and buried my dearest earthly Treasure under Ground, so that I shall see it no more, however he has given me more durable Riches, even his Grace and Peace. One half of my self is dropt into the Grave, and the other, by the weight of Diseases, as well as Inclination, is ready to fall after its dear Companion. But there is one Relation, *viz.* That between God in Christ and my Soul, that can never be broken off. Death it self that is too hard for all others, shall never break these Bands of Union. Tho' they fail me, when Breath failed them, tho' they leave me when God calls them away, yet *He* will never fail nor forsake. Wherefore *rejoice* O my Soul, *in the Lord, and again I say rejoice* in him who is *continually with thee, who will guide thee by his Counsels, and afterwards receive thee to Glory.* Amen, and Amen.



SERMON IV.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, altho' he make it not to grow.

HAVING shewn you from these Words, that the Covenant of Grace is wisely and well *order'd* with reference to the *Mediator* and *Surety* of it; and the *Spiritual* Blessings contained in it: I now proceed to show the same as to the *Eternal* ones in Heaven promised in it, and which God has prepared for his People in Heaven.

Now that as to *These* the Covenant is wisely and well *Ordered, i.e.* 'Tis so contrived as most effectually to attain the great Ends of that Covenant, *viz.* The securing and displaying the Glory of God, the Honour of Christ, and promoting the Duty, Comfort, and Happiness of Men,

will appear, if the four following Particulars be duly weigh'd.

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| I. | } | I. The Greatness of that Eternal Happiness. |
| II. | | II. The clearness and certainty of the Revelation and Promise of it. |
| III. | | III. The Method and Order of God in bestowing it. |
| IV. | | IV. The different Measures and Degrees of it. |

I. I. The greatness of that Eternal Bliss which God has provided for his People in Heaven. That it should be a very extraordinary one, will appear to be absolutely necessary, if we consider either

{ God
or
Them.

I. If we consider GOD. Seeing he hath stooped so low as to enter into Covenant with them, their Means is not so much to be ey'd (if it were, he must never have entred into Covenant with 'em ; or if he did, they could not rationally expect to receive any thing at all from him, they being *less than the least of all his Mercies*) But God's own Infinite Majesty, Greatness, and Goodness must be

be consider'd. He must act towards 'em like Himself; give them somewhat that is worthy of so mighty, so gracious, so glorious a Monarch as he is, and *make* 'em great by his Favours, seeing he does not *find* 'em so. Indeed the very Title he has assumed to himself, of being called *their God*, does naturally raise their Spirits and Hopes. He is the *God* of all in a *natural way*, as to Dominion and Sovereignty. But when 'tis said of any particular Body of Men by way of distinction from the rest of Mankind, that the Most High is *their God*, theirs in a *Federal way*, by vertue of a Covenant of Grace, this implies, that they have a special Propriety and Interest in him; whence it follows, that he has a transcendent love for them. For as the Apostle speaks, *Having no* Heb. 6. 16 *greater a one to swear by, he swears by himself*: So may I say, having no greater a Gift, he gives *Himself* to 'em, to be theirs in a very distinguishing way, which he would never have done, had they not been *accepted thro' his well-beloved*. For unless it be in and thro' his dear Son; for the sake of his meritorious Death and Sacrifice and powerful Intercession, fallen Creatures can have no special comfortable Interest in an infinitely just and holy God, nor can they be the Objects of his peculiar love and favour. But seeing

they are so by the bitter Passion, and powerful Recommendation of one so great, and so dear to the Father as He; hence it follows, that some very great and extraordinary Happiness shall one time or other be bestowed on 'em. For where-ever we have a special Interest in a very mighty one, and he has a special transcendent love for us, and are recommended to him by his most dearly Beloved, and intimate Relation and Friend, we do naturally and rationally conclude, that some time other he will certainly do very considerable things for us. And if God should never do so for his People, it would be a reproach to him to *raise* and then *mock* their Expectations. Now *nothing like* this is done for 'em in this World; 'tis therefore reserved for 'em in the next, where it shall be seen to the full, what an advantage it is to stand in a Covenant-Relation to him, whose Wisdom, Power, Love and Goodness, are Infinite and Eternal, all which are made over to them to be employed for them, and what all these taken in Conjunction can do, shall then and there be done for them. Otherwise the Expression that he is *their God*, would be like a big swelling Word of a great Sound, but no Sense at the bottom. Had they no better things than what they meet with here below,

God's

God's *Covenant* would be like the *Rainbow* (which he once chose to be a *Sign* of it) curiously enamell'd indeed and beautified with variety of imaginary Colours, springing from a mixture of Light and Shade, but in reality is no other than a dark and muddy Vapour that pleases the Eye, but then deceives the unwary beholder.

This will further appear, if you consider,

2. The *Covenant-People* of God themselves: Either their state in this World, or the posture of their Souls in reference to another.

(1.) Their state in this World. Most of 'em enjoy but little, and suffer very much in it, and that because of their Relation; yea, on *that account* they many times enjoy less and suffer more than others do, or than they themselves otherwise would. He cuts them short because he is their God, and resolves so to continue. He therefore keeps 'em low, lest earthly Prosperity should make 'em careless in their Obedience to him, and weaken their delight in himself who is and will be their Ruler, that so he may be their chiefest Happiness. Wicked Men persecute and use 'em very hardly, because they belong and resolve to prove loyal and steadfast to him. They are true Sterling, and
bear

bear his *Image* and *Superscription* upon them; and therefore they are miserably *clipt*, and sometimes *melted down*: whereas were they *Brass* or *Reprobate Silver*, they would not be so served. They are daily wrestling with strong *Corruptions* and violent *Temptations*; groaning because of the *Imperfection* of their *Graces* and *Duties*: are never quite out of all danger, and sometimes under sharp fears of falling into scandalous sin. The sight of other Men's *Miscarriages*, (especially if they are their near *Relations*) opens the springs of *Sorrow*, so that *Rivers of Tears run down their Eyes*. And they are often very uneasy in their own *Minds*, because they are in the dark as to their *Interest* in God. All this would be no more matter of *disquiet* to them, than 'tis to others, were it not for the good *Principle* within, suitable to the relation wherein they stand to him. If therefore there were no *Heaven*, the *People of God* would be *Miserable* on *His* Account.

(2.) Consider the *Posture* of their *Souls*, with reference to *Heaven*.

1. This is the main *Motive* that allures them to lay hold on *God's Covenant*. 'Tis this that gives a value to all the other *Blessings* of the *Covenant*, whither *Temporal* or *Spiritual*; that they are *Streams* that issue in *Heaven* at last:

last : were it not so, the other Blessings would make 'em *more miserable* : Of which more hereafter.

2. Nothing but such an extraordinary Future Happiness, such as that of Heaven is, could keep 'em from breaking Covenant with God. The Persecutions and Troubles of the World on one hand ; and the Pleasures and Delights of it on the other, are two mighty Engines, which Satan, a very subtil Adversary, imployes to draw away their Hearts from God and his Service ; And these things are present, and strike strongly upon our Senses.

Now Holy Men do not persist in their Fidelity, from a blind Necessity or a brutish Instinct, or from Sullenness and Obstinacy, Will and Humour. But from Divinely rational Grounds, they being governed according to their Make and Frame, by right Reason in subserviency to the Influences of the Divine Spirit. The odiousness of Sin in its own nature, and the native Beauty of Holiness, tho' they are of use, yet like slender Cords, would be presently broken by the violence of the Storm, and they be driven on the Rocks making Ship-wrack of Faith and a good Conscience, were it not for the sheet Anchor, cast *within the Veil*. They could not in a rational way be kept

kept steady to him, but by the promise of a very extraordinary Happiness, (such as that of Heaven is,) that the exceeding greatness of it may compensate for its being *Future and Invisible*, and vastly out-weigh whatsoever Arguments drawn from present and sensible things may be offered to induce them to break their League with God.

Lastly, Nothing but an extraordinary Happiness hereafter can satisfy their Desires, and prevent their Faintings under all their Labours and Trials. 'Tis this that is the Object of their Thoughts, their Faith, their Hope; which is their great Consolation in every state, more especially in an Afflicted one; what they most earnestly pant after. And the more Afflicted and Holy they are, the more do they long for it. Their Hearts would often fail, but that looking upwards, puts a new Life and Spirit into them. As if therefore they would prevent the *Angels* in their last kind Office which they are appointed to do for them, every day their Souls are carried up to Heaven in Holy longings and Fervent desires. Thither do they flee upon the Wings of Faith, Love and Desire, that so their Souls may be at rest, for which they find no place here below. The Covenant therefore is wisely *ordered*, because so very Glorious

Glorious a Place is provided for all the Saints, without which, the main Atticle of the Covenant had been left out; the largest, by far the Richest Jewel in all the Crown, without which, the other little Gems and sparkling Diamonds, (though now they are Additional Beauties) would have been of little weight or worth.

Remarkable to this purpose is that excellent passage of the Apostle, *But now* Heb. 11. *they desire a better Country, that is an* 16. *Heavenly one; wherefore he is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a City.* 'Tis Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the Apostle speaks of. The most High, saith he, *is not ashamed, i. e.* he looks upon it as matter of Credit and Glory to him to be called *their God*. Now because it might be asked, what should be the ground of this? what sort of Men were they? they had indeed their numerous Flocks and Herds; but herein they were vastly exceeded by the mighty Kings of *Egypt* and *Assyria*, who were Men of great Renown, who had greater *Droves* of Men than these Patriarchs had of Sheep, whose Subjects were as much their Property, whom they work'd, and fleec'd, and kill'd, and did eat up as freely, as they did their smaller number of Cattle. Yea, these Monarchs served

served their Slaves worse than so ; they made them all meer Beasts of Burden, and did at pleasure Eat and Drink their very *Bloud* ; whereas the Patriarchs did not do so by their Beasts. It might have looked Big and sounded Great, for the most High to have been stiled the God of such mighty Emperors as these. But where is the Glory of standing in so near a Relation to such comparatively mean Persons as *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*. Why, saith the Apostle, a most excellent *Spirit* was found in them ; *for they desire a better Country, that is, an Heavenly one* : And a most excellent *Reward* was provided for them, *For he hath prepared a City for them*. 'Tis the same Blessed Place, *viz. Heaven*, that the Apostle means by both those words, a *Country* and a *City*. The Scripture sets it forth to us by diverse Notions and Comparisons drawn from things obvious to our Senses, the great Inlets of Knowledge, the better to help our Understandings in our Conceptions of the Happiness and Glory of it ; and the one of these is added to the other, to prevent our entertaining the least imagination of any defect in the Beauties of it, which we might have been tempted to, if one word alone had been made use of. 'Tis represented as a *Country*, lest if he had called it a *City*

City only, we should think it too straight a place, where we should have been incommoded for want of Room or Air as Men use to be in a great *City*. But then 'tis represented as a *City* too, which signifies not only a *Place* made up of Regular and Stately Buildings, where there's a great deal of excellent Company to suit every Man's *Genius*, plenty of all sorts of Provisions for Necessity and Delight too, where Men dwell together, converse with, know and are in a capacity on all these accounts of helping each other. But the word signifies a *State* too, or *Polity*, where Men are united under an excellent Government, have noble Privileges, and live in great Love and Concord. By this term of a *City* is Heaven set forth, lest if he had called it a *Country* only, we should think it was but as a mean Cottage, or a lonely place where Men live scatteringly from one another, as People in the *Country* do. This was the place which they looked after. They did not Live and Act like the Men of this World, whose *All* lies here below, in this place, which as a certain King is reported to have said of this Island of ours, is but a Shovel-full of Earth cast up in the midst of the Sea. They were not such short-sighted, and of so mean Spirits; they aimed higher, as
high

high as Heaven, and looked much further than Time, even into Eternity. Nor did they please themselves with Golden Dreams and vain Imaginations; for there really was such a Place as they sought after, provided for them.

And 'tis observable, that the middle clause of the verse, *He is not ashamed to be called their God*, is closely connected, both with the first and the last Clause of the Verse too. With the first, by the Illative Particle *Wherefore*; and with the last, by the Causal Particle *For*. *They desire a better Country, that is an Heavenly one; wherefore he is not ashamed to be called their God*. Nor is there any reason on *his own* part no more than on *theirs* that he should; *for he hath prepared for them a City*. Implying, that had it not been thus in *both* these respects, it would have been just matter of shame to him to have stood in so peculiar a relation to them; but now he may with a great deal of Honour to himself be called *their God*.

And if it would have been a Reflection upon him to be so styled, if he had not provided a Heaven for *them*; much more would it be so to him to have been called the God of *other* Holy Men. For *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* were Rich Men, Courted by several Kings for their Allies; and were a sort
of

of petty Princes themselves ; whereas the generality of other holy Men, especially under the Gospel, were Poor when they became the Covenant Friends of God ; or at least were made so, because of their Alliance with him.

II. That the Covenant of Grace is II.
wisely and well *ordered* as to the Eternal Blessings contained in it, will further appear, if we consider the *clearness* and *certainty* of the Revelation and Promise of it. But now this must be understood of the last and best Edition of the Covenant of Grace, which we are now under. For in the former ones, the Saints have had but a glimmering knowledge of it. They seem for some Thousands of Years to have but One promise of Heaven whereon to live ; at least we read of no other, *viz.* That he would be *their God* : whence indeed it may be proved, that there is a future Reward for them ; but then this requires Thought and Labour, and is inferr'd by a long Chain of Inferences and Conclusions from it.

And there was good Reason for such a Conduct. Christ had not then Suffer'd, nor was he Glorified. It was fit that the great Prophet should come with the clearest discoveries, as of our Duty, so of

the great Promise, *viz.* that of Eternal Life; That his Coming might be more earnestly longed for to set this and other Matters of moment in a clearer light, and be the more gladly welcomed when he did Appear. And because it was the promise of Heaven that was to be the great Motive to win over Souls to him; and that in despite of the strong Prejudices of his own Cross, and those bitter Sufferings which in those early Days, were sure to follow all those that followed him; and which more or less will be the Portion of his sincere Disciples in all succeeding Ages; more especially considering, that since his appearing Temporal Blessings are given forth with a more sparing hand than formerly they were under the Old Testament Dispensation.

But we have no reason to complain on any of these accounts, for *Life and Immortality is so brought to light by the Gospel*; 'tis so very often, so very plainly, so very particularly promised, we have such an Assurance of it from the Oath of God, the Death of Christ, whereby the New Covenant is Ratified and Sealed, and by his so well attested Resurrection and Ascension, that there's no room left for Hesitation about it. But this I have

have at large Discours'd of else-where, *Vide Pre-*
and therefore shall add no more: *servative*

Wherefore

against
Deilm.

III. Let us consider the *Method* and *III:*
Order of God in bestowing these *Eternal*
Mercies. Which I shall speak to in these
Four Particulars.

I. 'Tis not (usually) till after some
time of painful Service and Suffering:
There is indeed a considerable difficulty
in this Point; considering that Men are
fundamentally fitted and qualified for the
work and reward of Heaven as soon as
ever they are Born again. While they
are kept out of it, they are subject to
a great variety of sore Afflictions, liable
to abundance of strong Temptations,
daily groan under the dead weight of
Corruption within, tremble at the thoughts
and fears of one day or other falling
by the Hand of *Saul*, to the wounding
the Honour of God and Religion,
breaking the peace of their Consciences,
defiling their Souls, and endangering
their Eternal Salvation. Their Graces
are so imperfect, they are so unlike to
God, that they are ashamed of themselves.
Their Hearts are set upon Heaven, 'tis
their Duty and their Character to long
for it. Their desires after it are some-
times sharpened by their fore-tastes of it

in joyful Communion with God in their Closets and the Publick Assemblies ; whereupon they are ready to clap their Wings and flee away. And they would so much the rather desire to be gone at such a time, because as that Devout Man complained, 'tis *Rara hora, Brevis mora*, their Hearts are like a heavy Bell, 'tis but seldom and with great pains they are raised to so exalted a Pitch ; why then, O why does he not take 'em away in that *bright Minute*, but delay it till they flat and fall again ; and are not so desirous of it ? why does he not draw out their Breath while he is thus kissing them with the kisses of his Mouth, and take them up into his Bosom, when he hath thus Enfolded and Embraced them in the Arms of his Love ? especially considering the endeared Affection that is between them and him ? their *Hope thus deferred makes their heart sick* ; but the granting the desires of mutual Lovers is, *as a Tree of Life*.

But all these difficulties will be removed, and the wise *ordering* of the Covenant in keeping Holy Men on the Earth for a Season, will appear if the following Particulars be considered.

(1.) Hereby the Divine Wisdom, Power, Faithfulness, Goodness and Grace do illustriously appear in the Conduct of Holy Men

Men through this World : In supplying their many daily Wants, strength'ning, upholding, preserving, recovering, and refreshing their weary drooping Souls; carrying them safely thro' a thousand threat'ning Difficulties and Dangers, in spite of all their numerous, potent, subtil and malicious Enemies, who are perpetually hovering about 'em, watching all Advantages to cut 'em in pieces. All which honour God would lose, if in a Moment or two after their Conversion, they were translated into the Seat of the Blessed.

(2.) Hereby there is sufficient time for the trial and exercise of their several Graces. Some of 'em indeed, such as love God and Christ, are never brought to perfection till they reach Heaven. But this Earth is the only place where they can be *proved*. Others of 'em, Such as Faith, Repentance, Patience, Self-denial, weanedness from this World, Courage and Zeal for God, &c. are calculated meerly for the Meridian of this World, and must be acted here, or no where. They shall drop all their *Corruptions*, and shed some of their *Graces* too as they ascend. They shall drop all their *Corruptions*. When these heavenly Plants are taken up out of this to be set in a better Soil, all the Filth and Mould that hangs about their Roots shall be entirely brusht

off. They shall also part with many of their *Graces*. Several of these are like a rich embroider'd Garment, which while a Man is in a cold Climate, do adorn and warm him too ; but must be laid aside when he comes into a warmer Region, because there it would be meer Cumber and Burden to him. So that these holy Principles, this divine Seed, would be sown in their Hearts to no purpose, and God would have no Harvest of Glory from 'em, were his People immediately caught up into Heaven. But this is wisely defer'd for a season upon another account, *viz.*

(3) That the World may be edified, and the Honour and Interest of God in it be promoted by 'em. The World indeed is not worthy of 'em, but it greatly needs 'em. And how sad would it be with this Earth of ours, if holy Men, as soon as ever they were made so, should immediately be hurried out of it. They must tarry for a Season, that they may be a credit to him by the holiness of their Lives, and shew by the brightness of their Example how useful an Institution Christianity is ; that they may espouse his Truth, bear up his Name, plead his Cause, do some good, if not on their Enemies, however among their Friends, Relations and Acquaintance, and especially among their Children and Servants ; that new

Tapers may be lighted at their Lamp before it goes out, lest thereupon it be perfectly dark. And how much does the welfare of the Church and State; the Temporal, Spiritual and Eternal good of many Souls depend on the Life of one good *King*, one excellent *Minister*, one godly *Parent*? How great a weight does Providence sometimes hang on one very slender Thread? All would fall to the Ground if that were broken.

'Tis true indeed, every Man's Life is not of so great Moment; nor is he capable of eminent Service. But there's no Man but what has at least *one* Talent, if he has but a Heart to Trade with and improve it. Every little Fibre is of some use, tho' not of so noble a one, nor is it absolutely necessary as the Vital Parts. Some Letters indeed there are in some Words that are useles, and don't contribute any thing towards the Pronunciation. But no Christian need to be altogether insignificant. The Apostle supposes, that the meanest Servant (and Servants in his time were meer *Slaves*, like the *Blacks* among us) might *adorn the* Coloss. 3^o *doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; 24^o for to them is that Exhortation directed.

And we have the less reason to regret our being continued for a season in a place of Tryal and Service, because till

we were savingly converted (and how long it was before we were so, is best known to God and our own Consciences, and some of us have reason to be thankful that 'tis spread no further; but till then I say) we did not strike *one true stroke*. We did much against God, but nothing for him. His Rule was not seriously minded, nor his Glory aimed at in any thing we did, tho' good for the matter and substance of it. It may be for Years together we have lived in open Rebellion against God, and done a great deal of mischief to our selves and the Souls of others. 'Tis fit we should be continued on the Earth for some Years to groan under the penal Fruits and Effects of our own Follies, the better to heighten our Repentance, to undo as much as in us lies the Evil we have done, to snatch those out of the Fire whom we have cast in, or at least to pluck others out; and by our good Conversation for a long time, effectually to convince them who knew our evil Manners, that we are changed indeed and become other kind of Men, than once we were, which they will not be very forward to believe.

And as for that Plea, Why does not God translate holy Souls while they are in the midst of their joyful Communion
with

with him, and earnestly desirous to be gone : Whereas if he defer it, their Minds will alter. I would ask, must God's Work be broken off in the middle, and he be a sufferer because of his extraordinary kindness to us? Must we be *taken off* from Labour, because we have had great Refreshments? One would think that should rather be an Argument for our being continued than for being dismiss'd from Service, which is so great a help to enable us to hold out the longer in it? His Harvest must stand still, or he be at the expence of a Miracle to raise up another to fill up our room, and stand in the Gap that our Laziness would make, for fear that otherwise we should be out of Humour.

(4) This is so order'd, that God may give Heaven to his People as a Reward. For so it is, according to that of the Apostle, *That ye may receive the Reward* Coloss. 3: *of the Inheritance.* 'Tis indeed the *Gift* 24. of God, and the *Purchase* of Christ; but 'tis withal the *Reward* of our Labour: Not of *Merit* indeed but of *Grace*; and so it necessarily implies a respect to foregoing Services. Now we are too much in haste, if we are not willing to fight and conquer too before we have the Crown, and run the Race before we seize the Prize.

These

These Four Considerations shew the Wisdom of God in the Method and Order of his bestowing eternal Mercies, *viz.* Not till after some time of painful Service and Suffering ; and the Vanity of those Objections that are made against it ; the weakness whereof I shall have occasion to touch further upon in some of the following Particulars.

Therefore,

2. At the most 'tis not long before a Saint shall enter into Heaven. The Patriarchs indeed before the Flood, and quickly after it, waited a great many hundreds of Years. But there were peculiar Reasons for it : That the Earth might be peopled : That Arts and Sciences necessary for the Comfort of Man's Life might be invented and improved : That the Divine Oracles might be handed down from Father to Son by Oral Tradition. For that most excellent of all Humane Inventions (if indeed it were a Humane, and not rather a Divine one, as many learned Men think) the Alphabet I mean, and Writing, were not then found out, or at least were not employed for the conveying down Divine Truths. These Reasons are now ceas'd ; and God not being willing his People should be kept *so long* out of Heaven when there is not so much ground for it, Life is now short-

short'ned. And 'tis observable, that the Years of Man first began to be so about the time of *Moses*, when the Will of God was first committed to Writing; the standard of Humane Life continuing much the same to this day as it was then reduced unto. 'Tis a comfortable Text to a good Man, that *the days of our years are but threescore years and ten*: Or at the utmost stretch, but *fourscore*, and it may be a few *Fractions* (for we must not talk of *whole* Numbers after that time) And it may be for a Reason that I need not mention, some of you are not willing it should be exactly known how much of that time is already run out. I am sure it would make some of us blush to think how much of it must be cut off and thrown away as entirely lost, wherein we did nothing for God. Our *Morning* began in Darknes. How thick that was, and how long it lasted before we awaked out of sleep, is best known to God and our own Consciences; and we have it may be, great reason to be thankful that it is so. Making allowance for that, we may justly say, the *time is short* for the trial of our Faith, Patience, and Long-suffering (which is but Patience drawn out to a little longer Thread) and then all the Glories of an everlasting Heaven are ours.

3. This time of Service and Suffering is to us very uncertain, tho' it be before hand known unto God. Nothing is more uncertain than the Life of Men, tho' they are ever so young and hail. Even those whose Original *make* is so strong as to endure great Hardships, are often carried off by little Accidents and slight Diseases: Like Manna that was so firm as to bear the being pounded in a Mortar, or ground in a Mill, or baked in an Oven; yet melted away before the gentle heat of the rising Sun. And the Divine Wisdom appears in thus contriving the matter, whither he has determin'd to translate us to Heaven while we are young, or in our riper and more advanced Years.

Indeed if we knew before hand, that we should be caught up into Heaven while we are young (which it may be God has decreed) we fancy this would make us very serious, diligent, circumspect in our walk, and mightily weaned from the World, &c. But then if we were so, it would look rather like *Force* than *Inclination*, and would be no very clear Argument of a truly holy temper of Soul. For this is no more than the worst of Men, yea the vilest Malefactors will pretend to with a great deal of seeming seriousness, when their days are numbred, and they know they must die within a
 very

very narrow compass of time. But then it is not much regarded, unless it be by a few who from an Excess of Charity, are willing to hope well of others on very slender grounds. For 'tis not the inward Spring of *Love*, so much as *Fear* that hangs like a dead weight upon their Spirits, which sets 'em a going after this sort. All our contempt of the World, our florid Speeches of Heaven, yea, the whole of our Religion would be thought to be the meer product of our Melancholy Circumstances, and Men would conclude, that were we sure of holding out to extreme Old Age, we should naturally give our selves as great a loose, as the rest of Mankind.

This would put a *stur* upon all that we do ; so it would put a stop to many other Instances of our Duty. Some who reach Heaven betimes, are very serviceable to God and their Generation in Church and State, by Industry in their Callings, Innocent and Chearful Converse with their Relations and Friends, and make a great Improvement in useful Arts and Sciences. But what a check would it be upon their diligence, if they knew before hand, they must just be shewn to the World, and then snatch'd out of it ? Men would then think it decent to throw off the affairs

of Life, dismiss their Earthly Business, apply themselves meerly to Acts of Devotion, and *run* out of the World before God calls them out of it.

On the other hand, did we certainly fore-know, what it may be God has determin'd, that we should live a very long while ; we should be apt to trifle away our precious Hours, and contentedly continue under the guilt of wilful sins, saying within our selves we have time enough before us. We should be very fond of this Earth, full of anxious Thoughts and pale Fears, eager and greedy in our Pursuits after it, as having so many Necessities to provide for, and so many Years to spend in it, and a large Family to provide for ; abundance of Forrage must be gathered for a numerous Army that is to March a great way through a Barren Country. The Temptations of this World would be stronger ; while the Hopes and Fears of the next, being like the Sun in Winter at a great distance, would have but a weak influence upon us.

It may be too sometimes we should be discouraged, to think we have so many Years of hard Labour yet to come ; which would make us *sweat and faint*. For *Thought* and *Fear* will do that as much as the scorching Heat and hard Labour.

bour. 'Tis enough to make a Man uneasie before his time, to have such a gloomy fore-sight of his Affairs as this ;
' I shall live till I am very Old, and
' the World will be weary of me ; my
' Relations will be as sick of me, as
' I of my Disease, and I be a burden
' to them as well as to my self. They'll
' think it long till a puff of wind comes
' to carry away the dry withered Leaf,
' and will be ready to sweep it away
' themselves. I shall out-live my time
' of Service, and be despised in my Old
' Age. In the end of my Life I shall
' be like a *Dial*, which Men resorted to,
' while it was day, and the Sun shone
' upon it ; but though the former Lines
' remain, yet when the Evening comes
' no Man turns aside to it, but passes it
' by as an useles thing, and regards it
' no more than the dry and rotten *Post*
' on which it stands.

In a word, if God had not kept us in the Dark as to the time of our Translation into Heaven, we had lost (what I am sure we cannot well spare) one of the most quick'ning Motives to Holy Diligence ; and one very strong Cordial to support us under all the Fatigues of our present Duty, *viz.* we know not at what Hour our Lord will come, whither at the Sixth, or the Ninth, or the Eleventh,

or till Mid-night, to put an end to our Services and Sorrows.

4. God has fixed this time, and invariably keeps to it. Not so much as a *Hair falls to the ground without our Heavenly Father*; much less can the Head it self on which they all grow.

Providence does in a peculiar manner concern it self about the Death of *Reasonable* Creatures, especially of his own *Children*. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the Death of his Saints. This is a Point on which the Temporal, Spiritual and Eternal well-fare of many others, whole Families, Churches, yea, and Nations sometime do depend. There's an end of all Seasons of Grace, opportunities for Service, their Eternal State is irrevocably fixed and determined, and their degrees of Endless Misery or Happiness, are settled when the last Fatal stroke is given. 'Tis fit that God should appoint the time of that which is attended with Consequences of so great Moment. None besides is fit to do it. No Man would be willing his Times should be in the hand, and at the Mercy of his Implacable *Enemies*. 'Tis well that we our *selves* are not to determine this Affair. For we should often change our Minds within the narrow compass of one Day. For such is our
humour,

humour, that we naturally run from one extreme to another ; either we are apt Immoderately to love Life, or else Peevishly to desire Death : either we grow too regardless of Heaven, or are in too much hast for it : we would always be here, or we must presently be gone. If we were much wiser and better than we are, we should be at a very great loss ; unless in both these we exceeded the Apostle *Paul*, who was in a great strait between Two, *what to choose* says he, *I wot not* ; could not well tell whither he had best to go or stay.

'Tis well 'tis not left to the determination of our *Friends*. For *affectionate* Husbands and *passionate* Wives, *fond* Parents, and now and then a very *loving* Child, O how would they hang and clasp about, and pull down each other, when any of them began to mount, hardly would any one be suffered to go, till all were agreed to depart together, which would scarce be, till all were involved in one very deep and common distress : like *Season Birds* which fly away in Flocks to another Country, each one calling to his Companion ; but then it is not till the near approach of a Cold and Sharp Winter that would equally pinch them all.

But if we could agree, 'tis not fit we should determine this matter. 'Tis a *Royalty* to have the power of Life and Death, which God reserves to himself; 'tis not for Subjects to invade his Prerogative, and with their unhallowed Hands to touch the least Flower of his Imperial Crown. God, as the great King of all the Earth, sends down the *Dead-Warrant* against the Wicked, and appoints the day when the Malefactor shall be Executed: And as a wise Father assigns the time when his Children who are on their Travels for their Improvement in this foreign Country, shall return home. He also appoints the very Method of their Conveyance. Some Sail in a calmer Season, and move so slowly, that you can hardly perceive they stir at all: Others are driven forward with a brisker Wind; which makes the higher and the more rolling Sea indeed, and the Passenger the sicker; but then the Passage is the quicker and shorter for it. Death is like a Moth to some; but comes on others like a Lion, that unexpectedly leaps on the unwary Lamb, and breaks all his Bones in the twinkling of an Eye.

But if we should saucily pretend to invade this Prerogative of God and seize it for our own Use, we have not Knowledge and Wisdom enough to manage it.

For

For God only knows when the Task is finish'd, which he has fitly appointed every Man to do ; when one Star must set that another may rise and shine. When 'tis fittest for *Moses* to withdraw, and make room for *Joshua* to come upon the Stage, that the Honour of serving God may not be engross'd by one, but be shared between 'em both. He only knows when a Soul is come to that Stature which it must arrive at, that it may be big enough to fill up that place, and his Head strong enough to bear that massy Crown of Glory which he has provided for it in the Heavenly Kingdom.

He alone who sees things *unborn*, as they lye in the Womb of their distant Causes, fore-knows the Evil that is to come, and will prove too hard for us to bear : When the rising Storm (the evil of Punishment, or of Trial and Temptation) that's coming upon a Nation, a Church, a Family, or a particular Person, would be so strong as to over-set the Vessel : He alone therefore is fit to give the sailing Orders, and assign the time when it shall be laid up in a safe Harbour. His *Greens* must be early hous'd in a warm place, because they are so tender, that the sharpness of the Weather would nip and kill 'em. But the *Corn* can endure the cold of the Winter, and the heat of the

Summer, Frost and Snow, Wind and Sun ; and it must grow longer in the open Field, before it be fit to be cut down and carried into the Garner.

This one Consideration would answer a great many Cavils and Objections, *viz.* Why are some cut off very young, others in the midst of their days and usefulness? Why are others delayed so long? Here the Ground is cover'd with tender Blossoms, shook off by a violent Blast. There you may see a great Gap made in the Garden by the cutting down of a large spreading Tree, laden with excellent Fruit, 'tis a thousand pities it did not grow that it might bear a great deal longer. But yonders a dry old Trunk that does little more than take up so much room and cumber the Ground. Why are some taken up into Heaven so soon when they can so ill be spared on Earth? Why are others staked down here so long, when they can do so little, that others, as well as they themselves, wish they were gone? Why does not God at least gather those who are overwhelm'd with Sorrows, drooping with Age, full of Grace, Peace, and triumphant Assurance, and bless'd with high Communion with God. Like a Flower fully blown, and fill'd too with Tears of Dew, or wet all over with drops of Rain, freely opening its Leaves, that the dis-

discovery of its Beauty may invite, and bowing its Head, as tho' it silently begg'd some or other with a kind Hand to pluck and carry it away. *Be still and know that he is God*; that all this falls out by the wise Decree of him, who is *a God of Judgment*, who knows the Times and Seasons (which is more than thou dost) and who *worketh all things according to the Counsel of his own Will*. Blessed are all they that wait for him, who live and die to him, who can part with the lives of their dearest Friends and their own when he calls for them, and under such trying Providences manifest a willing subjection to the Father of Lights and Spirits.

5. His time of removing his People to Heaven is the Best. *In due time we shall reap if we faint not*. This follows from the former Particular. There can be no shadow of Reason to doubt of it, if we consider his infinite *Wisdom*, and the tender *Affection* he bears to all his Children. If any of 'em therefore be speedily taken up into Paradise, 'tis because all things consider'd it was best for them. Happy Souls who have so soon entred upon their Eternal Rest, and got out of the Croud of this wretched World! who, as dearly as they loved us, would not on any account whatsoever come down to us again to Watch and Wrestle, Fight and Strive, Sin and Complain, as they themselves

once did, and as we shall further do for a season (wretched Creatures that we are!) till we flye up to that place of Victory which they have happily reached before us.

But if it should be very *late* before we reach 'em, and join that bright Body, 'tis *best for us* that it should be so, and the days of our Purifying be prolong'd. Sure then we shall be tired with so long a Journey, and Rest will be the sweeter to us for our being throughly weary. And if it be not greatly our fault, our Reward will be encreasing all that while. 'Tis true indeed, while the Fruit hangs upon the Tree, it may be sadly tofs'd there; yea wither'd and blasted by a malignant Wind, and be a little putrified by length of time and unseasonable Weather. But we know who hath said, *My Grace is sufficient for thee*. Unless we are highly wanting to our selves, the longer the Fruit is on the Tree, the larger and the fairer will it grow there. Which naturally leads me from this third Point of the *Method* and *Order* of God in bestowing these eternal Mercies, *viz.* 'Tis not (usually) till after some time of painful Obedience, which at the longest can't be very long, but 'tis uncertain to us whither it shall be longer or shorter, tho' it be certainly known to God, who has fixed the time and

and invariably keeps to it, and he having determin'd it, we are sure all things consider'd must be best.

From this wise *Method* of his I say, we are naturally led to the

IV. And last Point, *viz.* The Measures and Degrees wherein God bestows these *Eternal Blessings.* IV.

True indeed, all holy Souls above see the same blessed Objects, God and Christ; but among the same ranks of Beings, one may have a stronger Eye than another. They are all fill'd with Glory; but some Vessels are more capacious than others. They are all in the same Palace, but there may be higher and lower Seats in the same Room. All their Glories are purchased by one Blood, and the Saints are all equally the Children of God: But all a Man's Children may be redeem'd from Slavery by one common Sum; and yet for very good Reasons some may have a double Portion of their Father's Estate, according to their Birth or Behaviour.

As for that Parable of the Labourers receiving each one a Penny; 'tis not to be understood of an *equality of Rewards* in Heaven, but of *external Privileges* here on Earth: Which appears from those Words with which this Parable is brought in and closed up, *viz.* *The last shall be*

first, and the first shall be last ; for many be called, but few are chosen : Whereby 'tis plain our Saviour speaks of such a Privilege, as those who are not chosen of God, but only externally called might be made partakers, which sure can't be meant of Eternal Salvation in Heaven.

Indeed had God settled an equal Proportion of the future Reward for his Servants, whither they did and suffer'd little or much for him, it would have been a very great check to their Zeal and Industry for him ; but he hath wisely order'd it otherwise, for every Man shall Reap according as he Sows, as to quality and quantity too : Which thought is sufficient to raise and quicken Men to the greatest activity and vigour in his Service.

Hereby God has effectually provided, as for the promoting our Diligence, so also for the advancing of his own Glory. For there is so vast an inequality between our best Services, and the more abundant recompence of Reward, that tho' still God does observe some proportion too in the case ; he proceeds not barely according to the standard of Equity, but that too of the most magnificent and royal Bounty at one and the same time.

Having thus proved that the Covenant is well order'd as to the Eternal Blessings of it, because such admirable care is taken therein

therein for securing the Glory of God, the Duty, Comfort and Happiness of Man: I need not use many words to shew, that 'tis well order'd in the other respect also, *viz.* Because herein also wise Provision is made for the Honour of Christ.

For 'tis he that hath *purchased* Heaven for us by his Blood, has clearly *revealed* it to us by his Gospel, is *entred* into it in his own Person, as our Fore-runner to prepare Mansions for us there; who *receives* our departing Spirits, *presents* 'em before the Throne of God with exceeding great joy, and at the last Day will *set* the Crown of eternal Glory on the Heads of all the Saints. And no sooner has he put it on with his Hand, but every one of them pulls it off again with their own, and humbly casteth it at his Foot, saying, *Worthy is the Lamb to receive Blessing, and Glory, and Honour, and Praise, and Thanksgiving,*

To Conclude.

Let us then be often thinking on the Eternal Blessings of the Covenant, and clear up our Interest in 'em to our own Souls; and perswade and help all *ours* to do the like. This will help us to bear all our Calamities, whither Pains with which our Bodies are exercised, or Breaches that God makes on our Families,

Happy

Happy are our godly Friends and Relations who have got the start of such Loiterers as we; who have left us and a sick Bed, and pained Body, and a tottering Tabernacle; and are entred into their everlasting Rest.

The well-grounded Assurance of this which they expressed during their Sickness, and continued so to do notwithstanding Death was visibly making its near approaches to 'em, yea, just as it was laying hold of 'em with its cold Hands, did afford us a great support, which we needed as well as they. The *remembrance* of it will do the same now they are gone; and the thought that we contributed any thing towards it.

Now one of those Cords that tied us down to this Earth is cut, and we have one Help more to the having our Conversation in Heaven, *viz. Some more of our dearest Friends are got into it.* Let us be followers of them who thro' Faith and Patience are possess'd of the Promise, and then we shall overtake them, see them again, and dwell with them, and find their Persons and their Converse unconceivably finer and sweeter, even tho' it was excellent and admirable. All the little Knots which they certainly had, tho' so small that we could not see them, shall be plained; all the little invisible
Wrinkles

Wrinkles shall be smooth'd. Perfect Beauties shall they be in the Judgment of Man, and of God too. They and we shall Embrace, Rejoice, and never part any more. *For I would not have you ignorant Brethren ; nor would I have you carry it Brethren, like them that are Ignorant, concerning them which are asleep in Jesus ; that ye sorrow not even as others that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him : Then shall we and they ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

By the Board of Directors
 of the Company, it is ordered
 that the same be printed
 and distributed to the
 members of the Company
 and to the public.
 In witness whereof, the
 Board of Directors has
 caused this certificate to
 be signed by its President
 and Secretary, and the
 same to be attested by
 its Secretary, and the
 seal of the Company to
 be hereunto set, this
 1st day of January, 1901.
 President
 Secretary

1901
 171

1901

SERMON V.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, altho' he make it not to grow.

TIS this particular Property of the Covenant of Grace which yet lies under Consideration, *viz.* That 'tis a well order'd one *in all things*; *i. e.* That all the Parts of it are so contrived, that they have a natural tendency effectually to promote the great Ends of the Covenant; which are the Glory of God, the Honour of Christ, the Duty, Comfort and Happiness of Man.

I have proved that it is so, as to the *Mediator* and *Surety* of it: And as to the *Spiritual* Blessings contained in it; and the *Eternal* ones promis'd in it.

I proceed to shew the same as to *Temporal* ones. Altho' these are nothing near so considerable as either of the former, yet have they so much Worth and Value in them, that they are by no means to be despised. The Riches of the Covenant of Grace indeed consist in the Spiritual and Eternal Blessings contained in it : As the Riches of the Earth do in the Mines of precious Metals, the Veins of Silver and Gold that are hid in the Bowels of it. But then Temporal Blessings are like those Plants and Flowers, that adorn the Surface of the Ground, and perfume the Air ; both necessary and pleasant, which yield refreshment to the Passenger and nourishment to the Owner. These therefore are taken into the Covenant, and therein promis'd in such a manner, that in respect of them too the Covenant is wisely order'd ; as will appear if we consider the following Particulars.

- I. I. Therein 'tis promised that Necessaries shall Ordinarily be given some way or other.

I say *Ordinarily*. For there are some extraordinary Cases (which happen but seldom) wherein I doubt not but 'tis possible, that a truly pious Man may die for want of necessaries, *ex. gr.* When God visits a very sinful Land with any, but

†

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especially withal those three severe Judgments of his, Plague, War and Famine : In such a case I do not see but that a godly Man may die of Famine, as well as fall by the Sword or Pestilence, or indeed be cut off by a Feaver or any other Disease, especially if thro' the Flight, Imprisonment, or Death of all his Friends he want due Care and necessary Attendance. And I think for any one to say of all that ever were starv'd to death in a long Siege, or a wasting War, or a tedious Voyage, were wicked, to a Man, would be a very wicked and uncharitable Censure : And for us to add our cruel Judgment to God's severe tho' righteous one.

Nor can God herein be justly charg'd with a breach of Covenant. For holy Men are too often guilty of a notorious Neglect and Breach of those Conditions which God has prescribed as requisite on our parts in order to our escaping in such common Calamities. They have many sad personal Failings ; they do not deeply bewail publick Abominations, but do resemble and comply with the evil manners of those with whom they are mix'd : As sound Fruit may have a speck or two by lying next to that which is rotten. Very few of his Children do resemble that second Father of all Mankind, *Noah I mean, who was perfect before God, when*
all

all flesh had corrupted their way : That good Man then was like his own Ark in which he was saved ; the Floods of ungodly Men that encompass him on every side, did not break in upon his Innocence, no more than the surrounding Waters did afterwards on his little Vessel ; but he was an unwearied, an untainted Preacher, and an uncorrupted doer of Righteousness , and so he was delivered.

All therefore which I affirm is, that *ordinarily* Necessaries shall be given ; and that *in some way or other*. If not by a Blessing on our lawful Callings, yet by stirring up the Hearts of others to relieve us. This latter way it may be doth not so well suit our high Spirits. But tho' God satisfy our Hunger, he is not bound to gratify our Pride, and make provision for our Necessities and our Lusts too. Whither our Bread be made of Corn that springs from the Earth, in which we sow'd it ; or whither it dropt down from Heaven : Whither we have it by the Sweat of our Brows, or the charitable Hand of others ; if God send it any way, which he thinks best (tho' we do not) 'tis as much as his Promise obliges him to.

Now



Now *that* a holy Man *ordinarily* shall have. *He hath given meat to them that fear him*, says the Psalmist; Aye, he *hath* done so formerly may another say; but will he do so again? Yes, he will; for it follows, *he will ever be mindful of his Covenant.* Psal. lxxxv:
5.

Well, but a Man may be starv'd with Cold as well as with Hunger. And therefore a holy Man may expect not only Food but Raiment too. See with what variety of Arguments our Saviour presseth us to a steady Belief of this. *Matth. 6.* from the 25th to the end: Where he condemns distrustful Fears upon this Head as the practice of an *Heathen*, who is a stranger to the Covenant of Promises, but very unsuitable to a Child of God, who, if he will rely upon the divine Word, shall have *all these things added to him*. And to overcome our unbelieving Doubts, he urges the Instance of divine Care in feeding the worthless Birds that flye in the Air, and the Lillies that grow in the Field. Tho' we must not expect to be as *gorgeously* arrayed as the one of them, nor be provided for in a course of Laziness *without sowing or reaping, without toiling or spinning*, as both of them are. Which leads to the

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II. Thing,

II. II. Thing, *viz* That as for the Comforts of Life, they are not promis'd absolutely, but upon certain most reasonable Terms. As,

I. Provided we diligently do what may procure, and carefully avoid what may hinder 'em in a *natural way*. There are some Vices and Follies, which by the ordinary course of things, do blast Men's Reputation, wast their Estates, impair their Health, shorten their Days, perplex and confound all their Affairs. Such as Idleness, neglect of their proper Business, want of common Discretion in ordering it and themselves, Luxury, Intemperance, Uncleaness, &c. This is founded *in the nature of things*, and could we suppose there were no God, or no Providence, yet Misery is the necessary result of these Vices, and does as naturally spring from them as sharp Liquor from the pressing of wild Grapes.

Now if a holy Man be guilty of a single Act or two of these sins *after* his saving Conversion to God; much more if he has been guilty of the habitual Practice of 'em *before*; God many times (in a great measure at least) suffers him to languish a great part, if not the whole remainder of his Life. under the bitter Fruits of his own Wickedness.

Yea,

Yea, a holy *Child* may labour under Poverty, and great bodily Distempers as the effect of his *Parents* folly. For if the whole Bottom be rotten, the Threads of Life that are wound off it can never be found in a *natural* way according to God's established order between Causes and Effects.

Now in such cases, tho' upon a Man's sincere Repentance, God may take some of the Weights out of the Scale, lighten the Burden, or allay the Evil, especially by the inward Comforts of Repentance and Pardon; yet he is not wont wholly to remove the Calamity, but still is used to leave some Marks of his Displeasure on the sincere Penitent even to his dying day. Indeed it can't be otherwise unless he should interpose by his own immediate Hand. But 'tis not rationally to be expected, that he should alter the *nature of things*, and do Miracles for our ease in this World, tho' he does do Wonders for our Salvation in the next.

Now in this respect the Covenant is wisely *order'd*. 'Tis an effect of divine Prudence, that the kind Method's of his Grace shall not overturn the wise Constitutions of Nature. For one and the same God is the Author of 'em both, and acts like Himself when he so adjusts very intricate matters, that every Wheel (tho'

some of 'em seem to turn contrary) shall move regularly without clashing or interfering. Did he not suffer his own Children to eat these genuine Fruits of their own Follies, he would encourage them in an evil way, tempt 'em to throw aside the use of their own Thought and Wisdom, Care and Diligence, yea of common and of saving Grace too; and they would not be govern'd either as reasonable Creatures, or as renewed ones. They would quickly expect to have the whole of their Provision and Defence from extraordinary interpositions of a miraculous Providence, without any prudent or virtuous Conduct of themselves. They would be enduced to lie down to sleep, and suffer the Ship to be carried down the natural Current, in hopes God would *create* a Wind on purpose to blow them off from the Rock, when thro' their own Folly they were just a dashing upon it. But this shall not be. God will ordinarily leave even good Men to the proper Consequences of their *own* or their Parents *gross* Sins: Which if he did not do, he would let slip one of the most effectual Means of doing them good. For this is a very powerful Instrument of humbling 'em for what is past, as well as making them wiser for the future, for them every now and then to feel the throbbing Pains
caused

caused by the Thorns still sticking in their Flesh which first ran into it when they madly broke thro' the Hedge, which he had mercifully planted to keep them from wandering.

But we must not only avoid what would pull down Misery on our Heads, and do what may draw down the divine Blessing in a *natural* way : But must also

2. Avoid what has a fatal Influence, and do what may have a kindly one in a *moral* way too, which is another most reasonable term of enjoying the Comforts of this Life. By which I mean, we must lead a Life of close, sincere, universal Obedience to the Commandments of God. He can cause a Rod to grow from the Seeds or Kernels of that forbidden Fruit which we have gathered with unhallowed Hands. He can cause Affliction to spring out of the Dust, as we read he did in the Land of *Egypt*. He hath innumerable Calamities which we dream not of, where-with he can Correct us for our Disobedience. In that case a stormy Wind shall blow from some point of the Compass or other. And if it be a foul Offence, tho' upon a sincere Repentance he will forgive us here, and save us hereafter, yet will he take *Vengeance on our Inventions* : Of which *David* is a known Instance on the death of *Uriah*, he and his Family went

into deep *Mourning*, and a long black train of Afflictions followed him and his Children to his dying day. *The Lord God* will be a *Sun and a Shield*, and no good thing will be *with-hold* ; but then comes in the limitation, *from them that walk uprightly*. In this respect the Covenant is wisely ordered. His Wisdom, his Holiness, his Paternal Justice and his Truth, would be greatly blemisht if he did not by seasonable Rubukes, discountenance his wanton and rebellious Children. They would be harden'd in sin, and then according to the stated Rule of his holy Word, they must eternally perish for it. But that shall never be. *His loving kindness shall not utterly be taken away* ; and that it may not, their earthly Comforts often are so. He breaks the peace of their Lives, because he will not break his own Covenant ; and the dearest of their earthly Comforts fail 'em, because he will not suffer his own *Faithfulness* to do so.

But tho' we be ever so Holy, yet there is another Condition of God's giving or continuuing temporal Mercies, without which none but a mad Man would desire to have 'em, *viz.*

3. Provided, that all things being consider'd that ought to be consider'd, it be best we should have 'em. Now there
are

are several things to be weigh'd, of which we are no competent Judges.

(1) Provided it be best, the case of others being consider'd. Several truly good Men may be desirous of being fixed in the same Post of Service and Advantage. All of 'em can't be gratified at once in their so contrary desires, except the Decrees of Heaven should, like those imaginary Lines which Astronomers draw in it, cross and inter-sect each other. Sometimes all of 'em miss of the desired Happiness. God may see it fit to permit others to step into that place in his just and righteous Judgment, because they are less capable of performing the Duties of it; and he will carry on his holy Ends in his own way. But at other times he puts by good Men and settles others in that place in mercy to the Publick, because they are better fitted for it. Nor is he to be blamed for so doing. Because tho' he is in a peculiar manner the *Father* of good Men, yet he is withal the *Ruler* of the World. Now he must and will act suitably to both those Relations, and not carry it as weak Princes do, who often prefer their Favourites, tho' ever so unfit, to the great prejudice of the Community.

If any might have expected upon the account of Eminent Holiness, to have lived in perpetual Prosperity, the Apostles of Christ in general, and St. *Paul* in particular, might most reasonably have looked for it : But yet what Exercises did he meet with from Enemies and Friends too. They who once were ready to *pull out their own Eyes* for him, were so changed on a sudden, as to be ready to pluck out *his*. What between the one and the other he met with repeated Troubles. See at your leisure, a short Epitomy of the History of his Life, in 2 *Cor.* 11. 25. 26. 27. The greater part of which is written in *Black Letters*. But this was a great proof of his Integrity, and of his full assurance of the Truth of that Gospel which he Preached. Without this, we had wanted one main Prop for our Faith. He sowed in Tears, planted in the sweat of his Brows, and water'd it with his Bloud, and the whole Church of Christ has, and shall reap the blessed Fruit of it to the end of the World.

(2) Provided it make most for our Future, Temporal, especially for our Spiritual and Eternal Advantage. Such a Mercy may be good for the present ; but it may be, should it be given or continued, in a little while it would redoun'd to our greater Prejudice ; in which case
 'tis

'tis true Kindness to deny or remove it.

It may be the doing so is necessary for the prevention of some growing Sin. A wise Physician, to prevent a threat'ning Consumption, will order a Man to cut off his Hair, tho' it hang down in curious lovely Locks, and be neatly turn'd up in wanton Curles; which if the Patient will not submit unto (tho' with a sigh) every one will conclude, that there's nothing *within* the Man's Head answerable to the fair Bush that is hung forth on the out side of it.

It may be the want of temporal Comforts is necessary for the preserving, recovery, manifestation, and growth of the Graces of God in our Souls, or for the securing and encreasing our eternal Happiness. Now these are our main Interests, and our biggest Concerns, and the great things of the Covenant, to which lesser ones must give way. Surely 'tis Wisdom to throw the mean and contemptible Lumber over-board to preserve the Treasure and Lives of the Passengers which otherwise would be lost.

(3.) Provided it make most for God's Glory. This is the highest and the last End of all God's Actions. He has no higher nor no nobler a one to act for. 'Tis but a *God-like* owning of himself to do

do all things for himself. He never did any one action, he never did nor will bestow Spiritual or Eternal Mercies, but consistently with, and in subserviency to his own Honour, He parted with his dear and eternal Son, that his Glory might shine forth in all his Acts of Grace towards us. This which he hath been so tender of in all the great steps of Kindness he hath taken, he will never suffer to be eclips'd and blemisht meerly to gratifie our Humour in such Trifles as Temporal Blessings really are, if laid in the Ballance with Spiritual and Eternal ones.

So much for that second Proposition ; that the Comforts of Life are not promis'd *absolutely*, but upon certain most reasonable Terms ; and what they are I have laid before you,

III. According to these Terms so wisely settled, there is a mixture of Good and Evil, Prosperity and Adversity, mutually succeeding each other in the Life of every holy Man. We are Travellers towards Heaven, and like Men in a long Journey, sometimes we are mounting up the high Hills ; but at other times we are sunk down into the low and miry Vallies. Now the Light shines full in our Faces, and anon the Wind beats fiercely upon them. Now a Storm, quickly after a Calm, and
e'er

ever long the Clouds return again after the Rain. The whole of our time is divided between Summer and Winter, Heat and Cold, Night and Day, Light and Darknefs. Sometimes our days are longer; at other times our Nights are fo. But a constant Revolution there is of Day and Night, of Good and Evil, by the wife appointment of Heaven. The Wisdom of fuch a Conduct will appear, if we confider the following Particulars.

1. This is a proper method to prevent, or at leaft to put an end to the Sins of either ftate of Life. Do but confider the great Mifchiefs that would follow if our Lives were all of *a piece*: If on the one hand we were always fed with Honey, or if on the other, we had nothing but Wormwood and Gall fqueez'd into our Cup.

Suppofe we enjoy'd *uninterrupted Profperity*, as we fain would, this would be our Bane. This is one great occafion of the utter ruin of wicked Men. *They* Pfal. 55. *have no changes, therefore they fear not God.* 15.

Now there are are fo many remainders of Corruption in the Hearts of good Men, that if they were always fed in fat Paftures, they would wax wanton, turn their Backs upon God, and lift up their Heels againft him. Pride, finful Security, luke-warmnefs, forgetfulnefs of God and themfelves, neglect of Prayer, felf-examination,

nation, and other holy Duties, or at least deadness and drowfiness of Soul in 'em, an empty Form of Religion without the Life, Spirit and Power of Godliness, and abundance of other Evils would break in upon 'em. Let but a Christian (says one) be but two or three Years together without any Affliction at all, he is good for little. He can't Pray, nor Hear, nor Meditate, nor Discourse in that holy, serious, heavenly manner as he was wont to do. If the warm Sun shine for several Months together upon God's enclosed Garden, without so much as one shower of Rain, how fast do the Weeds multiply, the Flies swarm, an Army of Locusts and Caterpillars devour its pleasant Fruits, and the choicest Flowers wither, shed their Leaves, droop and hang down their sickly Heads, having in a manner almost lost all their Beauty and Sweetness. Now to prevent, or at least to cure these spiriual Evils, God will not suffer us to enjoy unbroken Prosperity, but sends affliction and trouble.

But then on the other hand, if we should groan under *perpetual Adversity* as much Mischief would be done that way. We should be froward and impatient, murmur and repine, be tempted to unbecoming Thoughts, and apt to flye out into Atheistical Speeches; saying, as our Betters have done, *I am plagued every day,*
and

and chastened every Morning, verily, I Psal. 73.
have cleansed my heart and hands in vain. 13.

We have much ado to avoid this now, tho' our Trials be short, for a Moment or two. How much more would it be so, if the whole thread of our Lives were full of Knots closely touching one another. Were we always on the Rack, and continually chasten'd with sore Pains on our Beds, how could we *walk about doing good*? Then the Correction of our Faults would prove an utter Obstruction to our Duty. But our wise heavenly Father will *not always chide, neither will he retain his anger for ever*, lest he utterly discourages, and quite break our Spirits. *He remembers our frame whereof we are made, that we are but dust*, and should be scatter'd like it, if a stiff Gale of Wind did always blow upon us. He considers *our flesh is not like brass or iron, and our strength is not like the strength of stones*; and yet if it were, a Stone is worn away with continual dropping.

Were we never in the Fire, our Dross would not be consumed; and should we always lye there our Silver and Gold would be wasted: Were we never moved, we should be intollerably lifted up with Pride; and were we never delivered, we should be unmeasurably cast down with Sorrow. God wisely orders a mixture and succession of Good and
Evil,

Evil, that when we enjoy the one, we might not weep and rave like Men who are without hope ; and when we feel the other, we might not rejoice and roar like Men that are without fear.

2. Hereby God takes a prudent Method for the Trial, Exercise, and Improvement of his people's Graces. In the fore-going Discourse I have shewed you, that holy Men are continued on Earth to this End, otherwise they had been wrought in 'em in vain ; to be sure they cannot grow and prosper without the exercise of them. But tho' they should live ever so long, they could not be tryed or improved, for they could not be exercised without this mixture and succession of Good and Evil. There could be no room for many of them, and not room enough for any of them to appear in their Beauty and Glory.

Let us consider how it would be if it were always a time of prosperity with the People of God, and they were never exercised with any Calamity. Where then would be the Proof and Glory of their Faith and Hope, Patience, Resignation and Submision to the Will of God ? What use is their of Patience, when we have no Burthen to bear ? 'Tis an easie thing to make a florid Speech about Submision to the Will of God while we sit

warm

warm and undisturb'd in our own Nests ; but when we are driven away like a Bird, and forced to wander like a Partridge on the Mountains, we shall find it a very hard matter to put in practice our own Doctrine. There's no difficulty sure in being contented, when we have all that our Hearts can desire. For ought we know these Graces may be counterfeit, till an evil day brings them to the Test. To be sure they can't be very large and strong if they are never exercis'd. But now when troubles press hard upon us, then to depend upon God and resign our selves to him, to *wait on him in the way of his Judgments*, then to be able to say, thy Rod, as smart as it is, has not alienated our Affections from thee ; but still *the desire of our Souls is to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name* ; then to be contented and in *patience to possess our own Souls* when we have lost our dearest possession, even a part of our selves ; then to *retain our Integrity* when little less is left us ; tho' there be *no fruit in the Vine, and the Fig-tree does not blossom* any longer ; yea, when not only the fair Blossoms are fallen off, but the lovely Tree too on which they grew is cut down, then to be able to *rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our Salvation*, this is hard, this is noble, this is praise-worthy indeed. This

is what holy Men have been, in some measure, enabled thro' Grace to do. The purging out of their Corruptions, and the lively exercise of their Graces, has given them such a knowledge of themselves and their good estate towards God, as has been matter of great comfort to them all their days. As the stirring of the Child within, notwithstanding the present uneasiness it causes to the Mother, yet affords a greater pleasure, because 'tis a certain sign of its life.

But then on the other hand, should we never see an happy day on Earth, where would be the proof and glory of our *Humility, Heavenly-mindedness* and *Contempt* of this World? Others would be apt to think and say, The only reason why these Men talk so meanly of the Earth, and so much of Heaven, is, because they can't attain to much of the things of this Life, and on that account alone it is that they so much disparage them. All their pretended strictness in Religion is meerly the product of their melancholly Circumstances: Did they fare as well, they would do as ill as we whom they now do so liberally reproach. But now when the Children of God enjoy much of this World, and yet manifest that they live above it, then can make God their chiefest joy, when they have so many other things to
steal

steal away their Hearts, so many other Channels to drain away the Stream of their Affections from him; then will it be seen that they are Men of a different make and frame from others; that an admirable Temper, even the Spirit of the living God is in them; that the Righteous is far more excellent than his Neighbour, and Heaven is his *Choice* and not barely his *Refuge*.

Thus does this wise Conduct of God make way for the manifestation, exercise and encrease of the several Graces of his People; every one of them in their own rank and order; some of which are calculated for a time of Prosperity, and others for an hour of Adversity: As the Sun is appointed to run round the Heavens in all his Glory in the day time, and the Moon with the Stars to walk about the Earth at the night season.

3. Herein God has order'd matters for his own Glory. This follows from the two foregoing Particulars. If his People enjoy'd an uninterrupted prosperity, his *Holiness* would be eclips'd, his *Paternal Justice* would be clouded, his *Truth* and *Faithfulness* would drop to the Ground. For all these, as I have formerly observ'd, oblige him to correct them for those Faults and Follies which Prosperity usually draws forth.

The Covenant well Ordered

On the other hand, if they labour'd under perpetual Adversity, where would be his *Goodness*, his *Mercy*, his *Fatherly Pity*, and *tender Compassions*, his *Wisdom* or his *Truth*, who hath so often said, *Call upon me in a day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorifie me.* Though therefore he cause grief, yet he will have *compassion according to the multitude of his tender mercies* : *Weeping may endure for a night, but behold joy cometh in the morning.*

God will make a difference between our *present* and our *future* State. In Heaven there is pure Joy without any mixture of Sorrow : In Hell there is pure Sorrow without any mixture of Joy. There is no Darknes in the one, nor no glimmering of Light or Hope in the other.

But in this World there is a mixture in our selves, *Flesh* and *Spirit* ; and in our Actions, *Good* and *Evil* ; and no wonder that there is the same in our Circumstances too. Briefly, *Variety* adds a Beauty and Lustre to Providence ; as the well chosen mixture of Light and Shade sets off a Picture. Wherefore *in the day of prosperity rejoice*, but with trembling ; and *in the day of adversity consider* and faint not ; for *God hath set one over against the other, to the end that no man might find any thing after him.*

There

There are several other Particulars to be spoken to ; but they must be reserv'd for the following Sermon.

To Conclude.

1. Hence learn what is our Duty under all the Calamities of Life which we meet with, when God makes Breaches on our Families, and snatches away our nearest Relations. If it were now as in the beginning, when the Woman was only taken from the *side* of the Man, and that too while he was in a profound sleep, the Affliction would not be so great. But when she is either hastily torn from, or slowly cut out of his very Heart, and never to be brought to him again ; the wound is the deeper, and the pain the greater. O that our Sufferings may bring our Sins to our Remembrance ! And that God would give us his heavenly Grace to behave our selves wisely, to walk in the middle Path between *despising* this *chastening of the Lord* on the one hand, and *fainting under his rebukes* on the other : And prevent either extreme, one of which the best of Men are naturally prone to run into ; like a beautiful Flower that is fully blown, which is apt to crack and break the Hood in which it is inclosed, if not on this side, yet on that, and then its Leaves unhand somely fall down.

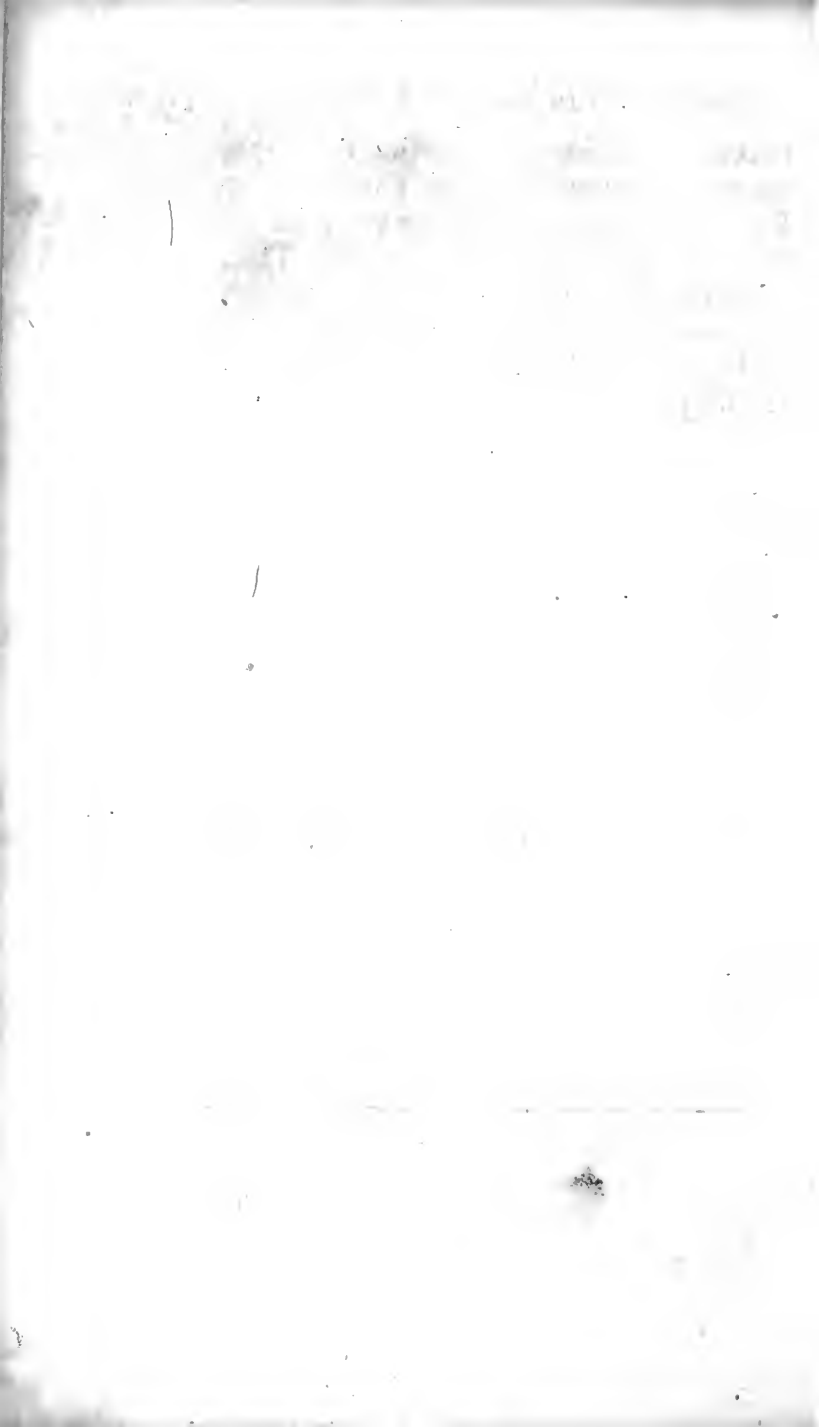
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2. Let

2. Let us all be more weaned from this World, and not expect great things in it. You have heard God's Terms with reference to Temporal Blessings; let us not forget or leave them out. We are ready here to promise our selves more than he does. If the Building be broader than the Foundation, our Folly is great, and so will be the fall of such an irregular Edifice. Our Comments too often are larger than the Text, and what that will not bear; and so by being besides, are contrary to it. God's promises of Temporal Blessings are like a little silver Stream, whose Waters are small, but wholesome, and continually run in the Channel which he hath cut for them to flow in. Our own Promises are like the Waters of a swelling Torrent, that over-run the Banks and know no Bounds; but quickly fail and deceive the dry thirsty Passenger in the time of his greatest need. Let us mind the future recompence of Reward more, and seek after an Interest in that one single Promise which will be better to us, than if God should make Windows in Heaven, and open them to drop down ever so great worldly Abundance upon us, *viz.* That *all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose.* The Lord enflame our love, and help us to
make

make our Calling and Election sure, that we may know not only by Faith but by Experience too, that all things work for our spiritual and eternal Advantage. Then whoever be absent, we shall have him continually present with us, he *will guide us by his Counsel, and afterwards receive us to Glory.*



SERMON VI.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, altho' he make it not to grow.

That which is yet further to be discoursed of, is to shew you that the Covenant of Grace is wisely and well ordered as to Temporal Blessings. 'Tis so as you have heard, because,

I. Therein Provision is made that Necessaries shall ordinarily be given some way or other. But, I.

II. As to the Comforts of Life, they are not absolutely promis'd, but upon most reasonable Terms. *viz.* Provided we diligently do what may procure, and avoid what may hinder them in a Natural way or in a Moral; and provided all II.

O 4 things

things consider'd which ought to be consider'd, it be best that we should have 'em; the Case of others being weigh'd if it make most for our future Temporal, especially our spiritual and eternal Advantage, and if it make most for the Glory of God,

III. According to these Terms so wisely settled, there is a mixture of Good and Evil, Prosperity and Adversity mutually succeeding each other in the Life of every holy Man. This being a proper method to prevent or put an end to the Sins and Follies of either state of Life; to try, exercise and encrease our several Graces; and tending to the Glory of God.

I now proceed to the Fourth Thing.

IV. God has reserved to himself the Judgment of this matter, and is wont to act accordingly, as to the time, manner, degree, and all other Circumstances of those Changes we meet with. He determines what Comforts shall be bestowed upon us, and when they shall be denied to us, or withdrawn from us. On which account the Covenant is wisely and well ordered. Two things will evidence this, which need little proof, but a great deal of consideration, *viz.* his infinite Wisdom, and our apparent Weakness and Folly, who

who have not the compass of Thought which is absolutely necessary for a right determining so intricate an Affair; whereas all things past, present, and to come, are altogether in view before his flaming and piercing Eye.

There is a great deal of difference in Men, and proportionably there must be in providential Dispensations. Some Hedges must be clipt oftener than others; else they will grow out of all shape. Some good Trees must be pruned twice to the others once, because their luxuriant Branches grow faster. Some Fruits require more Sun-shine, others more Shade: All must be managed by a skillful person, who knows the times and seasons, and understands the nature of every Plant and Tree. For an ignorant Man would make as mad work as a wild Beast if he were let loose in a Garden. When a Purge is necessary, if a Cordial be given, or Meat be eaten, 'tis as bad as Poison; it increases the Disease and kills the Patient. We all of us have our Diseases; and God hath his *Specificks*, and infinite Wisdom to apply 'em. He knows what Physick is most proper to work on that particular evil Humour which does most abound in us: Or if it be a *complication of Distempers*, he has his *compound Medicines*, and knows when and in what quantity to
give

isa. 28.
26. 27.
28.

give them, how often to repeat them, what our needs require and our strength will bear. What is but barely necessary to free the clogg'd Spirits of one Man, will utterly sink another. He *hath taught the Husband-man discretion* to deal with every sort of Grain according to its nature. The solid Corn must be bruised with a Cart-wheel of Iron, or the Hoof of an Horse brought over it; but the Fitches and Cummin are beat with a Rod only, because being of a more tender texture, it can't bear a rougher usage. Now *he that formed the Eye, shall not he see?* He is a *God of Judgment*; *blessed are all they that wait for him* and can calmly refer all their Affairs unto him. Had we the management of them our selves, or should he consult our foolish Fancies, and irregular Cravings, we should quickly be undone.

Thou art, it may be, importunately crying for a larger Portion of the things of this life; but little knowest or considerest how so large a Sail and so great a Gale of Wind would quickly over-set thy little Vessel; from how much Pride, Insolence, Forgetfulness of God; from how many strong Temptations and Lusts, which would corrupt and drown thee in Perdition, God mercifully preserves thee by denying thee what thou dost so eagerly desire. Thou art murmuring, why is this

this

this Breach made on my Family ; impatiently calling, when will this Pain and Disease be removed from my Body ; this Cloud taken off from my Tabernacle ? Whereas hereby it may be thou art quickened to Prayer, Self-examination, humbling thy Soul before God, living on the Promises, feeding on that Bread which endures to everlasting Life, making thy Calling and Election sure : Whereas if thy Burthen were presently removed as thou wouldest have it, if thou hadst the Temptations of Plenty and Ease, thou wouldest prove quite another Creature, forget God and thy self, be negligent in thy walk, contract abundance of Guilt, lose thy eternal Bliss, and make way for everlasting Sorrows. For tho' an *Astronomer* gazes most intently upon the Heavens when 'tis clear, a *Christian*, generally speaking, does most steadily look up when 'tis cloudy weather.

'Tis an excellent provision God has made in his Covenant, that he *will choose our Inheritance for us*, and assign the portion of our Cup : for we are *Minors*, and want discretion to choose for our selves. 'Tis our happiness, that our heavenly Father is not like fond and foolish earthly Parents, to forbear or give off chastising us when 'tis necessary, because of our crying ; or give us sharp Knives when his
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Children roar for 'em, because they look bright and dazzling in their Eyes.

How passionately did *David* desire the life of his Infant begotten in Adultery ! He cried as if he himself had been the little sick Child. But had his Prayers been heard, that Son of his, as long as he had lived, would have been a visible Monument of his Sin and Shame : and the Kingdom might have been embroil'd about the Succession by the bold Attempts of the sprightly and daring Youth : For considering how he came into the World, according to the natural course of second Causes, there would have been a great deal of heat and flame in his Constitution. Crafty Politicians, mutinous Officers, his being *born* in lawful Wedlock, the point of his own Sword, and actual possession of the Crown in any Country, would have wiped off all Defects, and have *Legitimated his Title*, how spurious soever he himself was. The Controversie would not have been so amicably decided as one of the like nature, tho' somewhat different too, was between *Xerxes*, who was begotten after his Father came to the Throne, and his elder Brethren who were born before. But God in mercy cut off the life of the Child, and thereby cut away the occasion of the quarrel, and prevented a great deal of evil
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by kindly contradicting the importunate Prayers of a fond Parent.

V. Another Instance of the wise Order of the Covenant is this, *viz.* God will not let us know before hand what he will do with us as to temporal Affairs. We can sometimes indeed look a little, and 'tis but a little, before us, as to the turns that he will make. Our Knowledge in this matter is like our *Prophetical* Glasses, Barometers and Thermometers, that will show us the change of the Weather, hot or cold, foul or fair, for a day before hand, or so; tho' even in that too they are not infallible. But if we pretend to look more forward into Futurity, we render our selves as ridiculous as our *Monthly Prognosticators*, who would be thought to be more *subtil* and penetrating than that Element with which they pretend so intimate a converse: But certainly they are not the *Familiars* of him who is stiled the *Prince of the power of the Air*; for Experience shews us, that their bold Conjectures are lighter than the Wind and Vanity it self.

Close by the *Ark of the Covenant*, wherein are the two Tables of the Law, there is a *Pot of Manna* to feed us, and a *Rod* to correct us according as we observe or break the divine Precepts. But both of them

them are within the *Veil*, in the *Holiest of all*, whither it is not lawful (or possible) for the People, yea or any of the *Priests* to enter, but only for him who is after the *Order of Melchizedech*, *Christ* I mean, who is *Priest* and *King* too, and hath *power over all flesh*. Nor is it fit that any other should : As will appear if these three following Particulars be considered.

1. Did we certainly fore-know future Events, it would disorder the Affairs of this World and break the peace of our lives. This would be the fruit of it, whither we consider the *Evils* that shall befall us, or the *Good* that shall come to us.

Consider how it would be if we certainly fore-knew all the *Evils* that shall befall us. A Man could have no heart to breed up his Child, or take any pleasure in it for so much as one day, if he were sure (what it may be is determin'd) the pretty young blooming Tree while 'tis crown'd with beautiful Blossoms, shall be slowly sawn asunder by a lingering Disease, or suddenly torn up by the Roots with a violent Blast.

A Man would never be able to solace himself with the lovely Wife of his Youth, if he knew before, that after she had lain a few Years in *his Bosom*, she should be
remo-

removed into *Abraham's*. Could we distinctly foresee what it may be will come to pass, such a day I shall be cheated of part of my Estate, lose another Limb of it by Fire or by Theives, have a great many very long and sharp fits of Feaver or Cholick, Gout or Stone, with a long &c. of other Calamities which it may be will fall upon us before we are gathered to our Fathers; it were enough to craze us. Were a Man at once to see the Table covered with those cruel Plaisters that must be laid on, and the whole Room filled with all the nauseous and tormenting Potions of Physick that he must take in one fit of Sicknes, the very sight of them would antedate the Calamity and make him Sick before the time; and as many as they are, there would be need of making a great addition to the mighty store; more Cordials to be sure would be requisite. Had we a sure Prospect of all our Calamities, we should be continually prying how near the black Cloud does approach; nicely calculating how many Minutes it would be e'er the lighted *Bomb* trowing in the Air would light and break upon our Heads, neglecting present Duty, and not able to taste our present Comforts, being utterly dispirited by the fear of future Events, which we should be gazing after in a distracted manner. We
may

may judge how it would be with us in this case, by considering how much we have been disorder'd, how drooping our Spirits, what Hurries, Agonies and Convulsions we have been cast into; how very unfit for any Duty, Civil or Religious, when we have had the near view of any great very probbaly approaching Evil. Yet then we had this to relieve us, that the black swelling Cloud just as it was opening to pour down the Storm on our guilty Heads might be blown off by a sudden Wind; as sometimes (God be praised) it has been,

But it may be some of you will say, We would not foresee the *Evil* that shall befall us; yet we would be glad to foreknow all the *Good* that shall come to us. But we don't think nor speak wisely in this matter. For even *this* too were enough to spoil the Comfort of our Lives, as will appear from the three following Particulars.

(1.) It may be but a little share of the good things of this Life that is designed for us: At least in comparison of what we covet, aim at, and proudly think we may justly challenge as due to our *Character* and mighty *Deserts*. Thereupon how should we vex our selves because we have so small a Lot, and never take the Comfort of that little, tho' it be, and because

cause it is our *All*. We should be fullen and not eat that poor sprinkling of Fruit that is scatter'd on the lower Boughs that e'en touch the Ground whereon we stand; because we can't climb up higher, perch on the top of the Tree, and glut our selves with the fairer and larger Clusters which grow on the uppermost Branches.

(2.) Hereby much of the sweetness of the Mercy would be lost. *When the Lord turned back our Captivity, we were like Men that dream*; we could hardly believe our Senses, or be perswaded we were awake: *Then was our Mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.* The suddenness, the surprising manner in doing what they never looked for gave a new relish to the Mercy, and higher Accent to their Praises. We have nice Palates, and a sickly Stomach; and did we know what Provision in particular was made for us, had we the continual smell of the Meat in our Nostrils while 'tis getting ready for us, we should have but little Appetite to it, find but little relish in it when 'tis set before us.

(3.) We can't fore-know many of the Comforts of Life, without fore-knowing that we must labour under the contrary Evils. For a very considerable part of our happiness lies in support under, and deliverance from Misery after we have felt

the sting of it, it may be too, for a considerable time. There is not a more sensible representation of the pleasure of Heaven on this side of it, than for a Man after he has long lain under racking Pain to feel perfect sudden Ease. This is like that sudden happy turn which those Saints shall have who are found at the second coming of Christ; whose vile Bodies shall be changed into glorious ones in the twinkling of an Eye. If I would fore-know the great mercy of a suddenly restored Ease, I must fore-know that I am to labour under the foregoing Pains which usher it in, and render it so very pleasant: For 'tis the Sting that makes the Honey. We would not fore-know the Evil we are to endure; why then we must not fore-know the Good that we are to enjoy; for the knowledge of the one can't be without the knowledge of the other; no more than a Man can know the length of the Day in any Climate, without understanding that of the Night also.

That's the *First* thing, that 'tis for our Interest that we are kept in the dark as to future Events, whither evil or good, because the fore-knowledge of either would disorder the affairs of this World, and utterly break the peace of our Lives. But besides this,

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2. 'Tis necessary it should be so for the bright'ning and assistance of our Graces. For suppose we are in *Adversity*; our *Patience*, *Fortitude*, *Steadiness* and *Constancy* in cleaving to God, our *Resignation* to his Will, chearful *Dependance* on him, &c. will be the *brighter*, because we can still hold on tho' we walk in a Cloud and are not able to see how far it is to the end of the narrow and miry Lane, wherein we are beset with Briars and Thorns on both sides tearing our Cloaths, and rending our Flesh. It may be a very *long* one for ought I can tell; and yet I am not out of Breath or Patience: And yet for ought I know it may be a very *short* one too; and then the deep way may open into a pleasant and spacious Plain; which thought may be a very great help to the fore-going Duties, and a good Means to prevent a fretful and impatient behaviour.

On the other hand, suppose I am in *Prosperity*, still I had need to keep close with God, that I may always retain the Comforts of Innocence, or at least of Pardon, and a good Conscience, whatever I lose if the Tide should turn, as I don't know how soon it may: For if it should not run out for many Hours according to the natural Course of things; yet a stiff Gale may suddenly drive the Waters out, and leave

the Channel empty. I had need still to fit loose toward this World, and long for Heaven, where alone I shall be out of the reach of all danger. Tho' I sit pleasantly under the shade of a well-grown Tree, I had need to have a care I don't fall asleep there : For I know not how soon a stormy Wind may blow down all the ripe Fruit, then that by its fall may forely wound my Head, wherewith I vainly hoped to have filled my Mouth ; that which loads and adorns the Tree may cover the Ground and rot upon it ; or be pick'd up and stoln away by others with whom *de facto* is the same with *de jure*, and who have no other Title than what actual Possession gives them ; vain Man that thou art, who dost look so big, because of the droves of Admirers who croud after thee, and hang like Bees upon thy Lips every time thou openest 'em in publick ! Thy Wit that now sparkles like generous Wine in a Glafs, may grow dead and flat, as that does by length of time. Thou mayest lose thy Credit, or that Delivery of thine, which it may be is one of the best Properties that belong to thee. For many times 'tis not the richness of the Sense, depth of Matter, or elegancy of the Composure (of which the Vulgar have little taste) but the sweetness of the Tune, or the melodious Voice
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of him that sings, or the pleasant sound of the Instrument on which he plays, that is the most charming ; and when the Organ or the Breath is crackt, where art *thou*, and where are *they*? Or the voluble humour may change ; or a more acceptable Man may arise : And a *brighter* Body will as certainly Eclipse thy shining lustre as an *Opake* and dark one can possibly do. Who knows but he that swaggers in the head of a Troop, may be shot in the Face by the open Enemy, or in the Back by a pretended Friend, and be trampled under the Feet of those that are behind? Who can tell how soon the strutting Bubble may break ; (which is the more likely, because it swells so extravagantly) and that which so proudly floats on the top of the Water, may slide into the common level? Thou hadst need therefore to *walk humbly with thy God*, and carry it modestly towards thy Brethren.

3. God hath reserv'd to himself the fore-knowledge of future contingent Events, as his own peculiar Prerogative: *'Tis not for you to know the times and Seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.* Acts 1.7. 'Tis an incommunicable Flower of his Imperial Crown ; and he who wears that may challenge the whole. God himself appeals to this as the Test

Isa. 41.
22.

whereby the true Deity may be known and distinguisht from all false pretended ones. *Shew us the things that are to come, that we may know that ye are Gods.* But he will not let us know 'em, because he would have us to understand that we are not *Gods* to fore-know Good and Evil (which was the first Temptation that ruin'd us all;) but that we are *Men*; whose Minds as well as their Hands are not able to reach very far.

Breifly. There are two great Excellencies of our Nature, which we can never be sufficiently thankful for; *viz.* Knowledge and Memory. *Memory* I say, that most valuable Talent, which none but Fools slight and neglect; without which thou couldst not give a wise Answer to any one Question, nor follow thy Trade: For how couldst thou sell thy Commodities, if thou didst not remember that thou hadst them, where thou laidst them, what they cost thee, and what thou canst afford them for. All the other Powers of thy Soul without this would signifie nothing; and all Religion would be at an end, for that's expres'd by *remembering thy Creator.*

We are not a little indebted to God for the two contrary Imperfections, *viz.* *Forgetfulness of what is past,* and *Ignorance of what is to come.* A Man may feel that
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he hath lost his Bloud and Spirits, which may make him feeble a good while after. But if he had always as quick a sense of Pain as he had when the cruel Instrument was first run into his tender Flesh, what an uneasie miserable life would he lead. Or if a Man had a distinct view at once of all the Changes he must run through before he is gather'd to his Fathers, the odd (as we should esteem it) and *party colour'd* Object, wherein are such surprising mixtures of black and white, dark and bright, fair and bloody, would greatly affright us and break our Hearts; and the swift turns of the Wheel would make our Heads run round as fast. But God has in mercy hid these things from our Eyes, and lock'd them up in his own Bosom. Astronomers indeed have undoubted Rules whereby they can predict the Eclipses of the heavenly Bodies, when they shall happen, how long they shall last, when the Sun and Moon shall emerge out of them. But no Man can foresee how often the dark Shadow shall obscure himself or his Neighbour, nor how few or how many Minutes the gloomy covering shall last, God having kindly hid this dangerous Secret from us: In which respect his Covenant is wisely and well order'd, which was the fifth Particular.

VI. Tho' meer Love be not the only, yet 'tis always the predominant Principle in all God's Providences towards his Covenant People. I must open this in both the Branches of it.

1. All their Temporal Mercies are *wont* to be the Effects and Pledges too of his special Love. They are given *together* with Christ. For (as the Apostle says) *he that spared not his own Son, how shall he not together with him freely give us all things?* They are the performance of the Promise. For he hath said, *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and then all these things shall be added to you.* This is that which sweetens a good Man's temporal Enjoyments, and gives him another kind of taste and relish of them than other Men have of the same Mercies for Kind and Substance. This is like a very curious Engraving on Brass or Iron, that renders it worth a great deal of Silver and Gold. Whereas now the Prosperity of wicked Men is oftentimes the effect of God's deepest Displeasure: Like a rich Garment that has a subtil Poyson lodg'd in it, which *adorns* the Body, but *kills* it too. Thus it was with the Israelites; they had *flesh rained* upon them *as dust*, and *feather'd fowl* like the *sand of the Sea*, but while the meat was

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Rom. 8.
32.

Psal. 78.
27, &c.

yet in their Mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them. But at best, their worldly Comforts flow but from that common Love that feeds young Lions and Ravens. Their fairest Mercies are but like those Medals which a Prince promiscuously scatters with a negligent Hand among the vile and common Rabble on his Marriage-day to shew his own Royal Bounty ; but his Picture does he give to his Spouse, as a Pledge that he intends to bestow himself upon her. *God, even our own God shall bless us* ; because he is our *own God* from whom they come, this gives a greater value to his Blessings, as well as an assurance of the continuance of them and an addition to them, when and while they will prove to us Blessings indeed. How pleasantly may a holy Man view his narrow and scanty Provisions. I have but a few Crumbs indeed, but then they fall from the Childrens Bread, and are an earnest that I shall sit down at the Table of my Father in Heaven : A few handfuls of Meal, or it may be of Pulse only, and a Cup of cold Water, together with Heaven, is a rich fair Portion for any of the Sons of God ; much more for me, who am not worthy to be called his hired Servant, to have the meanest Place, the lowest Office in his House and Family, yea, or to wash
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the Feet of the meanest of my Lord's Servants.

But then observe, that I said Temporal Blessings are *wont* to be given as Effects and Pledges of God's special Love. 'Tis ordinarily so. But there are some cases wherein 'tis otherwise; *viz.* When we are over eager after them, or over fond of them. We *must* have this or that. God does not give, but we snatch an Estate out of his hand, procuring it to our selves, or keeping it by unlawful means. And when he would remove the Mercy, we hold it fast, *can't and won't* bring our Hearts to resign; then 'tis got and kept by us to our hurt, and it always tends to our sorrow. Indeed 'tis fit it should be embitter'd to us to cure us of these Fits which are so dangerous; for the more effectual purging out so very untoward a Temper, so *unbecoming a Creature*, and much more a *Saint*, which is in truth no better than a spiritual Idolatry and Adultery. But then (which brings me to the Second Particular)

2. This and all other Afflictions, tho' they proceed from a mixture of Anger and Love, yet Love is the predominant Principle that lies at the bottom of all, and runs thro' the whole.

I do not say, that *all* the Afflictions of good Men proceed from *Anger*; because I do not forget the case of *Job*; nor that passage of our Saviour concerning him that was born blind; *This Man hath not sinn'd nor his Parents*, but therefore did this Calamity befall him, *that the works of God might be made manifest in him*. Which does not imply, that he was not tainted with original Sin. He that draws that Inference from the words, is blinder than that poor Creature. This does no more follow from those words, than it does, that his Parents were free from all actual Transgressions. For 'tis said, *they* had not sinned any more than he. The plain meaning of the Passage is, that it was not an eye to any particular Sin in them or him that was the cause of that Affliction; but the Evil was laid upon him for no other end than this, that there might be an occasion for God to glorifie himself by working a miraculous Cure upon him.

But then I must add; That even in this case a good Man will be very jealous of himself, for fear that some sin lies at the bottom of the bitter Cup, tho it be so thick and muddy that he can't look so far as clearly to discern it. He will therefore cry out with holy *Job*, *Make me to know my transgression and my sin; and if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more.*

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For most usually 'tis for some Sin or other that God strikes : And then Afflictions proceed from a *mixture of Anger and Love*, but *Love is the predominant Principle*.

From a mixture of *Anger*. Not that of an *Enemy* indeed which flows from bitter Hatred and fiery Revenge, and is accompanied with Rigour and utmost Severity, that intends nothing but self-satisfaction, the hurt and ruin of another. This is called *wrathful Anger* by the Psalmist, and is what he deprecates. *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger ; which he explains in the very next words, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure.* For God *considers our frame*, and remembers his own Promise, that *in measure he will debate with us and stay his rough wind in the day of his East wind.*

Psal. 69.
24

But then there is *the anger of a Father*, which is guided by Wisdom, tempered by Love, and intends the good of his offending Child, though he will use sharp severe Methods when 'tis necessary in order thereunto. And he who does not apprehend when God Chastizes him for his Follies, that this proceeds from his Fatherly Displeasure, entertains a wild Notion contrary to plain Scripture, clear Reason, and the common Sense of all Holy Men in all Ages.

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Yet however, *Love* is the Predominant Principle. This is more easily proved than heartily believed, when we are in the School of Affliction. But whatever a froward unbelieving Heart may suggest, 'tis a plain certain Truth, as will appear if we consider the *Mitigations* of 'em as to length or sharpness, the inward *supports* which God vouchsafes under them, together with the Gracious *Ends* of God in them. For Holy Men have their cool Breezes when the Sun strikes hottest upon their Heads, that fan their Faces, and revive their Spirits. The unpleasant and fiery Drops are divided into small Parcels, given at distant times, and are diluted by being scattered up and down in a large Vehicle ; whereas otherwise, they would Scorch our Mouths, Burn up our Entrails, Embitter and Enflame our Spirits. But God is Good and Wise, his design in all being to purge away Sin, to make us partakers of his Holiness, and prepare us for Heaven. The working of the Physick indeed at first generally makes the ill Humors fly about the Body, and the Patient the more Sick ; but Strength and Health comes at last. The first stroke or two beats the Vessel more out of shape, and makes it look more uncomely than it did before, but repeated blows bring it to a better fashion. The tossing and tumbling
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of Liquor, puts it into a Ferment, and makes it more muddy ; but in a little while, the dregs are carried off, and it runs the finer for it : The present *chastening which is not joyous but grievous*, because of the pain it puts us to, and the corruption it accidentally awakens in us ; but *afterward it bringeth forth the peaceable fruits of Righteousness*, when for some time they have *been exercised* thereby. So true is that which is written, *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten*. Whereupon Holy Men when the fit of Passion has been over, have heartily bless'd God for their Afflictions, look'd on them as Tokens of Love, as Marks of Adoption, admiring his condescending Goodness in Chastising them for their good. And herein is the Admirable manifold Wisdom of God seen, who can carry on two seemingly contrary designs at once, *Judgment and Mercy* ; as he apparently did in the case of *Josiah* : who sinfully opposed *Pharaoe-Neco*, who truly affirmed he had a Commission from Heaven for the Expedition he had undertook ; the truth of which, good *Josiah* never examined into, as he might have done by the Prophets of the Lord who were at hand ; but he rashly Marches out against him Fights against God in Fighting against the *Egyptian King*, whereby he lost his
Life

Life, and forfeited his Title to the promise, that he should *go to his Grave in Peace*. For to say as some have indiscreetly done, that he went to his *Grave in Peace*, when he Died a Violent untimely Death in *War*, is to speak Contradictions, and say Darknes is Light. Here was a Righteous Judgment that he was thus cut off. But much greater Mercy, for he was hereby taken away *from the evil to come*, and safely lodged before the *over-flowing Scourge* covered the Land.

Some short Application of what has been now delivered, shall put an end to this Sermon. And

I. From that particular, that *God has reserv'd the whole judgment of this affair*, viz. *Temporal Mercies to himself, and is wont to act accordingly*; let us be persuaded, not Sinfully and Foolishly to torment our selves, as to what is *past*, or what is *yet to come*. One would think there should be little need of pressing this; but he who so thinks, must be a great Stranger to the workings of Humane Nature under Affliction.

(1.) As to what is *past*. In all the Calamities that have already befallen us, the Judgment and Will of God is declared. By unmeasurable Sorrows and Vexations, we do in effect say, *God is of one mind,*

mind, and we of another. But God's will is fulfilled, and thy will is crossed ; thy Sheaf must bow down to his, for his will not stoop to thine. *He is of one mind, and who can turn him ?* and his Power is Infinite, and who can resist him, or undo what he hath wrought ? what would we have ? would we find flaws in his Proceedings ; bring a *Writ of Error*, and reverse his Sentence after Execution ? But if the *Iniquity* of this Carriage does not make us blush, one would think the *Folly* of it should make us desist. How much soever *David* might be to blame in the former part of his Carriage, yet his Example is worthy of our imitation as to the latter part of it, when he said, *while the Child was yet alive, I fasted and wept ; for I said, who can tell whither God will be gracious to me, that the Child may live : but now he is Dead, wherefore should I fast ? can I bring him back again ? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.* Our Modern Philosophers, tell us of a *Plastick Power* residing none knows where, very silyly lodged in some portion of matter to reproduce the same Body after it has been destroyed. Yea, *Kircherus* is said to have been able by a gentle Heat to raise in well-closed Vials, the perfect resemblances of Plants that had been destroyed by Fire. A Flaming

Bowl of
the Possib.
of the Re-
surrection.
p. 10.

ing Love will do somewhat like this ; often bring to our Minds the lovely Idea of a dear departed Relative: but the warmest affection can't make the most beautiful Plant in our Garden spring up again when once it has been cut down and reduced to Ashes. We may water those Ashes, but can't quicken them with all our Tears ; nor weep them out of the Grave: tho' we may weep our selves into it. *Why therefore art thou thus sinfully cast down, O my Soul ; why art thou thus vainly disquieted within me ?*

(2) Let us not sinfully and foolishly disquiet our selves about *Future Events* ; seeing *God has denied the certain fore-knowledge of them* to us. *Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*, and we can't be sure what Evils will be on the Earth to morrow, nor where we may be before the day dawns. Calamities that we think are hovering over us may be like Birds flying in great Flocks so as to darken the Air, that make a grievous chattering and a hideous noise, and yet may pass us by, never lighting upon our Heads. Thus it has been ; for how often have we frightened our selves with imaginary Evils, and startled at the sight of those Ghosts which were nothing but airy Phantomes, our own Creatures ?

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Let us see to it that we stand on good Terms with God, mind our present Duty that lies plain before us, and not lose our time in gazing about after future Events which are quite out of our sight. Let us be careful for nothing so much as to be of the number of them whom God careth for; casting all our Burdens on him, throwing all anxious Cares off from our selves: When thus the Troubler is cast out, the Comforter will come in, as Light succeeds in the room of Darkness. Then shall we better know what that Promise means, than Words can inform us, *The peace of God which passeth all Understanding, shall keep your Hearts and Minds thro' Jesus Christ.* Keep them as a strong hold is by a numerous Garrison, as the word *ἑστῆσαν* in the original signifies; which may sometimes be besieged, assaulted and Bomb'd too, but yet is seasonably reliev'd and shall be preserv'd from falling into the Enemies hand.

2. From that point that *all our Chastisements flow from a mixture of fatherly Anger, but from Love also, as the predominant Principle*; learn to receive his Rebukes with humble Reverence, and beware of quarrelling with him, or complaining of him. Consider he is a *provoked Father*, but yet a *Father* still; thou art a *Child* under the Rod, and tho' a *disobedient* one,

one, yet a Child still. Forget not therefore the Exhortation, or (as the word also signifies) the Consolation, that speaks to you as to Sons, *My Son despise not thou the chast'ning of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of him.* The evil Arrow wherewith thy dear Friend was slain, and thou so deeply wounded, did not move at random, but God guided it by his Eye, and 'twas shot by his hand. Not so much as one Saint was ever taken up into Heaven without a particular special order of their Father and ours, who dwells there whither they are gone before, and we are following after. *All the ways of the Lord are Mercy and Truth to them who are in Covenant and keep it with him.* He is continually with them here upon Earth, and they shall ever be with him in Heaven. *Amen, and Amen,*

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SERMON VII.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, altho' he make it not to grow.

THE Doctrine now before us is this,
viz.

Such is the Nature and Properties of the Covenant of Grace, that an Interest in it will support a Man under the most afflictive Evils, whether Personal or Family ones.

In the managing of this Point, I have opened to you the Nature of the Covenant of Grace; and then I came to speak of the Properties of it. I fixed on one, namely, that 'tis *ordered in all things*. I have explained the meaning of the word, namely, that all the parts of it are so adjusted, that they do naturally and effectually tend to the promoting and attaining

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of the great Ends of the Covenant, which are the Glory of God, the Honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Duty, Comfort and Happiness of Man.

I have endeavoured to prove the Truth of the thing, to shew that 'tis so.

1. With respect to the Mediator and Surety of it, our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. With reference to the Blessings that are contained and promised in it, which are Spiritual, Eternal and Temporal. Of each of these I have *particularly* discoursed.

I must now speak of these three sorts of Blessings as *conjunctly* taken, and shew you that 'tis necessary that God should promise all of these Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal Blessings, and that if any of these had been left out, it would not have been a Covenant well and wisely ordered.

For the proof of this there are three Generals I shall take into Consideration.

I. I shall shew what a blemish it would have been to the Covenant of Grace, if *temporal* Mercies had not been promis'd in it.

'Tis true indeed, Temporal Blessings make but a small Figure in the Covenant; their Glory is no Glory, because all the Excellency is swallowed up in the greater Glory of Spiritual and Eternal ones. But yet however, Temporal Blessings

sings are of that significancy too, that it would have been a very imperfect Covenant if they had been wholly left out. They are like the Hairs of our Heads or the Nails of our Hands, which are of little value if compared with the Head or Heart, or any other vital part ; but yet how uncomely would the most beautiful Face appear if there were not one Hair on it ; or the finest Hand without Nails. Tho' Temporal Blessings are little in themselves, yet the Covenant had not been wisely ordered if they had been wholly left out. This will appear if you consider,

1. This would have discouraged our Faith and Hope as to Eternal Blessings, Graces and Duties, that we are not so very ready at, or so very forward to.

Our weak and feeble Hopes would be checked by such a procedure as this, as the tender Bud is nipt by the cold of the Night, or the Frost of the Morning. God doth argue *affirmatively* from the greater to the less. *He that spared not* Rom. 8. *his own Son, but freely gave him up for us* 32. *all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.* But our Hearts would have argued backwards, *negatively* ; from denying lesser Mercies to strong Doubts concerning greater ones. How ready should we have been to cry out, How

can I believe that ever God will be so kind to my Soul, when he hath altogether neglected this Body of mine ? What tho' it be the meaner part, yet 'tis an essential part of my self. As by Soul I am distinguished from Brutes, so by my Body I am distinguished from Angels. The wants and Necessities of my Body claim a part of my Care, and I cannot but have a very quick and lively sensation of them. Now if he hath not spoken concerning a few Crumbs of Bread, or a few drops of Water, or a little Cloathing to feed and cover my Body ; how shall I ever believe that he hath that wonderful kindness for me, as at last to receive me to Heaven, and set a weighty Crown on my Head ? How can it enter into my Heart, that God should kindly receive and entertain me when I come home, who hath not that respect for me to remit me my necessary Charges on the Road.

2. If Temporal Mercies had not been promised in the Covenant of Grace, we should have had no patience to continue our appointed time in this World, nor any Heart to serve God in our Generations.

Afflictions do, and according to the natural and necessary course of things, must befall every Man in this World. And how would our Souls have bent under the heavy load, and our Spirits have been
soured

soured within us. We should have grown sullen and been apt to have said ; Lord, take away my Life, for 'tis better for me to dye then to live under my present Circumstances. Nothing can calm the troubled Soul so much as this Consideration ; I am under Circumstances, as black and melancholly as they can well be, but the Potion as bitter as it was chosen for me and put into my Hand by my God in Covenant, my wife and best Friend. This was appointed for me by God, who truly understands what is best for me, and would have dealt more kindly with me if it had been for my greater good. The Spirit of a Man is apt to be out of frame when he feels the weight of incumbent Afflictions ; but such a thought set home by the Spirit of God, will bring us into order again : Like the Ears of Corn that hang down their heads by a violent gust of Wind ; but when that is over, they lift up their heads again.

God knows our need, therefore hath taken Temporal Blessings within the compass of the Covenant ; which if he had not so done, it would have been a strong temptation to Unbelief, and have rendered us altogether unapt for the Service of God and our Generations.

II. II. I am to shew what a Blemish it would have been to the Covenant of Grace, what a defective thing it would have been, had not *Spiritual* Mercies been promised in it.

This will clearly appear if you do but consider the three following things.

I. If *Spiritual* Blessings had not been promised in the Covenant of Grace, we had been incapable of those high Duties and noble Privileges that the Covenant People of God are designed for in this Life; which are in short, serving God and enjoying Communion with God.

This is the End of our Life and Being, and the sweetness and comfort of Life in this World. Now if *Spiritual* Blessings had not been promised in the Covenant, we had been incapable of *servi*ng God, which is the End of Life, the business for which we came into the World, and without which it were not worth our while to continue a Moment here. For how could we have done any good Works, if by Grace we had not been *created* as well as *fore-ordained* to them? Can a Man gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles? Can a corrupt Fountain send forth sweet and wholesome Springs? No more can an un sanctified Nature perform any good Actions, that shall be acceptable and well-pleasing unto God.

Besides,

Besides, without Spiritual Blessings, we should have been uncapable of *enjoying* God, or of having any Fellowship with him, which is the Flame and Life of Life. *How can two walk together in a friendly manner, except they are agreed?* Especially when they are *so* disagreeable to one another, as a holy God and an impure and carnal Creature. He must have more than an *infinite* Power that can reconcile Contradictions: for even the Almighty himself cannot do this. He cannot make things that are repugnant in their own nature hang together, much less lovingly embrace each other. Sooner may the East and West meet together in one Point, than God and an unholy Soul meet together in a way of Love and Peace.

2. Without Spiritual Blessings, all Temporal ones would have been abused by us to God's dishonour and our own ruin.

We are a sort of miserable Creatures, that cannot do or bear any thing unless it be given to us from above. We cannot bear Adversity, no nor Prosperity neither. The cold Winter, were it not for our Cloaths and the Fire, would benumb our Spirits and freeze us to death: And the heat of Summer, were it not for the cool Breezes of Wind and the Shade, would exhaust our Spirits. Of the two 'tis by far the hardest to endure, in a becoming

coming manner, a great deal of Prosperity: To know how to *abound* with the Apostle, as well as how to *want*. This is plain from the many Cautions left on Record in the Word of God to them that are rich in this World. *Take heed to yourselves. Beware when thou hast eaten and art full, that thou dost not forget God and thy self too.* The sad experience of all Ages hath shewed us, that abundance of persons have been corrupted and ruined by a great deal of Prosperity. They have rode out many a Storm, and have perished at last in the midst of a Calme. 'Tis very plain, that abundance of the things of this World is but a great Snare without a proportionable measure of Wisdom and Grace to improve it for the Glory of God, and for the spiritual and eternal welfare of our selves and others.

3. If Spiritual Blessings had not been promised in the Covenant of Grace, we had been incapable of Eternal ones upon our departure out of this World.

Guilty Creatures can no more look a just holy and righteous God in the Face, especially as he pours out all his Excellencies, and displays himself in Heaven, than sore Eyes are able to bear the glittering Beams of the Sun when it shineth forth in its Meridian Glory. As soon may Darkness face the Light as a guilty Creature

ture behold the awful and majestick Countenance of God. An un sanctified and unrenewed Soul, if it could make a shift to crowd in at the Gates of the heavenly Paradise, he would be immediately driven out of it; the Cherubim and Seraphim would chase the Brute out of the holy place: Nay, he would voluntary run away from thence. He would not be able to endure the Company, nor bear the Work and Business of Heaven. How irksome would it be for a Man that has none of the Image of God in his Soul, nor any Love to God in his Heart, to behold the holy God and Worship him to all Eternity. He would not find Heaven in Heaven, but it would be a place of Misery and Torment to him.

III. If *Eternal* Blessings had not been contained in the Covenant of Grace, it had been a great blemish to it whatever other Blessings had been promised in it. III.

The promise of Heaven is the chief thing contain'd in the Covenant of Grace. *This* John 2. *is THE Promise that he hath promised* 25. *us, even Eternal Life.* If you drop that you leave the main thing out, without which all the rest were very little, yea, insignificant and vain.

This will appear if you consider the two following things.

I. That

i. That the value of *Temporal Mercies* would have been but small, and they would have been but sorry things if God had not promised *Eternal ones*. For

i. 'Tis but a very small share and proportion of the things of this World that the generality of God's People ever enjoy.

(2.) Tho' they had never so great an abundance of them, yet if *this* were their *all*, God could be said to be kind only to a *part* of them, and the worser part, to their Bodies only, and not to their nobler and immortal Souls. What a Reflection would this have been on him who is stiled the *Father of our Spirits*, to have abandoned that which is his most peculiar Off-spring. Earthly Parents would never do so, and far be this from our Heavenly Father.

The things of this Life tho' heaped in never so great a Store on us, cannot improve our Spirits: Riches and Honours make no Man Wiser or Better; but on the contrary, thro' the Corruption of Human Nature, thousands of Men have been made more Wicked and Foolish by them. Nor can they satisfy or content our Spirits. Of all Men that ever lived on the Face of the Earth *Solomon* had the greatest advantage to try the Experiment, to push things as far as they would go;

to see whither he could draw a true Elixer of Life from the things of this World ; but on the contrary, he found nothing but Wind and Dregs at the bottom. *Vanity of Vanities is the Sum Total. Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity and vexation of Spirit.*

(3.) We are exposed to a World of Calamities, wherein the things of this World can yield us no Relief.

Suppose a Man were a *Universal Monarch*, and could extend his Empire and his Fame to the remotest parts of the Earth, yet might all the Peace and Comfort of his Life be broken by ten thousand Accidents that might befall him. By bodily Sickness and Pain, by a little Wind pent up in his Bowels, or a melancholly Vapour flying up into his Head ; by thorny Cares to secure his present Enjoyments ; or by pale Fears, lest he should be turned out of the Possession by the treachery of pretended Friends, or the Malice of open Enemies ; by the sickness or wickedness of a Child ; or the untimely death of a near Relation, that is as the apple of the Eye to a Man, or his own Soul ; by trouble of Mind and terrors of Conscience ; by black Thoughts and slavish Fears of Hell and Ruin.

'Tis impossible to spend a whole Life without some or other of these, and
which

which soever of these Miseries thrust their Sting into our Flesh, may easily fill us with so much Pain as to swallow up the Pleasure of other Comforts.

(4.) Suppose that all a Man's days should pass over without one black Cloud, yet however Death will come at last.

And, Lord, how sorry a thing is this World to a dying Creature. The farther we draw off from any Object, the less doth it seem to our Eyes. The whole World is but a little *black Speck* to a Soul that is Sailing away, and hath begun to launch forth into the depths of Eternity.

'Tis true indeed, the Men of this World now call for Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, and during their Health and Ease, these things are instead of God to them; as Brass or Iron painted, or an empty Shell passes for Money among barbarous Nations: While times are calm and peaceable, Paper will pass for Money, but when 'tis otherwise what an universal Cry is there for Specie. The things of this Life while we are in Health and Peace, wonderfully captivate our Affections; Men are apt to be mighty fond of them, and greatly contented with them; but when a dying Hour comes, we shall then find that nothing will do our Business but an Interest in the Favour of God, and in the Blood of Christ, and the Hope of Eter-

Eternal Life. Death may be made more bitter to us, when he shall come to pluck and tear us away all at once from our dear Enjoyments, and when all our Treasures here below will not purchase one Inch of time, nor adjourn Death for a Moment when the appointed time is come.

Now lay all these things together, that the people of God have but little of the things of this Life; that if they had never so much of them they can only gratifie the worser part of them, cannot improve or satisfie their Souls; that there are many Miseries wherein the things of this World can yield them no relief; that they are all empty and hollow things when a dying Hour comes: And hence it follows, it had been a mighty Blemish in the Covenant of Grace, if Eternal Blessings had not been promised in it.

2. If there had been no promise of Eternal Blessings, the *Spiritual* Blessings of the Covenant had been little valuable.

This will appear if the following things be considered.

(1.) 'Tis Heaven that gives the chiefest value to all the *Spiritual* Blessings of the Covenant.

This is the main Jewel in the Crown of Life; all the other indeed, this being supposed, are like little sparkling Gems,

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that give a lustre to the whole, but without this, they would be dark and contemptible things. Grace is a most desirable Privilege, but chiefly on this account, because 'tis the Pledge and beginning of Eternal Glory. These are but rude Draughts, but imperfect Strokes. You take away the main thing out of Justification and Pardon, if you consider it only as a Privilege whereby we are delivered from eternal Wrath; 'tis one of the bright Steps that leads to the Celestial Throne above, and therefore is chiefly valuable.

Adoption without this would be but an idle thing: For there is nothing done to the People of God in this World that doth in the least answer and come up to that great Expression of their being the *Children of God, and if Children then Heirs of God, and joint Heirs of Christ.*

Fellowship and Communion with God is a sweet and most desirable thing indeed, but 'tis chiefly on this account, that 'tis the Earnest of what we shall have above; when we shall drink freely at the Fountain Head of those pure Pleasures, a few drops of which are so infinitely sweet to our Taste now.

'Tis this that lies at the bottom of peace of Conscience, makes it flower up and run over into the joy of the Holy Ghost.

Ghost. *Being justified by Faith, we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* That we shall hereafter be made partakers of it. And without this the main Spring that feeds the River would be stopped, and all the Streams would be dried up.

(2.) Not only so, but if there were no Eternal Mercies our Spiritual Blessings would but increase our Misery.

How black and gloomy a Thought would it be, if there were a just occasion for it, for a Child of God to be able to say thus with himself: The moral and legal Bar of access to God is removed indeed; I have an immortal Spirit that is capable of seeing and enjoying God for ever if he pleases; I have had a little taste of this that hath enkindled the desires of my Soul after him; I have seen a Beam of his reconciled Face and Favour, and, O Lord, how transporting was it to my Soul, it was the blessed Light of Life: O that I could but see the blessed Face of my God clearer, and behold it for ever. God hath spoken such things as hath raised my Hopes and confirmed my Faith: But after all there is no such a place as Heaven; I may dye the next Moment, and in a few days I must dye, and then my Eyes will be closed in everlasting Night and Darknes. I shall be capable

of enjoying God no more for ever, when a few days are rowled over my Head. O miserable Creature that I am, if this were indeed so. Then the more holy any Man is, and the more improved in the divine Life, so much the more miserable would he be ; then to enjoy God which is his present Happiness would be his Misery, Darkness would shine out of Light, and nothing but Salt and bitter Waters would flow from the Fountain of Good.

But God be thanked, there is no room for such melancholly Thoughts, Complaints, Suspicions, or Doubts. God hath given the highest assurances of Glory, Honour and Immortality to all his People, the Covenant comprehends Eternal Blessings in it. *The Lord God is a Sun and a Shield, the Lord will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.* This is a Golden Chain of Mercies, the several Links of which do run into, and have connection with one another ; take hold of the last and the rest will follow. The Lord God will give Glory, the last and highest Mercy. Will he give Glory ? then he must and will give Grace and further supplies of it ; because without Grace she shall never enter into Glory. And if he will give Glory and Grace in order to it, then this bountiful Lord God will

will be a Sun and Shield : A Sun to direct, and a Shield to defend us round about, or else our many Enemies would prove our death and ruin. And if he will be and give all this to his People, then 'tis plain to demonstration ; that no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

A word or two by way of Application, and so I shall conclude at this time.

1. Be perswaded to lay hold on this blessed Covenant of Grace, and do all that in you lies that your Children may do so too. By Prayers, by Instruction, by Counsel, by Admonition and holy Education, endeavour to bring them by their own personal consent into the Covenant of Grace, into which you entered them in Infancy ; and then you and they are happy beyond Expression, and to all Eternity.

2. Let us live like those that are Interested in this blessed Covenant.

The Moon is bright and fair, there are no Mists and Clouds ; its Body is of such a contexture, as not to send forth any such evil thing. But there is nothing like this in this lower World. Abundance of Vapours are steaming up every day, and no wonder they knit in Clouds and break forth in Thunder upon us, no wonder the

Air is sometimes darkened and the Tempest arises. Sin is in us while we are in this World, and the black Vapour is proceeding forth every day, and no wonder if it be sometimes Cloudy and Stormy with us too.

But now if we are in Covenant with God we may be peaceable and quiet within, for God, even our *own God*, will bless us: 'Tis God, even our *own God*, does correct us, and he will take off the Edge of the Affliction.

A wretched King once said; Had he been by when God made the World, he would have taught him how to have mended it in many particulars: And since his days we have had some *learned Fools*, that pretend to go very Mathematically to work, and a great many Errors have they found in the divine Workmanship. They don't like the roughness of the surface of the Earth, the Hills and Mountains, the inequality of the Seasons of the Year; they mightily dislike the gaping Chanal of the Sea, the broken Cliffs and the naked Shore cut into many irregular Angles.

But now they that have been such wise Philosophers have been guilty of gross Mistakes and not God. For if the Earth had been as smooth as these Men would have had it, we should then have wanted
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the fruitful Valleys, the plentiful Springs, and a great many precious Metals. In short, all manner of Navigation and Commerce had been utterly ruined to the prejudice of Mankind.

When we are under the Wheel, and pressed with a weight of heavy Afflictions, how apt are we to cry out ; Why so many broken and rough Steps in my way, why so many Breaches made in my Health, that create me so much trouble, and give so great an interruption to the Business of Life : But surely we are not altogether so Ignorant as we would make our selves. Look into thy Heart, Man, and thou wilt be quickly able to answer this Question thy self.

But I demand whether thou hast an Interest in the Covenant of Grace, Yea or No ? If not, thou hast reason to turn the stream of thy Complaints into another Channel : I have heard of the Covenant of Grace, and the great Blessings of it ; but my Soul is like to be miserable for ever, or I am very doubtful whither I shall ever be the better for them or no. If it be thus with thee after all the Sabbaths and Sacraments thou hast enjoyed, what reason hast thou to weep over thy own Soul.

But if indeed thou art interested in the Covenant, and this is cleared up to thy

Soul, thou art a happy Man how many
foever thy Miseries are. If thou dost be-
think thy self thou wilt say; As much
Poverty and Affliction as I am in, yet
would I not exchange my Condition with
the greatest Monarch on Earth. Tho'
thou art sunk down never so low, yet
thou art highly favoured of the Lord,
and shall have the Divine Presence conti-
nually with thee; whoever fails, God
hath said, he will *never fail*: He hath said,
My Grace is sufficient for thee. As per-
plexed as thy Affairs be, yet *all things*
shall work together for good. As miry as
the way is, yet chear up, there is a Hea-
ven of Eternal Glory in full view. *Why*
then art thou cast down, O my Soul, why
art thou thus sinfully and foolishly disqui-
eted within me? The Storm will drive
me the sooner to the Harbour, I shall
quickly enter upon my Eternal Rest. And
then, and not till then, shall we fully
understand the Beauty, the Wisdom and
Order of the Covenant of Grace, and the
Happines of those that are interested in
it. Glory, Honour and Praise be given
to God and to the Lamb for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON VIII.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, altho' he make it not to grow.

THE Doctrine that lies before us from these Words is this.

Such is the Nature and Properties of the Covenant of Grace, that an Interest in it will give a Man Relief and Comfort under all Afflictions, whither Personal or Family ones.

I have treated of the Nature of the Covenant, and waving others, have fixed on this particular Property of it: That 'tis a Covenant well and wisely *ordered* in all things, *i. e.* 'Tis so contrived in all the parts of it, that they have a natural tendency effectually to promote the great Ends of the Covenant, which are the Glory of God, the Honour of Christ,
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the Duty and Comfort, and Happiness of Man.

I have proved that the Covenant of Grace is thus well Ordered.

1. As to the Mediator of it.

2. As to the Blessings promised in it.

I must now prove the same.

3. As to the Terms required by it.

Now this being a matter of some Difficulty and of very great Moment, I must,

- I. I. State and prove it. And
- II. II. Shew the good Order of the Covenant in settling this matter.

- I. I. For the stating and proving the Point. Take it briefly in these following Particulars.

1. I do not now speak of the first inherent saving Grace, the new Heart and the new Spirit; but only of the following Blessings of the Covenant, *viz.* Pardon and Justification here, and eternal Glory hereafter.

2. By the Terms of the Covenant, I mean not any thing performed by us in our own strength; or that has any thing of Merit in it, or is a valuable Consideration: But I mean something required of us, which if by God's Grace it be wrought in us, and done by us, we shall be Pardoned, Justified and Saved for the sake of
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of Christ alone ; but if it be not wrought in us, or done by us, we shall not partake of these Blessings of the Covenant.

3. There are some Terms or other.

There is indeed no express mention of them in that passage of the Apostle. But Heb. 3. 10. then we must consider, that not the Form and Tenour, but the Nature and Quality, Vertue and Effects of the Covenant are there described : But then 'tis implied, that there are some Terms, as there are other places where they are laid down, because 'tis a Covenant, and because 'tis the peculiar Advantage of those that are in this Covenant ; that they shall not break it, and that he will give them Grace and Strength to fulfil it. Now there would be no danger of our breaking it, nor any need of Divine Grace to fulfil it, if there were no Terms to be either broken or kept.

4. Faith and Repentance are the Terms of Justification and Pardon, and a course of holy sincere Obedience is the Condition of our Glorification.

A Man that Believes shall be Justified ; but till he do so the *Wrath of God abides upon him.* *If a Man forsake his evil ways and thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, he will have mercy and abundantly pardon.* *If we do not repent, we shall all likewise perish.* *If a Man be overtaken with a fault*
and

and then *confess* his Sin, *God is faithful and just to forgive his sin*; and if we apply our selves to Christ our *Advocate*, the condemning Sentence shall not pass upon us. *If we thro' the Spirit mortifie the deeds of the Body we shall live; but if we live after the Flesh we shall die. He that endureth to the end shall be saved, but if any Man drawback his Soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

I do not say, that these Terms are of the same nature; Repentance is only the disposing Condition for Pardon, and Obedience for Salvation; without which the Persons were not meet for so great Blessings: But Faith is the receiving Condition. It hath a peculiar relation to Christ and his Righteousness, Death and Merits; 'tis a practical acknowledging of them, and trusting to them, by and thro' the doing of which we are justified.

5. Tho' I state Faith to be a Condition of Justification, yet I don't say 'tis no more than so, nor that Faith and Repentance are in all respects of the same Use in our Justification.

Faith and Repentance are not in all respects of the same Use. Repentance is the less Principal, Faith the more noble Condition. Repentance only disposeth the Person, and removes that which renders him unmeet for such a Blessing;
Faith

Faith is the receiving Condition, by which we are actually invested.

Faith hath that relation to Christ that no other Grace hath, and may, besides the Notion of a Condition, be called the *Instrumental Means* whereby we apprehend and receive the Righteousness and Merits of Christ, by and for which Righteousness and Merits of his, we are justified in the sight of God by vertue of his Word and Promise.

These things being premised, I come to shew,

II. That with respect to the Terms of Justification, or Pardon and Eternal Life. II. The Covenant is wisely and well ordered. This I shall endeavour to evince by the following Considerations.

1. These Terms are not derogatory from the free Grace of God or the Merits of Christ.

They are required of fallen Creatures, who, if they had had their due, had been destroyed for their Breach of the first Covenant, and if rich Grace had not interposed, had never had any new Terms propounded to them.

These are not such Terms but that even then we might be condemned by strict Justice, and they would not at all avail us, were it not for God's gracious acceptance and the Merits and Intercession of Christ

Christ. 'Tis by the free Grace of God procured for us by Christ, that we are enabled to perform them. And they are neither in whole nor in part that Price by which deliverance from Death or right to Pardon and eternal Life, is purchased. They are only the *Means* which God hath appointed to be used by us, that we may receive those Blessings and Benefits which Christ alone hath purchased for us. They are only Means whereby we obtain and preserve an Interest in Christ's imputed Righteousness, for the sake of which imputed Righteousness alone it is that we are justified and pardoned; have a Right given and continued to us to Eternal Glory, and at last have the actual possession of it.

So that tho' we are said *to buy*, 'tis in a very improper Sense, for 'tis *without Money and without Price*; and all is given to us. We *take of the Water of Life* freely. So that the Crown of Glory is still kept on the Head of free Grace, and in all things Christ *hath the Preheminence*.

Sure I am, that the Scripture speaks of the necessity of Repentance, as very fairly consistent with the free Grace of God:

2 Chron
30. 9: *For if you turn again unto the Lord, your Brethren and your Children shall find compassion before them that lead them Captive, so that they shall come again into this Land.*

For

For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his Face from you, if you return to him.

And if Repentance had been inconsistent with the Merits of Christ. He would never have ordered his Apostles to have preached *Repentance and Remission of sins* Luke 24: *in his Name.* And the Apostle Paul 47. tells us; *Therefore it is by Faith that it* Rom. 4. *might be by Grace.* And Heaven is set 16. forth as a *Reward*, and yet 'tis an *Inheritance* too, and *Eternal Life is the gift of God thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.*

And if this were not so, it would be a great Sin to *believe* that we may be justified; to *repent* that we may be pardoned; to *bow to the Spirit*, that of the Spirit we may reap *everlasting Life*: For 'tis a great Sin to do any thing that derogates from the free Grace of God, and the Merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. These are Terms by which Man is exceedingly humbled.

For what is Faith, but the flight of a convinced Sinner, who hath ruined and undone himself to the Mercy of God and the Merits of Christ, as the only way whereby he can be saved from the Wrath to come.

And as Faith is a self emptying and humbling Grace, so is Repentance too. For what is it to Repent, but to cast our
selves

selves at the Foot of God ; to lye in the Dust before him ; to abhor our selves, to confess our Madness ; bewailing our Folly ; condemning our selves as utterly unworthy his Favour, and deserving his Wrath and Vengeance ; humbly engaging to do so no more.

'Tis a very hard thing to bring a proud Spirit to do this with reference to his fellow Creature, whom he hath notoriously wronged. And now that all our Resolutions are founded on Divine Grace, and all the Obedience we perform by strength derived from Christ and the acceptance of it owing to his Death and Intercession, this is a further Mortification. Hereby God and Christ are greatly glorified, and Man is deeply abased.

3. These Terms are as low as could rationally have been expected.

No doubt but it would have been Grace, and free Grace too, if God had promised to pardon and save every impenitent, notorious and disobedient Wretch ; but there is no such Grace in God, nor is it reasonable to suppose there should be.

Supposing the Doctrine of our Redemption by the Death of Christ, who can imagine but that Faith in him must be required of us ? This was so noble an Instance of his Obedience to the Father, and of his Love to God and the Souls of Men,

Men, that for this Reason he could not but be exceeding precious in his sight. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my Life for my sheep. This Commandment have I received of my Father.* Now had it been consistent with this to have bestowed his Glorious Blessings upon those that continue to slight and undervalue him as every Unbeliever doth.

Nor can we reasonably imagine but that God should insist upon Repentance as necessary to Pardon, and Obedience to Eternal Salvation. To have done otherwise had been inconsistent with the Authority of God, would have destroyed the Credit of his Laws and weakned his Government. It would have encouraged Sin, and weakned and contradicted one of the great Ends of Christ's Death; which was to evidence the Purity and Holiness of the Divine Nature, and his Irreconcilable hatred to Sin; to amend and reform the World, save Men from their Sins, and destroy the Works of the Devil in their Souls.

A little Brief Reflection by way of Application on what hath been said, shall close this Discourse.

I. Examine your selves whither you are interested in the Blessings of the Covenant of Grace, by enquiring whither you have complied with the Terms thereof, Yea or No. S 'Tis

'Tis the height of Folly and Madnefs, to be unconcerned about a matter of fo great Moment ; or to take up with vain and groundlefs confidence.

If you ask me, How fhall I know this ?
I Answer,

Obferve the ufual Frame and Temper of your Spirits ; and the ordinary Drift and Scope of your Lives, whether you walk and act like Penitent, Believing, Obedient Perfons, Yea or No.

Can you go from day to day, and no Humbling of your Souls before God for Old and New Sins ; no Hatred of them, and Loathing your felves for them ?

Are there no thoughts of Chrift, no fresh acts of confenting to him and relying upon him ? do you think it enough to remember him upon the Monthly returns of a Sacrament, and forget and live as without him, all the fpace between.

Is there any Sin you prevailingly regard and love in your heart, and are ever now and then knowingly and willfully guilty of ?

Is there any Duty Personal or Relative, towards God, your felves or others, that you live in the frequent, willful, lazy, known neglect of ?

How is it with you as to your darling Sin, fuch as the bent of your Natures, your Constitution and Temper ; or your

your Business and Employment do most of all incline you to? How stands it with you in reference to what the Scripture calls the *Plague of a Mans own Heart*, and his *own Iniquity*? Is this amended? and do you get ground of it? or doth it ever now and then break in upon you and prevail over you?

How is it with you as to that particular *Branch* of that Duty which you have been naturally most avers to? Are you still Negligent, Careless, Lazy and Sloathful here, often omitting against the plain Rule of God's Word, the reiterated Dictates of Conscience and of the Spirit of God?

If so, however Conscience may be a Sleep, and you may have your Pleasant Dreams, while you are in Health and Strength, and your Thoughts diverted with the Business and Pleasures of Life; You will certainly be in very great Straights of Soul, when once you are throughly Awakened, and a Dying Hour comes.

2. Sincerely comply with these Terms of the Covenant if you have not yet done it.

If any ask; but what can we do in order hereunto.

I Answer,

Give your selves much to Consideration and Prayer.

Consider the Blessings of the Covenant, Pardon of Sin, Acceptance with God and Eternal Life and Glory : Things of such Inestimable value, that you cannot but earnestly Covet, and think nothing too much that you may be possesst of them.

And then consider the necessity of performing the Terms, that you may not miss of these Priviledges and Blessings ; otherwise then so, you cannot expect them and shall never have them.

And all this will make you thoughtful and serious, and earnestly Cry to God, that he would grant you Repentance unto Life, and work the work of Faith with power in you, and that through his strengthning of you, you may be enabled to do all things.

And don't defer this to an Old Age, a Sick Bed, or an uncertain hereafter. If these things are difficult now, they will be more so hereafter, when your hearts by length of Time and frequent Practice, are much hardened in Sin.

And what is your Life ? 'tis but a Vapour. How can you tell you shall have a long lingring Sickness of it, and not be cut off with a sudder stroke. Some Houses moulder away by little and little, and one stone is pluck'd away after another ; but some too fall flat on the ground in a Moment.

And

And how many Diseases are you subject too, which may stupifie all the Powers of your Soul, and take away the use of your Reason in whole or in part. 'Tis a dismal thing to have this work to do when your Heads are clouded, your Understandings scattered, your Memories broken, your Conscience terrified, and the Thoughts of God and of Eternity overwhelm and distract you, and your thoughts so confused, that you cannot knit two of them together in an orderly manner.

And who can assure you of the Grace of God, if it be now neglected by you? You may as soon command the Winds to blow, as him to move as you list; and yet without him, you may as soon remove Mountains, as comply with the Terms of the Covenant. *Behold now is the accepted time, this is the day of Salvation. In this your day, know the things that belong to your Eternal Peace.*

3dly, and Lastly. To those that have complied with the Terms of the Covenant, and have an Interest in it. Be thankful. Be careful you don't break Covenant with God. Be comforted under all your Sorrows and Troubles of what nature and kind soever. Be contented, though your Lot and Portion in this World be never so mean.

Very faint, illegible text, possibly bleed-through or a very faded page. Some words like "which" and "the" are barely discernible.

A Brief
DISCOURSE
 OF
Infant-Baptism;

Delivered at the *Public Baptism* of
 an **INFANT**,

A T

Kingston upon Thames;

June 23. 1700.

Beloved in our Lord,

Being desired to Baptize the Child
 of my Friend and your Pastor ;
 before I do so, I shall speak some-
 what, as briefly and as clearly as I can,
 for the justifying our Practice of *Infant*
Baptism : Which I shall do in the four
 following Heads or Considerations.

Consideration I.

No Man pretends, that 'tis written in
so many Words in the Scripture, that the
 Infants of Believers are to be Baptiz'd,

All that we say in the Case is this, *viz.* We can prove by *just Consequence* from the Scriptures, that 'tis the Mind and Will of Christ, that their Infants should be Baptized. And this we think to be sufficient for these Two Reasons.

Reason 1. Because Christ himself thought this to be *sufficient*, for the Proof of a Matter of greater Moment than *Infant-Baptism*; *viz.* A Fundamental Article of Faith, the *Resurrection* of the just and unjust; which as you will find in *Mat. 21. 31, 32.* he doth not prove against the *Sadduces* who denied it, by producing any Text of Scripture, wherein it was written in *so many Words* or *Syllables*, that there shall be a *Resurrection*: He goes another way to work. He proves it

Exod. 3. 6. 3. by *Consequence* from that Scripture, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* How many *Consequences* are necessary, to prove the *Resurrection* of all Men from these Words? *viz.* (1.) That the *Souls* of *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, are yet in Being; because he does not say, *I was*, but *I am* their God. (2.) That this Expression of being *their God*, doth imply, his being engaged to manifest himself some time or other, to be their *Benefactor* in an Eminent Manner; that he will do something for them, far better than for any other Men. (3.) That he

he did not fully manifest himself to be so very great a Benefactor to them, while they were in this World. As to Temporal Blessings many others exceeded them; *Pharaoh* for Instance. All that he did for them, fell vastly short of what that *Big* Expression, *I am their God*, doth import. (4.) That therefore he will fill it up in another state, which is yet to come. (5.) That in order thereunto, they shall rise from the dead, that they may be completely happy in Body and Soul. For he is a God not of a *Piece* only, but of their *whole* Persons; and therefore their *Whole* Man, Body as well as Soul, shall be made exceedingly happy. (6.) If *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob* rise again; so shall other Men, to whom also the Most High is peculiarly related as their God. (7.) If the Righteous rise again, so shall the *Wicked*. And therefore there shall be a Resurrection of the just and unjust.

All these Consequences must be drawn, to make good our Saviour's Proof of a *Fundamental* Article of Faith. We don't need so long a *Train* of Consequences to prove the Lawfulness and Duty of Baptizing our Infants (as you shall see by and by) though if we did, we have the Warrant of our Saviour's Example, who took this Method for Establishing a Point of much greater Concern.

Reason

Reason 2. Our Adversaries themselves do the same, when they *Oppose* Infant-Baptism ; as we do, when we contend for it. They don't pretend to bring any place of Scripture, wherein 'tis written in just so many *Words and Syllables*, that Infants are *not* to be Baptized : But they endeavour to prove it *by Consequence* : Or else there could be no Arguing or Dispute about the matter. If they argue from Consequences *against* Infant-Baptism ; we must not be blamed for doing the same *for* it. The *Method* and Way of Proceeding is the same on Their Side and Ours. This may suffice for the *First Consideration*. I proceed to

Consideration II.

The turning Point of this Controversie lies here, *viz.* Are our Infants within the Covenant, are they the visible Members of Christ's Church or Kingdom ; Yea, or No ? And I beseech you to take *special Notice* of this ; whether we are not able to make good these **Two Things**.

1. That our Infants are within the Covenant, are visible Members of Christ's Church or Kingdom. And,

2. That IF they are, then they have a Right to Baptism.

1. That

1. That our Infants are within the Covenant, and are the Visible Members of Christ's Church or Kingdom. That the Infants of Believers were so of Old, is not denied. That those were Privileges cannot be question'd. None has ever yet produced any Scripture to prove, that they are repealed. Yea, on the contrary, there are many Passages in the New Testament; whence it will appear, that these Ancient Priviledges are continued to Us and Ours.

To name a Few,

Luke 18. 15, 16. *They brought unto him Infants, that he would touch them: but when his Disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, suffer Little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.* By the *Kingdom of God*, must be meant one of these two Things. Either,

(1.) The Gospel-Church: In which Sense, that Expression is often to be taken. Or,

(2.) The Future State of Glory.

Now let any take which of these two he pleases; if the *First*, viz. *The Gospel-Church*; then we have what we are pleading for, Infants belong to the Gospel-Church.

If

If the *Second*, viz. *The future State of Glory*; thence it will follow, that our Infants are within the Covenant, and belong to the Church and Kingdom of Christ here on Earth; for else they can't enter into Heaven. Had it been quite contrary to this; had it been written, that Christ was very *angry* with those, who *brought* little Children to him; and had he said, *Suffer them not to be brought unto me; for of such the Kingdom of Heaven is not*: I suppose, the *Anti-pedo-baptists* would have made great Improvement of it.

If our Infants are saved, it must be by some Covenant: If by some Covenant, it must be by the Covenant of Grace. (For by the Covenant of Works; all Flesh is condemned.) They can't be saved by the Covenant of Grace, if they are not within it; if it don't reach and extend to 'em.

If Infants dying in their Infancy are saved; they must belong to Christ's Church which is his Body. For he is the Head, and actually a Saviour to none, but those who belong to him; who are his Members and Parts of his Body.

If they are not Members of Christ's Kingdom, then they are Members of the Devil's Kingdom. For the whole World is divided between these two. And can
any

any who are the Members of the Devil's Kingdom, so living, and so dying, be saved?

Again, That our Infants are within the Covenant, and Visible Members of Christ's Church and Kingdom; will appear from *Rom. 11. 17.* where the Apostle treating of the Rejection of the *Jews*, and the Calling of the *Gentiles*; has these remarkable Words: *If some of the Branches were broken off, (i. e. That part of the Jewish Church who rejected Christ, were Unchurch'd) And thou (who wast a Gentile) being a Wild Olive, wert grafted in among them; (viz. The believing Jews, who still retained their Ancient standing in the Church, and thou art added to 'em) and with them, partakest of the Root and Fatness, of the Olive-Tree.*

And then *ver. 20. Because of Unbelief they were broken off*; who are called *ver. 21. The Natural Branches.* And *ver. 24.* 'tis said of them, that upon their Conversion, they shall again *be grafted into their own Olive-Tree.* Now the great Enquiry here will be, what the Apostle means by the *Olive-Tree.*

They who oppose Infant-Baptism say, hereby is meant the *Invisible Church.* Now the *Invisible Church* is the Company of the Elect, that have been, are, or shall be sanctified and finally saved.

On the contrary We say, by the *Olive-Tree* is meant the *Visible Church*. Now the *Visible Church* is a Company of People, who profess the True Religion ; some whereof do it in Sincerity, but others of 'em are not sincere in the Profession of it.

And that by the *Olive-Tree* is meant, not the *Invisible*, but the *Visible Church* will appear : Because,

The Apostle speaks of such an *Olive-Tree*, whereof the *Jews* were *Natural*
Ver. 21. Branches. Now no Man is by *Nature* (but by meer *Grace*) a Member of the *Invisible Church*.

And the Apostle speaks of such an *Olive-Tree*, whence some of the Branches
Ver. 20. were *broken off* : Now no Man is broken off from the *Invisible Church* : The
Rom. 11. *Election of God shall obtain* ; the purpose
7. *of God according to Election shall stand.*
Rom. 9. All such shall be finally saved.
11.

Again, The Apostle speaks of such an *Olive-Tree*, from which, the Generality of the *Jews* were broken off : Now no Man will say, that the Generality of the *Jewish Nation* in our Saviour's Days, were Members of the *Invisible Church* ; *i. e.* were real Saints or Regenerate Persons.

These Considerations shew, that by the *Olive-Tree* is meant the *Visible Church*.

Now

Now do but Observe the Arguments drawn hence, for proving our Infants being within the Covenant, and Visible Members of the Church. *viz.*

First, The Apostle saith, only that *some* of the Branches, *i. e.* of the *Jews*, *Ver. 17.* were broken off ; and that it was for *Unbelief*. The Believing *Jews* therefore *Ver. 20.* were not broken off, but retained their Ancient Standing in the Church. And so did their Infants. For if their Infants wore broken off, it must be for *Unbelief* ; which is the only cause assigned by the Apostle. If they were broken off for *Unbelief*, it must be for their own *Unbelief* ; or, for that of their *Parents*. For their *own* *Unbelief* it could not be, because by reason of their tender Age, they were not capable of committing the Sin of Rejecting Jesus Christ. For their *Parents* *Unbelief* it could not be, because we speak only of the *Children* of such *Jews*, whose *Parents* did believe on Christ ; when he was Preached to them.

Now if the Infants of the believing *Jews*, were continued Members of the Christian Church ; our Infants are Members of it too. For there is no Difference under the Gospel, between *Jew* and *Gentile*.

Secondly,

Secondly, We Gentiles are grafted in among the Natural Branches, and with them partake of the Root and Fatness of the Olive-Tree : i. e. Believers under the New Testament, do as amply and fully partake of Covenant Blessings and Privileges, as Believers under the Old Testament did ; of which this was one very valuable One, that their Children were Members of the Visible Church, were within the Covenant ; the Most High promised (and a great Promise it is) I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed.

Gen. 17.
7.

Thirdly, The Jews upon their Conversion, shall be grafted in again into their own Olive-Tree. How can that be, if their Church-state then, shall be so very different from what it formerly was ; their Children being then to be left out, who were formerly taken in ?

In short, the unbelieving Jews and their Children were broken off ; when the Jews shall be Converted, they and their Children shall be taken in again. Believing Jews and their Children kept their Ancient Standing ; and Believing Gentiles and their Children are taken in among them ; share in the Privileges which the one are continued in, and which the other lost ; i. e. They and their

†

their Children are Church-Members, and within the Covenant.

Which is further proved from that known Passage, 1 Cor. 7. 14. *Else were your Children unclean, but now are they Holy.* Which can't be understood of a Holiness by real *Regeneration*, or the Infusion of Gracious Principles. Alas! Too many Children, that are descended from Pious Parents, give plain Evidence that they are not Born of God. Nor can it be meant of *Matrimonial Holiness*, as the Opposers of Infant-Baptism speak; and so they make this to be the Sense of the Place; *viz. Else were your Children unclean; i. e. say they, they were Bastards: But now are they Holy; i. e. say they, are Lawfully begotten.*

This Exposition can't be right; for this would be to make the Apostle say, that if at least One of the Parents be not a Christian, then all the Children are Bastards: which is not true. For Marriage is Honourable among *ALL*, Heathens as well as Christians. And if the Parents are Married, whether they be Believers or no, their Children are Legitimate, and can't be said to be *basely* born. It must therefore be meant of a Fœderal or Covenant-Holiness.

Heb. 13:
14.

These are some (and but a few) of the Arguments our Divines produce. But then

T

then

then Observe what 'tis they are brought for ; Not to prove *Immediately*, that Infants are to be *Baptized*. These Arguments *Immediately* and *Directly* prove no more than this; that our Infants are *within the Covenant* ; Holy by a *Covenant-Holiness*, as the whole Nation of the *Jews* were ; separated to be the Visible People of God, Subjects of his Kingdom, Members of his House and Family. Now this being proved in the *First Place*, Hence our Divines argue by just Consequence in the

Second Place, That IF our Infants are thus within the Covenant, and are Visible Members of Christ's Church and Kingdom ; (which hath been proved) That, Hence it follows, they have a Right to Baptism.

Circumcision, while it was the Initiating Sign of the Covenant, was *for that Reason* applied to Infants. Now Baptism doth succeed in the room of Circumcision, and should be applied to our Infants, if they are within the Covenant (as it hath been proved they are.)

Colof, 2.
11, 12.

Go and Teach, (or rather, as the Word by the consent of all Parties doth signifie, and should be Translated) *Go and Disciple* all Nations, Baptizing them, &c. *Mat.* 28. 19. If our Infants are *Disciples*, they must thereupon be *Baptized*.

If they are Christ's Soldiers, they must by this Ordinance be listed under him as their Captain. If they are his Subjects, they must be declared to be such by Baptism, which is the External distinguishing Badge between his Subjects, and those who are not so. *Acts 2. 38. 39. Be baptized every one of you: For the Promise is to you and to your Children.* The Parents are required to be Baptized for this Reason, *because the Promise is to them*; but the Promise reaches to the *Children* too; and therefore *they* also are to be Baptized. And 'tis Observable, the Apostle don't say the Promise *WAS*, but the Promise *IS* to you and to your Children. So much for that *Second Consideration* that the *Turning-Point* of this Controversie lies here, *viz.* Are our Infants within the Covenant, are they the Visible Members of Christ's Church or Kingdom; Yea, or No?

Be sure you mind and consider this.

Consideration III.

Distinguish between a Nation that never had the Gospel Preached to 'em, having always been Heathens; and a Nation to whom the Gospel hath for many Ages been Preached, the Inhabitants having for several Generations been professed Christians.

Between a People who have never yet owned Christ ; and a People that have owned him. In the former case (which was the case of those to whom the Apostles first Preached) *We* would exhort Persons to Repent and Believe, and upon their Profession of both these, we would Baptize them. But then we would also Baptize their Infants. Requiring this Profession of the Parents before Baptism, doth not prove that *WE* would not Baptize their Infants. Therefore neither did the Apostles requiring this Profession, prove *They* were against Infant-Baptism. They Preach'd to the *Jews*, who had not yet owned Christ ; and to *Heathens*, who had not heard of him before ; and to Persons grown up ; and therefore we read of Believing put before Baptizing. But Christ hath been known, owned and professed in *England* for many Ages. Our Parents before we had a Being were Disciples, and We were *Born Disciples by the Covenant*, and so had a Right to the Seal of that Covenant which is Holy Baptism ; *without any fore-going Teaching*. The Time *When*, the Manner *How*, we come to be Disciples, is not material : Whether by the Fore-going Teaching of a Minister, or by God's special and peculiar Vouchsafement. *Ananias* finding *Paul* a *Disciple*, he Baptized him, tho' no Man had by *Teaching* made him so. In

In *Lev. 25. 41, 42.* God calls Children his *Servants*. If Children are God's *Servants*, though for the present, they can't do any *Work*; why may they not be *Disciples*, though for the present they can't learn any *Lesson*?

Now this *Work of Discipling* the Infants of Professed Christians being done to our Hands, we treat them as *Disciples*, and lay a further Engagement on them to be such; first by *Baptizing* them; and afterwards as they grow up, and are capable of it, by *Teaching* them: And so we keep closer to the Commission in *Mat. 28. 19.* than they who oppose *Infant-Baptism*; for we observe the very *Order* of the Words, which they do not.

Consideration IV.

The other Objections against *Infant-Baptism* have no Weight with them, because of one of these Two Faults in 'em. Either,

(1.) They would have held as well against *Infant-Circumcision*.

Or else,

(2.) They will as well hold against *Infant's-Salvation*.

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(1.) They

(1.) They would have held as well against *Infant-Circumcision*. Such as these,
 Why do you Baptize Infants, *They don't know what's done to them?*

To which 'tis replied, our Infants when they are Baptized, are not more ignorant what's done to them, than the Infants of the *Jews* were, when they were Circumcised.

Again, say they, Baptism is the Sign and Seal of the Covenant; why do you Baptize *Infants who can't understand the Covenant, much less consent to it?*

To which 'tis replied, Circumcision was
 Rom. 4. the Sign and Seal of the Covenant also; and the *Jewish* Children could no more understand or consent to the Covenant than Ours; and yet they were Circumcised; and our Children may be Baptized for any thing in this Objection.

Not to add, that the Consent of the Parent goes for that of the Infant. How often do Men in their Leases and Covenants, bind their Children, who neither do know, nor are capable at that time of knowing any thing of the Matter? In *Deut.* 29. 10, 11, 12. Their *Little Ones* are entred into Covenant with God.

Again, say they, the End of Baptism is, that *Gospel-Duties, Privileges and Mysteries*, might be represented by that
 Figure

Figure to the Eye, *viz.* Dying to Sin, and rising to Newness of Obedience ; 'tis a Sign of Repentance, and Regeneration, and Faith. Why then do you Baptize *Infants*, who can't understand the meaning of that Sign, or what is represented by Baptizing ? and give no Proofs of their Repentance, or Regeneration, or Faith ?

To this 'tis replied, that Circumcision represented Regeneration, Mortification and Purity of Heart (whence Sanctification is set forth by Circumcising the Heart) And the *Jewish* Infants did no more understand, what was signified and represented by Circumcision, than our Infants do what is represented by Baptism ; and gave no more Proofs of Mortification and Regeneration than our Infants do ; yet the *Jews* Infants were on other Accounts Circumcised, and so may ours be Baptized for all that.

Though Baptism be not actually a *Teaching* Sign for the present to our Infants, no more than Circumcision was to the Infants of the *Jews* ; yet Baptism is at present a *Distinguishing* Sign, and an *Engaging* One ; whereby they are distinguish'd from the Children of Heathens, and obliged to the Duties of the Covenant ; and may be of great Use to them, when they come to Years of Understanding. As Circumcision was a Distinguishing

ing and Engaging Sign to the Infants of the Jews ; and of great Service to them when they were grown up.

(2.) Other Objections against Infant-Baptism, if they have not this Fault, that they would as well hold against Infant-Circumcision, they have another as bad and worse ; viz. They would as well hold against *Infants Salvation*. Take for Instance that Objection, about which so great a Noise is made ; viz. 'Tis written, *He that believeth and is baptized*, Mark 16. 16. Now say they, *Infants can't believe* ; therefore they ought not to be *Baptized*.

To this 'tis replied, read the Verse out, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned*. Now if there be any thing in their Arguing, Infants can't believe, and therefore they should not be Baptized ; it would as well follow, *Infants can't Believe, and therefore they shall not be saved*.

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the
RIGHT HONOURABLE
Sir *JOHN SHORTER* Knt.

Lord - Mayor

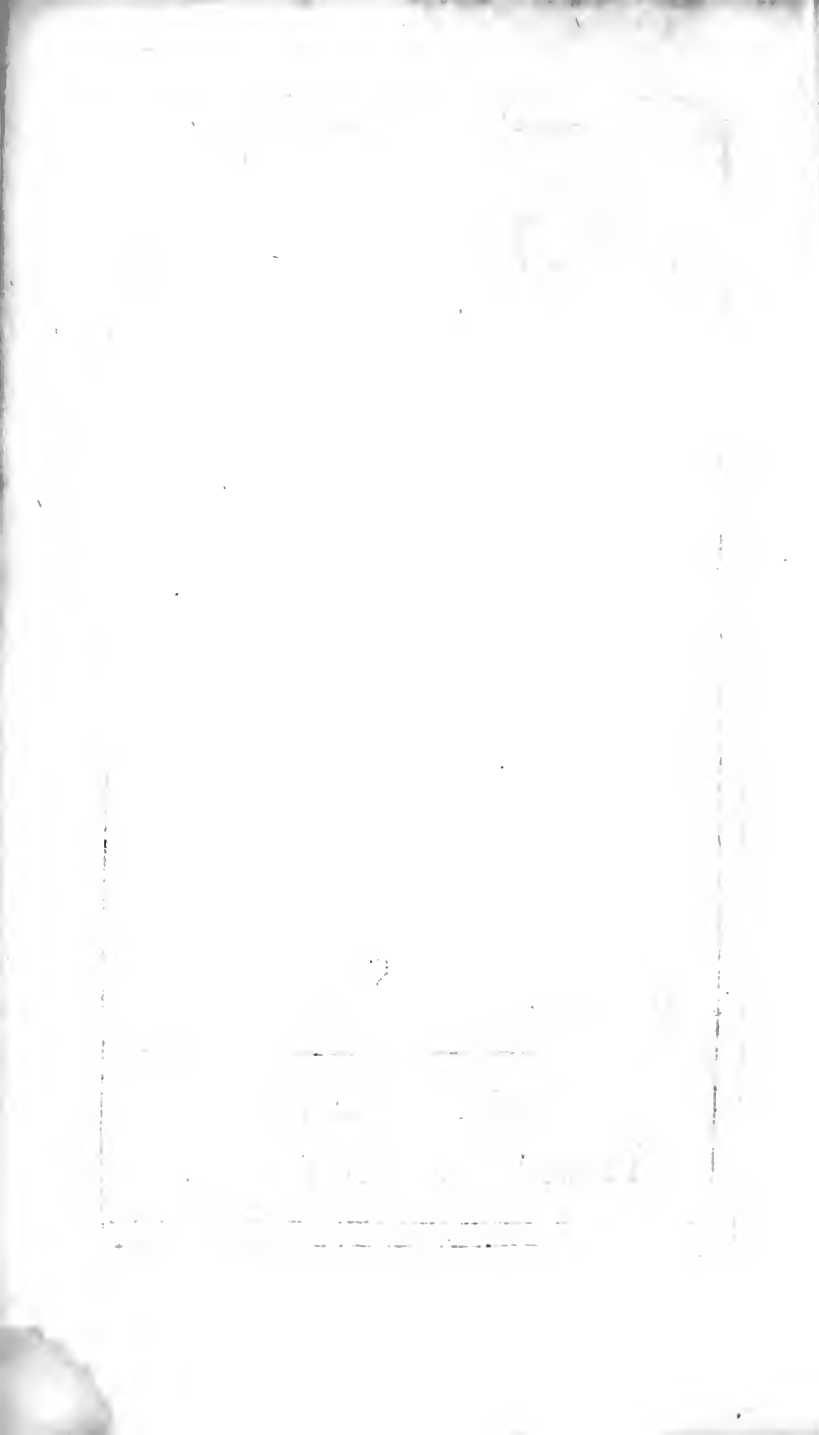
OF THE
CITY of *LONDON*;
A T
GROCERS - HALL,

February the 12th, 1687.

By *Nathanael Taylor.*

Published by his Lordships Command.

L O N D O N,
Printed in the Year 1703.



To the Right Honourable
Sir JOHN SHORTER Knt.

Lord - Mayor
OF THE
CITY of LONDON.

MY LORD,

HAD I been at liberty to have followed
*my own Inclinations, the ensuing
Discourse had been thrown by, and
lain neglected in my own Study only. But
having received your Commands for the Pub-
lishing as well as the Preaching of it, I here
present it to your Lordship; being resolved
there shall be no defects in my Obedience,
how many soever there may be in my Sermon.
But it's not the design of this Dedication
to make Apologies, or which is another com-
mon place usually insisted on, write a Pane-
gyric. They are generally Hypocrites that
blow Trumpets before other Men, as well as
they that of old did it before themselves. If
you take care that your Works shall praise
you, and your own Conscience approve and
commend*

The Epistle Dedicatory.

commend you ; this will afford you a solid Satisfaction, when the good Words of Men only will no more comfort, than the Breath wherewith they utter them, will nourish you. And that your Lordship and your Honourable Brethren, may manage your Selves and all your Affairs in that Station wherein Providence hath set you, so as to secure this to your selves ; prevent the Reproaches of Conscience, and live down those of malicious Men ; that this great City and Religion may flourish under your prudent and just Administration, is and shall be the Daily Prayer of

MY LORD,

Your most Obedient

and Faithful Servant,

Nathanael Taylor,

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the
 RIGHT HONOURABLE
 THE
 Lord-Mayor, &c.

LUKE X. 21.

In that Hour Jesus rejoiced in Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

HE that shall seriously consider the many express Prophecies concerning the *Messiah*; the great and incredible Diligence wherewith every Iota and Tittle of them was preserved; and the general Expectation among all sorts of Men in *Judæa* of his Coming and Kingdom, about our Saviour's Time; would
 be

be apt to think, that our Lord would have been as joyfully welcomed and entertained by them, as the first Approaches of the Sun are by those that have been Buried in Darknes for many Months together in the remoter parts of the Earth : And that as he was usher'd into the World with the *Hallelujahs* of Angels, so he would have been received with the *Hosannas* of the Wisest of Men. But he that is in the least acquainted with the History of our Saviour, as recorded by all the Four Evangelists, will easily see, *John* 1. 11. that tho' he *came to his Own, yet his Own received him not* ; and that though when he went out of the World, the Dead indeed arose, as if they would present him with their Sepulchres ; yet as for the Living, while he was in the World, they would not afford him a Place wherein to lay his Head. He had indeed approved himself to be a Teacher sent from God ; for never did any Man speak the Words, or do the Things which he had done : and yet the Generality reject him, and especially the Sons of Wisdom and of Learning did most furiously oppose him. He opened the Eyes of the Blind, yet the Pharisees would not see the truth of his Doctrine. He cured the Dumb, but this was his Reward from the Scribes, he himself was spoken against. He unstop-
† ped

ped the Ears of the Deaf, but yet the Rulers would not hear him : He removed the Diseases of their Bodies, with greater ease than the Errors and Prejudices of their Minds. The *Spiritual Wickednesses* Ephes. 6. in those *high places*, were the only Evil ^{12.} Ones that would not be subject to him. Nay, as if those raging Devils which he had cast out of others, had entred into them, they Blaspheme and Revile him ; and their Doctors sate in the Chair of Scorners as well as in the Seat of *Moses*. Whilst they that followed him were few in number, mean and ignorant, despicable as well for their understanding, as for their quality. Both of which things were very popular prejudices, and mightily improved against him to discourage Men from owning and submitting to him. But yet our Blessed Lord was so far from being dejected and troubled in mind at this, that on the contrary, as the Evangelist tells us in the words I have now read, *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, &c.* wherein we have these five things.

1. The inward motion of Christ's Soul, and the external effect or expression of it, *He rejoiced in spirit* ; and such a passion must have some vent, makes him break silence, and with an audible voice *give thanks.*

2. The

2. The time when this happen'd, *Is that hour* ; which calls us to cast our Eye
Ver. 1. back on the foregoing Verses. And therein we find our Saviour sending forth his Seventy Disciples to Preach the Gospel, and giving them directions how to behave themselves towards those that received their Message, and those that rejected it.
From ver. 3, to 11. Then he upbraids and threatens the Cities of *Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum* for their impenitence under all those means of Grace which they enjoyed. And immediately upon this St. *Matthew* brings in our Saviour uttering the same words with those in my Text. But St. *Luke*, that gives us an account of our Saviour's using these expressions at a different time from what St. *Matthew* speaks of, inserts an account of the return of the Seventy Disciples, and their being puffed up with the success of their Ministry, because, not only Diseases, but *Devils* themselves were
Mat. 11. 25, 26. *Ver. 17.* *Ver. 17.* *subject to them.*

Our Saviour hereupon corrects that carnal joy, and turns this wandering stream into its right Channel, and directs them to rejoice in that which was a solid reason and foundation of joy, *viz.* because
Ver. 20. *their Names were written in Heaven.* And then he instructs them by his example, as he had done by his words ; for seriously reflecting upon that scorn and contempt

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where-

wherewith the Scribes and learned Pharisees rejected his Doctrine, and the meanness of them that embraced it ; *in that hour he rejoyced in spirit*, for that revelation of Divine Mysteries that God had made unto them, which he denied unto others.

3. The subject matter or reason of Christ's joy and thanksgiving, *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes.*

These things] *i. e.* the knowledge of thy self and me, (which he mentions in the next Verse) and those Mysteries of thy Kingdom which I have declared, and on which Eternal Salvation doth depend. Ver. 22.

Thou hast [hid] from some, *[revealed]* to others. By considering the latter of these words we shall the better understand the former of them. *Thou hast revealed them*] He doth not speak of an External Revelation ; for that was not the peculiar privilege of some few only, Christ having Preached them publickly and plainly in the Ears of all the People ; but of an Internal Revelation, enabling them in a Spiritual and Practical manner to apprehend those Divine Truths that were outwardly proposed to them. And consequently by the *hiding* these things from others, we must understand the denying them that special Grace which

V might

might open their minds to see the glory of Divine Mysteries, and their hearts to feel the transforming power of them ; leaving them to their own obstinate wilful ignorance, to the lusts of their own hearts, and the power of Satan to blind and harden them.

Thou hast hid these things *from the Wise and Prudent.*] Men of great Parts, worldly Wisdom, humane Learning, such as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were. And revealed them to *Babes*. The word properly signifies those that are young in years ; but being opposed to the *Wise and Prudent*, must be understood of those that are, as young Children use to be, weak in understanding ; as Christ's Disciples were.

4. The notion under which Christ directs his thanksgiving to his Father for this thing ; that of *Lord of Heaven and Earth* ; which is a title very suitable to the matter insisted on, and denotes his absolute Dominion, and his infinite Power. *q. d.* It was not for want of ability, or of right, that thou hast not done otherwise. Thou didst act like one who hadst all power in thy hand, in thus revealing these thy Mysteries unto *Babes* ; and by the same Almighty Power, couldst have shined into the hearts of the *Wise and Prudent*, who are thy Creatures also. But
thou

thou art at liberty to chuse or pass by according as seems good in thy own Eyes.

5. Christ's approbation of, and acquiescence in this dispensation, on this account, because it was the gracious pleasure of God. *Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

From the words thus open'd, many Doctrines might be raised; but I shall take notice of one only.

Doct. *The saving Revelation of Divine things is usually bestowed on mean and inferior persons, and denied to the wise and prudent that enjoy the same outward means with them.*

In the handling this Doctrine, I shall

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|---|------|
| I. Explain and confirm this Truth. | I. |
| II. Shew upon what account this was matter of Joy and Thanksgiving unto Christ. | II. |
| III. Apply all. | III. |

I. I shall explain and confirm this Truth. And here

i. *As to a notional Knowledge, Divine things are so far from being hid from the Wise and Prudent, that they are more fully understood by them: than any of these weaker ones.*

ones. Daily experience shews us, there are many of *the Disputers of this World* that have a more exact scheme of Divine Truths in their heads, than thousands of holy Souls. They have such an understanding of Divine Matters, as they have of Humane Arts and Sciences : Can talk accurately and learnedly about them to the reviving the hearts of some, and stopping the mouths of others. Indeed the great things of God and Christ, the Precepts, Promises, and Threatnings of the Word, have not that found in their ears, nor that holy influence on their hearts and lives as they have on many inferior persons. They do not see them with life and affection, they do not taste the sweetness, nor feel the power of them ; they have not the relish and savour of them on their spirits. They do not receive them with respect and veneration ; with that love, delight and holy obedience, as those of weaker capacities do. All the knowledge that is in them, is but like those Lamps that have been discovered in some Tombs ; still there are dead bones, stench and rottenness within, and there the Carcase lies dead and unactive in the very same place and posture, notwithstanding all that light that surrounds it.

2. *Wisdom*

2. *Wisdom and Prudence do not in themselves obstruct the saving Revelation of Divine Things, nor doth the want of them qualifie any for the receiving it.* Humane Wisdom and Learning are the Gifts of God, and the proper ornaments of our rational Faculties ; like a Crown of Flame to a burning Taper. And therefore so far are such excellent qualifications from hindring any in their own nature from an hearty embracing Christianity, that if we consider how plainly the Doctrines of the Gospel are revealed ; how undeniably they are proved to be from Heaven ; how excellently suited to the distressed state of an Apostate World ; with what exquisite Wisdom the whole is contriv'd to the Admiration of all the Glorious Angels ; how reasonable its commands are, how glorious its promises, how terrible its threatnings ; 'tis a very amazing thing that Men of Parts and Abilities to weigh and consider things, and discern their own Interest, should not readily entertain them. These noble things are not Obstructions to it *in themselves* ; but those Lusts, and that Pride that too generally accompany them, like rust cleaving unto Silver and Gold.

Nor doth the want of these qualifie any Man for saving Knowledge. Nay, on the contrary, it renders Men naturally

John 4.
11.

more unapt and uncapable, as well as more unworthy of it. As the Woman of *Samaria* said to our Saviour, *the Well is deep*; and the shorter the line is, so much the more unlikely it is in it self to reach to the bottom for the drawing up of living Waters. If any have the advantage, it should be Men of quick parts: for such generally take a thing presently, as spirits immediately catch fire; whereas things do not enter so easily, nor pierce so deeply into those that are naturally dull and slow of understanding. If *the Iron be blunt*, much pains must be taken in *whetting the edge*, or more *strength put forth* in the using it.

Ecc. 10.
10.

Acts 13.
7.

So the
most Ex-
cellent
Theo-
philus.
was a
Man of
rank vid.
Lightf.
Harm.
Vol 1.
p. 392.

Eph. 4.
21.

3. *The saving knowledge of Divine things is not denied to all that are wise and prudent, nor given to all inferior Persons.* Some renowned for Wisdom and Learning, have been of Christ's Retinue. Some curiously carved Pieces have been in our Father's House that have exceedingly grac'd and adorn'd it. Sacred Records inform us of *Joseph of Arimathea*, a rich Man, and an honourable Councillour; of *Nicodemus* a Master in Israel; of *Sergius Paulus* a prudent man; of a profoundly Learned *Paul*; an Eloquent *Apollos*; and in the succeeding Ages there have been some others of a great name, that have *known the truth as it is in Jesus*. Some that have

have had the advantage of the higher ground, have breath'd in a clear Air, and been refresh'd with the beams of the Sun; while more inconsiderable Persons, like them that dwell in low and marshy Grounds, have been wrapt up in Fogs and thick Darkness. The very dust of the Earth, being raised by the Prince of the Air, flew in Christ's face; the common People, I mean among the Jews, who cried out Crucifie him, which they would no more have done than their Rulers, had they known the Lord of Glory. ^{1 Cor. 2.}

4. *The saving knowledge of Divine things is most usually given to inferior persons; and most commonly denied to those that are wise and prudent.* The Temple at Jerusalem was made of the richest and most costly Materials; the Spiritual Temple generally of the meanest, only here and there a few precious and polished Stones that set off the whole Building. And the truth of this will appear, if you consider,

1. *How matters stood about the time of our Saviour's appearing, and while he continued in the World.*

Learning and Policy were then at the highest. But yet the wise Philosophers were lost in the Fog; and by Wisdom the world knew not God. ^{1 Cor. 1.} Like the blinded Sodomites, ^{21.} they were groping after the

door of Knowledge and Eternal Life, when the Day-star was just rising, but were not able to find it. If we leave them, and pass into the dwellings of the Children of *Israel*, who were now the *Goshen* of the World, as they had been once of *Egypt*, we shall find them encompassed with palpable darkness. The most understanding Men want an Eye to see. One would have thought, that as the light of the Morning strikes first on the tops of the High Mountains, so the *dawning* of the day of Christ should have been first perceived by the High Priests. That the Sanhedrin should have had the most early notice of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, as they used to have of the *Phasis* of the New Moon. But on the contrary, the first tidings of an approaching *Messiah* were given to *Zechariah*, an ordinary Priest of the course of *Abias*; to *Elizabeth* his Wife, to the Babe in her Womb, to *Joseph* the Carpenter, and *Mary* a despised Virgin, of a Royal Family, but run to decay, and sunk like a dry Root under ground. True indeed, *three Wise Men* of the *East* were inform'd of Christ's Nativity by a *new Star*; but a more considerable number of *poor Shepherds* had it from a higher hand; one of the noble Order of Angels, those *Morning Stars* was their Preacher. And one Messenger did

Mat. 2.1,

2.

Luke 2.

2.

did not suffice ; there was besides a great multitude of the Heavenly Host, who in their hearing Sung a Psalm of Praise at the close of the Angelical Sermon. Ver. 13.

The Wise Men understood the matter but darkly and confusedly, somewhat in the general, which left them under much perplexity and uncertainty, and caused them to resort to *Jerusalem* to make a farther enquiry. But the poor Shepherds are told all very plainly, both as to the Nature and Office of Christ ; that he was a *Saviour* and the *Lord* : And as to the particular circumstances of Time and Place, *this day*, and in *the City of David*. Ver. 11.

It was several days to be sure ; nay, whatever *Baronius* saith to the contrary, for the credit of the *Roman Calender*, a Learned Man on good ground thinks, above a year before the Wise Men could obtain a sight of Christ. But the Shepherds find him the very *next morning*, and don't wait so long for admision into his Royal Presence, as the others did. Lightf. Works, Vol. 1. p. 432.

When our Saviour was brought into the Temple, the Learned *Scribes* and *Pharisees* knew him no more than Subjects do their Prince when under a disguise. Only two aged persons, *Simeon* (who in all probability was not the famous Man of that name, the Son of *Hillel* and Father of *Gamaliel*, President of the great Ver. 25.

great Sanhedrin, as some imagine) and
Ver. 35. *Anna* the Prophetess of the Tribe of
Asber, that was always mean, and much
 more so since the Captivity ; Persons
 remarkable for nothing so much as their
 extraordinary Piety, by which the Holy
 Ghost describes them, discern who he is ;
 the one opening his Arms to receive him,
 and both of them their Mouths to praise
 God for him. Afterwards Christ was re-
 moved from *Bethlehem*, as tho' that were
 a place too near the great Doctors in *Je-
 rusalem*, and *Nazareth* an obscure corner
 of the Country was the place of his usual
 residence. *Lazarus*, *Martha*, *Mary*, Per-
 sons of no extraordinary Quality, were
 his intimate Friends. Not Princes or
 Rabbies, but a Publican and Fisher-men
 were chosen his Disciples. The Learned
 Men indeed were sometimes his Hearers ;
 but they revile, oppose, undervalue, en-
 deavour to ensnare and murder him,
Mat. 11. while the *Poor* only receive the Gospel.
 5. He blesses little Children, and they are
 the Persons that sing *Hosanna's* to him.
John 4. He instructs a poor Woman of *Samaria*
 in the Mysteries of Salvation in a long
 and excellent Discourse, tho' she seemed
Luke 23. to deny him a draught of Water. But as
 8. for King *Herod*, who had long desired to
 see him, and if gratified, might have pre-
 served his Life, he could not get a word
 from

from Christ, tho' he hoped for a Miracle. There was not a greater Darkeness on the face of the Earth, in the time of Christ's Passion, than there was upon the Understandings of *Pilate*, the Chief Priests and Elders. Christ communicates a saving-light and knowledge of himself to a poor condemned Thief that hung by him on the Cross, and opens his Eyes that were ready to be closed by Death, while those of the Rulers that were almost as near him, were *holden that they could not know him*.

2. *Things ran in the same Channel in the Apostles Days, and the succeeding Age.* At *Athens*, the Eye of the World, when *Paul* Preached Jesus and the Resurrection, he was reviled as a Babblers, disputed against by two Sects of Philosophers; dragg'd before the great Judicatory at *Mars's Hill*: And tho' the Judges there were remarkable for their * number and quality, being the most Famous Men in all *Greece* for Wisdom and Morality, yet

Acts 17.
* For
tho their
number
was not
certain,

yet it could not be small, because nine of their *Archontes* that had Ruled well for one year, were annually chosen into that Society. It must therefore be a great mistake of those that say they were no more than 9, or 31, or 51. *Diogenes Laertius*, tell us that there were 231 of them that condemned *Socrates*, besides those that acquitted him; who, as *Plato* in his Apology affirms, were as many, wanting three only. And *Diogenes Laertius* informs us, that no less than 80 of those that gave sentence in favour of him, afterwards changed their minds; so that at least, there were no less than 351, that Voted against him. Vide *Meursi Areopag.* p. 32.

we find but one of them, *viz. Dionysius*
Acts 16. Converted to the Christian Faith. The
 14. heart of *Lydia* that *sold purple*, was open'd,
 while *Felix's* that wore it was only terri-
 fied. And though both he, and King *Agrippa*
 and *Bernice*, and *Festus* heard *Paul* reaso-
 ning about Righteousness, and Tempe-
 rance, and Judgment to come, yet he
Acts 26. that went farthest among them was but
 28. almost perswaded to be a Christian. And
 what the success of his Labours generally
 was, he himself tells us; *not many wise*
1 Cor. 1. *men after the flesh were called.*
 26. 3. *The great things of the Gospel, and*
the sacred Records of Christianity, are not
suit'd to the Genius of these wise and pru-
dent ones, nor penn'd so as to gratifie their
vanity. So far are the Apostles, like some
 Modern Missionaries in the remoter parts
 of the World, from drawing a Veil upon
 those Articles of the Christian Doctrine
 that seem most naked, and where it lies
 most open and exposed to shame and re-
 proach, that that part of it, a Crucified
 Saviour, they mainly insist on in their
 Sermons and Writings, and magnifie as
 the highest instance of Divine Wisdom,
 Power, Holiness, Justice and Goodness,
 and require all Men heartily to own it
Coloss. 2 as such. They openly triumph in the Cross
 15. of Christ, as he did upon it; a thing
 which the Wise Men of this World have
 scorned

scorned in all Ages as the greatest weakness and folly. The Truths, as well as the Laws of Christianity tend to promote Holiness, and are not accommodated to the evil inclinations of Mankind, as a Garment shaped so as to humour the body of a crooked Person. The Sacred Pen-Men are peculiarly severe against those Sins that Men are most in love withal. They blow on all humane Wisdom and Learning, that they may blast the Glory of it ; and the whole of our Religion is so contrived, as to suffer Men *to glory in nothing but this, that they know the Lord.* Jer. 9.
 Had the Holy Scriptures been Penn'd in 24.
 an exact Method according to the Rules of Humane Art ; had they been Adorned with all the Beauties of Style and Expression ; had they transmitted to us the secret intrigues of Princes, the Politick Maxims of States, or a more accurate History of the flourishing Empires of the World, than all the Prophane Authors have done : Had *Paul*, when he came down from the Third Heavens, discoursed of the Hierarchy of Angels, and their several Orders ; had his Language been as high as his rapture, these Men would have read and studied him with a mighty relish. But here's not *Cicero's* Rhetorick for an *Austin*, nor sublime Metaphysical subtilties for a profound *Bradwardine*.
 The

The Mantles which these *Elijahs* dropt and left behind them when they went to Heaven, are not so finely Wrought, nor so curiously Embroider'd as they would have had them, nor of such a fashion as pleases them. The main scope of them is nakedly to relate matters of fact concerning an obscure Person, one Jesus, who was dead, but they affirm to be alive; propose many surprizing and stupendous Mysteries, and lay down very strict and severe Rules that concern all alike. They don't run out into high useles speculations, nor stand on Mathematical Certainty, but press all on the naked authority of God, which these Men think below them to bow and submit themselves unto. And all this in such a manner, that tho' 'tis plain enough to Men that are Vertuous and Humble, that they are from God; yet not so plain as to hinder Vain, Proud, Atheistical and Captious Men from starting many Objections against them, and stumbling at them. And therefore all Ages have had but too much reason to complain as they did of Old, that Unlearned Men rise up and take Heaven by Violence, while great Scholars sink down into Hell, live in Spiritual Darknes, and pass into that which is Eternal.

II. Well, but tho' this be true as to matter of Fact, is not this a mighty Re-
proach and Scandal to Christ and Reli-
gion? Had it not been more for his
Honour and Interest to have had the *wise*
and prudent ones on his side? Or howe-
ver, seeing it hath pleased God to take
a contrary course, had it not been enough
patiently to have born this, to have
considered it with Calmness and Submi-
ssion? Would it not have been more sui-
table to his tenderness, and mighty con-
cern for the welfare of Mankind, to have
turn'd his Eyes towards these Men with
all the expressions of sorrow, rather than
to have lifted them up towards Heaven
with all the signs of delight? What rea-
son is here for joy and thanksgiving, con-
sidering either the thing it self, hiding
from Men the things that belong to their
eternal peace; or the *person* spoken of?
What! the Blessed *Jesus*, the great Lover
and Saviour of Men! One would have
thought he should rather have lifted up
his voice, and have wept upon this occa-
sion, and as he did on the death of *La-
zarus*, have groaned rather than rejoiced
in spirit.

And here Saint *Chrysostom's* answer will
not help us out, *viz.* that this Joy and
Thanksgiving of Christ doth not refer to
the *former*, the *hiding these things from*
the

the wise and prudent ; but to the latter Clause only, the revealing of them unto babes. And so he parallels it with that place of the Apostle, *God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of Doctrine which was deliver'd to you.* Where St. Paul can't be supposed to thank God but for the latter only ; *q. d.* Though you were once the slaves of sin, yet now I praise my God that you are become the Lord's Freemen.

But there is a mighty difference between these two Scriptures. For the Apostle doth not in that place ascribe their being the Servants of Sin unto God as the *Author* of it, as our Saviour in my Text doth the hiding of these things from the Wise and prudent, *Thou hast hid them.* Moral evils come not from God, but *penal* and *judicial* ones of this nature are frequently ascribed to him as his *marvellous* acts. That tremendous Prophetical threatning of his *making the heart of a rebellious people fat, and shutting their eyes lest they should see, &c.* is repeated no less than six times in the New Testament. God as a Sovereign and a Righteous Judge denies or withdraws his Grace when a People have a long time sinned against the light with a high hand, leaves them to themselves, and delivers them up to the will of Satan,

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who

who blind their Eyes, and hardens their Hearts.

The true answer therefore is this, That tho' the blinding of any Men consider'd *nakedly in it self*, and as they are rational Creatures made after the Image of God, and capable of Eternal happiness, is matter of great sorrow ; yet Christ being a true Man, and filled with quick and lively affections to God and his Glory, doth rejoice and give thanks for the hiding these things from the Wise and Prudent, as well as for revealing them to Men of weaker capacities. as such a dispensation in both the Branches of it tends to the displaying and glorifying the Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, Power and Sovereignty of his Father : For all these are Magnified herein. And,

1. Christ rejoices and gives thanks because such a dispensation *makes exceedingly for the honour of his Wisdom and Goodness*: See this in Four things.

(1.) *This tends to destroy pride, and advance the honour of his free Grace in the eyes of all whom he teaches and saves.* And 'tis highly reasonable that this should be done, considering the first rise of our misery, as well as the greatness of it. *You shall be like God's*, was the prevailing temptation that ruin'd Man. It was requisite that he who had totally undone
X himself

himself by aspiring, and bold attempts to exalt himself, should be greatly debased and humbled, and God alone be honoured in the very way of his recovery. That that evil Humour that had caused his Sickness should be purged out, and a contrary quality infused into him in order to the restoring of his Health. 'Tis agreeable to the Eternal Reason of things, that so vile a Criminal should be brought on his Knees, laid in the Dust, in the lowest posture imaginable, in order to the receiving so high an act of Grace. That such extremely miserable Wretches, and yet such haughty, swelling and lofty Creatures too, should have those proud looks of theirs taken down, that first brought them into, and still accompanied them in that most deplorable state. Now this God hath most effectually provided for by such a dispensation as we are now treating of: And if the Apostle may be believed, it was his great *design* therein.

1 Cor. 1.
25, 31. He hath *not called many wise men after the flesh, but hath chosen the foolish and the weak things of the World, that no flesh might glory in his presence; but that whosoever glorieth, should glory in the Lord alone.* Had God taken a contrary method, boasting had not been excluded. For natural and acquired Parts, when alone, are exceeding apt to puff up. Much more would
Men

Men be prone to be exalted in their own Eyes, if special Grace also, like a Crown of Gold, were commonly put upon these Mens Heads. And on the other hand, even those that have renewing Grace only, and little or nothing besides to recommend them, yet are apt to swell : which is so evident, that the Men of the World take notice of it, there being no Sin which they are more ready to reproach the Generation of the Righteous withal, than spiritual *Pride*, except it be *Hypocrisie*. And in truth, this Worm is apt to breed even in this Mannah that comes down from Heaven, not from the nature of the Grace it self, but from the corruption of those Vessels wherein 'tis put : How much more were saving-knowledge given to Men of refined Parts, would they be prone to be lifted up, and not ascribe all with that lowliness of mind that becomes them to the free grace of God alone. Instead of admiring him, they would be applauding themselves. They and others too would be tempted to ascribe all to their own excellency and deserts. It would be thought that a spiritual understanding of Divine things was not the effect of God's Teaching, but of the strength of their own Wit and Labour. That this choice Plant, like the Fruits of the Field in the beginning

of the World, did spring out of the
Gen. 2.5, *ground,* and did thrive and flourish, not
 6. by the Rain falling down from Heaven,
 but by Vertue of that *mist that went up*
from the Earth it self. But now God clearly
 confutes any such vain imaginations, and
 openly Proclaims that none of these Ex-
 cellencies were motive to him. Seeing
 he passes by the *great* ones of the World,
 who, by reason of their noble Qualifica-
 tions, appear Beautiful in our Eyes, as
Eliab did in *Samuel's*, and will not pour
 1 *John 2.* out the *Unction of the Holy One that tea-*
 20. *cheth all things,* on their heads and hearts
 (as the Prophet would not the anointing
 Oil on *Eliab*) but generally on the meanest
 of all the People, he *stains the glory of*
Man, and plainly declares, to the silen-
 cing and humbling of all Flesh, the ab-
 solute freeness of the unsearchable riches
 of the Glory of his own Grace.

(2.) By such a Dispensation, God *pours*
contempt and scorn on that wisdom for which
his Enemies so much despise him, and mag-
nifie themselves. Men of great Abilities
 are apt to have the same extravagant
 fancy concerning themselves, as that blind
 1 *Mark 8.* Man whose Eyes were half open'd, had
 24. of other Men, that they walk *like Trees,*
 far above the ordinary height and stature
 of Mankind. And they look down with
 scorn on the ways of Christ, and upon
 his

his Followers as a *rabble of fools and mad-men*. But what a mortification may it well be to these Men now, and will it certainly be at the last day, to see those very Persons, whom they thus despise, Crōwn'd with Eternal Glory, to which their own so much admired Wisdom was so far from advancing them, that it rather help'd, like bags of Gold about a drowning Man, to plunge them the deeper into Hell ! The flames of that infernal Pit shall at once manifest their folly, and punish it ; and the Darknes thereof shall not be their only covering ; for this very thing shall spread an Eternal Shame and Confusion upon their Souls. Like those Mat. 1.7. of old they count *the Table of the Lord contemptible, and the meat*, and those that sit and eat thereof. Mat. 2.9. Therefore will the Lord also *make them contemptible and base before all his people* in the generally Assembly of his first-born. How will they then be forced to say, We fools thought their life madness, but now it appears that ours was so ; and surely these are the only wise and understanding People.

(3.) The Wisdom of God is seen herein, *in bringing such weak Persons safely to Heaven, and carrying on his interest in the World by them*. 'Tis certainly an Argument of great Wisdom so to order matters, as by little contemptible things to

overcome strong ones. Now God suffers Satan to have almost all the advantages that he could desire. He is a very subtil Spirit ; and generally all the policy of Earth, as well as of Hell, is on his side for the strengthening of his Party. And how unequal a match are the poor weak Followers of Christ to cope and grapple with such Enemies whose policy is so much superiour to theirs ? How unlikely is it to an Eye of Sense and Reason, that these Men should in spite of all, bear up Christ's Name, propagate his Interest, drive on his great Counsels in the World, send others to Heaven, and at last safely reach it themselves ? It is one great Argument that our Religion is of God, that it was propagated by such feeble Instruments, against such mighty Enemies as the Philosophers and Princes of this World ; and the *sweet savour of the knowledge of a*

2 Cor. 2: 14, 15. Crucified Jesus was diffused every-where ; not like the Spices of *Arabia* upon the Wings of the Wind, but against a furious one that arose from every corner of the Earth. The Skill of a Commander is very much discover'd in securing the retreat of a few feeble and raw Men, during a long March, quite through the Enemies Country, while a powerful and well-disciplin'd Army, under the Conduct of a Politick General, hovers about them, watching

watching all advantages to defeat them ; but 'tis much more for his honour if he brings them off with Victory. When by the *mouths of babes and sucklings* God not only *still* the Enemy and the Avenger, *Pfal* 8.2. but Conquers him too ; he *perfects* the praises of his own Power and Wisdom.

(4.) The Wisdom and Goodness of God is shewn herein, because *hereby* he prevents the meanest of his Creatures being discouraged from seeking after saving-knowledge. Whatever the proud Sinners that are at ease in Sion, may imagine, yet to a poor convinced Soul that hath a lively view of the Divine Majesty and Greatness, it seems almost incredible that ever the King of Kings should stoop so much ^{I Sam. 24. 14.} below himself, as to cast a favourable Eye on such a *Flea*, such a *dead Dog* as he : who is sensible, not only that he hath been the greatest of Sinners, but is one of the meanest of Men ; and whose Abilities are so small, or rather none, that he can signifie no more to the advancing his Interest, than the very dust of the ballance to the turning of the Scales. We naturally think God is *altogether* ^{Pfal 50.} such a one as our selves ; that we must ^{51.} have some good qualities to recommend us to his favour, as well as to that of Men. None of us will Trade to Barren Countries ; and we fancy there can be

no Commerce between us and Heaven, unless there be some excellency of our own native growth to invite and encourage it. But now by this Dispensation God shews on the contrary, how much he values the precious Souls of the lowest of his Creatures. That he doth not do by the Treasures of his Wisdom and Knowledge as Princes do by those of their Earthly Substance, lock them up from vulgar Eyes ; but is ready to open his Arms and his Heart to those that humbly sit at his feet, and are willing to learn of him, how mean soever their state and condition may be. So much for the Wisdom of Christ.

2. Christ rejoices and give thanks, because *the hiding these things from the wise and prudent, is an act of high justice in God.* And that upon these three following accounts.

(1.) *Such men do despise and reject the Mysteries of the Gospel.* Tho' there are many things in Nature which they cannot understand, and dare not deny ; yet they are exceeding nice and tender about Mysteries in matters of Religion, 'Tis below Men of their refined Parts and piercing Intellectuals, to assent to any thing which they cannot grasp ; 'tis for Children to swallow Physick which they do

do not understand. They are subtil to evade the force of the strongest Arguments, start many plausible Objections against the plainest truths, which weaker heads never dream of ; smart and witty to represent them as contemptible and ridiculous. The barren Sands cannot send up so many Vapours to keep off the light of the Sun, as the richer and fatter Soil does. These are the Men that above all others have many high and proud thoughts, and vain imaginations, exalting themselves in their Souls against the knowledge of the Gospel, and will not be brought into Captivity to the obedience of Christ.

2 Cor. 10.
4, 5.

(2.) With the greatest scorn *they refuse the grand condition of the Gospel-Covenant.* To rely on Christ alone for Salvation, when they have so many rare things of their own to depend on : to stand begging at anothers door, and with deep humility and brokenness of heart to sue for Pardon and Salvation meerly from the Mercy of God, and the Merits of a Redeemer, 'tis such a Mortification as their high Spirits can by no means endure to think or hear of. Like foolish Children, they have the advantage of the ground, and therefore think themselves taller, their heads touch the Clouds, and are nearer Heaven than others. To lye at the foot
of

of a Crucified Saviour, they judge a posture more suitable for those vile ones of the Earth that are not raised up out of the Dust ; but as for them, they will never be brought to it, till like *Paul*, they are *struck down to the ground*. And even then too generally, when they are convinced of their Sins, and pained at the heart about them, they choose any other way to the Father ; and if they find themselves under a necessity of returning to God, they will rather do it in their own names, than his : And this is the spring of all that *Theism* that begins to spread so much among these Men in our days. To look on all they have done, or can do, as *dross and dung* ; to lay aside their own Wisdom and Prudence, for which they are so highly valued both by themselves and others ; to be justified by the Righteousness of another ; *to rejoice in Jesus Christ, having no confidence in the flesh* ; to be ruled and saved by him alone, 'tis not a thing suitable to the greatness of their minds. They would fain be doing somewhat that should distinguish them from the dregs of the People, and recommend them to the Divine favour and acceptance. They are not more desirous that their own Wills should be their Lord's, than that the Works of their own hands should be their

their Saviour's. They bear up themselves on empty Bladders, fill'd with nothing but wind, and despise that Ark of God's Building, wherein alone they can avoid sinking in the storms of Divine Wrath and Vengeance: and tho' Glorified Saints in Heaven above, *cast their Crowns at* Rev. 4. 10 *Christ's feet*, yet these haughty Sinners here below, scornfully refuse to do it.

(3.) *They desperately hate the great duties of holiness.* That first and fundamental thing which is required as preparatory to our learning of Christ, the renouncing our own Understandings, and becoming as *little Children*; the mortifying of our beloved Lusts, Crucifying the Flesh with Mat. 18. 3. all its affections, purifying the Heart, loving our Enemies, denying our selves, taking up the Cross, and suffering the loss of all things, even their darling Reputation; These are hard sayings, against which their hearts exceedingly rise within them, as a Man's Blood would do at the sight of one that would Murther his dearest Friend. And when at any time any serious thoughts are flasht into their minds, they run through their Souls like lightning through the Air, which never warms it, and quickly vanishes. They close their eyes, turn away their faces; 'tis the Language of their Hearts and Lives, *Depart* Job 21. 14. *from us, we desire not the knowledge of* *these*

these ways. They love and cherish darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Righteous therefore art thou, O Lord, just and true are thy Judgments, O thou God of all Grace, when thou sufferest the God of this World to blind the minds of these men, that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ may not shine in their hearts.

John 3.
19.

2Cor. 4. 4.

3. Christ rejoices in, and gives Thanks for such a Dispensation, because *the power of God is magnified herein.* He shews himself to be the mighty Lord of Heaven and Earth, in revealing these things unto Babes. In making the simple wise unto Salvation, elevating their weak Understandings to a saving apprehension of those matters, which the Wisest and most Learned of themselves are not capable of attaining unto ; He shews the power of his own grace to be far above the force of Nature when raised to its highest Pitch and Glory. When he makes things that *are not*, do more than things that *are* ; enables them that have not Logick enough, to perceive the force of an Argument in other matters, yet understand the *demonstration of the Spirit*, which the most Learned cannot know because 'tis *spiritually discerned* ; those that can't search into the vulgar Subjects of Philosophy, much less into the abstruser parts of it, see

1 Cor. 2.
4.

Ver. 14.

see into the profound depths of the Divine Wisdom ; those whose discourses on all other Arguments are weak and trifling, yet can speak of God, Christ, Heaven, and the great things of the Gospel in such an admirable manner, that the best Scholars may not only be astonish'd at them as the Rulers were when *they perceived Peter and John were ignorant and unlearned men* ; but be instructed by them too, as *Priscilla, the Wife of a poor Tent-maker, expounded the way of the Lord more perfectly to an eloquent Apollos*. Those that are not able to dive into the cunning Intrigues of Statesmen, shall pierce into the infinitely deeper Counsels of God's Will : Those that can't manage the Affairs of this Life with common discretion, but are easily over-reach'd by their Neighbours in every business, yet are *not ignorant of Satan's devices*, nor entangled by the cunning *craftiness of them that lie in wait to deceive* them to their Eternal ruine : Those that are dull and heavy in other matters, yet are *of a quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, and *though fools*, yet *they err not in the way of holiness*, in which *the unclean*, though never so knowing, *cannot pass* : He that doth these things, declares himself to be a God that worketh wonders.

Behold,

Behold, God exalteth himself by his Power ; who teacheth like him, that makes dull Scholars understand in writing, by his Hand upon them, how to perform those Duties and excel in those Graces, which the greatest Men of this World can't so much as know what to make of, much less can they imitate ? To be humble in Prosperity, to live by Faith in Adversity ; for a Brother of high Degree to rejoyce when he is brought low, as much as other Men when they are raised up ; to love the most bitter Enemies, and hate the dearest Friends and Relations ; when there is no fruit in the Vines, yet to sit cheerfully under their Shadow, rejoycing in the Lord, and joying in the God of their Salvation ; to set their Affections on things above, while they are here below ; have their Conversation in Heaven, while they dwell on Earth ; to be killed all the day long, and yet believe their Life is hid with Christ in God, where their Enemies Swords can't reach them ; to be diligent in their Callings, and yet careful for nothing ; to bear Burdens, and yet cast them all upon God ; carefully to preserve their Lives, and yet hate them too, and desire Death, longing to depart and be with Christ ; to be meek under Reproach and Injury ; when smitten on the one Cheek to turn, not to requite the Affront, but

Job 36.
22.

1 Chron.
28. 19.

James 1.
9, 10.

Hab. 3.
17.

Colos. 3. 3.

but offer the other also to the same Indignity : In a word, to live by the Spirit, walk by the Strength, do the Will and design the Glory, not of themselves, but of another whom *they never saw, yet they love, in whom tho' now they see him not, yet they believe and rejoice,* and that sometimes *with joy unspeakable and full of Glory.* 1 Pet. 1. 8.

These are things which God by his teaching enables many simple Men to do ; things that the Wise and Prudent can't so much as understand, but gaze and wonder at them as if they were not only Mysteries and Riddles, but Impossibilities and Contradictions ; when they hear us mention them, we are *Barbarians* to them, and speak a Language which they know not. He that doth all this, teaches with a wonderful Authority and a mighty Power.

4. Christ rejoices and give thanks, because in such a Dispensation, the *Sovereignty of God is declared.* This is an Attribute that Men do not much care to hear of, as if it were like those Flourishes and Pictures that we see in Maps, placed there to fill up some void room, but of no real use. And 'tis very remarkable, that for Preaching this very Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God in the free distribution of his special Favours, without any regard to humane Worth or Excellency ;

†

Luke 4.
25.

lency ; Christ himself was in danger of being *murther'd*. For when he discoursed to the Men of *Nazareth* about *one* only Widow and she of *Sarepta*, fed by *Elijah* ; and *one Naaman*, and he a *Syrian* too, Cured by him ; there being many Widows and Lepers, and they in *Israel* also, who were passed by, tho' they might (one would have thought) have pretended a better Title to such a Favour, than these Uncircumcised Gentiles ; the Men of the place were filled with Indignation against a Preacher of such Doctrine, and endeavoured to cast him down headlong from the brow of the Hill. But vain Men may think as they please ; this is one Letter of God's Name which he himself did not leave out when he Proclaimed it, and caused his Glory and Goodness to pass

Ver. 20.

Exod. 33.

14.

before *Moses* ; *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious*. Christ himself, in my Text, rises up as high as this Well-head, and acquiesces in this, *even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*. And hither must we resort for Satisfaction ; and here must we rest at last. If a Reason be asked of any Person, absolutely consider'd, Why is God savingly made known unto him ? It does not favour of Evangelical Humility nor a Gospel Spirit, to say, Because he was more worthy, or (as some mince the matter) be-

cause he was less unworthy : The Scripture answer is, *'Tis not of him that willeth,* Rom. 9. 15.
nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy ; according to his meer Mercy and Grace, and not for any Works of Righteousness which he hath done. Titus 3. 5. If the Question be asked of any one absolutely consider'd, Why are not Gospel Truths savingly made known to him ? 'Tis a Truth that will stop his Mouth ; and his own Conscience will attest it, by sinning against natural Light and common Grace, he hath deserved it, and there is no unrighteousness in God. But now take them comparatively, and if you ask, Why doth God reveal Divine Mysteries to two or three wise Men only in an Age, and not to the rest ? Why to *Paul* the Scholar, Acts 25. 24. whom tho' (as *Festus* imagined) much Learning had not made Mad, yet Rage against the Gospel made him exceedingly so ; and not to *Gamaliel* the Master, a moderate and sober Man that gave very gentle Counsel in favour of the first Preachers of Christianity, and was *in great Reputation among the People* ? Or if you ask, Why should God pass by the generality of wise Acts 5. 34. Men, pitch his Love upon, and give his saving Grace unto inferiour Persons for the most part ? What, could he not have torn off the Veil from the Heart of the one as well as of the other ? Was not the

Mal. 2.
15.

residue of the Spirit with him? Yes surely, for he is *Lord of Heaven and Earth*, and hath all Power and all Hearts in his Hands. He could have made the Dews of his saving Grace, as Universal as the Drops of the Morning. He could have made his Ministers have blown the Gospel Trumpet with such a Breath, made it give so loud a sound, that like the last Trump at the Mouth of an Angel, it should have awakened all that are dead in Trespases and Sins, and made them to revive.

Why therefore hath he not done it? If you answer, he shews his Power, Wisdom and Justice, in leaving them under Spiritual Darknes; it may be replied, these very Attributes of Wisdom and Power, besides that of his Infinite Goodness he might have glorified the other way; and his Justice had a large Field to display it self in the punishment of Apostate Angels. Why therefore hath he not done it? You must Center in this at last, because his Grace is free; he is *debtor to no Man*; he doth with his own what *seemeth good in his own Eyes*; he fashions the *same Lump* of filthy and untemper'd Clay into what Vessels he pleases. And who art thou, O Man! that darest to dispute or reply against thy Maker? Be still, O proud Dust! and know that he is God, and a great King over all the Earth. Bowels of
Mercy

Rom. 9.
20, 21.

Mercy made the Motion at first ; the Eye of Wisdom directed the Management of the whole ; the right hand of Power was there to assist ; Justice did not open its Mouth to contradict ; and Sovereignty (as it became that Attribute.) sat upon a Glorious high Throne, far above all the Heavens, and from all Eternity selected the particular Persons, whom according to the Counsel of its own Will, it resolved should be infallibly brought to Salvation through the knowledge and belief of the Truth,

III. In the last place I shall Briefly apply all.

I. By way of Information in six Things.

I. Hence learn, 'tis no great wonder there are so many Follies Weaknesses and Miscarriages, among the sincere followers of Christ. They are a plain, simple, illiterate sort of People, for the most part, that mind the Power of Religion, and but few of the prudent ones of this World among them. And therefore, though they are Wise as to the main, in as much as they avoid the greatest Dangers, and secure their biggest Interest ; yet it can't be expected they should manage themselves and all their Affairs, according to the exact Rules of Humane Policy, which they generally want ; and 'tis not strange,

if in many single instances of a lower nature, they frequently mistake their Way, and take many a false Step. A Mariner may have so much Skill in Sea Affairs, as to be able to steer his Ship through the main Ocean, and make a good Voyage even to the *Indies*, escaping the great Rocks and mighty Sands; and yet not know the way into a particular Port, so well as an ordinary Pilot of the Place, but be apt (through mistake) so run his Vessel a-ground, where it may receive great Damage, and be very difficultly brought off again.

2. See one reason, why the ablest Ministers are seldom so successful in their Work as those that are more meanly furnish'd. Like Canon mounted too high, they shoot over the Heads of inferiour Persons, whom generally God hath ordained to Eternal Life; and so they *beat the Air*, but batter down no strong Holds; and are qualified to deal with the wise and more rational part of Mankind, among whom God hath not much People, nor Christ many Sheep. The most Sovereign Remedies prepared according to Art, shall have no

John 9.
6.

Ver. 3. *manifest.*

3. See

3. See the Vanity of that Objection against serious Religion, drawn from the meanness of those that sincerely embrace it, when the far greatest part of the famous Men are on the other side. This is an old Engine of the Devils, *Have any of the Rulers or the Pharisees believed on him?* ^{John 7. 48.} The weakness of this Argument appears from what hath been said: And indeed, if it be of any force against a sincere embracing of Christ's ways, it will hold good against the practice of common Morality. For 'tis very evident, that Multitudes of the Wise and Prudent Ones of this World, are wholly eaten up with their Lusts, as the choicest Trees are devoured by Caterpillars.

4. See the reason, why weak Christians more stedfastly adhere to Christ, his Ways and Truths, in times of danger than the wise and prudent. This saving Revelation of Divine Things, fixes and establishes their Hearts, and keeps them faster in the Faith than others can be held by meer dry Reason and naked Arguments; so, that though they are none of the great Scholars of the World, nor able to answer the specious Arguments of subtil Hereticks, yet 'tis not possible that all the Craft and Policy of Hell should finally deceive them. ^{Mat. 24. 24.} For they that are thus taught of God, have a spiritual Sense

and Judgment to discern between Good and Evil; they inwardly know, and have a Witness within themselves of the truth of what this *Uñction* hath taught them. And therefore, as all Creatures, Plants as well as Animals, have a natural instinct whereby they draw to them what is proper for their Preservation and Nourishment, but avoid what is destructive to them : So these Persons to whom God hath spiritually reveal'd his Truths, have a supernatural Instinct whereby they turn aside from pernicious Errors, and unmoveably retain the great Things of the Gospel with a mighty relish and savour. They can't be beaten out of that Truth which hath been so plainly discover'd ; they know these things to be great Realities, that have made such a deep Impression on their Hearts ; and tho' they can't Learnedly dispute, they can courageously dye for them rather than deny them. They will not be disputed out of them, no more than a Man will be perswaded that Honey is not sweet, which his Senses tell him is so ; tho' some Sophistical Arguments may be propounded against it, which he has not skill enough to answer. This Divine Knowledge, like polished Armour, adorns them in the sight of God, and defends them from the fiery Darts of wicked Men.

5. See what the faithful Ministers of Christ must expect, and not be discouraged at it. They are the poor only, that for the most part will receive Us and our Message : And 'tis no very great Service that we do our Master or his Interest, by bringing in such as these. But yet, tho' they are the Poor, the Maimed, the Halt, the Blind, (such as we can pick up in the *Streets and Lanes*, or gather up by the *High-ways or Hedges*.) he refuses not them for his Table, nor will he be angry with us, unless it be, because his House is not filled with them. For our comfort, if we are but faithful in our Work, we shall be a sweet savour to God in those that are saved, though they are but inferiour Persons ; and in those that perish too, though they are the Great and Honourables Ones of the Earth.

Lulge 14.

21.

Ver. 23.

6. Hence I infer, we should not idolize the greatest, nor contemn the meanest. This is what the Apostle reproves ; and to take Men off from it, he propounds this Question to their serious consideration, *Hearken, my beloved Brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him ?* 'Tis great Folly not to prefer a rough Diamond before a counterfeit Stone, tho' curiously cut and set to the greatest advantage.

James 2.

1, 2, 3, 4,

5.

vantage. We should not judge according to outward Appearance ; for those that seem but little in our Eyes, may be, and frequently are, of mighty value ; as the Stars that look like small Sparks in the Skies only, are in truth, very Great and Glorious Bodies.

2. *Use. Exhort.* To those from whom these things are hid ; and those to whom they are revealed.

1. *To those from whom these things are hid ; chiefly the Wise and Prudent, tho' not excluding Persons of a lower Station.*

(1.) *Be not proud of nor satisfied with any Wisdom or Knowledge, while the great things of God are not savingly understood by you.* Some that have drunk as largely at those Fountains as any of you, have solemnly professed, they have found more sweetness and satisfaction of Soul, in one drop of a Spiritual Knowledge of Divine Mysteries, than in a whole Ocean of other Learning. They have looked on the deepest insight into all other things, to be, in comparison of this, but as congealed Drops of Water that may look bright and pleasing, but 'tis to Children and Fools ; but this, this alone hath been the Pearl of great Price in their account. All Humane Wisdom and Knowledge, though useful and valuable in its due Place and Order, yet is but like an Eye of Chrystal
in

in the Head of a blind Man, which may hide his Deformity from the observation of his Neighbours, but can't direct him one step in the way wherein he ought to go. The Devils have as much and more of this than the best of us, and yet are the most miserable of all God's Creatures. Why will you highly value your selves on the account of that, which leaves you in as bad a Condition as those wretched Apostate Spirits, and in a worse State than the most ignorant Man that hath a spiritual Understanding of Heavenly Things? If you have no more than this, you shall perish at last for lack of Knowledge. For at the last Day, it shall fare with those curious Wits that are ignorant of God and Christ, as with Carved Statues about a House that is set on Fire; down they drop into the Flames, and are consumed, there being none at hand to pluck them out.

(2.) *Seriously meditate on the deplorable State of those from whom these things are hid.* 'Tis a sad thing when God hides common Wisdom and Prudence from Men, as to the Affairs of this Life. When God infatuates, 'tis a sign he intends to destroy. When *Hamans* Face was cover'd with a Cloth, he was near his Execution. When God throws a Veil over the Face of Mens Minds, and hides from them the things

things that belong to their Peace, they are on the very Borders of ruin. 'Tis sad to be given up to judicial Blindness as to any Objects ; but to be so as to Divine Mysteries, so as to see no Glory nor Beauty in them, is the worst of all. *If our Gospel be hid, 'tis hid from them that are lost* ; they are lost Men indeed, and undone Creatures, unless Infinite Mercy speedily give them an Heart to perceive, to whom such a Blindness hath happened.

2 Cor. 4.
3.

(3.) If you are *wise and prudent*, be provoked unto a godly Jealousie, by those that are comparatively a foolish People ; be not out-stript in matters of the greatest Moment, by those that in other things are so much below you.

If you are *inferiour* Persons, let not your meanness discourage you ; seeing of such as you is the Kingdom of Heaven. Princes on their Coronation days, use to scatter rich Medals among the common People ; so doth Christ these Gifts of his. Do not you lose them for want of striving for them.

(4.) *Renounce all your Wisdom and Learning which you really have, or fancy you are possessed of. If any Man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a Fool that he may be wise.*

1 Cor. 3.
13.

2. To those to whom these things are revealed. (1.) Be

(1.) *Be humble.* Flesh and Bloud hath not revealed these things to you. Had not the Dew of Heaven fallen upon you, you had still been dry Trees and withered Branches. Out of free rich undeserved Grace, *to you it is given* of God *to know these Mysteries*; to others *it is not given*; be not proud and lofty as though you did not know your selves. Mat 13.
11.

(2.) *Rejoice and give thanks.* If you are *Wise and Prudent*, Adore that Sovereign Grace that stept out of its usual Rode to meet with thee; why art thou better than others that sate as high as thou dost, that God should single thee out to anoint thee with this Oyl above thy Fellows, and thine Equals, whom he generally overlooks? If you are *meaner* Persons; what are you that so Rich a Treasure should be put into such an Earthen Vessel? *Stones* should not hold their peace, but cry out aloud with the voice of Joy and Praise, when they are turned into *Children of Abraham*. Holy Men in all Ages have Admired and Adored this distinguishing Grace. *Judas saith to him, (not Iscariot) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thy self to us and not to the World!* Luke 19.
40.
John 14.
22.
The Holy Ghost takes care that we should not mistake the Person that was thus affected with these special Discoveries. It was a *Judas*, but not *Iscariot*; not that
Vile

Vile Traytor, not that Son of Perdition : No, it was another kind of Person, a better Man than he, tho' one of the same Name. Such Men know not the sweetness of that Wine they never tasted of ; and therefore admire not the goodness of the Master of the Feast, in the distribution of it. Christ rejoiced and gave thanks for the Revelation of these things to others ; and will not you do it for the discovery of them to your selves ? Had you the Tongue of Angels or Power over Devils, you would not have so great cause of Rejoycing and Singing Praises as you now have, because God's Law is written on your Hearts and your *Names in Heaven.*

(3.) *Envy not the excellent Gifts of others that are strangers to the grace of God in truth.* For you have the better part. Tho' the surface of the Field appear mean and barren, yet the rich Mines contained in the Bowels of it, render it exceeding more valuable than another Soil, that is Fat and Flourishing.

(4.) *Endeavour to grow and improve in this saving Knowledge.* Your Minds are not yet open'd so wide as they may be, to receive the highest sight and sense of these things ; no more than a Flower is full-blown in one day, but insensibly cleaves its Hood, and gradually opens it
self

self to our view. Spiritual Understanding, like the natural One, should come on by little and little ; and the Sons of God, like the Children of Men, be daily growing up in Wisdom and Stature.

(5.) *Long for Heaven, where your Knowledge shall be compleated.* 'Tis with us here below, as with a Man that walks in a cloudy Night, that makes a hard shift to perceive first one Star, and by and by two or three more ; but still there is a vast number of them which he cannot discern. Something we know, and gradually make some few fresh Discoveries ; but how great a Portion is hid from us ? Whereas in Heaven, all that Ignorance shall be removed, that now hangs about us like the Relicks of a broken Cloud on the top of a Mountain : All that Dust shall be blown out of our Eyes, that at present obstructs our Sight. The Sacred Volumes have many Glorious things written in them, which we can't yet discern, because they are according to the ancient Form of Books, rolled up ; which, tho' God be gradually unfolding, yet 'tis in Heaven only that they shall be fully stretched out, and lye all plain and open before us. There shall not be a greater and more glorious Change of the dull Matter of these vile Bodies, than in our dark Souls when we reach Heaven ; both shall shine clear as the Light

at Noon-day. Our Notions here are broken, confused and imperfect, like the rude Images in the Fancies of them that dream ; which we our selves shall *despise* upon our *awakning* in that Morning when we shall behold God's Face, and be satisfied with the Vision of him as well as with our Likeness to him.

Psal. 73.
20.

Psal. 17.
15.

(6.) *Follow the Example of Christ in an humble Adoration of the good Pleasure of God, as to those things which may seem very strange to you.* I might press this as to his *Laws, Ordinances and Providences.* When you meet with many hard Chapters in the Book of Nature, Scripture and Providence, which you are not able to read and understand ; don't cavil and wrangle ; lay your Hands on your Mouths ; or if you do open them, say no more than thus, with the greatest lowliness of Mind, *Even so Father, for so it pleaseth thee. O the depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out !*

Rom. 11.
33.

Lastly, *Lay out your selves to the utmost, for the advancing of God's Honour and Interest.* This is the Duty of all Men ; and in a peculiar manner, of Christian *Magistrates* that have been taught of God. And the fewer of the great Ones of this World, are on Christ's side ; so much the more zealous and active should those few be.

be. You cannot indeed, *give of your Oyl* unto the foolish Virgins ; yet you may reflect the *Light* of it in good Works, shining before Men, and induce them to glorifie your Heavenly Father. And if you do not do this, it had been better for you, you had still continued under the *Bushel*, remained in your former Obscurity, Luke 11.
33. than to be thus advanced on a high Hill. 'Tis a serious Question that will e're long be put to all of you, by one that hath Authority to ask it, and will have an Answer ; seeing I have done so much for you more than for others, *what have you done for me more than others ?* And I hope, you will betimes bethink your selves what Reply to make, and labour to be ready furnished with a very good one. If you behave your selves like Wise and Faithful Magistrates, the Power you have now in your Hands, and the Grace of God *ruling in your Hearts and Lives*, while you Rule over Men ; will exceedingly recommend Religion to others, and set it off with great Advantage. Divine Wisdom and Knowledge in an Assembly of Men in Authority, are like flaming Tapers in a Branch of burnished Gold, whose glittering and sparkling Substance returns Light as well as receives it ; sheds a Glory on the Room where it hangs, and at once draws and dazzles the Eyes of all both far and near. *I have said ye are Gods* ; but be not Psal, 82.
6. like the useles Idols of the Heathens, that are empty and hollow within, that only fill up the void Places where they stand ; and tho' Worshipped by the People, have neither Eyes to see and discern between Good and Evil, nor Hands to work Righteousness. Tho' you are a sort of inferiour Deities, yet remember you must *dye like Men* ; so live therefore in your present Stations, Vir 7.

tions, *as the Children of the most High*, that you may not dye in a Civil or a natural Sense, *as a Fool dyeth*. Encourage Religion; punish and suppress that Profanation of God's Name and Sabbaths, that Debauchery and Immorality which to this day walks too open and bare-faced in the midst of us. Steadily own the truths of God wherein you have been instructed. Plead his Cause in your Places; maintain, promote, encourage his Interest; *not that of any single Party among us*. This is the Duty of Magistrates as well as Divines. For *you also are the Ministers of God*. In our Saviours Glorious Transfiguration on the Mount, not only *Elias* the Prophet, but *Moses* also, the Ruler of the People, appeared and waited on him. Christ and his Interest will never be lifted up on high, nor shine in their Lustre and Glory in the World, till *both* these are with him. If you resolve to be so, you must expect Reproaches, and despise them. Let all the Revilings which Men pour out against you, be to you as Snow to the Ground, that comes down upon the Earth *like Wooll*, soft and easie, making no noise nor disturbance where it falls. Whatever a few Fools may say against you, this will be your Wisdom and Honour in the sight of the whole Nation, and redound to your Eternal Advantage. For if you do these things, then you, to whom *it is given to know the Mysteries of his Kingdom*, to you also shall it be given to behold the Glory, and enjoy the Rewards of it. When not only yours and all other Civil Power shall be at an end; but the Mediatorial Kingdom of God-Redeemer too shall cease, and the Father be all in all; you shall be advanced to Thrones of Glory near his right Hand, where there are Rivers of Joy for you to drink of, and Pleasures that flow for evermore.











