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THE
PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES

OF THE

SAVING OF THE
SERMON

ON THE MOUNT

In Eight Volumes

BY

WILLIAM B. EBBES

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

VOLUME

LONDON

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PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES
UPON OUR
SAVIOUR'S
SERMON
On the MOUNT.

In Eight VOLUMES.

BY
OSPRING BLACKALL, D. D.
Late Lord Bishop of *Exeter*.

V O L. II.

L O N D O N:
Printed by R. H. for THOMAS WARD,
in the *Inner-Temple Lane*. 1717.

PRACTICAL

DISCOURSES

UPON THE

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

SERMON

On the 24th of May 1717.

In the Year 1717.

OF THE

Late Lord Bishop of Exeter.

VOL. II.

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THE
CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE XII.

The Duty of Peace-making explain'd.

MATTH. V. 9.

*Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall
be called the Children of God.*

Page 1.

DISCOURSE XIII.

The Duty of Peace-making explain'd.

Text *Ibid.*

P. 39.

A 2

DIS-

1946423

The Contents.

DISCOURSE XIV.

The Blessedness of the Persecuted for
Righteousness Sake.

MATTH. V. 10, 11, 12.

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for
Righteousness Sake, for theirs is the
Kingdom of Heaven.*

*Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you
and persecute you, and shall say all
manner of Evil against you ~~falsely~~ for
my Sake:*

*Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great
is your Reward in Heaven, for so per-
secuted they the Prophets which were be-
fore you.*

p. 73.

DISCOURSE XV.

The Blessedness of the Persecuted for
Righteousness Sake.

Text *Ibid.*

p. 111.

DIS-

The Contents.

DISCOURSE XVI.

All Christians, as well as the Clergy,
are the Salt of the Earth, the
Light of the World, &c.

MATTH. V. 13, 14, 15.

*Ye are the Salt of the Earth; but if the
Salt have lost its Savour, wherewith
shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good
for nothing, but to be cast out and
trodden under Foot of Men.*

*Ye are the Light of the World: A City
that is set on a Hill cannot be hid.*

*Neither do Men light a Candle, and put
it under a Buskel, but on a Candle-
stick, and it giveth Light unto all that
are in the House.*

P. 143.

DIS-

The Contents.

DISCOURSE XVII.

The Method of making our good
Lives useful to Others.

MATTH. V. 16.

*Let your Light so shine before Men, that
they may see your good Works, and glo-
rify your Father which is in Heaven.*

p. 183.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

The Method of making our good
Lives useful to Others; and
the Motives to it.

Text *Ibid.*

p. 217.

DIS-

The Contents.

DISCOURSE XIX.

The Law and the Prophets fulfilled by
Christ.

MATTH. V. 17, 18.

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

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

p. 259.

DISCOURSE XX.

What Commandments are of Perpetual Obligation to Christians.

MATTH. V. 19.

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

p. 299.

DIS-

The Contents.

DISCOURSE XXI.

No Sin Venial either in the Teacher or
the Practiser.

Text *Ibid.*

P. 335.

DISCOURSE XXII.

What is Pharisaical Righteousness, and
wherein it is deficient.

MATTH. V. 20.

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

P. 367.



DIS-

DISCOURSE XII.

The Duty of Peace-making explain'd.



M A T T H. V. 9.

Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the Children of God.



N speaking to these Words I have formerly propos'd to do these two Things.

1. To shew *who* are the Persons here spoken of; The *Peace-makers*. And,

2. To shew both the present *Blessedness* and the future Reward of such Persons. *Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the Children of God.*

[Vol. 2.]

B

1. To

1. To shew *who* are the Persons here spoken of, and pronounc'd Blessed ; The *Peace-makers*. And they are in general such as are of a peaceful and quiet Temper, by which they are inclin'd both to live peaceably themselves, and to promote and preserve Peace among others.

But for the farther Explanation of the Nature of this most excellent Grace, I propos'd in the handling of this Head ;

1. To shew more fully, in general, wherein this peaceful Temper of Mind does consist ; and what are the general Fruits and Effects which it is apt to produce, and whereby it will shew it self in the outward Conversation. And,

2. To shew more particularly, how this Duty of Peace-making may be discharged ; or what are the most probable and hopeful Means both of keeping our selves in Peace, and of preserving and making Peace among others.

But before I began to discourse on this last Point, I premis'd this one thing (which I now think fit to remind you of

of again) *viz.* That what I intended to say upon this Subject should be only relating to the Duty of private Men; not of Governors, or Magistrates; altho' yet in truth they have the greatest Share of all in this Duty; their Power to preserve and maintain Peace in the World, being much more than the Power of private Men. Nevertheless, seeing that to know and practise our own Duty, is all that belongs to us, I judg'd it altogether needless, and what might rather do Hurt than Good, to preach to Subjects and private Persons (such as compose this Audience) the Duty of Governors and publick Persons.

A private Man, then, as I told you, may be consider'd, 1. As a Member of the Catholick Church, or a Citizen of the World; 2. As a Member of a particular Church or Nation. 3. As a Member of a lesser Society, or (if I may so call it) Corporation, consisting of his Neighbourhood and Acquaintance; and, 4. As a single Man, subsisting by himself: And accordingly, I propos'd to shew distinctly;

1. What a private Man ought to do towards the obtaining or preserving the Peace of the whole World, or of the Catholick Church; 2. What he ought to do in order to the making or preserving Peace, in that particular Church or Nation to which he belongs; 3. How he may best preserve or make Peace among his Neighbours and Acquaintance; And, 4. By what Means he may most probably keep himself in Peace.

And the two first of these Heads I have already spoken to; I proceed now to the third; *viz.*

3. To shew how a Private Man may best preserve and make Peace among his Neighbours and Acquaintance.

But before I go about to do this, it will be needful first to remove an obvious Objection which may be made against the whole that can be said upon this Subject; and which, if true and well-grounded, would indeed render all farther Discourse upon it altogether useless.

For it may perhaps be doubted by some, whether or no it can be any private Man's Duty to labour to preserve Peace, or to compose Differences among others ; nay, whether in endeavouring it, he does not rather transgress his own Duty, and go beyond his Bounds.

For, first, The *Apostle* expressly commands us to *study to be quiet* ; and in order thereto exhorts every Man to *do his own Business* ; 1 *Thes.* iv. 11. seeming to intimate thereby, that the meddling with other Mens Business is inconsistent with our own Peace and Quietness. And elsewhere, viz. in 2 *Thess.* iii. 11. and 1 *Tim.* v. 13. the same *Apostle* severely reproveth all those, both Men and Women, who are *Busibodies in other Mens Matters*. St. *Peter* likewise joyns these Busibodies with very ill Company, in 1 *Pet.* iv. 15. thereby seeming to intimate that they are not much inferior to them in Guilt : *Let none of you suffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil-doer, or as a Busibody in other Mens Matters*. Now, how (it may be asked) can

any Man labour to reconcile the Differences of his Neighbours, without concerning himself with their Affairs; without busying himself in their Matters? And accordingly, what is more common than for a Man, when he offers himself to this Work, to be put off with such Speeches as these by the contending Parties; *Let us alone; Go and mind your own Business; Meddle with what belongs to you; stay till you are sent for; and the like?*

Moreover, Did not (it may be farther ask'd) our blessed Saviour himself, and that too when he was desir'd to decide a Controversy between two Brothers, who could not agree how to divide their Inheritance, fairly excuse himself from the Office? *Luke xii. 13, 14. One of the Company said unto him; Master, speak to my Brother, that he divide the Inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, Who made me a Judge or Divider over you?* How then can it be our Duty to do that which he declin'd to do?

And

And, lastly ; Doth it not (it may be asked still farther ; Doth it not) very often happen, that he who interposes himself to reconcile the Differences of others, and to part those that are fighting, instead of making them Friends, only draws upon himself the Hatred and Anger of them both ? At least, of him by whose Fault the Contention began ? So it happened to *Moses*, *Exod. ii. 11.* who when he saw two of his Countrymen striving together, *would fain have set them at one again ; Saying, Sirs, Ye are Brethren, why do ye Wrong one to another ? But he who did his Neighbour Wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a Ruler and a Judge over us ?* And 'tis certain that many a Man has receiv'd a Blow, or a Wound, and some their Death, by only endeavouring to part a Fray. And therefore the *Wise Man* takes Notice, and forewarns Men of the Danger they run by thus concerning themselves in other People's Quarrels, in *Prov. xxvi. 17.* *He that passeth by, and meddleth with Strife belonging not to him,*

is like one that taketh a Dog by the Ears.

From all which it may seem to appear, that it is neither Duty nor Prudence, for a private Man ever to engage himself in other Mens Quarrels; not even so much as to give himself any Trouble to endeavour to make them at Peace. But that the best Way is, if Neighbours will fall out and quarrel, for a Man to let them alone to fight it out by themselves, and to keep himself as far as he can out of Harm's Way.

Nevertheless, After all that hath been now offered on that side, I can't but suppose that Peace-making is always a good Office, and in some Cases a necessary Duty; otherwise our *Saviour* would not have encourag'd Men to it with a Promise of Blessing and Reward; And if it ever be a Duty at all, it must be so when our Neighbours and Acquaintance are at Variance; whose Good and Welfare we are more especially oblig'd to promote; and whose Quarrels, more than other People's, are likely to have
an

an ill Influence upon our own Affairs, and to give Disturbance to our own Quiet and Security.

Besides ; We are oblig'd in Duty to *love our Neighbour as ourselves* ; But the Love of ourselves naturally inclines us to seek our own Welfare, and in order to it to preserve our own Peace ; And therefore if we love our Neighbours in the same Degree, or after the same Manner, that we do ourselves, we can't but also desire their Peace ; and consequently, as we have an Opportunity and Ability, endeavour to preserve and promote it. For how can we be thought heartily to love our Neighbours, and to desire their Welfare, if we suffer them to devour and destroy one another, when it is, or we believe it to be, in our Power to hinder it ?

It is plain therefore, in the first Place, that those Texts of *St. Peter* and *St. Paul* before cited, which so severely censure and condemn Pragmaticalness, or Busying ourselves in other Mens Matters, are not to be so interpreted,
as

as if it were unlawful for a Man to endeavour to preserve and promote his Neighbour's Welfare; It can't be such Busying ourselves in other Mens Matters as this, which the Apostles meant to blame; but such Pragmaticalness only as is sinful and uncharitable, which proceeds from ill Principles, and tends to work Mischief to our Neighbours. But tho' we may not set our Neighbour's House on Fire, yet, surely, if it be on Fire, we may without incurring any Blame help him to quench it. And therefore by the same Reason, tho' we may not so meddle in our Neighbour's Matters as to set them at Variance, we may surely, when we see them at Variance, endeavour to make them at Peace, and not incur any Blame for so doing. Nay, indeed, in endeavouring this (provided we assume not an Authority over them which we have not) we do not intrude ourselves into other Mens Business, but are truly doing our own; for we are only discharging a neighbourly Office to our Neighbours; we are

are only doing what Charity and Brotherly Love obliges us to.

But that the Practice of Peace-making was not meant to be discouraged by any of those Places before cited, will more clearly appear, if we consider each of them distinctly.

The first Place cited in the Objection was that of St. Paul, in 1 *Theff.* iv. 11. *Study to be quiet, and to do your own Business.*

To understand the true Meaning and Design of which Words, we must look back to the 9th Verse, *As touching Brotherly Love, (says the Apostle) ye need not that I write unto you; For ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it towards all the Brethren which are in all Macedonia. But we beseech you, Brethren, that ye increase more and more. The Apostle, you see, blames them not for that Charity which had put them upon doing good Offices to others; Nay, he commends them for it, and beseeches them to increase in this great Duty or Vertue more and more.*
And

And therefore those Words which follow immediately after, *and that ye study to be quiet and to do your own Business*, can't be so understood as if by their charitable Endeavour to promote the Good of others, they would be turbulent and troublesome, and meddle with what did not belong to them; but they only contain a Caution against such Meddling as is the Effect of Idleness; the Meddling with other Mens Matters, not with a Design to benefit them, but only to employ ourselves. And this is farther confirm'd by the Words immediately following, that *ye do your own Business, and work with your own Hands, as we commanded you*. This was to do their own Business, it was to be diligent in their proper Callings; and such Diligence is a most effectual Means to keep Men from Meddling more than needs in the Affairs of others.

The same is also plainly the Design of those Words in 2 *Theff.* iii. 2. where the *Apostle* opposes *Busibodies*, to such as work honestly for their own Living;
and

and intimates that they which neglect their own Business are the most likely to give Disturbance to their Neighbours. *They work not at all, but are Busibodies, and walk disorderly.*

And 'tis likewise the same Fault which he finds with the *young Widows*, in 1 *Tim.* v. 13. who being maintain'd by the Church out of the Poors Chest, so that they were not under an Obligation to work for their Living, and not caring to spend their Time, as they ought to have done, in Prayers and Devotions, did for Want of other Employment make a Trade of Gossiping, and Going about from one House to another, carrying Tales, and sowing Discord among their Neighbours. *They learn, says he, to be idle, wandring about from House to House; and not only idle, but Tatlers also and Busibodies; speaking things which they ought not.* That is, entertaining themselves and others, either with loose and wanton Stories, or else with uncharitable Tales and Surmises concerning their Neighbours.

Peace-

Peace-making being therefore (as has been shew'd already) the Effect of Charity and Brotherly Kindness, is plainly not condemn'd in any of these Places as a needless or blameable Meddling in other Mens Matters : But the only thing that these Texts find Fault with, is such a Pragmaticalness as is the Effect of Idleness, or the Cause of Mischief to others, or the Occasion of Men's Neglecting their own proper Business or Duty.

And lastly ; It is evident that St. Peter, in that Place where he forbids us to *suffer as Murderers, or Thieves, or Evil-Doers, or Busibodies in other Mens Matters*, means by *Busibodies* such only as meddle with other Mens Matters in such a manner as to be punishable upon that Account in humane Courts of Justice ; *Let none of you suffer as a Busibody* ; but I am persuaded it never was forbidden, or made punishable, by the Laws of any Nation, for Men to endeavour to promote Peace and Good-will among Neighbours. Peace-makers therefore are
not

not the *Busibodies* there spoken of, the *Busibodies* there meant being such only as were *Evil-doers* too; for they are joyned together by the *Apostle*; *Let none of you suffer as an Evil-doer, or as a Busibody.* They were therefore either such as *St. Paul* speaks of in the Places before-mention'd, who neglecting the Works of their Callings, did spend their Time in sowing Discord among their Neighbours, and making Mischief in the World: or else rather, they were (as the Word *ἀλλυτριοεπίσκοπος* then used does most properly signifie) such as assum'd to themselves a Power and Superiority over others without lawful Commission, or such as extended the Power they had beyond it's just Bounds, and invaded another's Jurisdiction. But a Man may be a Peace-maker, and yet not do this: I say, even a Private Man (for 'tis of such only that I now speak) may endeavour to preserve and make Peace among his Neighbours, as a private Man, without assuming to himself any Authority over them, or invading the
Ma-

Magistrate's Office ; as I shew by and by.

Thus it appears that there is no Text of Scripture forbidding private Men to be Reconcilers of the Differences of their Neighbours ; altho' there are indeed some which may be wrested to this Purpose by such as would willingly be releas'd from a Duty which they are loth, either thro' Laziness or Want of Charity, to undertake.

But the main thing of all objected against it was the Example of our Lord. For if it be lawful for a private Man to concern himself in reconciling Differences between his Neighbours, it may well enough be ask'd, what made our Blessed Saviour, even when he was desired to be an Arbitrator in a Difference between two Brothers, to wave and decline the Office ? Doth it not hence plainly appear that Peace-making is not the Duty of private Men ? For if it had, surely our Saviour, who came to *fulfill all Righteousness*, and to be a Pattern thereof to the World, would not have omitted so
fair

fair an Opportunity of Discharging this Office. Nay farther, Doth it not hence appear that a private Man can't undertake the Office without Meddling with other Mens Matters in such sort as he ought not ; and assuming to himself the Authority of a Magistrate ? For this our *Saviour's* Answer to the Man's Request may seem to import ; *Man, Who made me a Ruler or a Divider over you ?*

But to take off somewhat the Force of this Objection, (before I come to make a direct Answer to it) I desire it may be considered, That *St. Paul*, who certainly understood our Lord's Mind, and also spake by Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, severely chides the *Corinthians*, who, if any Difference happened between them, were presently for trying it out at Law in the Courts of the *Heathens* ; and advises them rather to stand to the Arbitrement of some wise and discreet Man among themselves : 1 *Cor.* vi. 5, 6. *Is it so, says he, that there is not a wise Man among you ; no not one, that shall be able to judge between his Brethren ? But*

Brother goeth to Law with Brother, and that before the Unbelievers. In which Words he plainly taxes them with two Faults; One was, that they were so apt to quarrel and fall out about small and trifling Matters; as appears from the following Words: *Now therefore there is utterly a Fault among you, because ye go to Law one with another: Why do ye not rather take Wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* The other Fault was, that when the Difference was about somewhat considerable, they did not rather put the Matter to the Arbitration of some wise Person among themselves. *I speak to your Shame,* says he, *Is there not a wise Man among you? i. e.* Not one that is able to decide your Differences, but that you must needs carry them before the Magistrate? Now if they did Ill in carrying their Causes before the Magistrate, it plainly follows, that some of themselves, who were all private Men, (for there were no *Christian Magistrates* in those Days) might have decided these Differences, without invading the Magistrate's Office and Authority. For certainly

certainly he would not have advised them to put their Differences to the Arbitration of some of their Brethren, who (as I said) were all private Men; if indeed it had been unlawful for a private Man, at the Request of both Parties, to have undertaken the Office.

It is plain therefore that this was not the Reason why our Saviour refus'd it: But either,

1. First of all, Because he was at that Time otherwise employ'd, and in a Business of far greater Moment, and more publick Concern; preaching the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God; so that to have gone about to decide this Difference then, would have been an unseasonable Interruption of his Discourse. Or,

2. He might at that time decline it, because he perceiv'd that the Man came to him, prompted by Covetousness, and a Desire of having a greater Share of the Inheritance than was his Due. *Speak to my Brother*, says he, *that he divide the Inheritance: i. e.* (for so his Words may

be understood) Speak to him to give me a Part of that Inheritance to which he, by Law, is sole Heir. And that this was his Meaning is the more probable, because our *Saviour* immediately took Occasion from hence to warn Men against Covetousness, in the very next Verse: *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of Covetousness.* Or,

3. He might then refuse to judge between this Man and his Brother, because the Man came to him alone, and seem'd as if he meant to engage him to be a Party rather than a Judge, and give the Cause for him without giving the other a fair Hearing. *Speak to my Brother,* says he, *that he divide the Inheritance.* He should have said; Hear what my Brother has to say why he refuses to divide the Inheritance, and what I have to say why he should do it; and then judge between us. Or,

4. A Reason why he wav'd concerning himself to decide this Difference, might be, because the Man came to him, not as to a private Person, to decide

cide their Differences, by Arbitration; but as to a Person invested with secular Power and Authority; presuming (according to the general Opinion and Expectation of the *Jews*) that if he was the *Messias*, which his Miracles seem'd to prove him to be, he was also to be a Temporal Prince. And this his Opinion of our *Saviour*, seems to be own'd by the Way of his Addressing him. *Master*, says he, *speake to my Brother; i. e.* Lay thy Command upon him, *to divide the Inheritance with me.* And if this was the Man's Meaning, then our *Saviour's* refusing to concern himself in the Business, was, in effect, only a Disowning himself to be a temporal King; or a Declaration that *his Kingdom was not of this World: Who made me*, says he, *a Ruler and a Divider? i. e.* I have no Commission from God to exercise that secular Power which thou thinkest me invested with. Or,

5. Lastly, Our *Saviour* might well then decline the Office, altho' not unlawful to be exercised by a private Man,

yet as not expedient to be undertaken by him at that time ; because the *Jews*, who watch'd all Occasions to entrap him, and were very desirous to have whereof to accuse him to the *Roman Governor*, would very probably have readily taken hold on such an Occasion as this ; and have laid it to his Charge that he affected the Kingdom ; for it was upon a far less Ground than this would have been, that they afterwards accus'd him of Treason before *Pontius Pilate*.

For some or other of these Reasons, I say, it is most likely that our *Saviour* did decline to take upon him to decide the Controversy between the two Brothers : And therefore all that can be argued from this single Example, is no more but only this ; That to labour to make Peace among Neighbours, is not always such a necessary Duty, as that a Man is bound to neglect all other Businesses for it ; or, but that in some Cases a Man may lawfully and wisely refuse to take upon him the Office of an Arbitrator between

between two Neighbours that are at Variance. But it doth not by any Means appear from this Example, that it is in general either unlawful, or not a Duty, to seek to make Peace among Neighbours; which may be attempted several other Ways, without in any manner thrusting in, or so much as offering ourselves to be Judges between them.

But against the Practice of this Duty, it was farther urged in the Objection, That the Office of Peace-making is many times very dangerous to a Man's self; and to confirm this, those Words of Solomon were cited: *He that passeth by, and meddleth with Strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a Dog by the Ears.*

But to this 'tis easily answered, That this Place needs not be so understood, as if it meant to condemn, as rash and dangerous, our concerning ourselves so far about the Strifes of others, as to endeavour by fair Means to put an End to them: It may more reasonably be understood, as meaning only to con-

demn such a Meddling with the Strifes of others, as engages us to take one Part, and to help and assist that against the other. As if a Man, when two Dogs were fighting, should hold the one while the other worried him. And he that does thus, does indeed *meddle with Strife that belongeth not to him ; i. e.* He engages himself in a Strife, and makes himself a Party, when he might have been at Quiet : He consequently runs himself into needless Danger ; and is truly like the Man that *Solomon* there speaks of, who *taking a Dog* by the Ears, can neither easily keep his hold, nor without Danger let it go : He will not be able so readily to disengage himself from the Contention, as he did thrust himself into it.

Or if we understand those Words as spoken of a Man who only endeavours to part them that are Quarreling, yet it is not all such Meddling which the *Wise Man* condemns, but only the Meddling with Strifes which *belong not to us ; i. e.* which we are not desired to accom-

accommodate, or which we have not Wisdom or Authority enough to put an End to. *He that passeth by, and meddeth with Strife belonging not to him; i. e.* who will needs take upon himself, without any Call or Warrant, to judge between others, having neither Power, nor Skill, nor Authority to discharge the Office.

And indeed, so much is certainly true that no private Man should hastily interpose himself to be an Arbitrator in any Dispute or Contest between others; for that is to assume to himself an Authority over them, when really he has none. And it is no Wonder that such proffered Service is many times refused with Scorn by both Parties: 'Tis no Wonder, I say, when a Man rashly thrusts himself into Office, and proffers of his own Accord that he will be a Judge and Determiner of every Strife or Dispute that happens between his Neighbours, if sometimes his Service be with Anger and Disdain rejected; and he be answered as Moses was, *Who made*

made thee a Ruler and a Judge over us?
For Men generally love to be Masters of their own Actions, and do not care to be censured and controuled even by them that have lawful Authority over them; and much less by those that have not. But if a Man be chosen by both Parties to end their Strife, and they have agreed to stand to his Determination, it is then no Arrogance nor Presumption at all in him, nor what is likely to gain him any ill Will from them, to accept of the Office, and to use his best Skill to decide their Difference as fairly and justly as he can.

But there are also several other Ways and Means of promoting Peace among Neighbours, besides arbitrating and judging between them; which any private Man may make Use of without incurring the Blame of needless Meddling; without arrogating to himself undue Authority; without running himself into Danger, or drawing on himself the ill Will or Displeasure of any; which therefore a Love of Peace will both
readily

readily suggest to him, and strongly incline him to put in Practice. For,

1. First of all, Whosoever is desirous to preserve Peace among his Neighbours, will be careful to avoid, and endeavour as much as he can to discourage and prevent in others, those Practices which are the usual Means of raising Quarrels and Contentions among Men. Such are, especially, Backbiting, Whispering, Tale-bearing, Slander, Detraction, and the like. For, as the Wise Son of Syrach observes, *A Backbiting Tongue hath disquieted many, and driven them from Nation to Nation; Strong Cities hath it pulled down, and overthrown the Houses of great Men: Whoso hearkeneth to it shall never find Rest, and never dwell quietly.—Curse the Whisperer and Double-tongu'd, for such have destroy'd many that were at Peace.* And to the same Purpose the Wise Solomon also observes, *Prov. xviii. 8. That the Words of a Tale-bearer are as Wounds; that they go down into the innermost Parts of the Belly.* And, *Prov. xvi. 28. That a forward Man soweth Strife, and*

a Whispherer separateth chief Friends. Indeed, the nearest Relations, the strictest Friendships, the most intire Love, and the firmest Peace, have been dissolv'd by such Men. And I believe most of the Quarrels and Contentions that have been in the World, and have ruin'd Families, and destroy'd Kingdoms, have been occasion'd at first by the private Whispers, or more open Detractions of flandering and backbiting Tongues.

Whoever therefore is desirous that they who live about him should continue in Peace, will especially take Care not to report of one Neighbour to another any thing that is false; not, without very good Reason, any thing, tho' true, which may any ways tend to make ill Blood between them; and he will likewise discountenance and discourage others, who, whether out of Malice, Envy, or ill Will, or merely out of Idleness, and a prating talkative Humour, make it their Practice to carry about Tales from one Neighbour to another, whereby their Love and Good-will towards each other

other is by Degrees cooled and extinguished. A peaceable-minded Man will be sure never to sow the Seeds of Dissention among his Neighbours. And,

2. In case there be any Dissention already begun among them, a peaceful Man will be sure so to behave himself as not by any Means to inflame their Anger and ill Will towards each other, or to widen their Breaches, or foment and encourage their Differences.

And if all Men would but behave themselves with this Prudence and Caution towards their Neighbours that are at Variance ; if they would but be persuaded only to let them alone, even this only would go a great Way towards the shortening of those Quarrels which happen among Neighbours : For Humane Nature in general is not so very bad as some have represented it ; 'tis not so very quarrelsome and contentious, so fierce and outrageous, as some Men (judging, it may be, all others by themselves) would make us believe it is. But most of the little Strifes and Contentions

tentions which happen among Neighbours, would soon cease and die of their own Accord, if some busy and ill-natur'd People (pretending, it may be, to be Friends to both Parties) did not blow the Coals of Contention, and throw on fresh Fuel when the Fire was near expiring, by aggravating to each the Injury or Unkindness of the other, and by reporting fresh Tales of each to the other to renew the Quarrel. For as *Solomon* observes, *Prov. xxvi. 20, 21. As Coals are to burning Coals, and as Wood to Fire, so is a contentious Man to kindle Strife. Where no Wood is, the Fire goeth out; so where there is no Talebearer the Strife ceaseth.* Thus and thus has he used you; (says the Makebate) this and this has he said of you: I wonder how you can bear it so tamely: If you were a Man of any Spirit, you could not put it up: Had he serv'd me so, I'd have made him repent it before this: Had I been so basely dealt by, I'd lose my Life in the Quarrel, but I'd be reveng'd; and the like. And when by such Speeches
he

he has pretty well heated and irritated one side, he as readily goes, and says all the same things to the other, till that be heated to the same Pitch, and then he hopes his Sport will begin. Were it not, I say, for some such Persons as this, who delight to sow Strife and Discord among Men, and to foment their Neighbours Quarrels, most of their Contentions would in a short time cease of themselves, as the Fire goes out when the Fewel is spent. So that it would do a great deal towards the Preserving Peace among Neighbours, if the Standers-by would but be persuaded not to blow the Coals of Contention, nor to stir up the Fire when it was almost out. But,

3. If the Contention be so hot and fierce that it is not likely to cease of its own accord, he that is a Lover and Maker of Peace will then endeavour to incline both Parties to Coolness and Moderation. *If thou blow the Spark, it shall burn; and if thou spit upon it, it shall be quenched*, says the Wise Hebrew, and
both

both these came out of thy Mouth. By which he seems to intimate, that as the usual Means of raising and fomenting Quarrels among Men, is by what *proceeds out of the Mouth*, viz. by Words, by carrying Tales, by aggravating Offences, by persuading to Revenge; so the likeliest Means to make them cease, is also by what *proceeds out of the Mouth*; i. e. by Words too; Not such indeed as the other, but by soft and gentle Intreaties, by representing to each Party the Smallness and Inconsiderableness of the Things they quarrel about; and the great Benefits and Advantages of Peace, and by shewing them how inconsistent it is with Peace to take Offence at every thing, to interpret every thing in the worst Sense, to give Ear to Slanderers and Backbiters, and to lay hold on every Occasion of Quarrelling that is offered. But,

4. Lastly, If the Passions of any of our Neighbours who are at Variance be so hot and inflam'd on both Sides, that gentle Words and fair Intreaties are not
sufficient

sufficient wholly to suppress them, they may serve however in good Measure to allay them. And therefore when a Man, desirous to make Peace among his Neighbours, sees that they are resolv'd to fight it out, and that no Means which he can use are sufficient to hinder them, he will then endeavour that their Contention may be ended with as little Hurt to both as is possible. And to this end he will labour to persuade them to defer the Matter in Dispute to the Decision of some wise Neighbour (whereby with less Charge, and probably more to the Satisfaction of both Parties, the Strife may be ended) rather than to try it out at Law: because tho' a Law-Suit may determine a Controversy, it very rarely leaves the contending Parties in Peace and Charity.

These are some of the Means whereby even a private Man may promote Peace and Good-will among his Neighbours. I might have mention'd some others, or have been more particular in treating of these: But a peaceful Mind and com-

mon Prudence will readily suggest to a Man what are the most likely Means of making Peace between others, considering the Circumstances he himself is in, and the Nature and Disposition of the Persons he has to deal with.

All therefore that I shall now add on this Head, shall be only a Word or two to excite you to the Putting in Practice these, or whatever other Rules and Methods of Peace-making your own Prudence may suggest : To which Purpose I desire these three things may be considered :

1. That by making or promoting Peace among Neighbours, we do a Work that is very pleasing to God ; who, as our Church styles him, is *The Author of Peace and Lover of Concord*, and for which he will plentifully reward us. For such, says our *Saviour*, *shall be called the Children of God*.

2. That we shall also hereby discharge a kind and charitable Office to our Neighbours, for which we shall deserve, and most probably have their
Thanks

Thanks also : For tho' possibly while they are in the Heat of Contention, they may give an angry or reproachful Word to those who endeavour to put a Stop to their Fury ; yet afterwards, when they become cool, they will discern the Kindness that was intended them, and look upon the Peace-maker as their best Friend. Whereas, on the contrary, they that sow Discord, and foment Quarrels, however they may for a short time curry Favour with both sides, by carrying about Tales from one to the other, will, when their Practices come once to be discover'd, be most assuredly hated by both ; and also be justly esteem'd by all others, the Pests and Plagues of Mankind.

3. Lastly, It may be farther considered, That they who promote and preserve Peace among their Neighbours, do in the Event reap also the Benefit of it themselves ; for while it is calm about them, they also may live quietly, which 'tis impossible they should do, how inoffensive soever their own Be-

haviour be, so long as all is Storm and Tempest round about them.

And besides, it will be very hard for any Man to keep himself from taking Part with one side, at least from being thought so to do; especially when a kind Look, a friendly Word, or even an Act of common Humanity to one, will be thought by the other a taking Part with him.

Thus I have shewn how a private Man may contribute towards the Procuring the Peace of the whole World, or of the Catholick Church; and especially of that particular Church and Nation whereof he is a Member: And now also, more particularly, how he may promote Peace among his Neighbours and Acquaintance.

It yet remains to be shewn how a Man ought to behave himself so as to keep himself in Peace.

But the Handling of this Point, and what else remains to be spoken of from these Words, I shall defer to another Time.



DISCOURSE XII
OF
Peace-making

T H E

D U T Y

O F

Peace-making Explain'd.



DISCOURSE XIII.

The Duty of Peace-making explain'd.



M A T T H. V. 9.

Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the Children of God.



N speaking to these Words I have formerly propos'd to do these two Things.

1. To shew who are the Persons here spoken of, and pronounced Blessed; *The Peace-makers.* And,

2. To shew both the present Blessedness and the future Reward of such Persons; *Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the Children of God.*

1. And in Discourfing on the first of these Heads, after feveral other things

said for the Explanation of the Duty here recommended, I came to shew how it may best be discharg'd by us : And particularly, 1. What, a private Person (for I confin'd my Discourse only to such) ought to do towards the obtaining or preserving the Peace of the whole World, or of the Catholick Church. 2. What he ought to do in order to the making or preserving Peace in that particular Church or Nation to which he belongs. 3. How he may best preserve or make Peace among his Neighbours or Acquaintance. And, 4. By what Means he may most probably keep himself in Peace.

And the three first of these Points I have already spoken to; I proceed now to the fourth, *viz.*

4. To shew how a Man ought to behave himself, so as to keep himself in Peace.

And that it is our Duty to endeavour this, as well as it is our Interest, that our Endeavours should be successful, is a Point which I suppose will not be ques-

questioned; especially, because it is elsewhere very expressly commanded, as particularly in *Heb. xii. 14. Follow Peace with all Men*; in *Rom. xii. 18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men*; and (to name no more) 1 *Thess. iv. 11. Study to be quiet. Study this, i. e. make it your Business*; Be content to spend a good deal of Time and Pains to procure your own Peace. But the Word in the Original is still more expressive of the most passionate Desire of Quietness, and the most industrious Diligence to procure it. *Φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν*, it might have been rendred, *Be ambitious of Quietness*, or, *Contend for Peace as earnestly as others do for Honour and Victory.*

Besides, If it be our Duty (as I have shewn it is) to preserve and promote, as much as we are able, the Peace of others, it must needs be so, much rather, to preserve and promote our own Peace: For our Love to ourselves is the Measure of that Love which we are to have for others. We are oblig'd

to

to love our *Neighbours as ourselves*; not more, not better than we do ourselves: We are therefore oblig'd at least as much in Duty (and I'm sure much more in Interest) to preserve our own Peace and Quiet, as we are that of other Men.

Taking it therefore for granted that to seek our own Peace is one Branch of that Duty, to the Performance of which our *Saviour* here pronounces a Blessedness; I come now to shew how it may be discharg'd: Particularly;

1. What lies on us to do to maintain and preserve Peace between ourselves and others. And,

2. In case the Peace between us be already broken, what lies on us to do in order to the renewing it.

1. I shall shew what *lies* on us to do in order to the keeping and preserving Peace between ourselves and others.

Now the only sure Ground of a lasting Peace, between two Persons, or two Societies of Men, is a mutual Love and good Will; for if once they come
to

to bear inward Hatred to each other, it can't be long before they will break out into open Acts of Hostility. Whoever therefore is desirous to keep himself in Peace and Quietness, must especially be very careful to avoid all those Practices which are naturally apt to provoke others to Passion and Revenge, and to excite their Hatred and Ill-will towards him; For, *Hatred stirreth up Strife*, as the *Wise Man* observes, *Prov. 10. 12.* It naturally tends to raise Disturbance, and the most trifling Matter in the World is sufficient to set Men a quarrelling when once they are inwardly disaffected towards each other: When once they are by their inward Hatred dispos'd to take occasion of Quarrelling, they can never long want Occasion; so that, in short, whoever would keep himself in Peace, must abstain, not only from doing real Injuries to others, but likewise from those things which are generally accounted and taken as Injuries; and if he does so, he may reasonably hope none will be dispos'd to hurt or injure him.

“ For

“ For (as is well observ’d * by one
 “ that has written on this
 * Moral Ef- “ Subject) if we will be
 fays, Means of “ juſt to ourſelves we
 conſerving Peace, “ ſhall find that very rare-
 p. 178.
 “ ly any one ſpeaks ill of us without
 “ Cauſe, or takes delight to hurt and
 “ vex us only for Wantonneſs; but we
 “ muſt always contribute ſomewhat to-
 “ wards it ourſelves; and if we give
 “ no immediate Cauſe, at leaſt we do
 “ it afar off. We commit without
 “ thinking, a thouſand little Faults
 “ againſt thoſe with whom we live,
 “ which diſpoſe them to take in ill
 “ Part, ſuch things as otherwiſe they
 “ would have paſs’d by, had they not
 “ already in their Mind given Enter-
 “ tainment to ſome Diſguſt. In fine,
 “ (ſays he) it is almoſt always true,
 “ that if we are not belov’d ’tis our
 “ own Fault; ’tis we who have not
 “ known how to make ourſelves be
 “ ſo.”

That therefore, if it be poſſible, we
 may not incur the ill Will of any, that
 we

we may not give them just ground to hate us, that if we cannot actually live in Peace with all Men, it may not be thro' any Fault of ours that we do not, it is necessary (as I said) not only that we forbear doing real Wrongs and Injuries to others, but likewise that we forbear all such Practices as People are generally apt to take ill, as Judging them (and that not without Reason) to be the Fruits and Effects of our Hatred and Disaffection towards them: For when once a Man is persuaded that we don't affect him, it is not to be expected that he shou'd affect us; and when People are disaffected towards each other, it is not to be expected that they should long live in Peace, because any the least Occasion is then sufficient to set them a quarrelling.

Now those Practices which next to real Injuries are most apt to breed and foment Discord among Men, and which therefore are with all Carefulness to be avoided by a Lover of Peace, are such as these: 1. Backbiting, Whispering, and De-

Detraction. 2. A Readiness to give ear to Backbiters and Talebearers. 3. Reviling, and Reproachful Language. 4. Needlessly contradicting the Opinions, and thwarting the Humours of other Men. And, lastly, meddling more than we need to do in other Mens Matters.

I say therefore,

(1.) If we would preserve and maintain Peace with others, it is highly necessary, in order to this, that we carefully abstain from Backbiting, Whispering, and Detraction, and all such Practices: For there is nothing that Men are generally more concern'd about than their Reputation: They are commonly very sensible of the least Wound that is given to that. And therefore the Wise Son of Syrach advises very well, *Eccles. xix. 9. Whether it be to a Friend or a Foe, talk not of other Mens Lives, and if thou canst without Offence, reveal them not; for he heard and observ'd thee, and when Time cometh he will hate thee; i. e. he will shew his*

Hatred

Hatred of thee, by the sensible Effects of it, the first Opportunity he has.

Nor does this Practice make a Man hated only by those whom by this Means he hurts, but likewise by all such as know his Way and Practice. They hate him (altho' they themselves were never hurt by him) as a common Enemy to Mankind, as a publick Pest to Humane Society. *A Whisperer* (says the same *Wise Man*, 21. 28.) *defileth his own Soul, and wheresoever he dwelleth will be hated.* Even they who may sometimes make use of such a Man to serve a present Turn, will yet look upon him as a base and unworthy Person, and will never dare to trust him as a Friend, because they will have all the Reason that can be to think that he who is so ready to tell them an ill thing of another, will be as ready to gratify another by reporting some ill Tale of them. Such an one therefore, being the common Object of all Mens Hatred, can never reasonably hope to enjoy a lasting Peace.

(2.) It is further necessary, for the Preservation of our own Peace and Quiet, that we be not ready or forward to give ear to Backbiters and Talebearers. *Whoso hearkeneth to a Backbiting Tongue* (says the same Wise Hebrew) *shall never find Rest, and never dwell quietly.*

For, besides that, 'tis very hard for a Man who knows a great many ill things of his Neighbours, (as he must needs do who gladly listens to all the ill Stories he can hear) always to conceal what he knows of them, and never to be tempted upon any Occasion to divulge such things concerning them, as will draw upon him their Hatred and Ill-will: Besides this, I say, it can hardly be supposed that any Man shou'd be very desirous to hear so much Ill concerning others, unless he had a Design to report it again, or to make use of it some other way to their Hurt; so that the very hearkning to such Tales, and especially the Pumping and Enquiring them out, looks like a Preparation for War on his side; which being observ'd
by

by the other, will of course make them to stand on their Guard, and dispose them to be ready to fall out and quarrel with him whensoever they can find an advantageous Occasion.

Moreover, the very Listening to Talebearers is a sure Sign that the Man has already no true Love for those whom he is so willing and desirous to hear spoken ill of; for no Man can well endure that any whom he has a Kindness for, should be represented to him under an ill Character; and therefore the giving ear to such Reports concerning others, must needs be a likely Means of Cooling their Love and Affection towards him.

Add to this, That the hearkning to Talebearers supplies a Man with the Grounds of Hatred and Aversion towards others; so that by listening to, and enquiring out ill things concerning them, we plainly shew that we have a mind to hate them more than we have yet Cause for, which being discovered, will of course provoke them to hate and

malign us as much. And when two Persons hate one another, and do thus strive every day to encrease their Hatred of each other, the Fire of Contention, tho' it may for a while be smother'd, can't be long before it breaks out into an open and unquenchible Flame ; Discord will necessarily soon follow from such nourishing of Hatred.

(3.) Another thing to be most carefully avoided by every Man that would preserve himself in Peace, is, all reproachful and reviling Language, all Words or Actions that argue Contempt and Slighting of others, all bitter Jestings and insulting Behaviour : For there is hardly any Principle more common to Mankind than Self-love, and Self-conceit, and (which follows from thence) a Desire to be esteem'd and respected by others in some Measure suitable to that good Esteem which they have of themselves : And therefore there is nothing that Men are generally apt to take more ill, to be more offended at, to be more inclin'd to revenge, than such reviling
and

and opprobrious Speeches as at once both intimate to themselves that they are not Persons so deserving as they thought, and also serve to lessen that Esteem and good Opinion which, as they suppose, others had of them before.

And accordingly we may observe that most of the Strifes and Quarrels that happen among Men, are first occasioned by some harsh Words arguing Contempt and low Esteem. Men can generally bear a real Injury and Wrong more patiently than they can an insulting or opprobrious Word. And I believe there have been more Friends lost by a bitter Jest than by real Acts of Diskindness. And to this agrees that Observation and Advice of the *Wise Man*, *Prov. xxii. 10.* *Cast out the Scorn, and Contention shall go out ; yea, Strife and Reproach shall cease.*

Besides, Scornful Language or Behaviour, as it intimates Contempt of that Person in particular towards whom it is used, so it also argues a general Vanity and Pride in the Person that uses it : whence the *Wise Man* calls him *proud*

and haughty Scorners. Now there is no Quality that Men do more generally hate in others than Pride ; so that he that allows himself in reproachful Language or contemptuous Behaviour towards others, is doubly an Enemy to his own Peace, *i. e.* not only in provoking to Anger and Revenge those whom he directly affronts, but also in drawing upon himself a general Dislike and Hatred from all those who are acquainted with his way of Conversation. And thus Solomon observes, *Prov. xxiv. 9. The Scorners is an Abomination to Men.* Even they who like the Jest, will yet conceive a great Dislike of the Man : They who may be glad perhaps that the other is contemned, will yet abominate that proud and haughty Temper which inclined him so to expose his Neighbour to Contempt and Scorn. Thus the *Scorners* becomes an *Abomination to Man.* He can really be belov'd by none ; he will most certainly incur the actual Hatred of a great many : And a Man that

that is generally hated, can never reasonably hope to live long in Peace.

(4.) Another thing to be carefully avoided by us, if we would not incur the Hatred and Displeasure of others, is, needlessly contradicting their Opinions, or thwarting their Humours.

For Men generally love to be Masters of themselves, and can hardly endure to be controul'd even by those who have Authority over them; and much less are they able to bear being oppos'd and contradicted by their Equals or Inferiours.

For whoever contradicts and thwarts another, especially if it be in a Notion that the other is very confident or fond of, takes upon him to know more than the other does, and in effect tells him that he is not so wise as he takes himself to be; and these are things that Men do not care to hear of from any Person, and least of all from those who are inferiour to them in Age or Quality.

Not that we are bound to assent to every thing that another says, for this we can't do unless we think he speaks reason, nor yet are we bound to pretend to be of his Mind when we are not, for that would be Lying or Diffimulation, and so can't be a Part of our Duty : But nevertheless, I say, that seeing there is nothing that Men do generally take more heinously, and are more apt to quarrel for than for being contradicted, we shan't need to do this neither, unless there be very great Reason for it, that is, unless the Error which they have embraced be such as we conceive will be very prejudicial to them, and then also, when we do think it necessary to oppose and contradict them, we ought always to do it in such a mild and gentle Manner as to exasperate them as little as is possible.

(5.) Lastly, In order to the living peaceably with others, there is nothing that ought to be more carefully avoided by us than the concerning ourselves needlessly, (that is, more than we are bound

bound in Duty or Charity to do) in other Mens Business; for to do so is generally very distastful to Men, who think themselves wise and able enough to manage their own Affairs without others Advice or Help : And to offer to give them Directions before we are desired to do it, as it argues an overweaning Opinion of ourselves, so it implies a slight Esteem of them, as if we thought them not capable of dispatching their own Business; which is a thing that, whether it be true or false, Men do not care to be told of, and which they can never hear without great Displeasure. And therefore the Apostle in 1 *Thess.* iv. 11. pressing the Practice of living peaceably with others, immediately subjoins as a necessary Means of doing it, that we should *mind our own Business* : *Study to be quiet*, says he, *and do your own Business*; plainly intimating, that such as will needs be meddling with other Mens Matters, farther than they are in Duty bound to do, are more likely to incur their Hatred, than to pro-

cure their Thanks for so doing. And to the same Purpose St. Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 15. forbidding us to *suffer as Busibodies in other Mens Matters*, plainly intimates, that if we will be Busibodies, we must expect to suffer; and that if we will not let others alone in their own proper Affairs and Concerns, they will as little suffer us to be quiet.

But it may happen, after all our Caution to give no Offence to others, that something may yet be said or done by us that may give them Occasion to fall out with us; or it may happen that they whom we have to deal with may be of such a contentious Spirit as to pick a quarrel with us, tho' we never gave them the least Occasion: In which Case it is both our Duty and our Interest, and what a Love of Peace will naturally incline us to, to use our utmost Endeavour to renew the Peace that has been broken, and to obtain a Reconciliation with them. And by what Means and Ways we ought to endeavour this, was
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the next Thing I propounded to shew,
viz.

2. What Course we ought to take
and use in order to the Renewing the
Peace between ourselves and others in
Case it has been broken. And,

(1.) In Case it was broken thro' our
Fault, our Duty is plain, namely, to
offer full Satisfaction for any Wrong or
Injury that has been done by us to any
other: For this is no more than we
are in strict Justice bound to do. But,

(2.) If the Quarrel begun thro' their
Fault only, what lies on us to do in
order to procure a Reconciliation with
them, is,

1. To debate the Case calmly with
them; to desire to know of them what
Reason they had to hurt or injure us;
what Cause or Provocation we ever
gave them to quarrel with us: For, as
I observ'd before, it seldom happens
that Men fall out for nothing; and tho'
perhaps we never gave those that are at
Enmity with us any real Cause, yet
some Expression or Action of ours mis-
understood,

understood, or some false Report that has been made of us to them, was probably the Occasion of their first Injury: For whether they had Cause or no, it is not to be supposed that they would have been Enemies to us unless they had thought they had Cause; and therefore before we can expect that they should be fully reconcil'd to us, we must shew them their Mistake, that the Thing they took so ill, was either a false and slanderous Tale; or, if true, that it was not so meant and intended by us as they took it to be: And when they shall see, by a calm and friendly Debate of the whole Matter, that they have no Cause to bear us Hatred, their Hatred will quickly cool and die of its own accord: And therefore we are advis'd by *Solomon* in *Prov. xxv. 9.* to *Debate our Cause with our Neighbour himself,* as the readiest and likeliest Means of composing any Difference that has happened between us. But,

2. If we can't put an End to the Difference this way, we ought then
to

to persuade our Adversary, if it be possible, to refer the Matter in Dispute between us to some wise and indifferent Person to judge of, rather than try it out at Law; for tho' a Law-Suit may determine a Controversy, such Determination rarely creates Peace, but even when the Dispute is over, the Anger, the Malice, and the Passion generally continue, nay, most commonly they are increas'd: For he that overcomes after a long and sharp Contest, can hardly forbear insulting, than which nothing is more apt to provoke the other's Passion; and he that is cast in his Suit, tho' he is forc'd to submit, will hardly ever be able to love his Conquerour; so that he will submit no longer than till he can recover Strength, and get an Opportunity to renew the Fight, and to take his Revenge; whereas in most of those Cases, of Words, or Trespasses, or small Injuries, that Men go to Law about, the Matter might have been so ended by a friendly Arbitration, that both Sides should have been satisfied with the Equity.

Equity of the Decision; and the Contest not having been so long and fierce, the Victory on either Side would not have been so great, nor the Defeat so shameful, but that both might have been glad that the Dispute was so well ended.

3. Another Means of procuring a Reconciliation with those that are in Contention with us, is by plainly shewing them that tho' for the Maintenance of our own Right against unjust Usurpation, we are forced to stand it out with them, because it would be such a Damage to us to yield our Right as we may not, it may be, well able to sustain, yet that all that we mean, is only to save ourselves from Harm, not in the least to hurt or damage them; that howsoever they are affected towards us, we are nevertheless in perfect Charity with them, heartily wishing and desiring their Welfare: And this we may clearly manifest (even while the Contention between us lasts) several ways, especially these two:

(1.) By

(1.) By acting only defensively; taking all the prudent Care we can to preserve ourselves from Hurt, and yet at the same time purposely dropping and letting slip all those Opportunities that we have of hurting our Adversary. And,

(2.) By being ready upon all Occasions (even while the Contention between us continues) to do our Adversary any friendly or charitable Office; according to the Apostle's Advice, *Rom. 12. to verse 20. If thine Enemy hunger, feed him, and if he thirsts, give him drink; for by so doing (says the Apostle) thou shalt heap Coals of Fire upon his Head; that is, such Behaviour towards him will, if any thing, melt and soften him into good Temper. Your behaving yourself to him so friendly, will, if he has the least Spark of Goodness in him, work a Change in his Mind, and make him throw off all his Enmity towards you, when he sees so plainly that you bear none to him. But,*

4. Lastly,

4. Lastly, Whatsoever Means or Method we can think of to procure a Reconciliation with those that are at Variance with us, it is necessary that we put it in Practice immediately, that is, as soon as ever the Contention is begun, because the longer any Dispute lasts, the more estrang'd Men grow in their Minds towards each other, and those Concessions, on the one Part or on the other, which would probably have been sufficient to have put a full End to the Controversy, when it first brake out between them, will often avail nothing towards it, after that, by a long and sharp Contention, their Passions on each side are inflam'd and heighten'd, and the Injuries that have been done on both sides, by way of Retaliation, since the Quarrel first began, are perhaps ten times greater than the first Injury was that occasion'd the Contention. The Strife that might easily have been put an end to when it first brake out, will then be very hard, perhaps impossible, to be compos'd. Thus 'tis observ'd by
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the *Wise Man*, Prov. xvii. 14. *The Beginning of Strife is as when one letteth out Water*; that is, 'tis like a small Breach in a Sea-bank, which the longer it continues unrepair'd, wears every Day so much wider: And the Advice which he grounds upon this is the same with that which I have now given; *therefore* (says he) *leave off Contention before it be medled with*; that is, before it comes to be a compleat Quarrel, before both Parties are warmly engaged in it; because then it will be much harder to break it off, than it was at first to have prevented it.

And now I have finished the first general Head of my Discourse on these Words, which was, to shew who are the Persons here pronounced *Blessed*, The *Peace-makers*.

I proceed now to the Second, which was,

2. To shew both the present Blessedness, and the future Reward of such Persons. *Blessed are the Peace-makers; for they shall be called the Children of God.*

1. There

1. There is a present Blessedness belonging to such Persons, *Blessed are the Peace-makers*: And they are blessed even at present, in that while they are employed in this good Work, endeavouring to make and preserve Peace with, and among others, they enjoy great Peace and Tranquility in their own Minds. *The Fruit of Righteousness is sown in Peace, of them that make Peace*, says St. James, Chap. iii. and 18. And if their Endeavours work the desired Effect, it will be then a farther Addition to their present Blessedness, that they will thereby be put into, or kept in, Possession of the greatest Blessing upon Earth: For what Health is to the Body, that is Peace to the outward Estate: With it we may bear almost any Inconveniencies of Life, and without it, the Enjoyment of all other outward Blessings will be flat and insipid, will yield us no Relish, will do us no Good. And these things alone, *viz.* that Peace within, which we shall certainly have, and that Peace without, which we are very likely

likely to have, if we are of a peaceable Temper, are, I think, a sufficient Encouragement to the Practice and Exercise of this Virtue. *Blessed are the Peacemakers.* But,

2. Besides the present Blessedness which the Exercise of this Grace confers, there is also a great Reward annex'd thereto by the Divine Promise. *Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the Children of God.*

They shall be called so, says our Saviour : But is that all ? Does their Reward consist only in an empty Name, in a meer Appellation ? Is all that they will get by their Love and Study of Peace only a Name of Honour ? They shall be called the Children of God : But what will they be the better only for being call'd so ? Will a meer Title of Honour make them happy ?

I answer : This is more than so : It is not a Shadow, but a Substance, which is here held forth to us ; there being indeed much more signified in these Words than is express'd : For *they shall be called,*

in the Scripture-use of the Phrase, signifies, *they shall be*. Thus in *Isaiah lvi. 7.* 'tis said, *My House shall be called a House of Prayer*; which Words of the Prophet, as cited in *Luke xix. 46.* are thus express'd, *My House is the House of Prayer*. And the *Apostle* speaking of the Calling of the *Gentiles*, and citing a Prophecy of it in *Hoseak*, expresses it thus; *Where it was said unto them, ye are not my People, there shall they be called the Children of the Living God*: But in the Prophecy itself, 'tis; *I will say to them which were not my People, thou art my People*. And so again in *1 John iii. 1.* Behold, says the *Apostle*, *what Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God*: But that by our being called the Sons of God, he meant not the Name only, we learn from the same *Apostle*, in *John i. 12.* *As many as receiv'd him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God*. And this same is, without Question, our Saviour's Meaning in the Text, *They shall be called*, that is, *they shall be the Children*

dren of God, for so at the 45th Verse of this Chapter, where he persuades to the Love of Enemies (the same in Effect, or, at least, a Branch of the same Duty) by this very Argument; he alters the Phrase, saying, *Love your Enemies, &c.* that ye *may be* the Children of your Father which is in Heaven.

And yet, tho' this Phrase, they *shall be called* the Children of God, may seem at first Sight not to signifie so much as if it had been said, *they shall be* so; it may in truth be well enough understood to signifie somewhat more, namely this; That such shall not only *be* the Children of God, but that it shall also plainly appear that they are so. They shall not therefore only be called the Children of God; but they shall really *be* so; and they shall not only be the Children of God, but they shall also be *called* so; *i. e.* It shall be so evidently that they are the Children of God, that all the World shall be forc'd to acknowledge it. The Time will come when even those *Sons of Thunder*, who

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love

love to make Mischief where-ever they come, and to set the World into a Flame; and who have now these gentle Peace-makers in the greatest Contempt, accounting them no other than easy and good-natur'd Fools; shall plainly perceive, and by the clear Evidence of Truth be forc'd to acknowledge their Mistake; according to that Observation of the *Wise Hebrew*; *Then they repenting and groaning for Anguish of Spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in Derision, and a Proverb of Reproach. We Fools (then it shall be) accounted his Life Madness, and his End to be without Honour: How is he now number'd among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints?*

Thus now we have seen the Meaning of the Phrase, *They shall be called the Children of God*; but we have not yet fully seen the thing signified by it. Because, as *to be called the Children of God*, is not an empty Title; so *to be the Children of God*, is not only a Matter of meer Honour, but likewise
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of great Benefit and Advantage: For Heaven and eternal Life is undoubtedly the thing signified by this; as it had been by all the Promises in the foregoing Verses. As therefore *they shall be called the Children of God*, signifies, that *they shall be so*; so that *they shall be the Children of God*, signifies, that they shall receive a Portion among his Children. For the same Title that a Son has to inherit his Father's Estate; the same Title that the Heir of an earthly Crown has to succeed in the Kingdom; the same have they who are the Children of God to inherit the Kingdom of God. And thus we are expressly taught by the *Apostle, Rom. viii. 16, 17. The Spirit itself beareth Witness that we are the Children of God; and if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ. And St. John means the same, in 1 Epist. iii. 2. Now are we the Sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.* To conclude,

Well may these Persons be called the

Children of God, which do so much resemble him, who is *the God of Peace*; and which are so very like to his Son *Jesus Christ*, the *Prince of Peace*. And they who are so like to himself, and to his dearly beloved Son, must needs be highly favour'd and belov'd by him; for Likeness does naturally create Love. He will therefore, no Doubt, own such for his Children, and also give them the Portion of Sons; bestowing upon them in this Life that Blessing of Peace which they endeavour after, and in the next, admitting them to be Partakers of his eternal Rest and Peace.

And that this may be the blessed Portion of us all, God of his great Mercy grant, for the Sake of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to whom, &c.

T H E

DISCOURSE XIV.



THE
BLESSEDNESS
OF THE
PERSECUTED
FOR
Righteousness Sake.



PERSECUTED

Righteousness

DISCOURSE XIV.

The Blessedness of the Persecuted
for Righteousness Sake.



M A T T H. V. 10, 11, 12.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsly for my Sake :

Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven, for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.



Several strange Paradoxes had been uttered by our Saviour before, of which we have already treated : but this last seems much the

the strangest of all ; for when he pronounced a *Blessedness* to the *Poor in Spirit*, to the *Mourners*, to the *Meek*, to the *Hungry after Righteousness*, to the *Merciful*, to the *Peaceable*, and the like, he gave indeed a Judgment quite different from the common Judgment of Men, who rather account those happy who are of an high Spirit, who live in Mirth and Pleasure, whose chief Aim is to become great and rich in this World, and who in all other Respects are quite contrarily qualified to those whom our Lord calls Blessed ; but here in the Text when he pronounces those blessed that are *persecuted*, he may seem to thwart not only the common Opinion of Men, but also common Sense and Reason ; his Proposition may seem to some a Contradiction in the very Terms, no less than if he had declared the unfortunate happy, the miserable blessed, and Pain and Pleasure to be the same thing ; for what is it to be persecuted but to be vexed and afflicted, to suffer the Loss of Liberty, of Goods, or, it may be,

be, of Life itself? And if he who suffers these Evils is nevertheless a happy Man, who is there that can be called miserable or unhappy? Persecution implies in it Pain and Loss, and all other Evils that can be suffered, and how can it be affirmed that he who suffers all the Evils that can be suffered, is nevertheless Blessed? And yet this is what our Saviour here affirms, *Blessed are the Persecuted*: And to confirm the Truth of what he here asserts, and to give us still greater Assurance of it, he repeats it over again in the very next Verse; *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you, falsely, for my Sake*: Rejoyce, says he, for this, *and be exceeding glad*; and of what our Saviour so expressly affirms, of what by doubling his Affirmation of it, he so fully assures us, we ought not to make any Doubt, altho' we could not reconcile the Truth of his Proposition to our own Reason. If he says, the Persecuted are Blessed, we may be sure they are so, altho' their
Blessed-

Blessedness were altogether invisible and indiscernible to others ; for we may be mistaken in our Judgment, who can judge only by outward Appearance ; we may account those happy, who in a true Judgment are extremely wretched and miserable ; but his Judgment is infallible, and according to Truth ; and therefore seeing he assures us once and again that the Persecuted are Blessed, doubling his Affirmation to denote the Certainty thereof, there can be no Doubt made of the Truth of it by those who believe that he that uttered it is *Truth* itself, as our *Saviour* is called, *John* xiv. 6.

But nevertheless, because it is easier to believe upon rational Motives than with an implicit Faith, and our Faith is so much the stronger as it is founded upon clearer Evidence, I shall now proceed to make some Proof of the Truth of the Proposition, that the Persecuted are Blessed ; *viz.* those *persecuted* whom our *Saviour* here speaks of, such as are persecuted for *Righteousness Sake* ; *Blessed*
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are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

In discoursing on which Beatitude, I shall observe the same Method that I have done in all the foregoing ones; *i. e.*

1. I shall shew who are the Persons here spoken of, and to whom the Blessedness and Reward of the Text belongs, the *Persecuted for Righteousness Sake*, And,

2. I shall shew wherein consists the Blessedness, and what is the Reward of such Persons; *Blessed* are they, says our Saviour, for *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*.

And I shall ground my Discourse of this Subject chiefly on the first of those Verses which I have chosen for my Text, the two following Verses being for Substance only a Repetition of the same thing; and there being nothing that is peculiar in them, but what I shall have Occasion to take Notice of, and consider, in discoursing on the first Verse only, in the Method before laid down.

I. Then,

1. Then, I am to show who are the Persons here spoken of, and to whom the Blessedness and Reward of the Text belongs, the *Persecuted for Righteousness Sake*; *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake*. And here I shall show,

1. What it is to be persecuted ; and,
2. What it is to be persecuted for Righteousness Sake.

1. What it is to be persecuted ; and the proper Signification of the Word is, to be followed, or pursued, as Enemies are when they fly away from the Battle : But our *Saviour* himself has explained what he means by it here, in the next Verse, where repeating the same Proposition, with a particular Application thereof to his Disciples, whose Lot he knew it would be to suffer Persecution in this World, he expresses it thus : *Blessed are ye, says he, when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you ;* which Description of Persecution, he further enlarges in *Luke vi. 22.* when repeating
again

again the same thing, he says thus; *Blessed are ye when Men shall hate you, and when they shall seperate you from their Company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your Name as evil.* And in another Place, viz. *Luke xxi. 12.* foretelling the Persecutions which were to befall his Disciples, he saith to them; *They shall lay their Hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the Synagogues, and into Prisons; and some of you shall they cause to be put to Death.* From which Places it appears, that to be persecuted, is to suffer any Kind of Evil from the Cruelty or Injustice of other Men; they are persecuted by other Men who are hated by them, because Hatred worketh all manner of Mischief to the Person hated; but they especially are persecuted, who do actually suffer those Mischiefs, which the Hatred of others towards them doth prompt them to inflict; who are defamed and spoken ill of; who are reproached and reviled; who are deprived of their Estates; who are detained in Prison; or who are put
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to Death by others. These are the *Persecuted*.

But now it is certain, that such Persecution considered in itself is not a Blessing ; nay, on the contrary, 'tis evident, that to suffer such Persecution, if it be not enough to make a Man unhappy, must at least very much abate and lessen his Happiness, and that, generally speaking, they are more Blessed who do not suffer these and such like Evils, than they which do ; and therefore our *Saviour* in the Text doth not say in general, Blessed are the Persecuted, but he adds a Qualification, which does and which indeed alone can, make Persecution a Blessing, *viz.* if it be for *Righteousness* Sake, *Blessed are they which are Persecuted for Righteousness Sake*. And this was the next thing I was to enquire into, *viz.*

2. What it is to be persecuted for *Righteousness Sake* ; And this Qualification of a blessed Persecution, our *Saviour* himself hath also explained in the next Words ; *Blessed are ye, when Men shall revile*

revile you and persecute you; and shall say all Manner of Evil against you, *falsly*, for my Sake: From which Place it appears, that there are two Conditions requisite to render Persecution a Blessedness, viz. 1. That it be *unjust* and *wrongful*, that we do not deserve those Evils which we suffer; and, 2. That the Ground and Occasion of our being hated and persecuted, be *our strict Adherence* to the *Profession* or *Practice* of our Religion.

1. I say, That to render Persecution a Blessedness, it is requisite, that it be *unjust* and *wrongful*, that we do not deserve those Evils which we suffer from others. Blessed are ye, says our Saviour, when Men shall say all Manner of Evil against you, *falsly*; so that if a *Christian* suffers for his evil Deeds, his bare Profession of the Christian Religion will not make him a Martyr, nor consecrate his Sufferings, and make them a Means of increasing his future Felicity: Nay, I add further, that a Man may suffer for Conscience Sake, and yet not

be a Martyr, *i. e.* if his Conscience be misguided, and if in a true Zeal for God; but a Zeal without Knowledge, he does such Things as do justly render him obnoxious to the Punishment of humane Laws. Thus a Jesuited Papist, or a Fanatical Enthusiast may think that he does God and Religion good Service, by raising a Rebellion against his Prince, whom he accounts a Heretick, or by otherways endeavouring to depose, dethrone, or assassinate him; but this is his Mistake, to think that the Cause of God or Religion, can be, or ought to be promoted by any unwarrantable Means; and Treason and Rebellion, and the Murdering and Assassinating of Sovereign Princes, who are God's Vicegerents, and accountable to God only for their Misbehaviour, (if indeed they do misbehave themselves) these Practices, I say, (whatever the Motives are thereto) are evil Deeds, and such as are justly punishable by humane Laws; because the Toleration of such Practices is inconsistent with all Government, and the Peace of all
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civil Societies; and therefore he who is persecuted for any of these Enormities, *i. e.* who suffers any Evil in his Body or Goods, or is put to Death, is not the persecuted Person to whom the Blessedness of the *Text* belongs; because, however his misguided Conscience may make him think otherwise, yet his Deeds are really evil, and such as deserve to be punished: So that he is not punished wrongfully or unjustly, altho' he be persecuted for his Conscience; for it is only such as are *falsly* accused of those evil Deeds for which they suffer, whose Persecution is blessed; *Blessed are ye, when Men shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsly*; if the evil Deeds they were accused of were really done by them, and their Accusation were true, they would have no Title to any Blessedness by their Sufferings; such may be Canonized by the Pope, and made Saints in the *Roman Calendar*, as *Thomas Becket* was in former Times, for his moving Sedition in the State in the Behalf of the Church, or, as in latter Times *Garnet*, one of the chief Actors in the Gunpow-

der-Plot, was, for the Part which he had in that most horrid and detestable Conspiracy, for which he suffer'd; but such as these are none of God's Saints; they will not be Canonized by him; they will have no Portion in his heavenly Kingdom upon this Account, and for their so suffering; and therefore St. Peter earnestly exhorts those *Christians* to whom he writes, 1 Ep. iv. 15. to add Innocency of Life, to the Purity of their Profession; *Let none of you, says he, suffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil-doer, or as a Busy-body in other Mens Matters;* and then he adds, *Yet if any Man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed,* intimating, that no Man can suffer *as a Christian* who suffers for his evil Deeds. And this leads me to discourse of the other Condition of our Suffering, which I said, was requisite to make us blessed for being persecuted, viz. 2. That the Ground of our being hated and persecuted, be our strict Adherence to the Profession or Practice of our Religion; I say, either to the Profession of the Christian

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tian Religion, or of some necessary and important *Article* of it; or else to the *Practice* of some necessary and indispensable *Duty* of Christianity; for both these are mentioned in the Text. *Blessed are ye*, says our *Saviour*, *Ver. 11. when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, &c. for my Sake, i. e.* for your being my Disciples; but in the foregoing Verse where he had expressed the same Sense, he does it in these Words; *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, i. e.* for their doing their Duty, for their living strictly according to the Rules of the Gospel.

And this Condition of a blessed Persecution, *viz.* That it was to be for *Christ*, or for *Righteousness Sake*, was necessary to be added to the foregoing one, *viz.* That our Sufferings be wrongful and unjust; because their Wrongfulness and Injustice alone is not sufficient to intitle us to the Glory and Reward of Martyrdom.

For there hath been many a Man put to Death wrongfully, *i. e.* by false Witness, and being accused of some capital

Crime of which he was really innocent; whose Suffering, nevertheless was not a Martyrdom; nay, whose Suffering, tho' wrongful in itself, because he had not committed that very Crime for which he suffer'd, yet was really highly just and deserved upon other Accounts; for it is oftentimes so ordered by the wise Providence of God, which rarely suffers some very notorious Crimes to escape exemplary Punishment in this World, that he who committed a Murder, in which he was not found out, comes afterwards to be hang'd for a Theft of which really he was not guilty. I say, if there be any Credit to be given to the dying Confessions of such Malefactors, it is a Thing that has often happen'd in the World, that a Man who has committed Murder, or some such heinous capital Crime, and either by the Secrecy of the Fact, or by Flight, did escape the Punishment of it, has come afterwards to be executed upon a fresh Accusation brought against him for some other capital Crime, in which Case, nevertheless, his Punishment (with Respect to humane Justice) is wrongful
and

and undeserved, because he had not committed that very Crime for which he suffered, so that his Accusation was false, and his Condemnation upon it unjust.

But it is not (as I said) only a false Accusation, or a wrongful Suffering alone that makes a Martyrdom, and renders a Persecution blessed, for even a *Heathen* and an *Infidel* as well as a *Christian* may be put to Death wrongfully, *i.e.* for a Crime which he never committed, and if he be a *Christian* that so suffers, yet his untimely Death is only his Calamity and Misfortune, in Case the same were occasioned by a Mistake of the Witness, or by some private Grudge and Malice that the *false Accuser* bore to his Person, or by some temporal Advantage which he promised to himself thereby, meerly in such Suffering, altho' it be wrongful, there is no Blessedness, for that, as I said, is restrain'd in the Text only to those wrongful Sufferings which come upon us for *Christ's*, or for *Righteousness* Sake.

1. For *Christ's* Sake. Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you and persecute you, &c. for *my* Sake, i. e. for your being *Christians*, for your owning and professing my Religion; or, as *St. Peter* expresses it in the Place before cited, *when ye suffer as Christians*.

And these indeed are the most joyful Sufferings, this is the most blessed Persecution of all, and which we see doth most clearly intitle us to the Glory and Reward of Martyrdom, when we suffer Shame and Reproach, Pain and Loss, or Death itself, for the Name of *Christ*, for our professing his Religion, and owning ourselves to be his Disciples, and publicly asserting the Truth of his whole Doctrine against Atheists or Infidels, or of some main and important Article of it, against such as have notoriously corrupted the Faith of *Christ*. 'Tis a glorious Cause that we are then engaged in, when we are Champions for *Christ*, and 'tis the highest Act of Love and Duty to *our Saviour*. when for his Sake, and rather than renounce, disown, or dissemble

dissemble his Religion, we give up our selves to suffer the Loss of all Things that are dear to us in this World; 'tis this that sets a Value upon our Sufferings (which in themselves are very inconsiderable, being only, as the *Apostle* styles them, *light Afflictions which are but for a Moment*) 'tis this, I say, which sets a Value upon them, and makes them so highly esteemed and so amply rewarded by *Christ*, that 'tis upon *his* Account that we suffer them, and that our voluntarily and cheerfully undergoing them, is the best Expression that we can make of our Affection to our Lord and Master. But,

2. As they are blessed that are persecuted for *Christ's* Sake, *i. e.* for owning and professing his whole Doctrine and Religion, so are they likewise who are persecuted for *Righteousness Sake*, *i. e.* for doing their Duty in any Point, for their discharging a good Conscience; who willingly suffer any Evil that can be inflicted upon them in this World, by unjust Men, rather than commit any Sin,

Sin, *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake*; and this St. Peter calls *suffering for Evil-doing*, and declares the patient Endurance of such Sufferings to be highly pleasing to God. 1. *Epist.* ii. 20. *If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

And thus a great many may be intitled to the Blessing and Reward of the Text, whose Lot it is to be born and to live in *Christian Countries*, and among such only as make Profession of the *Christian Religion*, and are called by the Name of *Christ*; for even among those that call themselves *Christ's Disciples*, there are many (too many, God knows) who make no Conscience at all of living according to the Rules and Precepts of the Gospel; there are too many professing the *Christian Faith*, that outdo even the worst of *Heathens* in the Wickedness and Immorality of their Lives, and who, either to make their Party the stronger, and so to save themselves from Reproach and Infamy, or else meerly out of a
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Hatred of God and Religion, set themselves to laugh Religion out of the World, by loading with odious Nick-Names, and Terms of Scorn and Reproach, all such as they see are strictly conscientious in every Thing, and exact and regular in their whole Conversation; and there is now, and always, almost in all Ages, has been, such a strong Party of these prophane Scoffers at true Piety and Virtue, that it is almost impossible for a true and sincere *Christian*, even in a *Christian* Country, wholly to avoid all Persecution for Righteousness Sake; if they cannot hurt him in his Body or Estate, because he is defended and protected from their Malice by the Laws of his Country, they will at least do him what Hurt they can in his Reputation, by forging Slanders, or venting Untruths concerning him; or, if they can do nothing worse to him, they will at least revile and reproach him, terming his true Zeal for God, Heat and Bigottry, or a religious Frenzy; his Strictness of Life, Hypocrisy; his Charity and good Works,

Works, a Desire of Vain-glory, and the like.

And this also is a Sort of Persecution for Righteousness Sake, as well as 'tis to suffer Pain or Loss of Goods, or Death itself, for the keeping of a good Conscience; nay, this very Sort of Persecution is particularly mention'd in the Text, and a Blessedness and Reward annex'd thereto, *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and speak all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake. Rejoyce and be exceeding glad for great is your Reward in Heaven.*

Nay, I add further, that this *Persecution* by the Tongues of profligate Men, which, considering the Wickedness of many professing the *Christian* Faith, *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus*, are as liable to suffer now, even in a *Christian* Country, as the *Primitive Christians*, who lived among the professed Enemies of the Gospel, were to suffer those other sorts of Persecution consisting in the Confiscation of their Goods, the Imprisonment of their Bodies, or the Loss
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of their Lives; I say, this Persecution by the Tongues of the wicked, by the Reproaches and Revilings, and opprobrious Nick-names, which they love to cast on all those, whose Strictness of Life they conceive is a Reproach to their own Loosness, this is a sort of Persecution, which I believe is as prevalent now to destroy the *Power of Godliness* out of the World, as even Whippings and Imprisonments, Racks and Gibbets, were in former Times to extirpate the *Profession* of the *Christian* Faith; and I believe there were not more in proportion, who, in those Times of fiery Trial, were by Fear of Persecution deterr'd from embracing the *Christian* Faith, than there are now, that are scared from the Practice of a *Christian* Life, by the Fear of that Reproach and Contempt which they fancy a strict Piety and Religion would expose them to; nor were there, I believe, Men in those Days, who having once embraced the *Christian* Religion, did in Times of the severest Persecutions fall away, than there are now-a-days
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of those, who having been virtuously and religiously brought up, and going out into the World with a tender Conscience, and a strict Sense of Duty and Religion, have been laugh'd out of their Conscience and Piety by the profane Scorners of all that's good, and have chosen rather to run to all Excess of Riot with them, than to bear their Reproaches; till at length they themselves, having their Conscience fear'd and harden'd by degrees, and proceeding from one Wickedness, and from one Degree of Wickedness to another, have from *walking* in the *Counsel* of the *ungodly*, and *standing* in the *Way* of *Sinners*, come at last also to *sit down* in the *Seat* of the *Scornful*, and to become Persecutors of others. So that tho' this Text may at first Sight seem to be improper to be handled in a *Christian* Country as ours is, when (God be thanked) the *Christian* Religion is established by Law, so that there is now no apparent Danger of our suffering such Persecutions as the *Apostles* did, yet in truth it can never be unseasonable, to

discourse

discourse of this Subject, and to encourage Men to the chearful Suffering of Persecution for Righteousness Sake, by the Consideration of the great Blessedness and Reward of it; because all Times are more or less Times of Persecution: And that saying of the *Apostle* ever has been, and 'tis to be feared ever will be true as long as the World lasts, 2 *Tim.* iii. 12. *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution:* If they are not persecuted in their Body or Goods, 'tis very likely they will be in their good Names; and if they are not persecuted for their Profession of the *Christian* Faith, yet if they are persecuted and reviled for their strict and conscientious Practice of the Duties of a *Christian* Life; 'tis the same thing, and this is as much a Persecution as the other. And, I say, that to be thus persecuted was not the Lot only of those *Christians* who lived in the Time of the *Heathen* Persecutions, but is likewise more or less the Lot of all strictly pious and good Men at all Times; and that Servant which now is
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turned out of a good Service, because he will not minister to and serve his Master, in cheating and over-reaching his Neighbours, or because he will not do any other Wickedness which his Master commands him, is as truly persecuted for Righteousness Sake, as they were in the primitive Times, whose Goods were confiscated, or who were turned out of a gainful Office because they were *Christians* : And he who now-a-days will not drink to excess, or refuses to join with his Company in any other sinful Extravagance, and is for that Reason jeer'd and reviled and laughed at by them, as a scrupulous Precisian, or excluded their Company as an unwelcome Guest, this Man, I say, is as truly persecuted for Righteousness Sake, as they were, who in the primitive Times were derided for their being *Christians*, and had their Names cast out as evil, for the Sake of that Religion which they professed : And Instances of such Persecution for Righteousness Sake as these, there are, and always have been, innumerable, even

even in the most peaceable Times, and in those Places where the *Christian* Religion is the established Religion of the Country; so that whatever Place or Time we live in, we must expect to be thus persecuted by wicked Men, if we are resolved to adhere close to our Duty, and to keep a good Conscience in every thing.

And this methinks shou'd be Encouragement enough to us, to be strict and exact in doing our Duty, and careful to avoid all Compliance with the sinful Customs of the World, or of the Age we live in; that if upon this Account we shou'd be reproached and reviled by the Multitude of Sinners, as 'tis very probable we shall be, their Scorn and Contempt of us, their Jeers and Reproaches, or whatever other ill Usage we suffer from the wicked World, upon the account of our obstinate and immoveable Virtue, will in the Conclusion turn to our great Advantage, we being thereby intitled to the blessed Reward of Martyrdom: For *Blessed are ye*, says

our Saviour, when Men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely, for my Sake, or for Righteousness Sake. Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.

And thus now having shewn who are the Persons to whom the Blessedness and Reward of the Text belongs, viz. the persecuted for Righteousness Sake, or for the Sake of Christ, I should proceed in the second Place to shew wherein consists the Blessedness, and what is the Reward of such Persons, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, and great is their Reward in Heaven.

But because the handling of that Head wou'd take up too much time at present, I shall conclude this present Discourse with briefly removing a Difficulty that may be thought to arise from there being any Blessing or Reward at all promised to such Men.

For it may be said, that nothing is properly the Subject of Reward but Virtue, and that all Virtue is Matter of Choice,

Choice, and is therefore rewarded because it was chosen; but that the suffering Persecution for Righteousness Sake, is not a Matter of Choice, but rather of Chance, or, to speak more truly, of Providence, and consequently of Necessity; for 'tis God's Providence only which so orders the Course of the World, that one Man of strict Piety and Virtue shall be hated and persecuted for his Goodness, and that another Man perhaps equally pious and virtuous, shall nevertheless live in perfect Peace, and be beloved and respected by all that know him: What Reason is there then, that there shou'd be any Difference in the Reward of these Persons who are supposed to be sound and strong in the Faith, and equally strict and unblameable in their Lives? and why shou'd this difference of their Reward depend upon an Event which it was not in the Power of the one to avoid, nor lawful for the other to chuse? For this I take for granted, that no Man ought to run himself into Persecution, or to provoke

the World to use him ill : Nay, rather it is every Man's Duty, how stout and courageous soever he thinks himself, to decline Persecution, if he can do it without betraying his Cause, and by lawful and warrantable Means ; according to that Advice of our Saviour, *Matth. x. 23. When they Persecute you in this City, flee ye to another.* Seeing therefore it is not in any Man's Choice to be persecuted for Righteousness Sake, why shou'd his being so persecuted contribute to the Encrease of his Reward ?

In answer to which it may be said, that the Blessedness and Reward of the Text are not promised merely for such as are persecuted for *Christ's* or for Righteousness Sake, but to such only as bear these Sufferings with Courage and Patience, and who, notwithstanding all the Persecutions they sustain, continue firm and constant in the Belief and Profession of their *Christian* Faith, and in the Exercise of a Spirit of Piety and Virtue ; and this is a Matter of Choice, this is truly and properly a good Work, and consequently

quently by Virtue of God's gracious Promise has the same Title to a Reward that any other *Christian* Grace or Virtue has; merely to be persecuted for *Christ's* Sake is no Commendation, because it is not what we chuse (or indeed ought to chuse) but only an Accident that befalls us; and many that have been persecuted for *Christ's* Sake, have not been bleis'd, nor have ever receiv'd the Reward here promised, because they fainted in the Day of their Adversity; and when they were put to the Trial, basely deserted the Cause that they had undertaken; but to be stout and couragious under Persecution, to abide the fiery Trial, to *endure* the *Cross*, to *despise* the *Shame*, and to continue *faithful* unto *Death*, this is a great Commendation, and an Instance of generous and heroick Virtue, and therefore may very congruously be recompenc'd with a greater Reward.

But to this perhaps it will be further objected, that this however is not a Virtue which it is in every Man's Power to exercise, because every Man has not

Occasion to exercise it, for a Man cannot bear Persecution patiently, and courageously, if it be not his Lot to be persecuted at all ; so that tho' indeed the Exercise of Patience and Courage under Persecution be a Matter of Choice, and consequently an Instance of Virtue, yet this depends upon another thing, which is not a Matter of Choice, but an Event that depends entirely upon the Providence of God ; and it may perhaps seem a little unequal, that when there are two Men equally Pious and Virtuous, one shou'd attain a much greater Reward than the other, only because it was his Lot to be called forth to Persecution, whereas had the other also been put to the same Trial, he wou'd have acquitted himself as well, he wou'd have been as Couragious and Constant as the other was.

But to this it may be answered,

1. That what is here presumed, *viz.* that some who are not called forth to suffer for *Christ*, would, if they were called forth to it, bear their Persecution
with

with as much Courage and Patience, and continue as constant to their Profession as any that have suffered; this I say, tho' it be a Thing that may charitably be believed, yet is what no Man in the World can be certain of; for as there have been a great many who have been thought of small Courage, that yet when they have been put to the Trial, have acquitted themselves beyond Expectation; so there have been many others on the other side, who have been very well conceited of themselves, and of whom the World also has had great Expectations, that they who have proved the stoutest Champions of the *Christian* Cause, who yet in the Event when they were put to the Trial, have fainted and given out at the first Onset, and not been able so much as to look Persecution in the Face; whether therefore any of those who are not tried, wou'd acquit themselves well if they were tried, we cannot tell, God only knows: And this I'm sure is a Thing that may reasonably enough be thought,

that as when a General of an Army has any hard and dangerous Exploit to be formed, he picks out of his whole Army such as he knows to be stout and valiant Men, leaving the rest, of whose Courage he is not so well assur'd, to other Services of less Difficulty and Hazard; so, I say, it may reasonably enough be thought, that who God calls forth, some as Champions for his Cause, designing to expose them to the forest Trials and Persecutions, he makes Choice of those who he knows are best able to abide that Trial; and that the Reason why he puts not others to the same Trial, is because he knows their Weakness, and that tho' they may be as sincere in their Profession as any are, they are not so stout and courageous as some others are, and so being *faithful* to his Promise, he will not *suffer* them to be *tempted above what they are able*. But,

2. It may be further answered, that tho' it were certainly true that many that are not called to Suffering, and so
are

are not in a Capacity of obtaining the most glorious Crown of Martyrdom, if they had been called to it, wou'd have born their Sufferings with Courage, and have resisted even unto Blood; I say, tho' this were certain, yet they that are not called to this hot Service wou'd have no Reason at all to complain, because that Reward which they will receive for their Obedience and Fidelity in the safer Station wherein they are placed, will be infinitely greater than even Martyrdom itself could challenge by way of Merit. 'Tis true indeed, being not called to Martyrdom, they cannot have the Martyr's Crown; but they will nevertheless have a Crown that is far more glorious than any Martyr can deserve; and therefore they can have no Reason to envy the greater Reward of those that have been called to harder Service. *Eternal Life is the Gift of God*, as the *Apostle* says, even our best Services cannot merit it; and when we have *done all we can*, we are taught by our *Saviour* to say, we are *unprofitable Servants*.

vants. Seeing therefore Heaven, and all the Degrees of Happiness in Heaven, are God's Gift, and even the lowest Degree of heavenly Happiness cannot by Way of Merit be claimed by the best of Men, why shou'd we not allow to God the same Liberty which we ourselves should challenge, of doing what he will with his own, and bestowing his free and unmerited Gifts, on what Condition and in what Measure he pleases? There is therefore manifestly no Injustice, nothing at all to be complain'd of by any, in God's assigning to Martyrs a greater Reward than to others, altho' Martyrdom itself be not a Matter of Choice, but of divine Affignation and Providence.

For thus it is also among Men of this World : All the Soldiers of an Army, for their Pay only, are liable to be commanded on what Service the General pleases ; and it is no Man's Duty to offer himself to a dangerous Enterprize ; nay, if any private Soldier quits his Station, and runs himself uncommanded,
upon

upon a dangerous Adventure, he deserves Reproof, rather than Commendation for his so doing, because he is guilty herein of the Breach of military Discipline and Order; but if the General himself picks him out, and orders him to stand in the Front of a Party which he has commanded on a dangerous Attack, and he behaves himself therein Valiantly and Courageously, it is very congruous for the General to give him somewhat more than his Pay, in Recompence for the greater Hazard which he ran of losing his Life; and this, altho' the Post he served in was not chosen by himself, but assigned him by his Officer; and any other Soldier, who was not commanded on the same Service, wou'd be thought a very unreasonable Man if he shou'd complain as if he were hardly dealt by, that he had not the same Gratuity given him, upon Pretence that if he had been commanded in the Service, he shou'd have behaved himself as valiantly as the other did.

By the same Reason therefore, if God thinks fit to chuse out one Man to suffer Persecution for Righteousness Sake, and permits another as Righteous as he, and perhaps as Couragious too, to enjoy his Religion and Conscience in Peace, this last can have no Reason to envy the other his greater Reward, in recompense for the harder Service that he was put to, especially seeing that Reward which he himself will receive at God's Hand, for the easie Service which he was put upon, will be infinitely greater than he cou'd have merited or claim'd at God's Hand, tho' he had been put to endure an hundred Martyrdoms.

Thus I have shewn who are the Persecuted for Righteousness Sake, and the Reasonableness of their having an extraordinary Blessedness and Reward assigned them, altho' the Persecution that they suffered was not a Thing chosen by themselves.

But wherein consists their Blessedness, and what will be their Reward, I shall endeavour (God willing) to shew the next *Lord's Day*.

DISCOURSE XIV.



THE
BLESSEDNESS
OF THE
PERSECUTED
FOR
Righteousness Sake.



DISCOURSE XIV.

The Blessedness of the Persecuted
for Righteousness Sake.



M A T T H. V. 10, 11, 12.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake.

Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven, for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.



His is the Eighth and last of the Beatitudes; and because it contains a stranger Paradox, than any of the foregoing, our Saviour therefore,

fore, the more fully to assure us of the Truth of it, repeats it twice over, for, 1. He declares in general that all which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake are blessed, and shall be greatly and plentifully rewarded; Verse 10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven :* And then applying this Doctrine to his Disciples, whose Lot he knew it would be to suffer great Persecutions for his Sake, he repeats it over again, and further explains and enlarges upon it, renewing also to his Disciples in particular the Promise which he had before made in general to all that are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, in the Words immediately following at the 11th and 12th Verses : *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake. Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven, for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

Seeing therefore these two last Verses of the Text contain in Substance the same

same Doctrine that had been delivered in the first, only differently expressed, and more largely insisted upon, I shall ground my Discourse chiefly on the first Verse of the Text, only taking Occasion by the Way as I go along to explain and consider whatever is peculiar in the two latter.

And I have already in a former Discourse on these Words propos'd to handle these two Points :

I. To shew who are the Persons here spoken of, and to whom the Blessedness and Reward of the Text belongs, *viz.* those that are *persecuted* for *Righteousness* Sake. And,

II. To shew wherein consists the *Blessedness*, and what will be the *Reward* of those Persons, *Blessed are they which, &c. --- of Heaven.*

1. I propounded to shew, who are the Persons here spoken of, and to whom the Blessedness and Reward of the Text belongs, *viz.* those that are *persecuted* for *Righteousness* Sake ; and this Point I have already handled, having shewn,

1. What it is to be *persecuted*, and

[Vol. II.]

I

2. What

2. What it is to be persecuted for *Righteousness* Sake ; for,

1. To be persecuted, I told you, is to suffer any Manner of Evil from the Cruelty and Injustice of other Men, either in our Body, in our Goods, or in our Reputation and good Name : They are persecuted who are reviled and reproached, *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and who are bely'd and slander'd, and when they shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsely ;* but the greatest Persecution of all, is when our Goods are confiscated, when our Livelihood is taken from us, when our Bodies are imprison'd, or tortur'd, or when we are put to a violent Death. But now it is certain, that merely in being thus persecuted, there is no Blessedness ; and therefore our *Saviour* does not say in general, *Blessed are the Persecuted ;* but he adds a Limitation, he subjoins a Qualification that is requisite to turn such Persecution into a Blessing ; it must be for *Righteousness* Sake ; *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake.*

2. Which

2. Which Qualification or Condition of a blessed Persecution implies in it (as I told you) these two Things :

1. That our Persecution be unjust and groundless, that the Evil and Punishment that we suffer be not merited or deserved by us, for our evil Deeds; *Blessed are ye*, says our Saviour, *when Men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsely; for, as St. Peter says, if we do Evil, and suffer for it, there is no Thanks due to us for that; no Persecution or Suffering is blessed, which is deserved.*

2. Another Thing implied in this Qualification or Condition of a blessed Persecution, is, that it be for *Christ*, or for *Righteousness* Sake; for every Man that is put to Death wrongfully is not a Martyr: But that Persecution only which entitles us to the Blessing and Reward of the Text, is when the Ground and Reason of Mens Malice and Hatred towards us is our strict and close Adherence to the Profession and Practice of the *Christian* Religion; when we are there-

fore persecuted as Hereticks because we are *Christians* and Orthodox, and are therefore punished as Evil-doers, because we will not do any Evil: *Blessed are ye when ye are persecuted for my Sake*, says our Saviour, Ver. 11. *and blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake*, Ver. 10. 'Tis only the Cause of our Sufferings that consecrates them, and 'tis only a Persecution raised against us for *Christ*, or for *Righteousness Sake*, which if patiently born by us, can entitle us to the Blessing and Reward of the Text.

And now having seen who are the Persons here spoken of, to whom the Blessing and Reward of the Text belongs, the Persecuted for Righteousness Sake, I proceed to the second Thing propounded, which was,

II. To shew wherein consists the present Blessedness, and what will be the future Reward of these Persons; *Blessed are they*, says our Saviour, *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*.

1. I shall

1. I shall shew wherein their present Blessedness consists, for notwithstanding all their Sufferings, which makes their Condition seem in the Eye of the World (which judges only by outward Appearance) very wretched and deplorable, they are yet nevertheless blessed even at present, our Saviour here expressly affirms; *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake; and blessed are ye when Men shall revile you and persecute you for my Sake: Rejoyce and be exceeding glad.*

And the present Blessedness of such as suffer Persecution for Righteousness Sake consists chiefly in these Six Things.

1. That such have their evil Things in this World, and so have all their good Things reserved in Store for them against another Life, and this alone is indeed a great Blessedness, forasmuch as the Things of this Life, whether they be good or evil, are *not worthy to be compared* with the good or evil Things of the other Life; for what are all the good Things of this Life, but only the

Gratification of our carnal Desires, the Pleasures and Delights of the Body, which are all of them very unsatisfactory in themselves, and besides are but of a very short Continuance at best, because our Life itself is so? And what are the evil Things of this World? they are (as the *Apostle* says, and that is the most that can be made of them) but *light Afflictions which are but for a Moment*: Even Martyrdom itself is only the undergoing that Death to Day, which perhaps otherwise we must have undergone to Morrow; to be sure, not very long hence, by the Course of Nature; and that too, it may be, by a Disease that wou'd have put us to a greater and a longer Pain than any that our Tormenters do inflict. But now, on the other side, the good Things of the other Life are perpetual Joy and Felicity, the most perfect and consummate Pleasure, without any Mixture of Pain, and that to all Eternity; and the evil Things of the other Life, are a *Worm that never dies*, and a *Fire that shall never be quenched*.

Seeing

Seeing therefore the good and evil Things of this Life and of the next are so vastly disproportionable, and they that have their good Things here may justly fear they will be all their Portion, and they who receive their evil Things here may reasonably expect their good Things hereafter, even eternal Comfort and Refreshment, it is plainly a Blessing and a just Ground of Comfort, to have all our evil Things here, and to live in a joyful Expectation of our Portion of good Things in the other Life.

2. Another Instance of the present Blessedness of those which suffer Persecution for Righteousness Sake, consists in the great Honour that is done to them, by God's choosing and singling them out to be the Champions for his Cause; in his putting them upon the most difficult, and consequently the most honourable Piece of Service, wherein if they acquit themselves well, they will acquire eternal Glory and Renown; for thus it is in earthly Warfares, no private Soldier may put himself upon a bold

and dangerous Adventure, but if he, with some few others, be chosen out of the whole Army for some Piece of Service that requires extraordinary Strength and Courage, this is always accounted a great Honour done to him, a Sign that his General has a great Esteem of him, and reposes more than ordinary Trust in his Fidelity and Valour: And thus it is in our spiritual Warfare, the common Soldiers of Christianity, are by God's wise and good Providence, who knows their Strength, or rather their Weakness, left to encounter such Temptations as are *common to Men*; but those whom God picks out for extraordinary Service, to wrestle with Principalities and Powers, to encounter sore Persecutions, or to undergo Martyrdom; these are such as he has furnished or will endue with extraordinary Grace and Strength, sufficient to enable them to come off victorious in this bloody Conflict: This therefore is a great Honour done them, a singular Privilege bestowed upon them, and in which they
may

may justly glory, as an Expression of God's singular Favour towards them.

And this Notion the *Apostles* and primitive *Christians* had of the Persecutions and Sufferings that befel them for *Christ's* Sake; they were so far from reckoning them a Grievance and Burden impos'd upon them, that they accounted it a great Favour and Honour done to them, that they were called thereto; thus saith the *Apostle*, *Phil. i. 29. Unto you it is given in the Behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his Sake*; their Call to be *Christians* was indeed a great Privilege, but it was a considerable Addition to this Honour, that they were also called to be Confessors or Martyrs; *Unto you it is given, &c.* And thus the *Apostles* themselves esteemed it, who therefore (as you may see, *Acts v. 41.*) when they had been imprison'd, and after that beaten by Order of the *Jewish Sanhedrim*, and strictly commanded not to speak any more in the Name of *Jesus*, departed from the Presence of the Council, rejoicing that

that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for his Name. And what they did, St. Peter tells us it is reasonable every good Christian should do
 1 Epist. iv. 16. *If any Man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this Behalf.*

Vid. Hall's
 Med. p. 6.
 Med. 40.

3. Another Thing wherein consists the present Blessedness of such as are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, is in that great Consolation which they receive from God under their Afflictions, in Proportion to the Greatness of their Sufferings, whereby they are enabled to bear them not only with Patience but Cheerfulness: Thus the *Apostle* says, 2 Cor. i. 3, 4, 5. *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort, who comforteth us in all our Tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any Trouble, by the Comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God, for as the Sufferings of Christ abound*
 in

in us, so our Consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

And of the Truth of this, altho' there had been no Scripture-Promise for it, we might be assured from the History of the Ancient Martyrs, and Sufferers for *Christ*; it being impossible that any Man, merely by the Strength of Nature, should be able to sustain those various Sorts of Tortures which they were put to by their cruel Tormenters, and which they, even the weakest of them all, the Women and the Children, endured, with the same Unconcernedness, as if they had felt no Pain at all; nay, with as much Cheerfulness and Alacrity, as if they had been then in the Enjoyment of the most ravishing Delights; so that it plainly appears, that the Consolations which they receiv'd from God under their Sufferings, were much greater than to counterbalance the Pain that they endured in them, and that upon the whole Matter, their Sufferings were rather a Blessedness to them than an Unhappiness, that they
were

were rather less than more miserable for their Sufferings.

4. The Persecuted for Righteousness Sake, are also blessed upon the Account of that Satisfaction which they have in their own Minds, and which naturally results from the Consideration of a Man's having done his Duty, especially in any hard or hazardous Instance of it ; for there is no Comfort or Pleasure in the World like that of a good Conscience ; but the greater Difficulty, and the more Opposition we meet with in doing our Duty, the greater is the Joy and Delight that arises from the Victory ; what deserves greater Commendation from others, yields also greater Satisfaction to ourselves, for we cannot but also applaud ourselves when we are conscious that we do well in any Thing, and the more noble and heroick the Act of Virtue is, we must of Course be so much the more pleased and satisfied with ourselves, for our having atchiev'd and accomplished it ; And this inward Joy and Satisfaction of Mind, wou'd be
alone

alone (if there were no other Reward) a sufficient Recompence for the Pain of any bodily Affliction. But,

5. What doth yet yield further Comfort, and is another Instance of the Blessedness of those which suffer for Righteousness Sake, even at present, is the Assurance which they have thereby that they are the Children of God, and highly favoured and beloved by him; according to that of the Author to the *Hebrews*, in the 12th Chapter of that Epistle, where he at large prosecutes this Argument from the 5th to the 13th Verse. *Ye have forgotten (says he) the Exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto Children; my Son, despise not thou the Chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth. If ye endure Chastening, God dealeth with you as with Sons, for what Son is he whom the Father chasteneth not, &c.* But,

6. And lastly, The great Blessedness of all, of those which suffer for Righteousness

teousness Sake, consists in the assured Hope which they have thereby of encreasing their Reward in another Life, according to that of the same Author to the *Hebrews*, c. x. v. 34. *Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your Goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in Heaven a better and a more enduring Substance.*

And this leads me to discourse of the other Thing propounded to be spoken to under this Head, which was, to shew,

2. What is the future Reward of those which suffer Persecution for *Christ*, or for Righteousness Sake, and that is expressed in the Text two Ways; *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*, Ver. 10. and *great is their Reward in Heaven*, Ver. 12.

The first is a Promise of certain Felicity to them that are persecuted for *Christ* or Righteousness, and the second is a Promise of greater Felicity for their being so persecuted, than they wou'd (according to the Terms of the Gospel-Covenant) have been capable of, if it had been their Lot to have lived in better Times; and that confirmed by the Example

ample of the ancient Prophets that suffered the like Persecution; *for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

1. There is a Promise of certain Felicity to those that are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, *Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* Heaven is indeed the Thing promised to all the Virtues and Graces mentioned in the foregoing Verses, as I have already shew'd; but this is the clearest Promise of it of all them, and there was some Reason for it, viz. because this is the most difficult Instance of Obedience, the most heroick Act of Virtue, the surest Argument of Love to *Christ*, and the most noble Expression of it, for which Reasons it was expedient, that for the Encouragement of Men to undertake this hard Service; they shou'd be animated by a clearer and more express Promise of a future Reward; *Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Nevertheless, we are not so to understand this Promise, as if the suffering Perse-

Persecution for our Profession of the *Christian* Religion, wou'd make Amends for a wicked Life ; or, as if the Practice and Exercise of our Virtue, and in case we were for the same expos'd to Suffering, wou'd give us as good an Assurance of the Happiness and Joys of Heaven, as a constant Continuance and Perseverance in all Well-doing ; for, on the contrary, we are told expressly by *St. Paul*, That no Persecutions or Hardships, no not Martyrdom itself, will avail us any Thing, if we have not a Love for God and for our Neighbour, *i. e.* if we are deficient in any Duty towards them ; for *Love is the fulfilling of the Law* ; and if we have such a Love for God and our Neighbour as we ought to have, we cannot be knowingly wanting in any Duty towards them : Thus, I say, he tells us expressly, *1 Cor. xiii. 3. Tho' I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and tho' I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

The Meaning therefore of this Promise of the Kingdom of Heaven to such

as are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, is this ; 1. That if they are really righteous and good Men that suffer Persecution, their Persecution in this World will give them such Assurance of a future Felicity in Heaven, as without this, (considering the Frailties and Infirmities of even the best of Men) they cou'd not well attain to ; and, 2. That that Reward which they wou'd have receiv'd in Heaven for their Piety and Virtue, tho' if they had not been persecuted, and which others of the like Piety and Virtue who are not persecuted, will receive, will be much increas'd by their Sufferings; that the Reward of their Virtue will be the greater in the other World, because they suffer for it here ; for 'tis not only promised them, that they shall have a Part or Portion in God's heavenly Kingdom, *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven* ; but likewise, that they shall have a better Portion there than other Men, *great is your Reward in Heaven ; i. e. your Reward in Heaven shall be greater upon the Account of those Persecutions which*

you suffered upon Earth, than otherwise it would have been.

And of this Increase or Addition of Reward to such as suffer Persecution for Righteousness Sake, there are, besides the Text, many other express Promises in holy Scripture: Thus in *Mat. xix.* when *St. Peter* had put this Question to our Lord, *Ver. 27. Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?* he answers in the next Verse, *Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.*

And that this Promise of an extraordinary Reward might not be understood as belonging only to his twelve Apostles, he adds, *Ver. 29. And every one that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands, for my Name's Sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting Life. And to the*
same

same Purpose we are told by the *Apostle*, 2 Cor. iv. 17. that *our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

Now, what this far more *exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory* is, we cannot say, because we know not yet what is the common Glory of Heaven, or wherein the Felicity of the other World does consist; but in general we are told, that the eternal Happiness of every good Man in Heaven will be greater than can be now conceived, according to that of the *Apostle*, *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have enter'd into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him*; if therefore the least Degree of heavenly Happiness be inexpressible, and also unconceivable by us now while we continue in this mortal State, it would manifestly be a vain Attempt, to go about to describe, or to give an Account of the Degrees of this Happiness, or to shew wherein consists the greater Glory of the

Crown of *Martyrs*, above that of other *Christians*; we must be content therefore to stay till we come to Heaven to know the full Meaning of this Promise, *great is their Reward in Heaven*, for till we know what will be the Reward of a common Disciple of *Christ*, we cannot know which will be the greater Reward of those that suffer Persecution or Martyrdom for *Christ*; but this we know, being assured thereof by the *Apostle*, *Rom. viii. 17.* That *if we suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified together*; and this is abundantly sufficient to encourage us to bear all the Afflictions and Sufferings that can befall us for *Christ's*, or Righteousness Sake; not only with Patience, but with Chearfulness and Rejoycing, forasmuch as the *Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us*, and thus we are frequently exhorted in holy Scripture, by *St. James i. 2.* *My Brethren, count it all Joy, when ye fall into divers Temptations*; by *St. Peter, 1 Ep. iv. 15.* *Be-*
loved,

loved, think it not strange concerning the fiery Trial which is to try you, as tho' some strange Thing happened unto you, but rejoyce, inasmuch as ye are Partakers of Christ's Sufferings, that when his Glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding Joy; and by our Saviour himself in the Text, *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake: Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.*

Thus I have shewn who are the Persons here spoken of, to whom the Blessedness and Reward of the Text belong, the Persecuted for Christ's or for Righteousness Sake, and wherein consists the Blessedness, and what is the Reward of such Persons, blessed are they, for *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, and great is their Reward in Heaven*; and so I have finished all that I propounded to do in discoursing on these Words.

I shall therefore now only briefly mention two or three useful Inferences that may be drawn from what hath

been said upon this Subject, and so conclude. And,

1. From what is here in the Text plainly intimated, and might from other Texts of Scripture be abundantly prov'd, if I had now Time for it, viz. that there are Degrees of Glory and Happiness in the other World, and that some shall be recompenced with a greater Reward than others, we may learn, that it is not only our Duty, but our greatest Interest also, to dedicate ourselves and all our Powers and Faculties, wholly and entirely to the Service of God, and the Practice of Piety and Virtue, to begin a good Life in our Youth, to persist in it in our Manhood, and to continue in the same till old Age, and to the Hour of our Death, to lose as little Time from Religion as is possible, and to do as much Good as ever we can while we live in this World.

For by the same Reason that the Crown of Martyrs, and such as suffer Persecution for Righteousness Sake, will

will be more glorious, because they are by God's Providence put upon harder Duty than others, by the same Reason, or indeed with greater Reason, may it be justly expected, that they that voluntarily put themselves upon the Practice of the strictest Piety and Virtue, and for the Sake of Religion, choose to deny themselves those Liberties which they might lawfully take, and dedicate their whole Life to the Service of God, beginning a Course of Piety when they are young, and continuing in the same to the End of their Days : I say, it may reasonably be expected, that tho' others that are sincere in their Profession, altho' not so steddy and constant in their Obedience, or altho' they came in later to God's Service, will be receiv'd to Mercy, and greatly rewarded, yet that these shall be recompensed with much higher Degrees of Happiness, that their Crown shall be more splendid and glorious than the others; and this is a Point which we are also expressly taught in Scripture, *viz.* that at the Day of Judg-

ment, Every Man shall receive according as his Works have been, that he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and that he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully; [*“ that he that by the
 “ good Improvement of his Lord’s Ta-
 “ lent hath gained Ten or Five Pounds,
 “ shall in Proportion to his greater In-
 “ dustry be promoted to the Govern-
 “ ment of Ten or Five Cities”,* (as this is parabolically expressed, *Luke 19.*) the Consideration of which should therefore make us not content ourselves with any Degrees of Virtue less than the utmost that we can possibly attain to, but as the *Apostle* exhorts, *1 Cor. 5. ult. To be stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our Labour* (how great soever it is) *shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

2. If such as are persecuted may nevertheless be blessed, as our *Saviour* here assures us, all those are, who are persecuted for Righteousness Sake; this may serve as a sufficient Answer to that
 most

most popular Objection of the *Atheists* against the Being and Providence of God, taken from the Adversities and Afflictions that do oftentimes befall the best Men in this World; for from hence they argue, that there is no God or no Providence superintending the Affairs of this World, because if there were, they suppose, that good Men wou'd always, as in Reason they ought, fare much better than wicked Men, the contrary to which is a Thing that to Appearance does oftentimes happen. But now this Objection is founded upon this Supposition, that Misery and Adversity are the same Thing that Afflictions and Happiness are, incompatible, and that whosoever is persecuted or afflicted, must needs also be unhappy, for unless this be supposed, the Objection is of no Force; and how very false this Supposition is, we are plainly taught in the Text, which assures us, that good Men are so far from being in a worse State at present, because they are more afflicted than others, that, on the contrary, if their
Afflictions

Afflictions befall them for the Sake of their Goodness, they are thereby rendered more blessed, than otherwise they would be ; *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, and blessed are ye when Men shall persecute you for my Sake : Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, But,*

3. If this were not so, if the Objection were thus far grounded upon Truth, and the Persecuted and Afflicted were really, while under their Sufferings, in a worse Condition than others, the Objection wou'd nevertheless be of no Force ; because that Time in which they suffer, and are consequently more unhappy than others, is so very short, that it is not considerable, in Comparison with the whole Time of their Existence and Duration, and when this short Time is over, they will not only be happy for ever after, but also much more happy hereafter, because more miserable and afflicted here, their *light Affliction*, which is but for a Moment, *working for them a far more exceeding and eternal*

eternal Weight of Glory; so that, all Things considered, good Men, how much soever they are afflicted here, are not more unhappy, but indeed, infinitely happier, not only than wicked Men, but also, than they themselves wou'd be if they had not been so afflicted; so that there is manifestly no Ground at all of objecting against Providence upon this Account, as if the Administration of Things were not just and equal, nor consequently ordered and managed by a wise and good Being, as we believe God to be; for if any had Reason to complain, it wou'd be those that suffer Persecution unjustly, and are hardlier dealt by in this World, than they deserve; but they, as our *Saviour* here assures us, have much greater Reason to *rejoyce* and be *exceeding glad*, because *great is their Reward in Heaven*. But,

4. And lastly, What may be here inferr'd and argued, from the Persecutions and Afflictions that befall even good Men in this World, is the certain and inevitable

inevitable Punishment of wicked Men in another World, and consequently how much it is our Interest, to keep strictly to our Duty, and to preserve a good Conscience in every Thing, how much soever we may happen to suffer by it here, and this is the Inference which *St. Peter* draws from hence, 1 *Ep.* iv. 16. &c. with whose Words I shall conclude: *If any Man (says he) suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this Behalf; for the Time is come, that Judgment must begin at the House of God, and if it first begins at us, what shall the End be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Ungodly and Sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the Will of God, commit the keeping of their Souls to him in Well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

And to God our Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be given, as is most due, all Honour, Glory and Praise, now and for ever.
Amen.



DISCOURSE XVI

CHRISTIANS


IN G E N E R A L

T H E

Salt of the Earth,

A N D

Light of the World.



CHRISTIANITY

THE HISTORY OF THE
RELIGION OF JESUS CHRIST

FROM THE FIRST
PREDICATION OF THE GOSPEL

TO THE PRESENT
STATE OF THE CHURCH

IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY
J. H. W. L.

LONDON:
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OF THE
WORK

DISCOURSE XVI.

All Christians, as well as the
Clergy, are the Salt of the
Earth, the Light of the
World, &c.

MATTH. V. 13, 14, 15.

*Ye are the Salt of the Earth;
but if the Salt have lost its
Savour, wherewith shall it be
salted? It is thenceforth good
for nothing, but to be cast out
and trodden under Foot of
Men.*

*Ye are the Light of the World:
A City that is set on a Hill
cannot be hid.*

Neither

*Neither do Men light a Candle,
and put it under a Busshel, but
on a Candlestick, and it giveth
Light unto all that are in the
House.*



OUR Saviour having in the former Part of this Chapter, (of which I have already treated) exhorted his Disciples to the Practice of several *Christian* Graces and Virtues, annexing a peculiar Blessedness, and promising a proper Reward to each of them, proceeds in the Words which I have now read to you, to enforce the Practice of them all, and also of all other *Christian* Virtues and Graces, by an Argument or Motive that is more general, and which obliges as much to one Virtue as to another, and is indeed a very strong Motive to all the Duties of an holy Life: And this Argument he draws from the peculiar Obligation lying on those to whom he then spake, to be Examples and Patterns to the World of all Sorts of Virtue, which
Oblig-

Obligation he grounds upon the Consideration of that Place and Station which they were set in; and this he expresses by four Similitudes; 1. He likens them to Salt; *Ye (says he) are the Salt of the Earth*; 2. To the Sun; *Ye are the Light of the World*; 3. To a City built on the Top of an eminent Hill, *A City that is set on a Hill cannot be hid*; and, 4. To a lighted Candle; *Men do not light a Candle and put it under a Bushel, but on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light to all that are in the House*.

In Discoursing on which Words I shall do these two Things:

1. Considering whom these Words were spoken to by our Saviour, or before what Company our Saviour preached that Sermon of which these Words are a Part, I shall enquire what Persons were hereby meant to be compared to and resembled by Salt, by the Sun, by the City on an Hill, and by a lighted Candle. And,

2. I shall briefly explain every one of these Similitudes; shewing, as I go
[Vol. II.] L along,

along, how fitly the Persons meant to be hereby resembled are likened to these Things ; what are the Duties incumbent upon them, resulting from that Likeness ; and upon what Accounts the Persons likened thereto are obliged to the Discharge of these Duties.

1. Considering whom these Words were spoken to by our *Saviour*, or before what Company our *Saviour* preach'd that Sermon of which these Words are a Part, I shall enquire what Persons were hereby meant to be compared to and resembled by *Salt*, by the *Sun*, by the *City on an Hill*, and by a *lighted Candle* : *Ye are the Salt of the Earth* ; --- *Ye are the Light of the World*, &c.

And the Reason of making this Enquiry is, because some Commentators on the Place have delivered it as their Opinion, that the Persons hereby meant are only the *Guides* and *Pastors* of the *Church*, the *Ministers* and *Preachers* of the *Gospel* ; that *they* are the *Salt of the Earth*, that *they* are the *Light of the World*, and that *they* are most fitly resembled

sembled by a *City on an Hill*, and by a *burning Candle*: The Consequence of which Opinion, if true, must be this, that the Ministers of the Gospel are indeed obliged to all those Duties which may be thought to result from their being so fitly resembled by these Things, but that other *Christians* are not so; that is, in plain Words, That none but only the Clergy are obliged to be exemplary in their Lives, and to be Patterns of good Works to others: For the Persons to whom these Words were first spoken were the *Apostles* of our Lord; 'twas to them therefore that he said, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth, ye are the Light of the World, &c.* 'Twas on them consequently that he meant to lay an Obligation to be in such manner useful to Men in their Spiritual Life, as *Salt* and the other Things here mentioned are to them in their natural Life; or that if any other Persons are oblig'd to the same Duty, they are only those that succeed them in the same Office of Governing and Instructing the Church of *Christ*.

And thus much indeed must be granted, that these Similitudes do more fitly resemble some Persons than they do others, and consequently that there is a stricter Obligation lying on some Persons than on others, to the Duties hereby meant to be enforc'd, and that their Deficiency therein is more inexcusable, and more severely punishable than the like Deficiency in other Persons is.

And particularly, it must be granted, that they who are placed in the Office of Spiritual Guides, that is, the Pastors of the Flock of *Christ*, and the Ministers of his Gospel, are in a more especial Manner bound to go before others, and to shew them the right Way, as well by their Example, as by their Doctrines; and that if they give any Scandal by their ill Example, their Sin is greater than another Man's would be, and that their Punishment will be also more severe.

And it must likewise be further granted, that when our *Saviour* first utter'd

uttered these Words, he spake them to his *Apostles*, whom he design'd to employ in converting Men to the *Christian* Faith; in order to which, it was as necessary that they should be holy and exemplary in their Lives, as that they should be found in their Doctrine, and powerful in their Preaching; and that all the Ministers of the Gospel, their Successors in that Office, are likewise under the same strict Obligation to be unblameable and exemplary in their Lives.

But then, on the other Side, That our Saviour spake these Words, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth, and the Light of the World, &c.* to his Apostles, only as *Apostles*, and not likewise as *Disciples*; Or, that he spake them only to his Apostles, and not likewise to all others (if any others there were) then present; Or that the Similitudes here used and apply'd to them, do belong to and benefit them only and their Successors in the Work of the Ministry; so that consequently the Doctrine or Instruction grounded thereupon, and inferr'd from

thence contains the Duty of none but only of the Governors and Pastors of the Church : These Things I utterly deny ; and that for these plain Reasons :

1. Because (as has been formerly observ'd) when our *Saviour* preached this his Sermon upon the Mount, of which my Text is a Part, he had not yet chosen his Apostles, for the Choice and Appointment of them we meet with afterwards at the tenth Chapter of this *Evangelist* . So that tho' it be supposed, that there were no other Persons present at this Sermon, but only those Men whom our Lord design'd to make Apostles, and Preachers of the Word ; yet, considering that he had not then appointed any of them to this Office, it can't reasonably be supposed, that any of the Directions now given them were such as they would not be obliged to observe, or until they should be, appointed thereto : It is not reasonable to think, that he spake to them only as *Apostles* or *Preachers*, when

when as yet he had not made them such. But,

2. It is evident (as has likewise been before observed) from the first Verse of this Chapter, that there were present at this Sermon many others, besides those who were then design'd, and afterwards appointed to be *Apostles* or *Preachers*, even *all* the then *Disciples of Christ*; all that either had already own'd him to be the *Messias*, or that came with an honest Mind to hear what Proofs he had to offer that he was so. *There follow'd him* (says the *Evangelist*, at the last Verse of the foregoing Chapter) *great Multitudes of People from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan*. And then immediately it follows, at the first Verse of this Chapter; *And seeing the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain*: He went thither, not to retire and withdraw himself from them; there is no Reason to think that was his Design, for there is no Mention made, as

there sometimes is, that he *sent the Multitude away* ; but rather, he moved thither, that being on a Rising-ground, he might be the better seen and heard by that his numerous Auditory ; for it follows immediately, *and when he was sate, his Disciples came unto him, i. e.* they flock'd round about him, and placed themselves conveniently to hear him ; and that by *his Disciples*, more were meant than only the Twelve, and the Seventy, seems evident, not only from their being called by St. *Luke*, the *whole Multitude*, but especially from what our *Evangelist* observes at the Conclusion of this Sermon ; *The People were astonished at his Doctrine* ; in which Words it is plainly imply'd, that *all the People*, (*i. e.* as many of them as would, none being sent away, or excluded the Assembly) had been the Auditors of his whole Sermon ; and therefore all the Directions here given, (being given without any Restraint or Limitation) must in Reason be understood, as meant to be given to all
that

that were there present, who either had already, or should at any Time after, profess themselves his Disciples.

3. It is farther evident, that the former Part of this Sermon, (of which we have already treated) contains such Doctrines, and such Doctrines only, as all Men are alike concern'd to practise, and for the Practice whereof, all shall be alike rewarded; *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, Blessed are they that mourn, Blessed are the Meek, &c.* These Blessings belong not only to *Apostles*, or *Prophets*, or *Evangelists*, or *Pastors* and *Teachers*, but to all *Christians*, that have these Qualifications. And even in the Verses just before the Text, where (as here) our Lord addresses himself to those that were then his Hearers, saying, *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you. — Great is your Reward in Heaven*, yet, that he meant not to confine this Promise of Blessedness and Reward, only to his *Apostles*, or to their *Successors* in the Office of the *Ministry*, but design'd it
to

to all those, whether *Pastors* or *People*, who either then, or in After-Ages, should be persecuted for his Sake, appears from the Verse foregoing those Words, wherein he pronounces the same Blessedness to all *Christians* in general, whose Lot it should be to be persecuted for the Cause of *Christ* and his Religion; *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

And it is likewise further evident, that the whole remaining Part of this Sermon wherein our *Saviour* adds to, and improves the moral Law given to the *Jews* in sundry Instances, contains Matters of Doctrine, and Rules of Life, in which all *Christians* are alike concern'd; for it is, without all Doubt, the *Peoples* Duty, as well as the *Pastors*, to avoid causeless and immoderate Anger, to forbear reviling and opprobrious Speeches; to be pure and chaste in their Minds as well as Bodies; to abstain from Revenge; to love their Enemies; and the like,

When

When therefore, it is thus evident, that both the former Part of the Sermon, and all that follows after, belong to all *Christians* alike, and declare and press such Duties only, as all the Disciples of *Christ* are equally obliged to observe; what good Reason can there be to imagine, that just these Words, which come in between, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth, and ye are the Light of the World, &c.* were design'd by our Lord to be spoken only to his *Apostles*, as such, that is, as then ordain'd, or design'd to be afterwards ordain'd, to the Office of the Ministry; and in them, to those that were to succeed them in the same Office, when he had undoubtedly all the same Auditors to this, that he had to the foregoing and following Parts of his Sermon; and when he expresses no Design to confine this Part of the Sermon, more than any of the rest, to some few of them only?

The only Reason, I think, that is, or can be pretended for it, is this, that those Appellations, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth,*

Earth, and ye are the Light of the World, and like a City on an Hill, and a burning Candle, seem to besit the Ministers of the Gospel better than they do others; that these Things may more truly and properly be affirm'd of them, than they can be of *Christians* in any other Station. In Answer to which, therefore, it may be considered;

4. Lastly, That however these Expressions may be thought more proper to be used to them than to others, yet they are not improper to be used to *Christians* in any other Office; and that they are (at least some of them) expressly so used, and apply'd in other Places of Scripture; so that consequently, tho' it may be said, (and I see no Harm in allowing that) that the Ministers of the Gospel are more strongly obliged to be exemplary in their Lives than other Men, yet it is also a necessary Duty, incumbent on all *Christians* of what Station, Degree, or Office soever, to endeavour to shew themselves Patterns of all good Works to all other Men;

Men; for in *Luke* xiv. 34. when (as the *Evangelist* expressly observes at the 25th Verse,) there were *great Multitudes* with him, our *Saviour* uses the same Similitude of *Salt*, and applies it to all his Hearers, that is, to all his Disciples; *Salt is good, but if the Salt have lost its Savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?* And so likewise, what our *Saviour* here affirms of those to whom he spake, that they were the *Light of the World*, is no more than *St. Paul* expressly affirms of all *Christians*, *Phil.* ii. 15. and from thence he infers the same Duty which our Lord here exhorts to: For thus he says, speaking to all *Christians*, the People, as well as their Pastors, *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God without Rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Nation, among whom ye shine as Lights in the World.* And tho' I am not indeed aware that the other Similitude, that of a *City on an Hill*, is any where, unless in the Text, spoken of, or apply'd to *Christians* in general, yet that it might, not improperly, be
fo

so apply'd, is evident enough; for as a City so situated draws all Mens Eyes towards it, so does the *Christian Church*, so does any Society of *Christians*, especially in a Country of *Infidels*, of *Turks*, or Heathens; that Purity, and Excellency of Doctrine, which they, above all others, pretend to believe, and do believe, and do profess, makes their Behaviour and Conversation more narrowly watch'd and inspected by such as are Enemies to their Profession, and every notorious Irregularity in the Life of a *Christian*, draws a Reproach upon his Religion, and makes it evil spoken of among the *Gentiles*; the Consideration whereof adds a fresh Obligation on all that profess this holy Religion, to adorn their Profession by an holy and exemplary Conversation.

From all that hath been said therefore, I think it plainly appears, that tho' the Duty which our Lord grounds upon, and argues from, these Similitudes of Salt, of the Sun, of a City on an Hill, and of a lighted Candle, be such as the
Guides

Guides and Pastors of the Church are indeed more strongly obliged to than others, because if they fail therein, their Example gives the greatest Scandal, yet the same is a Duty, also strictly incumbent upon all *Christians* whatsoever, according to that of the *Apostle*, 2 *Tim.* ii. 19. *Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity.*

And so much may serve to have spoken on the first Head of my Discourse on these Words, which was, by considering whom they were spoken to, or before what Company this Sermon was preached; to enquire what Persons our *Saviour* here meant, to compare to *Salt*, to the *Sun*, to a *City on an Hill*, and to a *lighted Candle*. He speaks here, I have shewn of all his Disciples, of all that profess the Faith of *Christ*, they are every one of them fitly and properly enough resembled by these Similitudes; they are consequently every one of them oblig'd to practise the Duty which our *Saviour* infers, and argues from hence; that is, (for that is the

the Sum of the Duty argued from hence, as it is laid down at the 16th Verſe) to be very regular and exemplary in their whole Life and Converſation ; as will more fully appear from what I ſhall ſay in diſcourſing on my ſecond Head, which I come now to ſpeak to ; viz.

2. To explain briefly every one of theſe Similitudes, and as I go along, to ſhew how fitly the Perſons meant to be hereby reſembled are likened to theſe Things ; what are the Duties incumbent upon them, reſulting from that Likeneſs ; and upon what Accounts they are obliged to the Diſcharge of theſe Duties. I begin with the firſt of them. —

1. *Ye are the Salt of the Earth.* Now the Virtue of Salt, you know, is to ſeaſon and give a good Reliſh to Meats, and to preſerve them from Corruption ; when therefore our *Saviour* reſembles his Diſciples to Salt, ſaying, *Ye are the Sale of the Earth*, his Meaning is, that he deſigned that thoſe which did then,

or

or should afterwards believe, on him by the Preaching of the Gospel, should perform the same Office to the rest of Mankind that Salt does to Meats; that is, that they should by their Persuasion, by their Example, and by whatever other Means should lie in their Power to use, endeavour to season the Manners of Men with the wholesome Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity, and to preserve them from the Corruption and Putrefaction of Sin.

This then is the Duty which, by this Resemblance of Salt, he presses upon all his Disciples, *viz.* That they should both by the *Savouriness* of their Speech (as St. Paul expresses it, Col. iv. 6.) that is, by their wholesome Instructions and good Advice, *Let your Speech be always with Grace, seasoned with Salt:* And also by the *Savouriness* of their *Lives*, that is, by the Innocence, Unblamableness, and exemplary Piety of their Conversation, endeavour to gain Profelites to the *Christian* Religion; that is, not only to the Profession of the

Faith of *Christ*, but likewise to the Obedience of Faith, to the Practice of all the Virtues of a Holy and Christian Life. And this Duty our *Saviour* expresses in the following Part of the Verse (keeping still to the Metaphor of Salt) by shewing the great Reasonableness of it, and the severe Punishment that they would incur, if they should be negligent or failing therein.

(1.) The great Reasonableness of it; *If*, says he, *the Salt have lost its Savour, wherewith shall it be salted?* That is, *If you yourselves*, who profess my pure and holy Religion, and especially, if those of you whom I shall appoint to preach it, shall nevertheless be wicked and corrupt in your Lives, your State and Condition will be of all Mens the most incorrigible and desperate: For other Things that are flat and insipid, may by Salt have a good Relish and Taste infused into them: Or, if they are subject to Corruption and Putrefaction, they may by Salting be preserved; but if the Salt itself loses its Savour, there is nothing

thing that can give *that* a Relish; or, if *that* be corrupted and spoiled, there is nothing that can restore it to its pristine Soundness: So a wicked *Heathen* may be reclaim'd from his vicious Life by the Truths and Precepts of the Gospel. Innumerable were the Instances of such Conversions in the Primitive Times of Christianity: But a wicked *Christian* is in a much more incorrigible Condition; because there are no Arguments by which he might be persuaded to a good Life, but such as have been already urg'd upon him, and proved ineffectual; there can be no Reasons offered to him, to induce him to Repentance and Amendment of his Life, but such as he has heard already, and hardned himself against: His Recovery is consequently an Event, that may much rather be despair'd of, because there can be no Remedy tried upon him, but what has been tried already without any Success. And this, I suppose, was what was meant by St. Peter. 2 Epist. ii. 20, 21. *If after they have escaped the Pollutions*

of the World thro' the Knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter End is worse with them than the Beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them. This is the first Argument by which our Saviour, from the Resemblance which his Disciples bear to Salt, urges the Necessity of their being holy and unblameable in their Lives, because if they become corrupt, there is no Means left likely to restore them to their former Soundness.

2. The second is taken from the Consideration of the great Punishment they will incur, if they are negligent or failing in the Duty here press'd upon them, *If the Salt have lost its Savour,--- it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under Foot of Men. It is good for Nothing. Other Things, if they are so corrupted and spoiled, that they will not serve for the*
Use

Use which they were first design'd for, may, however, serve for some good Use or other; Wine, tho' it be decayed, and no longer fit to be drunk as Wine, is nevertheless useful as Vinegar; Money, if so crack'd or broken that it will no longer pass in Payment as current Coint, is nevertheless valuable, as Gold, or Silver, or such other Metal as it was made of; and even an old worn Garment, so ragged and threadbare that it will neither cover nor keep warm the Body, is nevertheless of some Use still, for if it will serve for no other Purpose, yet at least it will help to make Dung: But *Salt*, if by losing its Salt-ness it be not fit for its prime Use, is thenceforward of no Use at all; *it is neither fit for the Land, nor yet for the Dunghill*, as our Saviour observes, *Luke xiv. 25.*

And this is the Case of a wicked *Christian*; He is the most unprofitable Creature upon the Face of the whole Earth; he serves for no Purpose but only to do Hurt in the World, and of

that indeed he does a great Deal, much more than he could have done if he had not been a *Christian*. For the open Sins that he is guilty of while he lives in the Profession of a pure and holy Religion, are more scandalous and infectious than other Men's; the Wickedness of a Christian's Life casts also a Blemish and Reproach upon that holy Religion which he professes, and gives great Prejudice against it to such as were otherwise well-disposed to embrace it; so that he is so far from Discharging the Duty that was incumbent upon him as a *Christian*, viz. of Bettering the Lives and Manners of other Men, that he does the quite contrary; he contributes very much to the Spoiling and Corrupting of the World; and if he was not a *Christian* by Profession, he could not do so much Hurt by his evil Example as now he does.

As therefore Salt, having lost its Savour, is good for nothing, and is therefore cast forth and trodden under Foot of Men; such also will be the most deserved

served Doom that will be pass'd by God upon all wicked *Christians*, who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness, as we are told in *Matth. xxv. 30.* Cast ye the unprofitable Servant in outer Darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.

And so much of the first Similitude here us'd by our Saviour, and apply'd to his Disciples, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*; and of the Obligation thence resulting, which lies upon all *Christians* to be exemplary to others in their Lives and Conversations: Which Duty if they fail in, and much more if they give Scandal to others by their wicked Example, they are like Salt that has lost its Savour, good for nothing; nay, they are very hurtful and pernicious, and in Proportion to the greater Mischief that their evil Example does in the World, because they are *Christians*, they will receive a severer Punishment.

2. The second Thing to which our Saviour here likens his Disciples, is the *Sun, Ye are the Light of the World*: And by

this likewise he meant to admonish them of their Duty, and to excite them to it: Namely this; That as the Sun by its Light dispels the Mists of Darknes, wherewith the Earth was before overspread, so it was the Duty of his Disciples, by dispersing that Knowledge of the Gospel wherewith they themselves were enlightned, to instruct the Ignorant World; to teach them both by their Exhortation and Example the same Way of Life, which they themselves had been set into, to cure the Blindness of their Minds, and to reduce them from the Error of their Ways, to an Acknowledgment of the Truth. As ye are *the Light of the World*, ye ought to give Light to it.

It must indeed be granted, that this Saying, *Ye are the Light of the World*, was more especially true of the *Apostles*, and their Successors, the *Guides* and *Pastors* of the Church, whose sole and proper Business it was, and is, by publick Preaching, to instruct Men in the Knowledge and Practice of *Christ's* Religion

Religion; but there is no Necessity of confining the Similitude, and the Duty resulting thence, to them only; because it may likewise, in some Sense, be most truly affirm'd of all *Christians*, in every Age, that they are the *Lights of the World*, and so, as I noted before, the *Apostle* expressly calls them in *Phil. ii. 15.* the Consequence of which is, that it is the Duty of every *Christian*, a Piece of Service which every Disciple of *Christ* owes to his Lord, an Instance of Charity which every Servant of God ought to express to his Fellow-Servants, to endeavour, so far as he is able, to free all other Men from their Ignorance and Blindness, and to bring them into the same glorious Light, wherein they themselves are placed. Which Duty, if he industriously sets himself to perform, and is successful therein, he will, for a Reward of his Work of Piety and Labour of Love, be transplanted from Earth to Heaven, and from being a Light of this lower World, become a much more glorious Light in the other World,

World, shining forth with great Splendor to all Eternity; according to that of the Prophet *Daniel*, Dan. xii. 3. *They that be wise shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever. Ye are the Light of the World.*

3. The third Thing to which our Saviour here compares his Disciples, thereby still farther instructing them in, and exciting them to the same Duty, is a *City on an Hill*; A City, says he, *that is set on an Hill cannot be hid.* The farther Design of our Saviour, in which Similitude, beyond what was either expressed, or very plainly implied, in the two former, I take to be, to put his Disciples in Mind, that their Behaviour would be more narrowly watch'd and inspected, than other Men's commonly is; that they were placed in such an Eminence, by reason of their professing a purer Religion, and pretending to greater Light and Knowledge than other Men, as would draw the Eyes of all the World towards them, to watch and observe

observe whether their Lives were answerable to their Profession, and whether their Conversation was as much better than other Mens, as their Religion was : So that consequently their Behaviour, whether good or bad, would probably have a great Influence on the Minds and Manners of other Men. That if their Conversation was unblameable; as the Beauty and Comeliness thereof would be much taken Notice of, so it would also very probably draw over many Profelites to their Religion; but that, on the other Side, if their Behaviour should be in any Respect disorderly, the Eminence they were seated in would be a Means of discovering the same to all that were round about them, not only to them that were near, but likewise to them that were afar off; so that their ill Example would give much greater Scandal to the World, and be, by many Degrees, more pestilential and infectious than the like Misbehaviour in other Men, whose Actions lay not so open

open to View and Observation as their^s did. *A City that is set on an Hill cannot be hid.*

And this also was more especially true of the *Apostles*, and first Professors of the *Christian* Faith, the Novelty and Singularity of their Profession, as well as the wonderful Works wherewith it had been introduced, had fixed all Mens Eyes upon them, and this Circumstance of their Condition, their being placed so very much in Sight, was a very good Reason why they should be more than ordinarily circumspect in their Behaviour; because, if they should be guilty of any notable Miscarriage, they might be sure it would be presently observ'd by their Adversaries, and that they would readily take Occasion from thence to blaspheme and reproach their most holy Religion.

But nevertheless, it is likewise in great Measure true of all *Christians*, in all Ages of the World, that they are like a *City on an Hill*, which *cannot be hid*; their Professing a pure Religion, must

must needs make their impure and wicked Lives the more taken Notice of; so that the very same Sins must be much more scandalous in a *Christian*, than they would be in any other Man: For if a Man, who makes no Profession of Religion, lives as without God in the World, 'tis not much to be wonder'd at: And if a Man that professes a Religion that allows of any Wickedness, allows himself in that Wickedness which he thinks his Religion allows of, 'tis no more than might be expected; for the Man but acts like himself, and his Practice is agreeable to his Principles: But if we who profess ourselves the Disciples of the holy *Jesus*, and who are baptised into a Religion which allows of no manner of Wickedness, do nevertheless equal, if not outdo, the worst of *Heathens*, in the Impurity and Immorality of our Lives, our Wickedness being so contradictory to our Professions of the strictest Holiness, must needs be the more remark'd, and reflect
a Dis-

a Disparagement upon our Religion itself.

And I make no Question, but that the small Progress that *Christianity* has made in the World in these latter Ages, is chiefly owing to this, viz. to the Offence that is taken by *Jews, Heathens, Turks*, and other *Infidels*, at the wicked Lives of *Christians*: For our professing a Religion enjoining the greatest Purity, makes our Impurity more apt to be taken Notice of; and how much soever our Religion may commend itself by its Precepts, or we may commend it to others in our Discourse, they that are Strangers to the Grounds and Reasons of it, will hardly be perswaded that it is a better Religion than their own, so long as they see that it does not make us better Men than they themselves are.

But this Similitude may be apply'd still farther; for, even of a City built upon an Hill, no Part of which is, or can be hid, there are however some Parts more eminent and conspicuous than

than others, and on which consequently Men are more apt to fix their Eyes, viz. those high Buildings, or lofty Towers which over-top the rest.

And so it is in the *Christian Church*; the whole is like a City on an Hill, making a goodly Shew at a Distance, and thereby raising an Expectation in the Traveller to find still greater Satisfaction in the Sight, when he shall make a nearer Approach to it; but there are some particular Members of the *Christian Church*, who being in a more eminent Station than others, lie more open to have their Behaviour observed; and whose Example, be it good or bad, is probable to have a greater Influence on others; and if good, will more credit, adorn, and commend, if bad, will more disgrace and disparage, that Religion which they make Profession of.

Now, who they are that may most fitly be reckon'd as Towers, or high Buildings, in this *Christian City*, (whose Behaviour is consequently likely to be first, and farthest off, and most curiously observed)

observed) is very obvious to conceive; namely, first, Magistrates of all Sorts, Civil and Ecclesiastical, these are as the highest Towers of all, and most in View; of a Degree lower than these, are all the Governors and Pastors of the Church, and all Persons of Quality, Degree or Estate, above the common Rank; and next to these may be reckon'd all Fathers and Masters of Families, who, whatever Quality or Degree they are of, are still alike Superior to their own Children, and their own Servants, and all others that have Dependence upon them. On all these therefore, who are either in Authority, or Place, or Dignity, above others, the Duty implied in this Similitude of a *City on an Hill*, is most strongly incumbent; they are obliged to a more than ordinary Watchfulness over themselves, and Circumspection in their whole Behaviour, because they have more Eyes upon them than others have; and the least Slips or Failings in them will be readily spy'd out, and as readily imitated by their Subjects

Subjects and Inferiors : They ought to be more cautious than others of not giving ill Example, because their ill Example will give greater Scandal ; and more careful than others to give good Example, because their good Example will not only set a Pattern to others, but also afford them good Encouragement to follow it. Whatever is done by such as are in any eminent Station above others will be more narrowly observed, and more readily imitated, by them that are of lower Rank ; so that if they go astray, they lead whole Shoals after them to Destruction, and if they go right, their Example may very probably induce many others to take the same good Course. The blessed Consequence of which will be, that they will thereby greatly increase their own Reward. But,

4. Lastly, There is yet another Thing to which our *Saviour*, in the Text, likens his Disciples, and that is, a *lighted Candle*. The Design of which Similitude is in general the same with
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those foregoing, *viz.* to excite them to an exemplary Piety and Virtue; only whereas the three former Similitudes had only prescrib'd or imply'd the Duty, this also intimates the Means whereby it may be discharg'd, *viz.* by a publick and open Practice of Virtue, by not endeavouring to hide or conceal our good Example, as if we were afraid or ashamed to be thought so good Men as we really are; like *Joseph of Arimathea*, who, tho' a *Disciple of Christ*, yet was secretly so, for fear of the *Jews*; or, *Nicodemus*, who, for the same Reason, as may be supposed, came to *Jesus* by Night; whereas he ought rather to have chosen to come to him in the open Noon-Day, to the Intent that he might be both seen and imitated by others. For a Work of Darknes ought indeed (if it can be) to be kept in Darknes, because the fewer there are that see it, the less Hurt will the Example do; but Virtue, the more publick it is, the better; the clearer Light it is set in, the more beautiful will it appear; and the more

more there are that see it, the more (it may be hop'd) will be induc'd to imitate it. We ought therefore to be so far from endeavouring to conceal our good Works, as if we were ashamed of them, that we should rather (so far, I mean, as it may be done without Pride, or Affectation of worldly Glory) publish and proclaim them, thereby to gain Credit to our holy Religion, and to excite others to follow our good Example: For, as our Saviour here says, *Men do not light a Candle, and then put it under a Buskel, but on a Candlestick, that it may give Light unto all them that are in the House*; And upon this he immediately grounds that Exhortation in the following Verse, with which, as containing the Sum and Substance, and the proper Use of all that has been said, I shall conclude my present Discourse, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorifie your Father which is in Heaven.*

more there are that see it, the more (as
 may be seen) will be inclined to
 take it. The ought therefore to be
 for them, endeavouring to be as
 good Workers, as if we were called
 them, that we should be as good
 men, as it may be seen, and
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THE

DISCOURSE XVII



THE
METHOD

Of MAKING our

GOOD LIVES

USEFUL to Others.



THE
METHOD

OF WRITING

GOOD LINES

USEFUL TO OFFICERS.

DISCOURSE XVII.

The Method of making our
good Lives useful to others.



MATTH. V. 16.

*Let your Light so shine before
Men, that they may see your
good Works, and glorifie your
Father which is in Heaven.*



IN the three foregoing Verses,
our Saviour had compared his
Disciples, first to Salt, the
chief Use of which is to give a Relish
to Meats, and to preserve them from
Corruption; secondly to the Sun, the
benign Influence whereof infuses Warmth
and Life into the lower World; thirdly,
to a City on an Hill, the high Situation
whereof is apt to draw Men's Eyes to-

wards it, and to put them upon enquiring concerning it; and, fourthly, to a *lighted Candle*, which serves for no Use, if it be *cover'd* with a *Busbel*, or *put under a Bed*; but if it be *set*, (where it ought to be) on a *Candlestick*, gives *Light to them that are in the House*, and supplies, in good Measure, the Want of that greater Light; and here in the Text he sums up the main Design of all the aforementioned Similitudes in a brief and plain Exhortation, (borrowing an easy Metaphor from the Similitude that was last named) *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorifie your Father which is in Heaven.*

In Discourfing on which Words, I intend,

I. To explain the Duty here preſcrib'd; and,

II. To urge ſome Motives to perſwade to the Practice of it.

I. I am to explain the Duty here prescrib'd; *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorifie your Father which is in Heaven.*

And I take it, that these Words do not directly enjoin any single Duty, either of Piety, Justice, or Charity; but they rather suppose, that we are already fully instructed in every Duty, and careful to discharge all the Parts of an holy and virtuous Life; and what they teach and prescribe, is, the Means and Method whereby we may make our constant Practice of Piety and Virtue, as well useful to others, as profitable to ourselves; viz. by so ordering our Conversation, that our Piety and Virtue may become exemplary to others, so that by seeing our good Works, they may be incited and encouraged to imitate us therein.

What (I say) the Text prescribes, is not this or that particular good Work, but a general Aim and Design that we ought to have in every good Work that
we

we do, of Instructing and Bettering others, and gaining Glory to God thereby: That we should not satisfy ourselves with barely doing what we are commanded, but should so contrive the Doing of our good Works, that God may be glorified, and our Neighbour edified: That by the same Acts and Exercises of Piety and Virtue, by which we endeavour to work out our own Salvation, we should also seek to procure and farther the Salvation of other Men: That our Conversation should be not only innocent, but also discreet; not only such as we can justify to ourselves, but likewise such as we can justify to the World; not only agreeable to the Doctrine of the Gospel, but also such as may adorn our holy Profession, and be apt to gain Profelytes to it. This I take to be the general Design and Meaning of the Precept in the Text; *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*

But

But this Account of the Meaning of the Text, tho' it be true, yet is not full and particular enough to direct our Practice; because it only shews the Aim and Design that we ought to have, but does not teach us how we may accomplish the same.

In order therefore to the farther and fuller Explication of this general Precept, and to render it more readily practicable, I shall reduce it to some Particulars, by laying down some Rules and Directions, which it may reasonably be thought are implied in it, and were meant by our *Saviour* to be hereby enjoined, because they are such as seem to be necessary to be observed, in order to the obtaining of that End, which are here taught to aim at. And,

1. First of all, this Precept, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works*, plainly supposes that we ought not to affect a solitary, or too much retired Life; or, (to use our *Saviour's* own Expression in the Verse foregoing) that we should not put
our

our Candle under a Bushel, but on a Candlestick, that it may give Light to them that are in the House. For how is it possible that our Piety should quicken others, if they do not see it? or that our good Example should make them better if we hide it from them? If therefore it be our Duty to *shine as Lights in the World*, and by a holy and exemplary Life, to endeavour to bring others to a Liking and Imitation of the same good Course, (which is certainly what our *Saviour* here meant to enjoin) it is evident that the Way and Method to obtain this End, is not to retire from the Society of Men, and to live alone in a Cloister or a Desert. This is so very plain, that it can't be needful to add any Thing more for the Proof of it.

But nevertheless, because some pious and devout Persons have spoken and written largely in the Commendation of a private and solitary Life, as if that were the most perfect and divine Way of Living; whence also they have appropriated

appropriated to such as live thus, the Name of *Religious*, as if all that were not shut up in a Cloister, or a Cell, were prophane and irreligious, or at least in a much lower Form of Godliness, and not near so well employ'd as the others; I think it may not be amiss (for this Reason) to enlarge a little upon this Subject, and to shew that this solitary and recluse Way of Living is so far from being more perfect, or more excellent, than the other, that as 'tis an Argument of Weakness to chuse it, so it is not indeed to be either commended, or even so much as allowed of, in any but such as are weak: For there is no Virtue practis'd by those that live reclusely, but what may also be practis'd by such as live and converse in the World; but, on the other side, they who live in Towns and Cities, and converse freely and friendly with other Men, have frequent Opportunities of excercising many Virtues, which they that live reclusely are, for want of such Opportunities, not in a Capacity to perform.

He

He indeed who lives all alone in a Cave, or a Wilderness, having few of those Concernments in the World, about which other Men are commonly very busily employ'd, has more Time, and greater Leisure, for Prayer and Meditation, and such-like private Exercises of Religion: But seeing we are born for others, as well as for ourselves, and have a Duty to perform to our Neighbour as well as to God, and are obliged by Nature and Christianity to have Love for others, and consequently to endeavour to promote their Welfare and Happiness in this World, and especially to advance, for far as we are able, their spiritual and eternal Good; he that chuses a solitary and retired Life (even tho' he lives as well, and does as much Good, as 'tis possible for a Man to do in that State) yet while he is diligent in one Duty, must neglect, in some Measure, another, that is altogether as necessary, or rather more so: For we are told in Scripture, that *God will have Mercy and not Sacrifice*, or *Mercy rather*

rather than Sacrifice ; and therefore there is no Reason why this should be thought a more excellent or perfect Way of living than the other.

It is plain that our blessed *Saviour*, one End of whose Coming into the World was to give us an Example of holy Life, and who was undoubtedly the most perfect Pattern of Holiness that ever appear'd in the World, did not cloister up himself, or live retired from the rest of the World, except only at some certain Times, when he withdrew from Company for the freer Exercise of his Devotions ; (and that Man is indeed too much in Company, who is never alone , and too busy, who can spare no Time from his secular Employments for Prayer and Meditation: But I say otherwise, our *Saviour*) affected not a solitary and unactive Life ; but *went about doing Good*, and conversed freely with other Men, and disdained not the Company of the worst of Men, when he was in Hope of doing that Good by conversing with them :

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Infomuch that, you know, he was upon this Account slandered by his Enemies, as a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; and I would to God we were all such Friends to them as he really was, that we would make it our Endeavour, as he did, *to seek and to save that which is lost*: But such Friends we can't be to them, such Good we can't do them, if we shun all Company, and chuse to live quite alone by ourselves. Our *Light cannot shine before Men*, if we cover it, neither can they see our *good Works* if we purposely hide them from their Sight.

Thus much indeed must be granted, that 'tis very convenient for such as are weak in the Faith, and not well grounded in their Religion; or who, having been before very much corrupted in this wicked World, have newly undertaken a good Life, and so are still in great Danger of being drawn away to their former evil Course, by the Perswasion and Example of their former wicked Companions; ('tis, I say, very
conve-

convenient and adviseable for such as these) to retire from the World for some Time, till they shall have confirm'd their Faith by Prayer and Consideration, till they shall have broken off their bad Acquaintance by sufficient Absence, till they shall have wean'd themselves from their old and beloved Sins by Disuse, and till by continual *Exercising* themselves *unto Godliness*, they shall be grown up to some Strength and Perfection therein: But when they shall have well serv'd these Purposes by their Retirement, their Solitude is no longer to be commended; 'tis time for them then to go abroad, and to do Good; and much more Good they may then do abroad, than they can do in a reclusive State. And if after this, they still chuse to continue in their former Retirement, the best Thing I think that can be said of them is this, that they take up with a lower Degree of Goodness, when they have a fair Opportunity put into their Hands of attaining to greater Perfection, and that they do not

make such Improvement of their Talent as they might have done; the Consequence of which will be, that they will also fall as much short of that great Reward which they might have attained.

2. Another Rule or Direction very requisite to be observed, in order to the obtaining of that End which we are here taught to aim at, *viz.* the Glory of God, in the Conversion and Salvation of Men: And which consequently we may reasonably think was meant to be enjoin'd by our *Saviour* in this Precept, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works*, is this, that we so contrive the Doing of our good Works before Men, that not only the Works themselves may be seen, but the Goodness of them may likewise appear.

Now the Goodness of any Work consists in two Things, 1. In the Matter of it, when the Thing itself is Good, when it is agreeable to the Law of God, when 'tis a Thing that God has command-

commanded to be done: And, 2. In the Mind and Intention of the Doer, when the Reason why he does it, is because God has commanded it, when he does it out of a Principle of Obedience to God, and his only, or at least his chief, Design in the doing it, is to recommend himself to God's gracious Acceptance.

Now the first of these, *viz.* whether the Work that we do be materially Good, is easy to be known by all that see it: But the second, *viz.* whether we do it with a good Design, and out of a right Principle, can be known by Men (who can judge only by outward Appearance) no farther than we ourselves are pleas'd to discover to them what our Design is in it, and what Principle we act upon; and therefore that the Goodness of our Work may be fully seen, it is requisite that our Design and Principle should (so far as is possible) lie as open to Men's Views as the Action itself.

We ought not therefore to be ever ashamed of owning and professing our Religious Fear of God ; we should not ever be shy of declaring publicly, whenever a proper Occasion is offer'd, that Conscience towards God is the Principle of all our Actions ; that the Reason why we do this or that, or why we do not otherwise, is because we are persuaded that that is a Duty, or this a Sin ; that it is our firm Resolution, not willingly to be wanting in any Duty, nor knowingly to consent to any Sin, and that it is this our stedfast Resolution of Obedience to the Will of God, that inflames us in every thing that we do, and not temporal Interest, or any other worldly Consideration. This is what ought to be, and this is what, if it really be so, we ought not to be ashamed or shy to own ; because no Action, how good soever in it self, or how publicly soever it be done, is a good Example to others, unless it be done, and, if there be a proper Occasion, be also own'd to be done upon a right Principle, *viz.* a Principle of Religion.

Thus,

Thus, for Instance, if a Man on any publick Occasion of Charity, as suppose in giving to a Brief, should give very largely, but at the same time should declare, that the Reason why he gave so much was because his Neighbours, of the same Quality and Degree with himself had given so; he would not in this Act of Charity, give any Example of Charity, but only of Complaisance or worldly Prudence: For in declaring that he gave so much, only because others had given so, he does in effect declare, that if little had been given by others, he would have given less than he did, and that if others had given nothing, neither would he: And if so, 'tis plain his Gift was not a Fruit or Effect of Charity, but only an Act of neighbourly Complaisance; that he did not give what he gave out of Pity and Compassion to his necessitous Brother, but only to avoid the Imputation of Avarice; that he did not give because he thought it was his Duty to give, but because he thought it would have been a Discredit to him

not to have given as others had done : So that his Alms, which consider'd in it self was really a Work of Charity, yet being given upon these worldly Considerations, was not an Act of Charity in him, nor an Example of Charity to others.

Or thus, again : If a Man that is really Sober and Temperate out of Duty to God, yet does not own that this is his Principle, and that the Reason why he is always careful to keep himself sober is, because he will not commit a Sin ; his Act of Sobriety is no Example of Sobriety. Nay, on the contrary, if when he refuses to stay longer with those who, he sees, design a drunken Bout, he only pretends urgent Business as the Reason of his leaving them so soon : Or, if staying still in their Company, he nevertheless stiffly refuses to drink with them to excess, pretending only Weakness, or Indisposition of Body, as the Reason of his refusing his Cup ; in thus leaving them, or thus refusing to keep the Round with them, he is so far from giving

ving to others an Example of Temperance, that he rather gives them an Example of the contrary. For when he only pretends Business as the Reason of his leaving them, he does as good as say, that if he had not had such urgent Business to call him away, he would have staid longer with them : And when he pretends only Indisposition of Body, as the Reason of his refusing the Cup, he does in effect grant, that if he had not been so Indisposed, he would have kept Pace with them in their Excess ; which tacit Concession of his affords greater Encouragement to them to continue their Excess, and to others to follow the same Course, than his own personal Sobriety, which they have Reason to believe is grounded only upon Temporal and Prudential Considerations, does to make them Sober out of a Principle of Conscience : And that Sobriety which is not grounded upon a Sense of Duty, and a Fear of Offending God, is not the Virtue of Sobriety, nor properly a good Work.

So that if what the Man pretends be true, and it be indeed only Business, or Care of his Health, that keeps him sober, his Sobriety, being apparently no Virtue in him, can't be an Example of Virtue to others. Nay, supposing the contrary, *viz.* That Conscience and a Fear of Offending God, be indeed the true Reason of his Sobriety, yet while he gives out only those other Reasons, tho' his Work be manifest, yet the whole Goodness of it is concealed ; and so all that others can learn from his Example, is only to mind their Business, or to take Care of their Health, and not the Virtue of Sobriety, for that he purposely conceals and hides from them, and seems unwilling that they should discover it.

From all which it appears, that those good Works only are Exemplary, the Causes whereof are as visible as the Actions themselves ; when it is not more manifest that we do the thing that is good, than 'tis that we do it out of a Religious Principle ; and consequently

quently that to the Discharge of the Precept in the Text, the gaining Glory to God by the Exemplariness of our Lives, it is requisite not only that our Work be materially Good, and that it be done in the Sight and Presence of others, that they may take Example by it ; but also that we freely own and declare to the whole World, that we do it out of Conscience towards God, and not out of any worldly Consideration; Following herein the Example of the Patriarch *Joseph*, who being earnestly Sollicited by his Mistress to lie with her, thought it not enough barely to resist the Temptation, or to give out as the Reason of his not Consenting, (which yet he might have done, and a good Reason enough, if there had been no other, it would have been) the Danger that there was of his Master's Discovering their Dishonesty, and the great Mischief that might thence accrew to both of them ; but laid the Stress of the Business where it ought to be laid ; *How can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God ?* And

And this is truly to give good Example ; this is to *Let our Light so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works*; viz. when we not only do what is Good, but also boldly own the Religious Principle that Influences our Lives.

And indeed, on the other side, If while we are really the Servants of God, we are yet ashamed to appear so, and are unwilling to be thought so by others; and altho' we do the Things that God Commands, because he Commands them, would yet rather have it thought that we do them upon other Accounts ; as if we reckon'd that it would be a Shame, and a Disparagement to us to be taken for Men of Religion and Conscience ; we may justly fear that our good Works will in the Event be as unprofitable to ourselves as they are to others, and may reasonably look to be punished for them rather than rewarded: According to that Threatning of our Saviour, in *Mark viii. 28. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words,*

Words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.

3. Another Thing requisite to make our Piety and Virtue exemplary, and to excite and stir up others to an Imitation of it (and which consequently may well be understood as a Direction meant to be included in this general Precept, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works,*) is this, that we should endeavour all we can, by our own prudent Carriage and Behaviour, to make Piety and Virtue seem amiable and lovely in the Eyes of Men. And then true Virtue and Goodness makes the best Shew, and appears most amiable, when it is shewn simply, in its own proper Shape and Colour, without any of that artificial Cloathing, wherewith it is commonly dress'd up by Hypocrites, and such as pretend to more Religion than they really have.

Nay indeed, I believe there is nothing in the World that does more prejudice

judice some Men against Religion, than that false Notion of it, which they happen to have taken up from observing the Carriage and Behaviour of these hypocritical Pretenders to it: For they see that those who make the loudest Noise about Religion, are very commonly Men of sour Tempers, of melancholick Looks, of severe and grave Deportment: That they affect to talk all in Scripture-Phrase, and to thrust in Religious Discourse (as we use to say) *by Head and Shoulders*; that they are severe Censurers of others, and will not allow of a Jest, or a Smile, or any Pleasantness in Conversation, as Savouring of too great Lightness; that they condemn, as unlawful, even the most innocent Recreations and Divertisements, and seem to judge all that Time mispent, which is not employ'd in Prayer or Reading, or in some such godly Exercise: Such, I say, they observe is the Carriage and Behaviour of many of those who make the loudest Pretences to Religion, and assume to themselves,
exclu-

exclusively of all others, the Name of the *godly Party*; and so forming a Notion of Religion, from thence they become greatly prejudic'd against it; and if this be Religion, it is a thing that they can by no Means ever like or approve of: For they, it may be, are naturally of a sanguin Complexion, and of a chearful Temper; and if they can't be religious and chearful too, they had rather be without Religion than have their Tempers spoil'd by it; or, they, it may be, are as yet in the Heat of Youth, their Spirits are light and active, and they have a quick Sense of Pleasure; and therefore, if they can't be religious without bidding adieu to all Mirth and Delight, and becoming as grave and serious as old People naturally are, they'll e'en put off all Thoughts of Religion to that Age of Gravity and Seriousness, which they think is fittest for it, and suits best with it.

But now all this Dislike of Religion, is in Truth grounded upon a false and mistaken Notion of it; and Religion it-
self

self is not such a Bug-bear as it appeared to them in that hypocritical Dress, in which they happened to view it : For a Man may be virtuous, and yet pleasant ; he may be strictly religious, and yet chearful ; he may be truly and thoroughly a good Man, and yet appear in Dress, in Garb, in Look, in common Discourse and Conversation, and the like, just as other Men do : He may be a very good *Christian*, and yet not cease to be a good Companion ; and, in fine, he may, even in his Youth, put on all the Gravity of a *Christian*, and yet not put on that Sourness and Moroseness which is oftentimes the Infirmary of old Age : For true Religion does not consist in a peculiar Garb, in an affected Phrase, in a singular Behaviour, in a down Look, in Sighing and Sobbing, and a whining Tone, and such like Fooleries, but in the rational and manly Worship of the true God, and in an hearty Love and Good-will to Men. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but*
to

to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? and in all this, there is nothing that Men can dislike, I am sure there is nothing therein that they can despise.

If therefore we would have our *Light* so shine before Men, that they seeing our good Works, may be incited to imitate our Example : If we would gain Profelites to Virtue and Religion, we should not (at least not in our publick Behaviour) affect needless Austerities ; we should take Care that Religion do not (as it does in a great many) sour our Tempers, and make us peevish, froward and ill-natur'd ; we should be as complaisant to others as we can be with a good Conscience, and endeavour to please all Men, as far as we can do it without offending God. We should rather sometimes take Part with others in their innocent Sports and Recreations, (tho' to do so be against our own Inclination) than, by our studiously and constantly avoiding the same, give them Occasion to think that Religion condemns

demns all Sport and Recreation. We should rather sometimes even force ourselves to Mirth and Pleasantness, (altho' our own Temper be naturally grave and melancholick) than give them Occasion to think, that our Melancholy is the Effect of our Religion; and that a Man can't be religious and chearful too.

Thus, I say, we should endeavour (as *St. Paul* exhorts) to *please every Man his Brother, for his Good, to his Edification*: We should endeavour all Ways, as well by our Example, as Discourse, to represent Religion under the most lovely Character; we should carefully avoid giving any Occasion to Men to think, that they can't be truly religious without bidding adieu to all the Delights and Pleasures of this Life; or that they can't be the faithful Servants of God, without rendring themselves justly ridiculous to the World for their humorfome and fantastical Singularity. Thus, I say, we should endeavour both by our Discourse, and by our own wise Conversation, to beget a true and lovely
Notion

Notion of Religion in Men's Minds; this is the Way to adorn our Profession, this is the likeliest Means we can use to induce other Men to embrace it.

For when Men shall see that they may be both *merry and wise*, that they may be truly religious, and yet not be always talking of Religion; that they may be strictly conscientious, and yet not nicely scrupulous; that they may be in every respect good Men, and yet not be ridiculous for their Preciseness; and, in a word, that they may *have their Conversation in Heaven*, and yet not be unfit for Conversation upon Earth; it may reasonably be hoped, that such a fair Representation of Religion as this will induce a great many to become Profelites to it, and that *seeing our good Works*, they will be perswaded to become Followers of the same.

In order to which it is farther requisite, (and therefore this may be laid down as another Rule or Direction meant to be prescribed in this general

Precept, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works.*)

It is farther requisite, I say,

4. That with a general Care to order our whole Conversation aright, so as not to give ill Example in any Thing, we should have a special Regard to those Duties of Religion which are of a publick Nature, and proper to be perform'd in the Sight and Presence of other Men, and that we be strictly regular and constant in the Performance of them.

Such especially is the publick Worship of God, in those Times, and at those Places which are appointed for it; which therefore can't at proper Opportunities be neglected, or without reasonable Excuse omitted, without Breach of the Precept in the Text, commanding us to *let our Light shine before Men. Let us consider one another to provoke unto Love and to good Works*, says the Author to the Hebrews, Chap. x. 24. which Precept is in Sense and Effect the same with

with this in the Text, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works*; and then he adds immediately, as one special Instance of this Duty, the duly frequenting the Publick Assemblies, for the Worship of God; *Not forsaking the Assembling of ourselves together, as the Manner of some is.*

And this they should do well to consider seriously of, who upon any trifling Occasion, and many Times upon no Occasion at all, do keep from Church.

For tho' they should use all the same Prayers at Home, or in their Closets, that are used in the Church, and tho' they should read at Home the very same Portions of Scripture that are read there, and tho' they should pass all the rest of the Church-time at Home in the Reading of some good Book, treating perhaps of the very same Subject that is treated of by the Minister in the Church (and yet I fear there are but few of those that make a Custom of staying from Church, who do ordinarily spend

the Church-time at Home so well as this ; but, I say, if they should always employ themselves thus at their Homes in the Hours of publick Worship,) yet this however would not be quite so well as if they had been then at Church. For, even supposing that by thus employing themselves at Home in the Church-time, they might edify themselves as much as they might have done at Church (which yet is not true) it is plain however that they do not thereby so much edify their Neighbours : They may get a great deal of Good to themselves by these private Exercises of Religion, but they do no Good at all thereby to others : Their Prayers, and their Reading, may profit themselves much, but their Example cannot profit the World ; their *Candle*, tho' it burns clear, and shines bright, yet being *hid* thus *under a Bushel*, when it ought to have been *set on a Candlestick*, gives no Light to their Neighbours. So that in doing for Substance all the same Things
at

at Home, which should have been done at Church, they perform but only half their Duty, being at the same time manifestly deficient in that other half which is here enjoyn'd making *their Light so shine before Men, that others seeing their good Works, may glorifie their Father which is in Heaven.*

5. Lastly, As there are some Duties of our Religion of a publick Nature, and which therefore are not at all exemplary unless they be done in Publick; so there are others which have a peculiar Aptness to procure Love and Esteem to them that practice them, and in Consequence to procure a Liking and Esteem also to that Religion which teaches and enjoins them : In order therefore to the Attaining of that End which we are here directed to aim at, *viz.* the gaining Glory to God by the Exemplariness of our Lives, it is more especially requisite, that we give our Minds to the Study and Exercise of these Virtues.

But it would take up too much Time now to enquire what these Virtues are, and to shew how much our Religion is adorned and credited, and commended thereby; and therefore I shall defer the handling of this Head, with what else remains, to another Opportunity.



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THE
METHOD

OF MAKING OUR

GOOD LIVES

USEFUL to OTHERS ;

And the MOTIVES to it.



M E T H O D

OF MATHS

GOOD LINE

USEFUL TO OTHERS

And the M O T I O N

DISCOURSE XVIII.

The Method of making our
good Lives useful to others;
And the Motives to it.



MATTH. V. 16.

*Let your Light so shine before
Men, that they may see your
good Works, and glorifie your
Father which is in Heaven.*



THESE Words (as I have already noted) contain the practical Inference or Conclusion, which our *Saviour* draws from the three foregoing Verses, wherein he had compared his Disciples to *Salt*, to the *Sun*, to a *City on an Hill*, and to a *lighted Candle*; and especially from the last Verse of these three, wherein having
noted

noted the Incongruity of covering a *Candle* with a *Bushel*, and the Usefulness thereof when set on a *Candlestick*, he here, borrowing a Metaphor from that Similitude, infers a Duty incumbent on all his Disciples, viz. to be of the like Use to the rest of the World, by the Exemplariness of their Lives, that a *Candle* set on a *Candlestick*, is to those that dwell in the House; *Let your Light, &c.*

In discoursing on which Words I proposed to do these two Things;

I. To explain the Duty here prescribed: And,

II. To urge some Motives to persuade to the Practice of it.

I. To explain the Duty here prescribed, and this I proposed to do by reducing this general Precept, to some more particular Rules and Directions; such as it may reasonably be thought were meant by our *Saviour* to be hereby enjoined, because they are such as seem necessary

cessary to be observed, in order to the Attaining of that End which we are here taught to aim at.

And four of these Directions I have already mentioned, and treated of, viz.

1. That we should not affect a solitary, and too much retired Life; to do so is truly to *put the Candle under a Bushel*.

2. That we should be always free in owning the Religious Principle that Influences our Lives; that so not only the Works themselves that we do, but also the Goodness of them may appear.

3. That we should endeavour by our own prudent Carriage and Behaviour, and particularly by avoiding all endless Austerities, and affected Singularities, to beget in Mens Minds such a Notion of Religion, as may not be scaring and discouraging to them, such as may make it appear to them (as indeed true Religion is) manly, and rational, and worthy of their Choice. And,

4. That

4. That we should be especially strictly regular and constant in the Performance of all those Duties of Religion which are of a publick Nature, and are proper to be perform'd in the Sight and Presence of others.

I add now in the fifth and last Place,

5. That there being some Duties of our holy Religion, which have a special Aptness to procure Love and Esteem to them that practise them, and by Consequence to procure also a good Liking to that Religion which teaches and enjoins them, this Precept of our *Saviour*, commanding us to *let our Light shine before Men*, may reasonably be understood as meaning to enjoin a particular Care, and a more than ordinary Strictness and Constancy in the Discharge of all such Duties.

And to this Purpose is that Exhortation of the *Apostle* in *Phil. iv. 8. Whatsoever Things are true*, that is, evidently and undeniably Good ; *Whatsoever Things are honest*, that is decent, comely or venerable ; *Whatsoever Things are just*,

just, that is manifestly reasonable, fair or equitable ; *Whatsoever Things are pure*, that is, cleanly and graceful, and for that Reason delightful to the Beholders ; *Whatsoever Things are lovely*, that is, apt and likely to render a Man beloved by his Neighbours, and well accepted to those among whom he lives ; *Whatsoever Things are of good Report*, that is, are generally well spoken of, and apt to procure the good Word of others ; *If there be any Virtue*, that is, any Practice, the Goodness whereof is so clearly evident by the Light of Nature, as to be readily acknowledged by all ; *and if there be any Praise*, that is, any Practice that is universally esteem'd Laudable and Praiseworthy ; *think on these Things*, that is, let your Thoughts be chiefly fix'd upon, and your Endeavours chiefly bent to these ; give your Minds to the Study and Exercise of these Virtues above all others.

And the Reason of this Advice is plain, *viz.* because tho' there is indeed

no Virtue, or good Work, of any kind that may be neglected without Sin, yet other Virtues are necessary only as Duties, they are necessary to be done, only because we can't discharge a good Conscience towards God, while we are failing in them; but these, these lovely, these honourable Virtues, these Works of good Report, these Virtues and Graces which attract Esteem, and procure Veneration and Respect; these, I say, are necessary, not only as Duties to which we are directly obliged by those particular Precepts which enjoin them; but likewise as Ornaments and Graces to our Profession, as serving to beget in others a liking to our Religion, as a good Means to help to spread and propagate it in the World, and to make Profelites to it. By these we do not only exercise that Religion which we profess, but we commend and adorn it: According to that Exhortation of the same *Apostle* in *Tit. ii. 10.* to *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

And

And it may be consider'd, that that Exhortation is there specially given to *Servants*, that is, to Persons of the lowest Rank, and meanest Condition: Now certainly if it was the Duty even of these to endeavour to *adorn* that holy Religion which they profess'd, it is much rather the Duty of those who are of better Fashion and superior Degree, to do the same; that is of Masters of Families, of great Men, of Magistrates, of all that are advanc'd high in Dignity above others, or have Power and Authority over others: Such as these are more especially oblig'd to adorn the Religion which they profess, because they are of all others in the best Capacity of doing it, because their Examples lie most open to be taken Notice of, and are most likely to have an Influence upon others.

It is therefore plainly the Duty of all *Christians*; for if it be even of the lowest (as the *Apostle* there expressly teaches) much rather is it so of those who are in an higher Station, to *adorn* the *Doctrine* of
Christ,

Christ, that is, by the Beauty and Orderliness of their Lives, to endeavour to make that Religion which they are govern'd by, appear *worthy of all Acceptation*, and thereby to prepossess Men in its Favour ; that so they may hear, with an Inclination and Desire to be convinc'd (or at least without any Prejudice) those Arguments that are offer'd for the Proof of it ; which if they do, they can't fail to be convinced by them.

And therefore, there being (as was said) some *Christian* Virtues and Graces which have a peculiar Beauty and Comeliness, which approve themselves to every Man's Conscience, which as being amiable even at the first Sight, and universally praised and spoken well of, have a special Aptness to beget a Liking and Esteem, and a sort of Prejudice for that Religion which enjoins the Practice of them, it is plainly our Duty (and a Duty which the Precept in the Text commanding us to make our *Light shine before Men*, meant to lay upon us) to have, in the Course of our Lives, a
parti-

particular Regard to these Virtues, and a special Care not to be deficient therein : And of this Kind are these four which follow ; I don't mean these only (for there is a Beauty and Gracefulness in every Christian Virtue) but I mean these more especially, *viz.* Temperance, Justice, Meekness, and Charity.

1. Temperance, or Moderation in the Use of Meats and Drinks ; this is not only a necessary Duty of Christianity, but it is also plainly an ornamental Virtue ; it renders lovely and beautiful the Person that is endued with it ; it makes him respected and reverenc'd by all that know him : For a Man that eats and drinks only for Necessity, to repair the daily Decays of his Body, not to please his Palate, not to satisfy the Cravings of a luxuriant and extravagant Appetite, lives as becomes a Man, and upholds the Dignity of his Nature, and maintains that Dominion which the rational Part of him, his Soul, ought to have over the brutish Part of him, his Body. Hence, when we would give a

good Character of any Person in one Word, we often do it by this, we say he is a *very sober Man*, and in saying this of him, we think we say enough to recommend him to the Esteem and Respect of all; for if he be a sober Man, he is one that has his Wits, and his Reason, always about him; he is therefore fit to be employ'd in any Business he is capable of, and will not fail the Expectation of those that employ him; whereas, an Intemperate Person, who is a Slave to his Palate, and drinks away his Reason, turns a wise Man into a Fool, and a Man into a Beast; and is therefore more vile and despicable than other Fools, and than other Beasts, because his Folly or Want of Reason is the Effect of his own vicious Choice, whereas theirs was the Lot of their Creation.

Such is the natural Turpitude of the Sins of Intemperance, that even they that do too freely allow themselves therein, yet cannot hardly but be sensible that their Way of Life is a Reproach
and

and a Discredit to them ; and therefore very rarely (unless they are hardened in their Wickedness, and past all Shame) do they care that the World should know what sort of Men they are. *They that be drunken are drunken in the Night,* says the *Apostle*. And if upon any Occasion a Character were to be given of them, they would take it heinously ill of him, who should make (tho' very truly) their Drunkenness a Part of their Character.

But a Part of their Character it must be, if it be true ; because 'tis what with all their Care and Endeavour they can't conceal from the Knowledge of the World. And that's another Reason why it should be thought that by this Precept, commanding us to be good Examples to others, we are more especially oblig'd to the Practice of Temperance, *viz.* because the Vices of Intemperance are, of all others, most manifestly contrary to good Example, upon this Account, because they can't be hid ; because the natural Effects of them,

which are evident to all, I mean that Sottishness, that Stupidity, that ridiculous Folly and Childishness, which they introduce, plainly discover to all, the Cause by which they are produced ; so that how close and secret soever the Man might be in the Act of Intemperance, it is nevertheless as publick as if it had been acted in all those Streets which he afterwards passes thro', or in all those Companies which he afterwards happens to be in ; for his sottish Look, his wry Walk, his trembling Hand, his ridiculous and antick Behaviour, his faltering or broken Speech, his profane, obscene or foolish Talk, every Thing that he says, tells, and every Thing that he does, shews the World, where he has been, and how he has been employ'd ; so that a Man can't be Intemperate, especially in Drinking, but he must be scandalously so ; and what is commonly said of him, (unless he be one that is quarrelsome in his Drink,) that he is no Body's Foe but his own, is most evidently false, for he
hurts

hurts every Body that knows him, or converses with him ; at least, there is great Danger that they may be infected by his ill Example ; and by the Scandalousness of his Behaviour he also brings a Reproach and Disparagement upon the holy Religion which he professes.

2. Another very graceful and adorning Virtue, the Practice whereof is apt to render a Man beloved and respected by all those among whom he lives, and by Consequence to beget also in others a good Liking to, and a high Esteem for, that Religion by which he is influenc'd and governed, is Justice ; exact Justice and Honesty in all our Dealings, and Faithfulness in Discharging all our Trusts. And therefore in the Place already cited, *Tit. ii. 10.* where *Christian* Servants are exhorted to grace their Profession, this Way of their doing it is particularly mentioned. *Not Purloining, but shewing all good Fidelity, that they may adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things.*

In order therefore to the obtaining that End, which in the Text all *Christians* are requir'd to aim at, that is, that we may gain Glory to God, by making the *Light* of our good Example to *shine before Men*, there is plainly nothing more needful than this, that we be square and exact in all our Dealings, punctual in the Performance of all our Promises, and faithful in the Execution of all our Trusts.

For whatever Opinion or Perswasion Men are of in the speculative Points of Religion, Justice and Truth, Fidelity, and fair Dealing, are what all People like, approve and commend, at least in others; and even they who for filthy Lucre's Sake allow themselves in the Practice of Frawd and Falshood, yet dare not offer to justifie their own Practice; they may find their Injustice gainful, but they can't think it reputable: What they chiefly trust to is their Cunning, by which they hope they may so contrive their Doing of Wrong, as not to be found out; but if it should be
disco-

discovered, they are sensible it must bring upon them an indelible Reproach.

There being therefore a great many Religions, and Sects of Religion in the World; and the greatest Part of Mankind being not in a Capacity, or not having Leisure enough to examine into the several Grounds of each of them, there is plainly nothing that can more recommend any Religion to the general good Liking of such as are ignorant of the Grounds and Reasons of it, than the remarkable Justice, Truth, and Fidelity of those that profess it: For these social Virtues being commendable among all, and of daily Use, if there be any one Sort or Sect of religious Professors that is remarkable above the rest for the constant Exercise of them; all indifferent and discreet Persons will for this Reason only, have a better Opinion of them than of the rest; and will be readily inclin'd to think, that theirs is the best Religion, because it makes them honester Men than the rest are.

And this, without doubt, was one great Help towards the spreading of Christianity in the World so very fast as it did spread at the first Preaching of the Gospel. It was then seen and observ'd by all, that as many as gave up their Names to *Christ*, tho' they had been before Thieves and Covetous, Unjust and Extortioners, did immediately, upon their embracing Christianity, become quite other Men, so that it could not be doubted but that this Change in their Manner of Life was wrought by the Power of that Religion which they had newly embraced; and the Observation of this quickly begat in such as were well disposed a general good Liking to the Religion, even before they had been instructed in the Grounds and Reasons of it, and inclined them to give a ready Ear to the Proofs that were offered of its Truth and Divinity; and these being very strong and convincing, all that heard them without Prejudice were quickly perswaded by them.

But

But the Arguments for the Truth of the *Christian* Religion are the same now as formerly, and as strong now as ever, and yet now we see they prevail little or nothing; very few Converts to Christianity are now ever heard of: For which, I believe, a better Reason can hardly be given than this, That tho' Christianity be the same excellent Religion that it was then, the *Lives* and *Manners* of *Christians* now-a-days are not so excellent as they were formerly; so that (to keep to the Point I am now speaking of) tho' there has been in these last Ages, by Reason of the great Increase of Trade and Navigation, a much better Opportunity of spreading Christianity into the remote Parts of the World, than ever there was heretofore, yet this Opportunity has rather hinder'd the Growth of Christianity, than promoted it; and all for want of that Truth and Fidelity, and that just and fair Dealing in Trade, which our Religion indeed strictly enjoins, but few that outwardly profess Christianity, do now
make

make much Conscience to practise : For how is it likely that a *Turk*, a *Heathen*, or an *Indian*, should have any Inclination to turn *Christian*, when he sees (and, I fear, 'tis a Thing too often to be seen) that those *Christians* with whom he trades, are not so fair in their Bargains, so true in their Assertions, so faithful to their Promises, and so square and honest in their Dealings, as many even of the *Infidels* themselves are ? What reasonable Inducement can he have to lend a willing Ear to those Arguments whereby the *Christian* would perswade him to embrace Christianity, when, as he may well think, (judging of the Nature of the Religion, from the Manners of those that profess it) he can't embrace it without renouncing those Principles of moral Justice and Honesty, which were taught him by the Light of Nature only ?

This therefore is a Matter that highly concerns us all, (tho' indeed more especially those that travel into foreign Parts, or have any Traffick or Dealings with

with Men of other Religions,) to take special Care of, viz. That we do not by any Falshood or Injustice in our Dealings with them, prejudice them against our Religion, or give them Occasion to blaspheme it.

But let us revive that Truth and Justice, that Honesty and Fidelity, that Uprightness and Singleness of Heart, which the *Christians* in the Primitive Times were such eminent Examples of, and then we may hope to see now a more speedy and general Conversion of Men to our most holy Faith than ever there has been in former Ages; then may we look for a quick and punctual Accomplishment of those many ancient Prophecies in the *Old Testament*, as well as *New*, concerning the Enlargement of the Kingdom of *Christ*, upon which we ground a Hope, that there will be yet, before the End of the World, a general Conversion of all Nations to the *Christian* Religion.

3. Another *Christian* Grace or Virtue, highly Ornamental to all that are endowed

dued with it, is Meekness or Humility, together with all the Branches and Expressions, all the Fruits and Effects thereof; every one of which is lovely and amiable, and apt to endear, and render beloved and respected, the Person in whom they are observ'd; such are, Gentleness, good Temper, easiness of Access, Affability in Discourse, courteous Behaviour, a Readiness to do Kindness, Contentedness in our Condition, Orderliness in our Station, and the like.

These Branches and Fruits of Humility of Mind and Carriage, are every one of them exceedingly taking, and very apt to procure Love and Esteem; they are all of general good Report, they are commended and spoken well of by all; so that there can be nothing more proper to recommend our holy Religion to Mens Esteem, than the careful Practice and Exercise of these Virtues: For even they who know nothing of the Grounds and Reasons of our Religion, yet can't but see and acknowledge,

acknowledge, that it is a Religion worthy of God, when they observe how much it does adorn and beautify the Lives of those that are influenc'd by it; when they take Notice how orderly and useful it makes them in every State and Condition of Life that they are in; and a general Liking of our Religion, and a good Inclination towards it, must render them much more easy to be persuaded of its Truth.

And accordingly we may observe, that there is not any Motive whereby, in the sacred Writings, we are more frequently exhorted to the Practice and Exercise of these Virtues of Humility, than we are by the Consideration of that Love and Esteem that they will gain to us, and that Credit and Reputation which they will, in Consequence, procure to our Religion.

Thus in 1 *Pet.* v. 5. we are exhorted in general to *be cloathed with Humility*; by which Expression 'tis intimated, that Humility does adorn and set us off in the Eyes of Men, more than any Dress
or

or Apparel can do. And the same Thing is again intimated in the third Chapter of that *Epistle*, at the 3d and 4th Verses, where the *Apostle*, reprov- ing the Vanity of Women in affecting to set themselves off by a fine Dress, liath these Words, *Whose Adorning let it not be that outward Adorning of Plaiting the Hair, and of wearing of Gold, or of putting on of Apparel; but let it be the hidden Man of the Heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit.*—For after this Manner in old Time the holy Women adorned themselves. And this same Advice is also given them by St. Paul, in 1 Tim. ii. 9. *Let Women adorn themselves in modest Apparel, with Shamefastness and Sobriety.* In all which Places, Modesty and Humility, and the lovely Fruits of these Graces in the outward Behaviour, are recommended as the best Ornaments to set ourselves off in the Eye of the World, and to gain to ourselves universal Love and Respect.

And

And what Love and Respect we gain to ourselves by these Virtues, we do, by Consequence, also gain to our Religion : For the same Things for which we ourselves are commended and belov'd, our Religion, which has this good Influence upon our Behaviour, will likewise be approved, and well spoken of. And therefore in other Places these same Virtues are perswaded to by that Consideration, *viz.* that thereby we shall procure a fair Esteem, and a general good Liking, to our Religion. Thus in 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. that same Modesty which, in the two next Verses, is recommended to Women, as an Ornament to themselves, is there perswaded to, as what would likewise adorn and recommend their Religion. *Likewise, ye Wives, be in Subjection to your own Husbands, that if any obey not the Word, they also may, without the Word, be won by the Conversation of the Wives; while they behold your chaste Conversation coupled with Fear.* And thus also Servants are exhorted to be subject and obedient to
their

their Masters, (which is a Fruit of Humility) that thereby they may prevent that Blame which would be cast upon the *Christian* Religion, if those that embrac'd it should behave themselves disorderly in the Stations wherein Providence had placed them; *1 Tim. vi. 1. Let as many Servants as are under the Yoke count their Masters worthy of all Honour, that the Name of God, and his Doctrine, be not blasphemed. And exhort Servants to be obedient unto their own Masters, and to please them well in all Things, — that they may adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour, says the same Apostle. Tit. ii. 9, 10.*

4. Lastly, Another Virtue or Grace, in the Exercise whereof it is our Duty to be very constant and exemplary, thereby to procure Love and Esteem to ourselves, and by Consequence, Credit and Liking to our holy Religion, is Charity, as it includes all the Offices of Kindness and Compassion, all the Acts and Expressions of Bounty and Beneficence.

The

The diligent Practice of all Virtues of this Kind, is so manifestly comprehended in this general Precept, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven*; that our Church in the Offertory of the Communion Service has placed this Text among those other Portions of Holy Scripture, whereby she means to exhort to Works of Mercy and Charity; as if she thought that this was the prime Meaning of it, or rather the only Thing intended by it, that we should abound in Works of Mercy and Charity; with an Aim to gain Glory to God, and Reputation to our Religion thereby.

And if this was not the only Thing here meant, (as indeed I believe it was not) it is nevertheless, most undoubtedly, a considerable Part, and a main Ingredient of the general Duty hereby prescribed; there being no one Duty of Christianity that does so much adorn our Profession as this; no Grace or Vir-

tue that singly does so much tend to commend our holy Religion to the Esteem and Practice of those that are yet Aliens to it, as that diffusive Bounty, and unlimited Charity which is enjoin'd by it, and carefully practis'd by all the true Professors of it. For *by this*, says our Saviour, *shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one for another.*

'Twas this, I mean the remarkable Bounty and Charity of the *Primitive Christians*, which brought Christianity into Credit at first, as much, nay perhaps more, than the frequent Miracles that were then wrought for the Confirmation of it : For Miracles may be counterfeited ; and Miracles have been wrought, or at least have seem'd to be so, by false Prophets, for the Confirmation of a false Religion : But there could be no reasonable Cause to doubt, but that that Religion was from God, which, besides its Confirmation by Miracles, did so manifestly better the Tempers of
all

all those that embrac'd it; which made them so kind and loving, and so ready to do all Good, not only to one another, but even to their Enemies and Persecutors; which disposed them to spend their Time, and their Wealth, to procure the Ease, the Comfort, and the Happiness of their Neighbours, which made them readily to sell even Houses and Lands, and develt themselves of all, when less than all that the Rich had was not sufficient to supply the Necessities of the Poor; and, in a Word, which made them in their Temper, Disposition, and Practice, so like to God himself, of whom we have all this natural Notion, that he is an infinitely kind, good, merciful, benevolent, and beneficent Being.

And by the same Means by which Christianity first gained Credit in the World, by the same, I say, must the Reputation thereof be upheld; that is, by our Abounding in Works of Mercy and Charity.

All other Virtues and Graces do really make us better in ourselves ; but 'tis Charity which chiefly, and more than any other single Grace, makes us appear better to others : This attracts Love and Esteem from all that behold it ; and they that like not our *Christian* Profession for its own Sake, because it lays such Restraints upon them as they are unwilling to be under, yet can't chuse but like it for those manifold goodly Fruits and Effects of Charity which it produces in the World.

Vid. *Add.*
for *CH. Sch.*

And now having, as I suppose, said enough for the Explication of the Duty here enjoin'd, I should have gone on immediately to urge some Motives to induce to the Practice of it, but that there is one Difficulty in the Way which seems necessary to be first removed, and that is this ; That the Precept in the Text, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works,* and the Explication thereof which has been

been now given, have an Appearance of directly contradicting what our Saviour teaches in the next Chapter : For there, at the first Verse, he bids us *take heed that we do not our Alms before Men to be seen of them* ; at the fifth Verse he commands us, *when we pray, not to be as the Hipocrites are, who love to stand Praying in the Sinagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets, that they may be seen of Men* ; but to *enter into our Closet, and to shut the Door, and to pray to our Father in secret* : And at the sixteenth Verse, he condemns the Hipocrites, who *when they fast are of a sad Countenance, that they may appear unto Men to fast* ; and commands his Disciples to put on them the same Look that they have at other Times, that they *appear not unto Men to fast, but unto their Father which is in secret*.

Now how, it may be ask'd, are these Things reconcileable ? How can we be as publick in the doing of our good Works as we are here, and yet as private and

secret as we are there directed to be? How can we let our *Light* so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works, and yet not do our Righteousness before Men, to be seen of them?

But this Difficulty will, I suppose, be clearly removed, and these Texts easily reconciled, by considering these two Things :

1. That what our Saviour there condemns in the *Pharisees*, and forbids in his Disciples, was not their doing in publick such Acts of Virtue and Religion as were of a publick Nature, but their publishing and proclaiming those which ought to have been kept secret : For he does not blame them for Praying publickly in the Temple, at the Hours appointed for Prayer ; but only for putting up their private Petitions (which were more proper for a Closet) in Places of publick Concourse, and in the Corners of the Streets : Neither does he condemn them for Appearing to fast on a publick Fast-Day, but only for publishing their private Fasts.

Now

Now these are clearly distinct Things, and both good in their proper Seasons: For it is necessary sometimes to give Alms publicly, to give a good Example of Charity to others; and all other Times to give Alms privately, to approve our Sincerity to God, and our own Consciences: It is necessary sometimes to pray publicly in the Church, the Place appointed for Divine Worship, *in the Assemblies of the Upright, and with the Congregation*; thereby to own publicly our Dependence upon God, to confess his Name before Men, and by our united Prayers to obtain at his Hands publick Blessings: But when our Confessions or Petitions are more peculiar to ourselves, then a Closet, with the Door shut, is a more proper Place than the Corner of a Street, or than even the Temple itself: And thus also, lastly, it is necessary sometimes, *viz.* on Days appointed for solemn Fasting, to fast publicly, and to appear to do so; and at other Times to keep private

Fasts, between God and ourselves, and let the World know nothing of them. These Duties therefore being clearly distinct, and both necessary in their respectively proper Seasons, the Text, which commands the publick, and those other Places in the next Chapter, which command the private, Exercises of Religion, are by no means contrary or repugnant to each other.

2. It may be considered farther, That the Ground and Reason for which our *Saviour* here in the Text commands the publick Exercise of Religion and Virtue, and for which Hypocrites do make a publick Shew of more Religion and Virtue than really they have, are clearly different : For they, when they give an Alms, *sounded a Trumpet*, and call'd together a Concourse of People to see them ; and when they pray'd, they purposely chose such Places to pray in as were most in View ; and whenever they fasted, they took Care, by *Disfiguring* their *Faces*, to let the World know it :
And

And why? our *Saviour* tells us, that they did all this, that they might have Glory of Men: This was their ultimate End, to gain Praise and Applause to themselves, and to advance their worldly Interest thereby: And we also (we are plainly so commanded in the Text) are to make our *Light* to *so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works*, but not to the Intent that we ourselves may gain Honour and Reputation thereby, not that we *may have Glory of Men*; (for if that be our only, or ultimate End, that will be also our only Reward.) But what we are to aim at in *so letting our Light to shine before Men*, is a much greater and nobler Design; not meerly that we ourselves may appear more glorious, but that *so being, and so appearing*, our Light may serve to direct, and our Example to instruct others; what we are ultimately to aim at is not that we ourselves may have Glory of Men, but that God may be glorified in us, that Men *seeing our good Works*,

Works, may glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.

And this makes a very clear and wide Difference between the Practice which our *Saviour* here commands, and that which in the next Chapter he condemns: The Actions are indeed to Appearance the same, but the Ends are clearly different. The Hypocrite does his Works that they may be seen of Men, with no farther View but to gain Praise and Applause to himself, *God is not in all his Thoughts*: And the good *Christian* likewise so does his Works that they be seen of Men, but not with any, much less with only, a selfish Design; but he does the Works because God has commanded them, and he does all the same good Works at other Times when he knows he is seen by none but God; and when he chuses to do them in the Sight of the World, as judging it most proper so to do, yet even then 'tis only that other Men may by his Example be taught and encourag'd to do the same, and

and that God may thereby be more glorified.

This Difficulty therefore being thus removed, I come now to what I proposed to do in the second Place, *viz.*

II. To urge some Motives to the Practice of the Duty here laid upon us; *Let your Light, &c.* And to avoid Tediouſness, I ſhall at preſent urge no other but what are ſuggeſted in the laſt Words of the Text, *That they may ſee your good Works, and glorifie your Father which is in Heaven.* In which Words the highly probable Effect of our Practiſing the Duty is hinted at as a good Reason to engage us to it. As if it had been ſaid, “ If you are careful to
“ make your *Light ſo ſhine before Men,*
“ that they may *ſee your good Works,*
“ they will ſo clearly diſcern the Beauty of Holineſs and Virtue in your
“ Example, as to be in Love with it,
“ and ſo be incited to imitate and reſemble you therein; the bleſſed Con-
“ ſequence

“ sequence of which will be, that God
“ will be *glorified* in their Conversion
“ and Salvation.

And the natural Tendency of good Example to provoke others to good Works, and the great Probability there is, that it will have this Effect upon some, at least, if not upon all that see it, is indeed a very powerful Inducement to the Discharge of the Duty here enjoin'd; because if it has this Effect, we shall by thus *letting our Light shine before Men*, bring the greatest Glory to God, do the greatest Kindness to our Neighbour, and obtain the most ample Reward to ourselves: Any one of which Considerations alone is, and therefore much rather are they all together, sufficient to engage to the careful Practice of this Duty.

1. I say, we shall thereby bring the greatest Glory to God: For if we can, by our good Example, be a Means of Converting those that see our good Works from a Course of Sin to a Life
of

of Righteousness, the Consequence of that will be, (1.) That God will be glorified by their Mouths; they upon whom this blessed Change is wrought, will have great Cause to magnifie and praise the Name of God, for his Grace and Goodness to them: (2.) That he will be glorified in their Lives, which they will thenceforward wholly dedicate to, and spend intirely in his faithful Service; and *herein, says our Saviour, is my Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit*: And lastly, that he will be also glorify'd in their Salvation, when being pardon'd and justified, and admitted into his glorious Presence, they shall spend their whole Eternity in Singing forth his Praises.

And what greater, what nobler Design can we propose to ourselves, than to bring Glory to God? This is the End of the whole Creation; God made all Things for his own Glory, and every Thing that he has made declares his Glory and Greatness. This in particular

cular was the End for which he made Man, the only Creature of this lower World that is able actively to give Glory to God by expressing his Praise, and this, as the *Apostle* teaches us, is the End that we ought to aim at in all our Actions, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.*

2. If our good Example shall have this blessed Effect upon others, if it shall provoke and stir them up to the same good Works, we shall also do them the greatest Kindness that 'twas possible for us to do them. We reckon it indeed a great Kindness (and so it is) to rescue and redeem a Man from any bodily Pain or Danger; but it must needs be a much greater to preserve his Soul from eternal Destruction; and this is what we shall do, if by the Light of our Example we instruct; if by the Influence of it we incite and encourage him to Well-doing. And so St. James tells us, in *Jam. v. 19. Brethren, if any*
of

of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins. And,

3. Lastly, We shall also hereby greatly increase our own Reward. For those good Works which are done by another, in Imitation of our Example, will be placed to our Account as well as his, as being in great Measure owing to us. And thus, by a dextrous Management, we may by our good Act obtain the Reward of many, and receive an Addition of Glory, for the good Works of other Men done by the Influence and Encouragement of our Example. According to that of the Prophet Daniel, Dan. xii. 2. *They that be wise shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness as the Stars for ever and ever.*

Let therefore your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorifie your Father which is in Heaven.

And

And to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three Persons, and one God, be given, as is most due, all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*





THE
LAW
AND THE
PROPHETS
FULFILLED BY
CHRIST.



THE

LAW

AND THE

PROFESS

OF

CHRIST

DISCOURSE XIX.

The Law and the Prophets fulfilled by Christ.



MATTH. V. 17, 18.

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

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



THESE Words being a Part of our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount, which is all one intire and continued Discourse, are probable

to be some way connected to the Context, and by observing their Connexion we shall best come to understand their Meaning.

And if we consider them as connected with the foregoing Part of the Sermon, (of which I have already treated,) the Design of them seems to be to answer an Objection, which he saw some might be apt to make against his Person, and against the Authority he pretended to, from the Nature of that Doctrine which he had before deliver'd; for there, in the Beginning of this Chapter, he pronounces a Blessedness, and promises a Reward, to several Graces and Virtues, of some of which there seems to have been no express mention made in the Books of the Old Testament; and on the other side he makes no mention at all, nor gives any Command concerning many Things which the Law had expressly enjoin'd; so that his Preaching had not been at all like that of the Scribes and Pharisees, whose
Way

Way it was to ground their Discourses upon some Places of the Law, and to insist chiefly upon the ritual and ceremonial Part of it : Upon this therefore it was very likely that some object, that most certainly he was not a Teacher sent from God, seeing he neglected the Old, and went about to establish a New Religion ; to which therefore he answers, by positively denying, that it was his Intention to teach any Thing contrary to what *Moses*, and the Prophets, had taught ; think *not*, i. e. do not, by any Thing I have said, be induced to suspect or believe, *that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets.*

Or if we consider the Words as respecting chiefly the following Part of the Sermon, wherein our Lord explains and enlarges upon divers Precepts of the Law, and enforces the Practice thereof ; then the Design of them seems to be to serve as a Transition from the former Part of his Sermon to that which follows after : Or seeing they may be so

aptly connected both with the foregoing and following Words, I see no Reason why we may not think they were designed for both these Purposes, *i. e.* both to answer an Objection which might be raised against him, from what he had said before, and also to prepare the Way for what he was then about further to say; and that his Hearers might receive, without any Prejudice, that Interpretation of the Law which he was then going to give them: In order to both which Ends, it was very proper to acquaint them, that the Design of his being sent into the World, was not to abrogate the Law which they were then under, but only to give them the right Interpretation of it, and to enforce the Practice of it afresh; *think not, &c.*—
'And that he might more confirm them in the Belief of what he had said, he proceeds in the next to declare, that as it had not been his Design to disannul and make void the Law and the Prophets, so neither would it be the Design

sign of any true Prophet that should ever be sent by God into the World, as long as the World should last; so that by this they might in part judge, whether any Person, pretending to Inspiration, was truly sent from God, or not; for that if he went about to release Men from those Duties which had been before bound upon them, by the Law of God, it might be certainly concluded, that he was not a true Prophet; for *'till Heaven and Earth pass*, says our Saviour, i. e. as long as the World lasts, *one jot, or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, 'till all be fulfilled*, i. e. till the End or Consummation of all Things.

This seems to be the general Design of the Words, to declare, That he himself was not sent into the World, to make void the Law and the Prophets, and that God never would send any one after him, into the World, upon this Errand. *Think not that I am, &c.-----fulfilled.*

But for the further explaining of the Words, and shewing the Truth, and the Use of them, I shall do these following Things:

I. I shall require, what is here meant by *the Law* and *the Prophets*.

II. I shall show, what it is to *destroy* them.

III. I shall show, what it is to *fulfil* them.

IV. I shall show, that nothing that our *Saviour* said, or did, while he was in the World, did destroy them, or did tend thereunto.

V. That all that he said, or did, in the Course of his Ministry, was with a Design to fulfil them, and that he actually did fulfil them.

VI. That no other Prophet was ever to be sent into the World after him, with a contrary Design. And,

VII. And Lastly, I shall draw some practical Inferences from the whole.

I. I shall enquire, what is here meant by the *Law*, and the *Prophets*. And by the *Law*, when 'tis distinguished from the *Prophets*, we are to understand the five Books of *Moses*, or that *Law* which was given to the *Jews* by *Moses*, which is usually distinguish'd into three Sorts, 1. the *natural* or *moral* *Law*, that is, that Part of the *Law*, which prescribed the Duties of Piety and Devotion towards God, and of Justice and Charity towards Men, and of Temperance, Sobriety, and Chastity : 2. The *judicial* *Law*, *i. e.* that Part of the *Law* which respected the Administration of publick Justice, by the civil Magistrate ; which prescribed what Proof should be taken of such Crimes as were injurious and hurtful to Society, and what temporal Punishments should be inflicted for them : And, 3. the *ceremonial* *Law*, *i. e.* that Part of the *Law* which ordained the Rites and Ceremonies of publick Worship, which prescribed the Time, the Place, the Manner of performing it,

it, and such other Circumstances as were not essential to the Worship, but were only requisite to be observed for Order and Uniformity Sake; these are the three main Parts of the Law of *Moses*, given to the *Jews*, and altogether are called *the Law*.

And by the *Prophets*, we are to understand the other Books of the *Old Testament*, which were written by the Prophets who succeeded *Moses*, until the Coming of *Christ*; and of their Writings, some Parts are only Explications, or Reinforcements of the Law, that had been given by *Moses*, and other Parts are Prophecies of Things that were to come; and of these last, the greater Part respected the *Messias*, who was to appear in the World in the latter Days.---I proceed now in the second Place,

II. To show, what it is to *destroy* the Law, and the Prophets; *to destroy*, the Word, in the Original, signifies to abrogate, to disannul, to make void; and

and thus to destroy the Law, if by it we understand the moral Law, is to release Men from the Obligation that was before laid on them to the Duties of Piety, Justice, Charity, and Sobriety; if by it we understand the judicial Law, then to destroy the Law, it is to introduce a new Form of Political Government, to prescribe new and different Methods of administering Justice among Men; or if we understand this Place of the ceremonial Law, then to destroy the Law, it is to abrogate the Rites and Ceremonies that were then in Use, or to institute others in their room: And to destroy the Prophets, is either to give a new Interpretation of the Law, different from what they had given, or to deny the Truth of their Predictions, or to defeat, and put by, the Accomplishment of those Events which they foretold; ---- This is to *destroy the Law and the Prophets*: — And therefore,

III. To

III. To fulfil the Law, and the Prophets, πληρῶσαι, to accomplish and perfect them, must be the quite contrary to this, *i. e.* to practise all those Things which were enjoin'd by the Law, and to teach other Men to practise the same, to exact rather greater Degrees of Righteousness than the Law did, and to bind Men to the Performance thereof, by stronger Obligations; this is to fill up, and to perfect the Law, and to fulfil and accomplish the Prophets, *i. e.* the other Books of the Old Testament, is to keep to that same Interpretation of the Law which they had given; and so far as in us lies to contribute towards the Accomplishment of those Events which they had predicted. — I proceed now in the fourth Place,

IV. To show, that in the Sense before given of the Phrase, our Saviour did not destroy the Law, and the Prophets; *i. e.* that nothing that he said or did, while he was in the World, did tend

tend to destroy or disannul them; *think not that I am come to destroy the Law, and the Prophets.* And for the Proof of this we are to consider, 1. The *Life* and *Conversation* of our *Saviour*; and, 2. His *Doctrine*, by neither of which he did destroy them.

1. Not by his *Life* and *Conversation*, for that was in every respect *Spotless* and *Unblameable*, according to the *Law* then in force; he did no *Sin*, neither was there any *Deceit* in his *Mouth*; he strictly observed all the three *Parts* of the *Mosaical Law*; the *moral Part*, in an exact *Performance* of all *Duties* to *God* and *Man*; the *judicial Part*, in not assuming, or arrogating, any *judicial Authority* to himself, nor so much as accepting the same when it was offered to him; for when the *People* would have taken him by *Force*, and made him a *King*, he withdrew himself from them; and when the *Jews* had brought to him a *Woman taken in Adultery*, and desired him to give *Judgment* concern-

ing

ing her, he declined the Office, as not belonging to him, being but a private Man; as he did likewise the giving Judgment between two Brothers, who could not agree about dividing their Inheritance: He observed likewise, very punctually, the ceremonial Part of the Law, for he was *Circumcised the Eighth Day*, as other Children were, that were born of *Jewish* Parents; by which Ceremony of Imitation he became a *Debtor to keep that whole*, (as *St. Paul* speaks) and in the Course of his Life, he observed all the other Rites and Ceremonies appointed by *Moses*; nothing was ever objected against him upon this Account by the *Jews*, but only, that he was not such a rigorous Observer of the rest of the Sabbath, as they reckon'd themselves obliged to be: But from this Accusation he clearly justified himself, by showing out of the Law, and the Prophets, that they misunderstood the Precept of the Sabbath; and that the same was not meant to forbid doing Works of
Neces-

Necessity or Mercy on the Sabbath Day ; for which only it was, that they judged him to be a Breaker of the Sabbath :

And, 2. as our *Saviour* did not by his Life and Conversation destroy the Law; *i. e.* transgress it in any Point; so neither did he destroy it by his Doctrine, *i. e.* by teaching other Men to transgress it, or by declaring that they were not obliged to keep it: For,

1. As to the moral Law, or that part of the Law of *Moses* which prescribed the Duties of natural Religion to God, our Neighbour, and ourselves; there is not any one Precept of the Gospel which can be thought to evacuate this; there is not in the whole Gospel the least Licence given to Men, to transgress any Precept of it; but the whole Doctrine of our *Saviour* was (as the *Apostle* styles it) a Doctrine according to Godliness, and which teaches us to deny all Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World: And,

2. As

2. As to the judicial Law of *Moses*, which prescribed the Forms and Methods of administering publick Justice among the *Jews*, our *Saviour* made no Alteration at all in that ; he left it just as he found it, and was so far from instituting a new Policy, or making new Laws, relating to Civil Government, that he always declared, That *his Kingdom was not of this World*, and that he had no Command given him, by his Father, to assume a secular Authority, or exercise a civil Jurisdiction among Men: And,

3. And Lastly, as to the ceremonial Part of the Law, which is the only Part of it in which it can be pretended that our *Saviour* made any Innovation by his Doctrine, so far was our Lord from abolishing that, or teaching the *Jews*, among whom he lived, that it was abolished ; that as he lived in the strict Observations thereof himself, so he taught the same to others; as you may see, *Mat. viii. 4.* when having cur'd
a Man

a Man of his Leprosy, he immediately gave him this Charge; *See, says he, that thou tell no Man, but go thy Way, shew thyself to the Priest, and offer the Gift that Moses commanded for a Testimony unto them.* Thus it appears that our Saviour did not destroy the Law, and the Prophets: I proceed now in the 5th Place,

V. To show that he did fulfil them; *think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets; I am not come to Destroy, but to Fulfil, i. e. (as was said before) to accomplish, to compleat, to perfect them.* All that he said and did in the whole Course of his Ministry was with a Design and had a Tendency to fulfil them.

And the Truth of this will readily appear, if we briefly run over again the Particulars already mention'd. And,

First of all, he fulfilled the moral Law, or that Part of the Law of *Moses* which commanded the Duties of Natural Religion, partly by freeing it from those false

and loose Interpretations, which the *Pharisees* and *Jewish* Doctors had put upon it, who, as our Lord observes, had in many Instances, *made void the Law of God by their Traditions*; partly by obliging his Disciples to higher Degrees of Holiness and Virtue than the Law had expressly enjoin'd; many Instances of which we meet with in the remaining Part of this Chapter, [*of which (God willing) we will in due Time Discourse*;] and partly by restraining Men from those Liberties, which being contrary to that Purity and Perfection which the Law design'd, were nevertheless permitted to the *Jews*, because of the Hardness of their Hearts; several Instances whereof we meet with in the Gospel, as in the Case of Polygamy, Divorce, Revenge, and the like.

2. He also fulfilled the judicial Law; so far was he from destroying, that he rather added to that, by threatening to those Crimes which were hurtful and prejudicial to Humane Societies, much severer

severer Penalties than the Law had threatned to inflict; for thus, whereas the Law had threatned Death only to Murder, and that too only a Temporal Death, and had not passed any Censure upon the lesser Degrees of, and Approaches towards, this great Crime, our Lord expressly threatens eternal Death, not only to him that should kill his Brother, but also to him who should be *angry* with him *without just Cause*, or in an undue Measure, or that should Hurt or Wound him even by the Stroke of his Tongue by reproachful and reviling Language; as you may see at the 21st and 22d Verses of this Chapter; and several other Instances of the like Nature I might mention.

3. He also fulfilled the Ceremonial Law; not indeed by multiplying and increasing the Number of Ritual and Ceremonial Observances, or by obliging Men more strongly to observe those which *Moses* had before Ordained; but by strictly commanding that inward Puri-

ty, that Cleanness of Thought, and Un-corruptness of Manners, of which the legal Purifications enjoined by the Law of *Moses*, were only a Shadow and a Figure. He also perfected and fulfilled this Part of the Law, by accomplishing those Things in his own Person, which had been prophecied and foretold of him in Types and Shadows, by the Ceremonies enjoined by *Moses*. Thus our *Saviour* perfected and fulfilled the whole Law.

2. He also fulfilled the Prophets, by doing and suffering all those Things which the Prophets had foretold concerning him; there was scarcely any Thing that our *Saviour* did or suffered, which had not been predicted before by the Prophets, and which was not the Accomplishment of some ancient Prophecy concerning the *Messias*, as may be easily observed by any one that carefully reads over the History of the Gospel, throughout all which the *Evangelists* do frequently remark,
that

that this or that Thing was said or done by him, *that it might be fulfilled* which was spoken by this or that, or the other Prophet concerning Christ; and there is not any one Prophecy concerning the *Messias* in any of the ancient Prophets, which, if we carefully read over the History of our *Saviour's* Life and Sufferings, as the same is Recorded by the four *Evangelists*, we may not find exactly accomplished in and by him; even that which is the only Thing that the *Jews* can object against his being the *Messias*, and a Teacher sent by God, *viz.* that by the preaching of the Gospel, the Ritual and Ceremonial Law of *Moses* is declared to be abolished (though, as I observed before, our *Saviour* did not expressly abrogate or abolish it, but only by his own Appearance, who was the Substance, did make the Shadow to vanish and disappear) I say, even this very Thing had been expressly foretold by the Prophets in many Places, particularly by the Prophet *Jeremy*, Ch. xxxi. 31.

Behold the Days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah, not according to the Covenant which I made with their Fathers, in the Day that I took them by the Hand, to bring them out of the Land of Egypt. But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with them in these Days, saith the Lord: I will put my Law in their inward Parts, and write it in their Hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my People. And so much for the fifth Thing proposed, that all that our Saviour said and did while he was upon Earth, tended to fulfil the Types and Prophecies, and to perfect and compleat the Rules of holy Living that were delivered by Moses and the other Prophets; I am not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil.

VI. The sixth Thing proposed was to show, that no other Prophet was ever to be sent into the World after Christ, with a contrary Design; *i. e.* to evacuate

evacuate Mens Obligation to the Practice of Holiness and Virtue; and this is what our *Saviour* expressly Teaches, or at least what does necessarily follow from his Words, in the 2d Verse of the Text; *Verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled*; which last Clause, *till all be fulfilled*, may be expounded in two Senses; for, first, the Word *all*, may be referr'd to the *Law* before mention'd, as if it had been said, *till all the Law be fulfilled*, and then the meaning will be, that no Part of the Law was to be abrogated or abolished, till that was accomplished which was signified by it; intimating, that when it was so accomplished, then it would be of no longer Obligation; that then, without any express Abrogation, it would of its own accord (as it were) die and vanish; and this being the Case of the ceremonial Law of *Moses*, it plainly follows, that the *Apostles* of our Lord, who taught

that the ceremonial Law of *Moses* did no longer oblige, were not Destroyers of that Law, but only declared Matter of Fact, *viz.* that the Law at the first giving of it, was not designed to continue for ever, but only till it was fulfilled, *i. e.* till those Events were come to pass of which the Ceremonies enjoined in that Law, were Types and Shadows, and moreover, that at the first Delivery of it, it was only designed to oblige the *Jews*, while they were a peculiar People, separate from all other Nations, so that consequently when the Partition Wall was broken down, and the *Gentiles* were admitted into the Church, and all, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were become *one Fold under one Shepherd*, *Jesus Christ*, it was impossible that that Law should be any longer obliging; because the Nature of it plainly shewed it to be such, as was fitted only to the *Jewish* State; for what need was there of the discriminating Sign of Circumcision, to distinguish

guish between *Jews* and *Gentiles*, when there was no longer any Difference between *Jews* and *Gentiles*, but they were all alike Partakers of the same Grace of God in *Christ Jesus*? Or how should that Precept be any longer obliging, which commanded all the *Males* to appear three Times a Year before God in Jerusalem, when the Church was dispersed so far over the whole Habitable Earth, that it would take up the greatest Part of the Year, for those who live in remote Countries from *Judea*, to make so much as one Journey thither, and to return Home again? And the like might be shewed in many other Instances; and therefore the *Apostles*, who declared that this Part of the Law, consisting in Types and Shadows, did no longer oblige, when Christ, the Substance, was come, and that being fitted only to the Nation of the *Jews*, it should not oblige the *Gentiles*, (I say, the *Apostles*, in declaring this) did not abrogate that Law, but only shewed that it was expir'd,

pir'd, and that it was at first but a Temporary Law, which was of Course to die and grow obsolete, when the Time for which it was made was run out; *one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled; i. e. till the Time for which it was made be expir'd*; and that (as to the ceremonial Part of the *Jewish* Law) was, when our *Saviour* had finished all that was foretold of him by those Types, and when the *Jews* were no longer to continue a separate and peculiar People distinct from the *Gentiles*; when these Things happened, (as they did in the Days of the *Apostles*) then all that Part of the Law was *fulfilled*, and so was to pass away; neither was there any Need of an express Abrogation or Repeal of it, because being made at first only to continue till that time, it did then of itself expire, just as a Law made only for Time of War ceases when the War is at an End, and after a Peace is made; it is not then destroyed or abro-

gated,

gated, but it expires ; the Reason for which it was made then ceasing, the Law itself likewise ceases, when all that is accomplished for which the Law was made, the Law continues no longer to oblige ; and thus it was with the ceremonial Law of *Moses*, our *Saviour* did not expressly repeal it, but he fulfilled it ; he put an End to that State of Things, during which only that Law at the first making of it was designed to oblige, and then it passed away. But,

2. That Clause, *till all be fulfilled*, may be otherwise understood, viz. as referring to the End of the World, to the Consummation of all Things, one jot or one tittle shall not pass from the Law *ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται*, *till all Things be done*, that is, till the World be at an End, or, as he had said at the Beginning of the Verse, *till Heaven and Earth*, i. e. this present World, *pass away*, and be dissolved ; thus long our *Saviour* here assures us the Law shall continue

continue and be in Force, *i. e.* the moral Law, or that Part of the Law which teaches the natural Duties owing to God, our Neighbour, and ourselves, for if we understand the Clause, *till all be done or fulfilled*, in this Sense, it is evident, that this Perpetuity of the Law must be understood only of the moral Law, not of the judicial Law, which prescribing Rules of Government, and Administration of Justice to the *Jews*, ceased of Course when the *Jews* ceased to be a People; nor of the ceremonial Law, which being only a *Shadow of Things to come*, expired and was outdated, when the Things typified and signified thereby were accomplished, as has been shewed already; but the moral Law, which prescribes natural Duties, or forbids things which are naturally Evil and Sinful, this our *Saviour* here assures us shall continue and be in Force for ever, *till the End and Consummation of all Things*, and *till Heaven and Earth do pass away*, and be dissolved. From
whence

whence it plainly follows, that as our *Saviour* himself did not come to destroy this Law, so neither will God ever send any Messenger into the World upon this Errant; and the Proof of this was the sixth Thing propounded. I proceed now, in the last Place,

VII. Briefly to draw some useful Inferences from what had been said, and so conclude. And,

First of all, what has been said on this Subject may serve to confirm our Faith in the Belief of this great Truth, (indeed the fundamental Truth of our whole Christian Religion) *viz.* that *Jesus* was the *Christ*. These things alone, *viz.* that all the Types of the Law, and Predictions of the Prophets, were fulfilled and accomplished in our *Saviour*, and that the Doctrine which he taught was not any ways contrary to the Rules of Piety, Justice and Sobriety, which had been delivered by *Moses* and the *Prophets*, were abundantly sufficient to prove him to be the *Messias*,

Messias, although he had not had the Attestation of Miracles over and above ; but his Miracles alone, though they had been ten times more and greater than they were, would not have been sufficient to prove it, in case he had not answered the Character which the Prophets had before given of the *Messias*, or in case he had taught a Doctrine that was contradictory to former Revelation, or not agreeable to the eternal Law of Reason written in our Hearts ; and therefore our Saviour himself, who sometimes appeals to his Miracles as a Proof of his Divine Mission ; as in *Joh. v. 36. The Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear Witness of me, that the Father hath sent me ;* at other times appeals to the Testimony of the ancient Prophets concerning him ; as *Joh. v. 39. Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think that ye have eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me ;* and at other times to the Purity of his Doctrine ;

as

as *Joh. vii. 18. My Doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*-----And then to prove this, he adds, *He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own Glory; but he that seeketh his Glory that sent him, the same is true, and no Unrighteousness is in him.*

Had he wrought never so many Miracles, yet if his Doctrine had been wicked, or contradictory to natural Religion, he ought not to have been received as a Prophet: Or again, if he had only wrought Miracles for the Confirmation of a true Doctrine, and such as was agreeable to former Revelations, tho' this would have sufficed to have proved him to be a true Prophet, it would not have been sufficient to prove him to be the *Messias* foretold by the Prophets, unless those Things which they had prophesied concerning the *Messias*, had been also accomplished in him. But when his Miracles were such, as plainly argued that he was assisted by a supernatural Power, and when by the Purity of his Doctrine it appear'd

appear'd that he was not assisted by evil Spirits in the working of his Miracles, for they would never have helped him to destroy their own Kingdom; when, I say, the Miracles that he wrought were such as shew'd plainly that God was with him, and when the Doctrine and Religion that he taught was a Religion worthy of God, and when, besides all this, all the Types of the Law and Predictions of the Prophets were exactly verified in him, all these Things together were an irrefragable Proof and Demonstration not only that he was a Teacher sent from God, but that he was the Prophet which *Moses* himself had foretold, and which all the Prophets had spoken of, even the *Messias*, the Saviour of the World.

2. It may be further inferred from the foregoing Discourse, that whoever now-a-days, or at any time hereafter, does or shall teach any Doctrine tending to make the Practice of Holiness and Virtue unnecessary, is a false Prophet,

phet, and by no Means to be hearkned to; for our *Saviour*, himself, here plainly teaches, that it was not his Design to destroy the Law, but rather to raise it higher, to perfect and compleat it, and to exact of Men greater Degrees of Holiness than they were before obliged to; and he likewise declares, that the Law, which he had interpreted in its true Sense, and had set so high, shall remain in Force as long as the World lasts; and therefore whoever goes about, by Publishing any loose and licentious Doctrine, to evacuate or destroy this Law, as the *Gnosticks*, and other *Hereticks*, did in the primitive Times; and as the *Papists*, and other *Sectaries*, still continue to do in our Times, is manifestly a false Teacher, and by no Means to be hearken'd to by us, even altho' he should pretend to do, nay, not altho' he should really do, many Miracles, to induce us to believe him; for this very Case was foretold by our *Saviour*, that after him there should

arise false Christs, and false Prophets, who should shew great Signs and Wonders, insomuch, that if it were possible they should deceive the very Elect. Mat. xxiv.

24. In this Case therefore we are not only to mind, whether or no Men really do the Miracles that they pretend to do ; but also, whether their Doctrine be agreeable to the Principles of natural Religion, and to the Truth of the Scripture, and in Case it be not so, the greatest Miracles ought not to induce us to embrace it ; and thus the Jews were warned by Moses, Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. *If there arise among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and giveth thee a Sign, or a Wonder, and the Sign, or the Wonder, come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, let us go after other Gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them, thou shalt not hearken to the Words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of Dreams ; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God, with all your Heart, and with all your Soul.*

3. From what has been said it further appears, that they do greatly mistake the Design of our Saviour's Coming into the World, and the Nature of the *Christian* Religion, who think that he came to do our Work for us, and to perform perfect Righteousness in our stead, and that nothing more is required of us, but only to receive him for our Saviour, and to apply his Merits to ourselves by Faith, and to rely wholly on what he hath done for us: It is true indeed, after all that we can do, we must rely only on the Goodness of God, and the Merits of *Christ*, for Salvation, because our Obedience, at the best, is very imperfect; and besides, if it were never so perfect, it could not merit any Thing at God's Hands; but the Merits of *Christ* will never be applied, by him, to any but such as take him for their King, as well as for their Saviour; and submit themselves to be guided and governed by his Laws; and so far are his Laws from discharging Men from

the Duties of Morality, or giving them any License to Sin, that they are really much stricter than any that had been before given, and require greater Degrees of Holiness and Virtue than were ever before requir'd: So far was he from making void the Law, that he establish'd it; he came not to destroy, but to fulfil.

4. *And Lastly*, It therefore appears further, from what hath been said, that if any Man thinks himself not obliged by the Law, which enjoins good Works, but that so long as he believes in *Christ*, he may live, and act, as he pleases himself; he is so far from being a better *Christian* upon this Account, that if he practises according to this Opinion, he so far renounces his Christianity, and forfeits all the Privileges he was entitled to by his Baptism; and this is the Inference which our *Saviour* himself draws from these Words of his in the Verse following the Text, *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, and*

and the Prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, 'till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall not pass from the Law 'till all be fulfill'd; and then he adds, as an Inference, or Corollory, from hence, Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, or shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

To be added in the Christmas Holy-Days.

5. *Lastly.* Considering the present Season, I think it will be very proper to mention this one Inference more from what hath been said, viz. that the Design of our Saviour's Coming being, (as he himself here teaches us) not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it, our Remembrance, as at this Time, of his Coming, ought to be suitable to this Design of it.

Seeing therefore, he came not to destroy the Law, *i. e.* not to release Men from the Obligation they were before under to the Duties of Morality, but to fulfil it, *i. e.* to require of Men a stricter Purity and Righteousness than had been before enjoin'd, it is very absurd and incongruous, that we should (as a great many do) make this Season set apart for the solemn and religious Commemoration of our Saviour's Coming into the World, an Occasion and Opportunity; 'tis yet much more absurd and incongruous, that we should think it (as I fear some do) an Excuse for our greater Licentiousness.

Quite otherways are we taught by the *Apostle*, Tit. ii. 11. with whose Words I shall conclude: *The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men, teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great*

great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.

Therefore, Rev. i. 6. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God, and his Father; to him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

THE first object of the present work is to show that the principles of the science of politics are not only applicable to the study of the history of the human mind, but also to the study of the history of the human body. The second object is to show that the principles of the science of politics are not only applicable to the study of the history of the human mind, but also to the study of the history of the human body.



WHAT
COMMANDMENTS
ARE OF
Perpetual Obligation
TO
CHRISTIANS.



THE
COMMUNION
AND
PERPETUAL OBLIGATION
OF
CHRISTIANITY

DISCOURSE XX.

What Commandments are of
Perpetual Obligation to
Christians.



MATTH. V. 19.

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



OR the Understanding of
these Words, it will be
needful to enquire.

I. *What*

I. *What Commandments* they are which our Lord here speaks of.

II. What he means by these *least Commandments*, or the least of these Commandments.

III. What he means by being *call'd* the *Least*, or *Great*, in the Kingdom of Heaven. And,

IV. What he means by coupling, as he does, in both Clauses of the Text, our *Doing* a Thing ourselves, with our *Teaching* Men to do the same Thing; *Whosoever*, says he, *shall break these Commandments, and shall teach Men so*; and in the latter Clause, *Whosoever shall do, and teach them*.

I. *What Commandments* they are which our Lord here speaks of, and calls *these Commandments*. *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these Commandments*.

Now the Word *therefore*, *Whosoever therefore shall break them*, plainly shews, that the Words of the Text have a *Con-*
nexion

nexion with, and Dependance upon, what had been said before; and consequently, that for the right Understanding of them, we must see what it was that had been said in the preceeding Sentence.

And the Words immediately foregoing, [of which I discoursed the last Time] are these; *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, and the Prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For, verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.* And then it follows, *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, &c.*

By which Connexion it plainly appears, that the Commandments here spoken of, are the same which had been spoken of in the foregoing Words, and which our Saviour there says, he came not to destroy but to fulfil; and of which he further affirms, that they shall be ever obliging, even until the End of the World;

World ; 'Till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the Law.

But *what Commandments* are these which are thus perpetually obliging ?

Are they the *Ceremonial Commandments* of the Law, Circumcision, Sacrifices, New Moons, Sabbaths, legal Purifications, and such like ? No, for these are already fulfilled, being only *Shadows*, of which Christ is the *Substance* ; And therefore being already fulfilled in Christ, so far is it from being now a Sin not to observe these Precepts, that, on the contrary, the Observation of them would be, in Effect, and by fair Interpretation, a Renouncing our Christianity ; for should we now observe those Ceremonies which were Types of Christ, and were designed to point him out when he should come into the World, this would be in Effect to deny that Christ is already come in the Flesh ; for if we believe him already come, what Need, or what Reason, can there
be,

be, to use now those Ceremonies which were instituted at first only as Types and Prefigurations of Christ.

Are they then the *Judicial* Commandments of the Law which our *Saviour* here meant? I answer, not these neither; for these were given at first only to the *Jews*, and were never design'd to oblige other Nations, any further than as they are grounded upon Equity and Reason, which indeed all Nations ought to have a constant Regard to in the making of all their Laws, for the Preservation of Property and Justice and Peace among their Subjects. But then the same Laws which are very Necessary or Expedient for these Purposes in one Kingdom or Commonwealth, may be very inconvenient or unsuitable in another; And therefore, the Legislative Power of every Nation must herein have Consideration of the peculiar Temper and Genius of their own Subjects, and must suit their Laws thereunto; seeking to maintain Peace and good Order among
them,

them, by such Means as are likely to be most effectual. And there are not, perhaps, two Nations in the whole World, to which exactly the same Form of Government, and exactly the same Methods of administering publick Justice, would be in all Respects the best. In short therefore, the Judicial Laws of *Moses* were by the Wisdom of God himself suited to the *Jewish* Nation, and so, while they continued a Nation, were obliging to them; for it would have been unpardonable Presumption in them to have gone about to correct the Divine Legislature. But these Laws can't now be thought obliging even to the *Jews* themselves, now that they are dispersed among other Nations, and must, whether they will or no, be govern'd by, and subject to, the several Laws of the several Countries, in which they sojourn; and much less can they be thought obliging to other Nations to which they were never given.

It remains then that the Commandments here spoken of, must be the *Moral* Commandments of the *Jewish* Law, which do in truth continue now in the same force that they ever were ; and are so far from being abolish'd by our *Saviour*, that on the contrary, they are advanc'd and improv'd, as will be seen in handling the remaining part of this Chapter. Thus far the *Jewish* Law, and the *Christian* Law, are the same ; what were Moral Duties under the Law, are now no less Duties under the Gospel ; and what were Sins then, as Breaches of those Duties, are Sins still, and ever will be so while the World lasts. The truth is, these Commandments, though they were a part of the Law given by *Moses*, yet were not (properly speaking) given by that Law, because they had been long before given to all Mankind by the Law of Nature ; and other Nations, to which the Law of *Moses* was not given, were oblig'd to observe and keep them as much as the *Jews* were. The *Gentiles*, which *had not the Law*, were by Nature taught to do these things contained in the Law, as the

Apostle speaks; and whenever they fail'd to do them, they were condemn'd by their own Consciences. And these, being Laws founded upon eternal Reason, must be for ever obliging.

But then, besides these Natural Laws, there are also some positive Commandments given by our *Saviour* to all his Disciples, of like nature with those Ceremonial Laws which were given to the *Jews* by *Moses*, only with this difference; That whereas they had reference to the *Messiah* that was then to come, and were Types and Prefigurations of *Christ*; these have respect to the *Messiah* that is already come, and are Tokens and Expressions of our Belief that *Jesus* was the *Christ*. And these Commandments are only two, *viz.* Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Which tho' (considering the nature of them) they are only Ceremonial Observances, (because they are not good in themselves, but only because they are commanded) yet now, being commanded to all *Christians*, and being also such Institutions as are suited to the state of the whole *Christian Church*, they

they will be obliging as long as there is a *Christian Church* ; *i. e.* to the end of the World.

Thus you see what are the Commandments that our Lord here speaks of: They are either the Moral Precepts of the Law, as expounded, enlarg'd, and amplified in the Gospel ; or else they are the *Sacraments* of the *Christian Religion* ; Baptism, by which we are entred and initiated into the *Christian Church* ; and the Supper of the Lord, by partaking of which we profess our Faith in the Crucified *Jesus*, and call to mind his bitter Sufferings on our behalf, and with Thankfulness commemorate the same.

I proceed now in the Second place :

2. To enquire what our *Saviour* here means by these *least* Commandments, or the *least* of these Commandments.

Now if we consider the Authority by which the Commandments were given, in this respect they are all equal, one is as great as another : For *he which said, Thou shalt not commit Adultery, said also, Do not steal* : And he who commanded us to wor-

ship God, and to love one another, has likewise commanded us to be baptiz'd in his Name, and to continue the memory of his Passion by partaking of his holy Supper. And therefore seeing the enacting Authority is in all cases the same, no Commandment laid upon us by this Authority, can in this respect be thought greater or less than another; but it is a Sin, and as plainly a Sin, and as much a Sin, wilfully to neglect a Precept of positive Institution, as to transgress a natural Law.

The difference therefore between the Commandments, upon the account of which one may be said to be greater or less than another, must be, I think, either,

1. In the Subject-matter of the Commandments, as one thing may be more or less necessary in itself than another thing: Or,
2. In the different manner in which the Divine Authority is impress'd upon the Commandments; as one thing may be commanded by God directly, another thing only indirectly, and by consequence. Or,
3. In the difference that may be in the effect

fect of the Transgression of any Law ; as the Breach of one Commandment may be of much more hurtful and mischievous consequence, than the Breach of another may be.

For the clearing of which Distinctions, I shall give an Instance or two of each kind.

1. Then, I say, one Commandment may be greater or less than another in regard to the Subject-matter of it. For one Commandment may expressly enjoin the doing of a thing that is necessary in itself, and which was so antecedently to the Commandment ; whereas another Commandment may enjoin the doing of a thing, which if it had not been commanded by a positive Law, would not have been a necessary Duty.

And in this respect the Moral Precepts of the Law are greater than the Ceremonial, and by consequence the Ceremonial are *less* than the Moral ; *i. e.* they are Precepts, which in comparison with the Moral Precepts, are of less Worth and Dignity. And this distinction our Saviour him-

self approves of, and confirms, in *Matth.* xxiii. 23. where, comparing the Ritual and Ceremonial Precepts of the Law with the Moral, he calls these last *the weightier matters of the Law* : *Wo unto you*, says he, *Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites ; for ye pay tithe of Mint, and Anise, and Cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Fidelity.* Not that these last alone would have been sufficient, and if they had done these, they would have incurr'd no blame for omitting the other ; for our *Saviour* himself affirms the contrary in the Words immediately following ; *These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* They were both alike necessary to be done, because they were both alike commanded ; but they were not both alike necessary to be commanded : And there would have been no fault in omitting a Ceremony of the Law, in case it had not been commanded by a positive Law ; but there would have been a fault in omitting the Moral Duty, although the same had not been enjoin'd by the written Law : And there-

therefore, whenever there happen'd a case wherein the Moral Duty and the Ceremony could not be both discharg'd, the Ceremony was to give place to the Moral Duty; the Ceremony was to be omitted, that the Moral Duty might be perform'd. And so our *Saviour* himself determines in the case of *David's* eating the *Shew-bread*, which was forbidden to be eaten but by the *Priests* only; that he did not sin in doing so, because the Preservation of a Man's Life was a greater Good than the observing a Ceremony; and in the case of the Sabbath, on which the strict Rest that was enjoin'd, did not make it sinful to do Works of Necessity and Mercy. And in all such cases he declares in general, that *Mercy* is more pleasing to God than *Sacrifice*.

2. One Commandment may be said to be greater or less than another, in regard to the different manner in which the Divine Authority is impress'd upon them; as one thing may be commanded by God directly, and another thing only indirectly, and by consequence. As for instance:

A Father commands his Son to say his Prayers duly and constantly, to be diligent in reading the Scripture, to frequent the Church, or the like; and the same Man also commands his Son to go and *work* in his *Vineyard*, or to do some other worldly Business. Or again, a Master commands a Servant to be Honest and Just, Sober and Temperate; and the same Master likewise sets him a Task to do in the way of his Trade or Business; and commands him to see that it be well done. It is certain now that in both these cases, that Son or Servant who does as his Father or Master bids him, does, in obeying them, do the Will of God, and discharge his Duty to God; and that that Son or Servant who neglects to do as he is bidden, does therein transgress his Duty to God, as well as to his earthly Father or Master, because it is the Will and Command of God, that Children should obey their Parents, and Servants their Masters; in some sense therefore all these things may be said to be divine Laws; and yet there is plainly a manifest difference between them,

and the divine Authority is not impress'd upon all these things in a like manner. For the Instances first mention'd in both cases, *viz.* Prayer, Reading, frequenting the Church, Honesty, Justice, Temperance and Sobriety, these are the subjects of an immediate divine Command, they are commanded by God directly and expressly; but the other instances, *viz.* those last mention'd in both the cases before mention'd, as working in the Vineyard, doing the Task that was set, dispatching some worldly Business that was appointed, or the like; these things are not commanded by God directly and expressly, but only by consequence; and they become Duties only by virtue of those general Precepts, whereby Children and Servants are commanded to obey in all things their Fathers and their Masters: So that whereas the former are Duties to all Mankind, these latter are Duties only to some few; for it is every Man's Duty, as well as mine, to be constant in religious Exercises, and to be True, and Just, and Temperate; but to work in the Vineyard, or to do this or
that

that or the other particular worldly Business, tho' it be my Duty, and what I am bound to do in Conscience towards God, in case my Father or Master commands it, is not another Man's Duty, whose Father or Master has not commanded him to do the same thing. And, again, whereas it is the Will of God only that makes the former to be Duties, it is the Father's or Master's Will that makes these latter to be Duties; for it is the Son's Duty to be constant in Prayer and Reading, altho' his Father says nothing to him about it; and it is the Servant's Duty to be Just and Temperate, altho' his Master should allow him to be otherwise; but it would not be the Duty of either of them to dispatch this or that worldly Business which they are set to, unless the Father or Master had declar'd his Will to have it done; and upon their declaring their Pleasure, and giving forth their Command, this becomes the Son's or the Servant's Duty, which was not so before; and then they sin against God, if they do not perform it; because tho' the thing it-
self

self was not commanded by God, it was commanded them by God to obey their Father or Master in all lawful things. In respect to which difference, one of these Commandments may be said to be greater than another, and it may reasonably be deem'd a less Fault in a Son or Servant to transgress his Father's or Master's Commandment, in a matter that was before indifferent, than in a matter which had been before the immediate subject of a divine Command. But,

3. Lastly ; One Commandment may also be said to be greater or less than another, with respect to its consequences ; as the Transgression of one divine Law may be of more hurtful and mischievous consequence than the Transgression of another Law may be.

As for instance ; the same divine Authority which has forbidden Murder, has also forbidden Theft ; but it is not so great a damage to a Man to lose some of his Goods, as 'tis to lose his Life ; and therefore in this respect, the Law forbidding Murder may be said to be a greater Commandment

mandment than the Law forbidding Theft. And by the same reason, the Laws against Fornication, and Lying, and Evil-speaking, and immoderate Anger, tho' they are all divine Laws as much as any other are, may yet be said to be less Commandments, than those which forbid Adultery, and Perjury, and Slander, and Falseness, and Murder, and such like Crimes, which are plainly of more hurtful consequence than the other are.

Thus I have shewn in what respects, or upon what accounts some of the Commandments may be said to be less, and others greater ; but as they are all divine Commandments, the Authority enacting them is the same, and we are as much bound to obey one as another ; and the wilful Breach or Transgression of any one is no more venial or excusable, than the like Transgression of any other is.

And so our Saviour plainly teaches us in the Text, where he says, that *whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven*; and that, *whosoever shall do them,*
i. e.

i. e. the least as well as the greatest; he that makes Conscience of doing them all, *the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

And this was the next thing I was to enquire into, viz.

3. What our *Saviour* means by these Phrases, by being called the *Least*, or *Great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

And, *First*, By the *Kingdom of Heaven* in this place we are, I think, without all doubt, to understand that state of Glory and Happiness which is prepared for good Men in the other World.

And therefore, *Secondly*, To be *Great* in this Kingdom, is nothing else but to be admitted to greater degrees of Glory and Happiness in the other World; and on the other side, to be *Little* in this Kingdom, is to be plac'd in a lower degree of Happiness; and to be *Least* in this Kingdom, is to have no place in it at all, to have no part or portion thereof, but to be utterly and for ever excluded from those eternal Joys. He may truly be said to have the least of any thing, who has nothing at all
of

of it, for he that has any part of it, be it never so little, has more than he that has none. *Minimus vocabitur*, he shall be called *Least*, that is *minimè vocabitur*, he shall not be called at all, he shall have no Name or Inheritance there at all, so says *Castalio* upon the place.

But there are but only two great Lots, a good and a bad; there are but two only states in the other World, Heaven and Hell; and therefore by this Phrase, *He shall be called Least in the Kingdom of Heaven*, there is more meant than is express'd; for they that are least in the Kingdom of Heaven, in the sense which I have before given of that Phrase, *i. e.* they that shall have no Portion at all there, must have their Portion elsewhere, and that can be only in the *Lake which burns with Fire and Brimston for ever and ever*.

But it is not said here of the one sort, that they shall be the least, or of the other sort, that they shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven; but only that they shall be call'd so; What's the meaning of that?

I answer;

I answer; There is likewise more here meant than is express'd. For *to be call'd*, is in the Scripture Phrase the same as *to be*. One instance or example of which we have had already at the 9th Verse of this Chapter, where it is said of the *Peacemakers* that they are blessed, because they shall be *called the Children of God*; *i. e.* because they are the Children of God, who is the God of Peace. And so in *Luke i. 35.* it is said by the *Angel* concerning our blessed *Saviour*; *That holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God*; *i. e.* He shall be the Son of God, for so without doubt he was; he was so the Son of God as none else ever was or will be, *The only begotten Son of God*, as he is frequently stil'd in holy Scripture.

And abundance of other examples there are of this in the holy Writings; by which it may appear, that, *to be called*, signifies much more in the *Hebrew* Stile, than we in *English* do commonly mean by that Phrase; that *to be called*, is the same as *to be*; so that when it is here said of some, that they shall be *called the Least in the Kingdom*

Kingdom of Heaven, the meaning is, that they shall *be the least*; and they, as I said before, are the least who have no Portion or Inheritance at all in that Kingdom; and on the other side, that when 'tis here said of others, that *they shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven*, the meaning is, that they shall *be great there*, i. e. that their Portion in Heaven shall be larger, their Glory there more bright and resplendent than other Men's.

There is now only one thing more remaining to be enquir'd into; And that is—

4. What our *Saviour* means by coupling, as he does, in both clauses of the Text, our own doing a thing with our teaching other Men to do the same thing. *Who-soever shall break these Commandments, and teach Men so*; and *whosoever shall do and teach them*.

By this it should seem, that altho' a Man be himself a Transgressor of any of the divine Laws, yet so long as he is contented to be wicked by himself, and does not persuade or entice, or any other ways encourage

encourage Men to do the same Wickedness, he may hope well of himself; because the Threatning is made not to them that do only break some of God's Commandments themselves, but to them that break them, *and* teach Men so: And on the other side, it should also seem, that 'tis a thing little worth in God's account, for a Man to be very exact and regular in his own practice, unless he be also a *Preacher of Righteousness*; because the promise of being great in the Kingdom of Heaven, is not made to them that do only do the Commandments, but to them that both do, and teach them; *Whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

And greater without doubt he shall be in the Kingdom of Heaven, who *both does, and teaches* the Commandments, than he that *only does* them; because this Zeal in teaching them to others, and in persuading, pressing and encouraging others to keep them, is an Argument and Expression of greater Love to God, than it is to be only careful to do the will of God

ourselves, and at the same time very unconcern'd and indifferent whether others do it or not ; and the more a Man loves God, the more, without doubt, will he be lov'd by God, and receive for his greater Zeal, a greater Reward.

But then, as to the other thing that was inferr'd from the form of Speech here us'd; *Whosoever shall break any of these Commandments, and shall teach Men so, viz.* That a Man may hope well of himself, altho' he be not so exact and punctual in his own Obedience as he ought to be, so long as he lets others alone, and does not tempt, entice, teach or encourage them to transgress the Will of God ; because the Threatning here is made not to them that do only break these Commandments, but to them that break them, *and teach Men so* : This, I say, is an opinion for which there is no ground or foundation in Scripture or Reason ; nor would there seem to be any ground for it in this Text, if the words were translated as they might and should be.

For,

For, as is well observ'd by *Grotius* upon the place, a Conjunction is oftentimes us'd in Scripture for a Disjunction, *καὶ*, for *ἢ*, and, Ex. xii. 5. xxi. 15. for *or*, of which he gives several instances, Lev. vi. 3. Deut. xvii. 9. but I'll name but one of them; 'tis in *Matth. xii. 37.* *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd:* 'Tis evident that there, *and* signifies *or*; as if it had been said; *By thy words thou shalt be justified, or by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd.* And it had been better if the words of the Text had been so render'd; *Whosoever shall break one of the least of these Commandments, or shall teach Men so, he shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

For this indeed is the truth; he that allows himself in any known Sin, is a wicked Man; and he that teaches, or any other ways encourages another to commit a Sin, is likewise a wicked Man; for he is partaker with the other in that Sin that he tempts him to; and no wicked Man hath any Portion in the Kingdom of Heaven; and he may very well be said to be least

324. *What Commandments are of*

in the Kingdom of Heaven, who will have no Place or Inheritance there at all.

And if we do but believe this, that 'tis a damnable Sin, either wilfully to transgress any Law of God ourselves, or to teach any others to transgress it ; there is no hurt in believing that to *do both* is *much worse* still, and that they will have the saddest Portion of all in the other Life, Rom. i. *who* (as the *Apostle* speaks) *knowing the*
^{32.} *Judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of Death, not only do the same, but have Pleasure in them that do them.*

This then is the Doctrine which we are here taught by our *Saviour* ; that in the other World there are different degrees both of Misery and Happiness ; and that they that allow themselves in the Transgression of *any one* of the Commandments of God, or teach other Men to transgress the same, even tho' it be what they account the *least*, or what may in some respects be truly accounted the least of the Commandments, shall have no Portion in the Kingdom of Heaven, and consequently

consequently shall have their Portion in the Kingdom of Darkneſs; but that if they not only tranſgreſs the ſame themſelves, but likewise *teach*, or any other ways *encourage* other Men to do ſo, their Portion ſhall be ſtill worſe. And on the other ſide, that they who are very exact and regular in their own Behaviour, not allowing themſelves ſo much as in one known Sin, tho' it be in the Opinion of the World never ſo *ſmall* a Sin; and do likewise uſe their beſt endeavour to bring all other Men to the ſame ſenſe of their Duty, ſhall receive a reward in Heaven that will be proportional to the greatneſs of their Love, and the fervency of their Zeal. *They ſhall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

This I ſay is the Doctrin of the Text; for the Proof of which there is no need of urging any Arguments, or of producing any other evidence but the Text it ſelf; 'tis enough, that 'tis a Doctrin plainly taught by him, who was a *Teacher ſent from God*, and who alſo was himſelf *the Truth*; 'tis enough that it was taught by

him who is *appointed by God to be the Judge of Quick and Dead*; and who was therefore the best able to acquaint us by what Rules he will proceed in passing Judgment upon Men.

All therefore that now seems needful to be done, is to make some application of this Doctrine, and to draw some inferences from it in order to practice. And this is what I should now proceed to do; but having been already so large in the explication of it, I'll trespass no further upon your Patience* at present, than only while I mention one plain inference that naturally follows from what has been said; and which I the rather chuse to mention now, hoping thereby to forward the Collection now to be made for the Poor, as has been customarily done upon the last Sundays in Term. It is this:

If they shall have no Portion in the Kingdom of Heaven, who live in the wilful neglect even of the least of the Commandments of God, as our *Saviour* here plainly

* On a Collection day at St. Dunstons, West, London.

plainly teaches ; much less can they reasonably look to be admitted thither, who neglect the weightier matters of the Law, and knowingly allow themselves in the breach of the greatest of all the Commandments.

And which of the Commandments of God they are that may reasonably be accounted the greatest, I have already shewn in the foregoing Discourse ; they are either, 1. such as command those things which are good in themselves ; or, 2. such as have the Divine Authority in the plainest and fullest manner impress'd upon them ; or, 3. such as command those Duties, the performance of which is of the greatest consequence and concernment ; and in all these respects, I think I may truly say, that there is no other particular Commandment greater than that which commands Bounty to the Poor. For,

1. 'Tis plain that Charity to the Poor and Needy is a Duty of Natural Religion ; 'tis not, as a Rite or Ceremony, good, only because commanded ; but was therefore

commanded, because it was good : It was good antecedently to any positive Precept concerning it ; it was a Duty taught by the light of Nature to those who had no light of Revelation, and which carries its own Reason along with it.

2. The Precept commanding Charity to the Poor, is likewise a Commandment upon which the Divine Authority is in the plainest and fullest manner impress'd, and is in that respect, if not the greatest, yet at least as great as any : For there is no Duty more plainly, more frequently enjoin'd in Holy Scripture, than this is ; there is none on which there is greater weight and stress laid in Scripture than on this ; there is no good Work wherewith God has declar'd himself more highly pleas'd, than with this : He has told us he would have *Mercy and not Sacrifice*, or *Mercy rather than Sacrifice* : And *to do good, and communicate, forget not*, says the *Apostle*, *for with such Sacrifices God is well pleased* : And in the account which our *Saviour* himself has given us of the manner of Proceeding at the great Day, in the *xxvth* Chapter of *St. Matthew*,

thew, the only thing he mentions as to be then enquir'd into, (and which therefore we may be sure will not be then omitted to be enquir'd into) is whether Men have been careful or neglectful in the Performance of this Duty; and according to this, he says, Sentence shall pass upon them either to Salvation or Damnation: *Come ye Blessed of my Father*, will the Judge then say to them on his right Hand, *inherit the Kingdom prepared for you—For I was hungred, and ye gave me Meat; thirsty, and ye gave me Drink; a Stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: sick, and in Prison, and ye came unto me.* And, *Go ye Cursed*, will he then say to them on his left Hand, *into everlasting Fire—For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no Meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no Drink: A Stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in Prison, and ye visited me not.* It seems by this as if our eternal Doom depended solely upon our Discharge of this Duty, or Failure therein: most certain therefore it is that it depends
very

very much thereupon, perhaps more than upon any other one thing. And,

3. Lastly ; The Precept of Charity to the Poor, is likewise as great as any other particular Commandment, if not greater, in regard to the effects and consequences of our discharging or neglecting it : For the Subject-matter which this Duty is chiefly exercis'd about, is, the Necessaries of Humane Life ; *The Bread of the Needy is their Life*, says the Son of Syrach ; *he that defraudeth him thereof, is a Man of Blood*. If we give of our Bread to the Hungry, and satisfy their Wants out of our Abundance, we are to them as in God's place, we are, under God, the Preservers of their Life. And on the other side, seeing a Man may be said to do what, being in his power to hinder, he does not hinder, if we withhold good from him to whom it is due, (and there is nothing more due to any Man, than necessary Relief is to those that want, from such as are able to give it) by such Defraudation, we become Accessaries at least, if not Principals, in that Pain and Misery,

Eccles
xxxiv. 21.

Misery, or untimely Death, which, for want of such needful Relief, they are forc'd to undergo. The discharge of this Duty is therefore plainly of the greatest concernment, seeing that by Charity we save, by Uncharitableness we destroy Life, which is by much the greatest and most valuable of all worldly Goods.

And now, I hope, I need say no more to incite you to the constant Exercise of this Duty on all fit Opportunities; but only to repeat once more the Inference which I before drew from the Text, in the Words wherein I before deliver'd it; *viz.* That if they shall have no portion in the Kingdom of Heaven, who live in the wilful neglect of any, even though the least of the Commandments of God, (which is what our *Saviour* here plainly teaches) much less can they reasonably look to be admitted thither, who neglect the weightier matters of the Law, and knowingly allow themselves in the breach of any of those Commandments of God which may with good reason be accounted the greatest:

est: And such an one, I hope, you are now persuaded the Precept of Charity is.

What other things may be properly and usefully inferr'd from the Doctrine deliver'd by our *Saviour* in the Text, I shall defer speaking of till another opportunity.



DISCOURSE XXI.

Of Sin Venial either in the Teacher



N O

SIN VENIAL

Either in the

Teacher or the Practiser.



DISCOURSE XXI.

No Sin Venial either in the Teacher
or the Practiser.



MATTH. V. 19.

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



HAVE already in a former Dis-
course given an Account of
the Meaning of these Words:
Having shewn, 1. *What Com-
mandments* they are which our Lord here
speaks of, whosoever shall break *these Com-
mandments.*

mandments. 2. *What* he means by these *least* Commandments, or the *least* of these Commandments: In speaking to which Point, I shew'd in what respects, or upon what accounts one Commandment may be said to be greater or less than another; for as to the Divine Authority enacting them, it is certain that they are all equal. 3. I have also shewn, what our *Saviour* means by being *called* the *least*, or *great*, in the Kingdom of Heaven. And, 4. lastly; What he means by *coupling*, as he does in both Clauses of the Text, *our doing* a thing ourselves, with *our teaching* other Men to do the same; *Whosoever shall break one of the least of these Commandments, and shall teach Men so*; and, *whosoever shall do, and teach them*.

And the Sum of what I said upon all these Heads, was this; That the Commandments, on the Observation or Breach of which our eternal Doom depends, are the Moral Precepts of the Law, which our *Saviour* (as he says in the foregoing Verse) *came not to destroy, but to fulfil*; *i. e.* to enlarge and reinforce; together with those peculiar

peculiar Rites of *Christianity* which he himself did institute, *viz.* Baptism, and the Lord's Supper : That of all these Commandments of God, now in force, they may with good reason be accounted the *greatest*, first, which enjoin the doing of such things as are *in themselves* most necessary to be done ; secondly, those which have the Divine *Authority most plainly*, and most fully impress'd upon them ; and, thirdly, those which are in their consequences of the *greatest concernment* to be fulfill'd : That to be CALL'D *great*, or *little*, in the Kingdom of Heaven, is, in the Scripture-use of that word, the same as to BE *great*, or *little* ; and that they are *great* in the Kingdom of Heaven who are admitted to the Enjoyment of the highest Degrees of Heavenly Happiness, and they *little* who are admitted to less ; but that they who are called *least*, are such as have no Portion there at all : And lastly, that the *Copulative Particle*, *and*, is here, as 'tis frequently elsewhere in Scripture, us'd *disjunctly* ; As if our Saviour had said, *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments*, or shall

[Vol. II.] Z teach

teach Men so ; for most certain it is, that they who do either of these things, *i. e.* who either break the Commandments themselves, or teach other Men to break them, have no Inheritance in the Kingdom of God ; though they that do both these things, will be sentenc'd to the greatest Torments.

This then, as I told you, is the Doctrine that we are here taught by our *Saviour* ; That in the other World there are different degrees both of Happiness and Misery ; and that they that allow themselves in the Transgression of any *one* of the Commandments of God, or teach other Men to transgress the same, even though it be what they account the *least*, or what may in some respects be truly accounted the least of the Commandments, shall have no portion in the Kingdom of Heaven, and consequently shall have their portion in the Kingdom of Darknes : But that if they not only transgress the same themselves, but likewise teach, or any other ways encourage other Men to do so, their portion shall be still worse. And, on the other side,

fide, That they who are very exact and regular in their own Behaviour, not allowing themselves so much as in one known Sin, though it be in the opinion of the World never so small a Sin, and who do likewise use their best endeavour to bring all other Men to the same Sense of their Duty, shall receive a Reward in Heaven that will be proportional to the Greatness of their Love, and the Fervency of their Zeal; They shall be *great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

And there is no need (as I told you) of urging any other Proof of the Truth of this Doctrine, but only the Authority of him that deliver'd it; for he that taught this Doctrine, is the same who is *appointed by God to be the Judge of Quick and Dead*; and therefore was the best able to acquaint us by what Rules he will proceed in passing Judgment upon Men.

What is therefore more needful to be done, is to make Application of this Doctrine, and to draw some Inferences from it in order to Practice: And that's what I design at this time to do. And,

1. First of all ; If a Man that allows himself in the Transgression of *any one* of the Commandments of God, even though it be of the *least* of them, has no Portion in the Kingdom of Heaven, as our *Saviour* himself here teaches ; it plainly appears from hence, That there is no Sin whatsoever that is *venial* in its own nature, (as the *Roman* Doctors teach) *i. e.* That there is no Sin whatsoever, but what if it be seen, and known, and allow'd of, renders the Person guilty thereof obnoxious to the eternal Torments of Hell, unless it be timely repented of and forsaken.

This indeed is not so much an Inference from the Text, as the true Sense of the Text itself otherwise express'd ; and therefore I can't but wonder how any can dare to assert and maintain the Doctrine of *Venial Sins*, which is so expressly contradictory to it. For if any known and wilful Sins can in any reason be accounted venial, it must certainly be those Sins, which are Transgressions of those Commandments, which in some respect or other may, in comparison with other of the Commandments,

ments, be call'd smaller or less Commandments, (for I take it for granted, that they that hold the Distinction of mortal and venial Sins, will not be so absurd as to affirm, that the Transgression of the smaller Commandments is mortal; but that the neglect of the great and weightier matters of the Law is more venial) Taking it therefore, I say, for granted, as what can with no colour of Reason be disputed or denied, that if any Sins are venial, they must be such as are Breaches of those Commandments which may with some good reason be call'd and accounted the *least* of the Commandments; I say, it is plain from the Text, that no Sins at all are venial; for these, I mean the Transgressions of *the least of the Commandments*, are here expressly declar'd by our Saviour to be mortal and damnable: For, *whosoever*, says our Lord, *shall break one of these least*, (or *one*, even though it be the *least* of these) *Commandments*, he shall be *least in the Kingdom of Heaven*; i. e. he shall be for ever excluded thence.

No Words can be plainer against the Doctrine of venial Sins, than these are. And yet as plain as they are, I fear there are a great many who are not Members of the Church of *Rome*, a great many, I mean, among ourselves, who profess the greatest Abhorrence of *Popery*, that do yet secretly hold this most pernicious Doctrine of *Rome*, tho' they do not publicly own it: Sure I am, there are a great many among ourselves, and who pretend to be Men of Religion and Conscience too, that do too freely allow themselves in the Transgression of some plain Points of Duty; which therefore it may be reasonably thought they do out of an opinion, that the Sins which they allow themselves in, tho' they can't be justify'd; yet being (as they think) but *small Sins*, will not be severely punish'd, will be look'd upon as Infirmities, and easily purg'd away by a general Repentance: Nay, and sometimes too they will not stick to let fall Expressions to this purpose.

Thus I am, says one Man (I must own it, because it can't be deny'd) sometimes over-

overtaken with Drink, but 'tis not often that I am so ; I do not make a trade and custom of it, as some do ; I never design it, I never promote it ; I never do drink to excess but only now and then, when I am hard put upon by the Company, and can't well avoid it ; And I hope my Easiness and Good-nature (for I'm sure 'tis nothing else) will not be imputed to me as a Fault ; or if this be a Fault in me, I hope 'tis such an one as will be easily forgiven.

I am, says another, I must confess, not so constant to my Prayers, and Reading, and other Religious Exercises, as I think I should be : But the case with me is this ; I have a Family to maintain, and am encumbered with much Business, so that sometimes I forget, and at other times am forc'd to flubber over my Prayers : But for so small a Fault as this, especially, it being occasion'd not by a Forgetfulness of God, or Contempt of Religion, but only by a prudent and necessary Care for those whom I am in Duty bound to provide for, I hope it will be easy to obtain pardon.

I have been, says a third, always very constant at Church, and have kept the Lord's-day as religiously as any Man; but one thing I must confess I have been wanting in, I have never yet stay'd the Communion; For I have had such a Sense of my own Demerits, and such a Dread upon me of incurring the Danger of Communicating unworthily, that I have not yet dar'd to approach the Lord's Table. This Omission to receive the Holy Sacrament, is indeed what I can't justify, (for the Institution of it by our *Saviour* is plain, and his Command concerning it is express; *Do this in remembrance of me*;) but yet, I hope, in me it may be excus'd; for 'tis not a prophane Contempt of the Institution that keeps me from Receiving, but rather too great Reverence for it: And besides, this I am sure of, that I have in my Mind a very grateful Sense of the Love of our *Saviour* in dying for us, and that's the Substance, that's the thing design'd in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; being therefore not wanting in that, I hope I shall not be condemn'd only for the Omission of a Ceremony.

I am,

I am, says a fourth Person, very industrious, as I am bound to be, to get a Living; and strictly and nicely careful to get, what I do get, honestly: No Man I'm sure can truly charge me with any Falsity or Injustice in my worldly Dealings: But this I must own, that what I have once fairly got, I love to keep; for I don't know what Times may be hereafter; I don't know but that I may have occasion before I die, to use upon myself all that I have gotten; and therefore can't persuade myself (though I know 'tis a Duty that is much preach'd up) to give any of the fruit of my Labours to other People: No; They that han't whereon to live, must work for their Living, as I do; or, if they can't work, they must be maintain'd by those that have over-grown Estates, that have more than they know what to do with; I'm sure it is not so great a fault in me (if it be any) as it is in them, to give little or nothing to the Poor: In them it may be unpardonable not to part with their Superfluities; but in me, in my strait Circumstances, surely it is venial not to give
to

to others what I may so likely come to want myself ; and therefore, since this is my greatest fault, I hope I shall escape well enough.

And innumerable such like cases I might put : For there is no Man but is more inclin'd to some Sins than he is to others ; and whatever Sin it is that any Man is most inclin'd to, and most free to allow himself in, that to be sure will be, in his opinion, (whatever it may be in itself, or in the Judgment of others) of all Sins the most venial, the most excusable : And upon this ground there are very few even of the greatest Sinners of all, but who are apt to conceive good hope of themselves, and to presume, that at the hands of such a gracious and merciful God as they have to deal with, they shall easily obtain Pardon for those small Faults which they, in their own Judgment, can hardly think do deserve any Punishment at all.

But now, How vain and groundless this Presumption is, appears plainly from these Words of our Lord ; *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, (i. e. know-*
ingly

ingly and wilfully) *shall be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.* For these words grant to the Sinner all that he can possibly plead in his own Excuse, and yet condemn him.

For what can any Sinner plead for himself, in excuse of any known Sin that he lives in, more than is here allow'd, and yet being allow'd, is here plainly declar'd to be insufficient? For,

1. Will he say that he has but *one Fault*, that there is but only *one Thing* for which he can be blam'd, that bating this one particular, he is in all other points strict, and regular, and unblameable?

This, some may say, tho' I believe none that allow themselves in any one known sinful Practice can truly say so; for I think, 'tis not to be imagin'd or conceiv'd, that any Man should be blameable in one point only and no more; that a Man should strictly and constantly observe and keep all the Commandments but one, out of a Principle of Duty and Obedience, and Conscience towards God, and yet at the same

same time, knowingly and wilfully, neglect or transgress that one, which is as plain as any of the rest, and has the divine Authority as fully stamp'd upon it as any of the rest have. This, I say, seems to me unconceivable.

But however ; be it so as he says ; allow the matter of his Plea to be true ; grant that there is but only one thing wherein his own Heart condemns him, but one only thing wherein he can be blam'd by those who view and consider his Behaviour the most narrowly and exactly ; yet, if he be indeed blame-worthy for that, I mean, if that one single Transgression be seen and allow'd of by himself, if in that single instance his Sin be known and wilful, his Righteousness and Unblameableness in all other points will avail and profit him nothing. For this is the very case that the Text speaks of ; and our *Saviour* here plainly declares, that he that breaks *one* of his Commandments, (even tho' it be *but one*) shall have no part or portion in his Kingdom.

And

And the very same thing, upon putting the very same case, we are also taught by *St. James*, together with the reason of it. *Jam. ii. 10, 11. Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit Adultery, said also, Do not Kill. Now if thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou Kill, thou art become a Transgressor of the Law.* The sense of which Argument I take to be this; that whoever freely allows himself in any practice, which he himself knows is forbidden by God, does thereby oppose and resist that Authority by which the Law was made. By any one such wilful and presumptuous Transgression, he does as good as declare that he will not be subject to the Authority of God, that he will not have God to rule over him; so that consequently, by that one act of wilful Disobedience, the perverseness and disloyalty of his Mind is as plainly discover'd and prov'd, as it would be by many such acts; and by his chosen and wilful Disobedience to the will of God, in any one instance, it plainly appears, that

that he has no regard to his Sovereign Authority, and that it is not Duty and Conscience towards God, but some temporal reason or consideration only, that restrains him from transgressing the Law in all other points. For if a Principle of Duty and Conscience towards God, were the true Ground of his carefully observing any one of the Laws of God, the same Principle, as it does as strongly, would also as effectually oblige him to observe every other Law that was as plainly enacted and established by the same divine Authority. From all which it plainly appears, that he that is not uniform and impartial in his Obedience, he that has not the same regard to every Law of God, which he seems to have to some of them, has, in truth, no regard at all to any of them, nor to that divine Authority whereby they are all alike enacted; and so, for that wilful Transgression of the Law in one point, may reasonably be judg'd a Transgressor of the whole Law, altho' he does not, in fact, transgress every point of it. But-----

2. Perhaps the Sinner will further plead for himself; that as there is but one only point wherein he allows himself to transgress his Duty, so that also is a point of Duty *not very considerable*; that he has but one Fault, and that that is but a *small one*; but 'tis an intirely beloved Sin, 'tis a Sin that he takes great pleasure in, and which it would go very near him to part with; and therefore, since he likes it so well, and 'tis but *one*, and a *little one* too, he hopes he may allow himself in it without danger.

But in answer to this it may be considered;

1. That no Man is a fair Judge of the smallness of any Sin to which he himself is addicted; because every Man is prone to judge in his own Favour, in a case wherein he himself is concern'd; and there is no Sin so heinous, which the Person that is guilty of it, and takes great delight therein, will not be able to say a great deal to lessen and extenuate. But,

2. Supposing it to be so as he says, granting the matter of this Plea also to be true,

viz.

viz. that the Sin to which he is most addicted, and would fain have himself allow'd in, is in truth such a Sin as, in comparison with some other Sins, may reasonably be thought but a *small one* ; yet that this Plea will no more serve for an excuse than the former, we are plainly taught in the Text. For the Judgment that is here given by our *Saviour* himself is concerning this very case ; he supposes a Man to be an Offender but in *one* Point, a Transgressor but of *one* Law, and that too in a matter which (at least in comparison with other weightier matters) may be well judg'd to be *not* very *considerable* ; and yet the Judgment that he gives of it is this ; that whosoever shall break *one*, even of *the least* of his Commandments, shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven, *i. e.* shall have no place there at all.

It is evident therefore (as I said) from hence, that there is no such thing as a venial Sin ; for if the Transgression of one of the least of the Commandments be not venial (which is what our *Saviour* here expressly affirms) most certainly the Transgression

gression of a greater Commandment cannot be venial; and if no Sin be venial, then there is no Sin (whatever the matter of it be, or how small soever we may think it) but which, if it be seen and known and allow'd of, is sufficient to put us out of a state of Grace and Salvation, to which there is no way of being restor'd again, but by Repentance; *i. e.* (as the *Apostle* exhorts, *Heb. xii. 1.*) by laying aside every Weight, and the Sin that doth so easily beset us (even that Sin, whatever it is, which does best suit our Temper and Genius, and which of all others we are most loth to part with) and by running with Patience the Race that is set before us. For whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, says our Saviour, the same shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven; He has said it who is Truth it self; this is his Judgment upon the matter, by whose Sentence we must stand or fall to all Eternity.

It highly concerns us therefore, to weigh and consider the thing well, and carefully to examine our own Hearts, and

see if there be any Sin, which we have a secret love and kindness for ; any Sin that we take delight in, and allow our selves in the practice of ; any Sin, which, as thinking it to be but a small one, we flatter our selves we may live in without danger ; and diligently to set ourselves to repent of that Sin, as well as of all others ; because otherwise, all our other Labour will profit us little. It may serve, perhaps, to lessen our Accounts, and to make some abatement in the degree of our Torment in the other World, to have kept our selves from great Pollutions, and to have done some things well ; but nothing less than the forsaking of every known Sin, and a conscientious discharge of every known Duty, is sufficient to afford us a reasonable hope of Blessedness ; for he, who (as I noted before) is to be our Judge, has already plainly declar'd his Judgment in the case, that the wilful Transgression of *any one* Commandment is no more venial, than the like Transgression of *any other* Commandment, or of *them all* ; that whosoever breaks *one* of

of his least Commandments, shall have no Portion in his heavenly Kingdom, *He shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

But the Sentence here given by our Saviour, is not only against those that live in the love and practice of any Sin themselves, but likewise against those that entice, persuade, abet, or encourage others in the practice of any Sin ; *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, or shall teach Men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven.* And therefore—

2. Another thing which we may observe from hence, in order to practice, is, the great guilt and danger of being any ways *accessary* to the Sins of other Men.

And this we may be, not only by directly commanding, advising, or by our own example tempting or encouraging others to the practice of any Sin, but also by teaching any Doctrine, or by pleading or arguing for any Opinion, which tends, in its consequences, to give Men any encouragement in Sin, or to lessen their Zeal of good Works. *Whosoever shall teach Men so, says our Saviour, i. e.*

who shall teach Men to break any Law of God, shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us then *take heed to ourselves*, and also to our *Doctrine*; it is St. Paul's Advice to *Timothy*, 1 *Tim.* iv. 16. and it is indeed a piece of Advice that is most necessary to be given to those who are Preachers and Ministers of the Gospel, as *Timothy* was; it is a Duty, I say, most especially incumbent upon them, tho' not upon them only, to take heed to themselves, that they do not in any point give ill example to the People; and likewise to take heed to their Doctrine, *i. e.* to weigh and consider well the natural tendency, the true and just consequences, of every Point of Doctrine which they teach, of every Notion or Opinion that they maintain and dispute for. For if a Man be in a mistake himself (and who is there that is not mistaken in some things?) yet if he does not see the pernicious consequences of his own Error, and if his Practice be not corrupted thereby, his Error may be to

to himself an innocent Error, and being a mistake of the Understanding only, may not be imputed to him as a Fault ; but the same Error or Mistake, which may not be hurtful to the Person himself that holds it, provided he keeps it to himself, and does not endeavour to spread and propagate it, because (as I said before) he may not perhaps see the evil consequences thereof, or does expressly disown them ; (this same Error, I say) may be very pernicious and hurtful to the Person who teaches it or pleads for it, endeavouring thereby to persuade others to it ; because if it be indeed such an Error, as has a natural tendency to make Men loose and careless in their Practice, or to give them encouragement in any Vice or Sin, they, who by his Reasons or Authority are persuaded to embrace the same erroneous Opinion, may receive it with all its just consequences ; they may see the tendency that it has to encourage Sin, and may by it be encouraged and embolden'd to commit Sin ; which if they are, the same Error, the

bare belief whereof was innocent and harmless in him, will be of fatal consequence to them who receive it from him; and he himself, who would not, perhaps, have incurr'd any Punishment only for his false Opinion, in case he had kept it to himself, because it had no ill effect upon his own Practice; yet by teaching and spreading it, and thereby, in the event, corrupting the Lives and Manners of other Men, who practise according to the true consequences of the Opinion, renders himself obnoxious to that Sentence which our *Saviour* here declares he will pass upon those who *teach Men* to break any of his Laws, that they shall be *least in the Kingdom of Heaven*; i. e. that they shall have no Portion there at all.

3. If they, who teach Men to break any of the Laws of the Gospel, shall be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven; another thing that we may observe and learn from hence is this, that no Doctrine that evacuates our obligation to Holiness and Virtue, or that gives encourage-
ment

ment to any Vice or Sin, is, or can be a true Doctrine of *Christianity*. For 'tis absurd to suppose that our *Saviour* should condemn any Man for truly teaching and preaching the Doctrines of his Gospel; but here in the Text he does plainly condemn all those that teach Men to break any of the Commandments; and therefore it plainly follows, that there is no true Doctrine of the Gospel of this kind, no Doctrine of the Gospel that can give Men any reasonable encouragement to transgress any of the Laws or Precepts of it.

And this may serve as a Test to make a trial of Doctrines by: By this we may be enabled in good measure to distinguish between true and false Prophets. For if any Man teaches any Doctrine, which in its true consequences tends to release Men from any of the Laws of *Christ*, any Doctrine which makes the practice of Piety and Virtue unnecessary, any Doctrine which makes it appear safe to continue in the love and practice of any

known Sin, we may be sure that the Doctrine itself is false, tho' we are not able to shew the weakness and vanity of those Reasons and Arguments whereby it is supported; for 'tis impossible that that should be a true Doctrine, or any part of the Doctrine of the Gospel, which is of a different kind from all the rest; but the Doctrine of the Gospel is, as the *Apostle* styles it, *a Doctrine according to Godliness*; i. e. 'tis all of it so; and therefore no Doctrine which is, as we may say, *a Doctrine according to Wickedness*, i. e. which teaches, encourages, or allows of any Wickedness in any kind, can be any part of the Doctrine of our *Saviour*, nor can the Person that teaches it be a true Prophet.

4. *Lastly*, What we may further learn from these words of our *Saviour*, is, how much we are oblig'd, not only in Duty, but also in Interest, as well to teach others those good Rules of Life which the Gospel prescribes, as to practise the same ourselves. *Whosoever*, says our *Saviour*,
shall

shall do, and teach them, the same shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Whosoever shall do so, whosoever shall both do, and teach them; the obligation to teach them is as universal as it is to do them; and no *Christian* does well and fully discharge his own Duty, unless (according to his Capacity) he teaches, and (so far as in him lies) makes other Men practise the same.

Not that 'tis lawful for any Man to invade the ministerial Office, who is not call'd and ordain'd thereto; but there are other methods of teaching and instructing others, besides publick Preaching; for good Advice and wholesome Instruction may be given with very good success, by every Master of a Family, to those of his House; and by every one that is in Authority, to those that are subject to him; nay, and by every private Man to his Brother, as well as by a Pastor to his Flock.

'Tis every Man's Duty therefore, as he is able, and as it comes in his way, to instruct

instruct the Ignorant, to counsel the Unwary, to reclaim those that err from the way of Truth and Righteousness, to reprove his Brother that offends, and not to suffer Sin upon him.

And the more diligent and industrious we are in doing these Offices of spiritual Kindness and Charity to others, the more fully shall we discharge our own Duty, the better account shall we be able to give to God of the Talents he has intrusted us with, and shall receive from him a reward proportional to the fervency of our Love and Zeal. *For they that turn many to Righteousness shall shine as the Stars for ever and ever, as the Prophet Daniel says; and, whosoever, says our Saviour in the Text, shall do these Commandments, and teach Men so, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Which great reward, that we may all of us attain, by a sincere obedience to every Law of the Gospel, and by a constant endeavour to promote the interest of Religion, and the practice of
Virtue

Virtue in the World, God of his Mercy grant, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ :

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. Amen.



...in the World, God of his Mercy
...the sake of our Lord Jesus

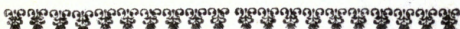
...and the Holy
...God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy
...the Father, the Son, and the Holy
...the Father, the Son, and the Holy



...the Father, the Son, and the Holy
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WHAT IS
Pharisaical Righteousness,
AND
Wherein it is deficient.



DISCOURSE XXII.

What is Pharisaical Righteousness,
and wherein it is deficient.

M A T T H. V. 20.

*For I say unto you, That except your
Righteousness shall exceed the
Righteousness of the Scribes and
Pharisees, ye shall in no case en-
ter into the Kingdom of Hea-
ven.*



OUR Saviour at the beginning
of this his Sermon upon the
Mount, had utter'd several
strange Paradoxes, Truths
very hard to be receiv'd and credited by
those to whom he spake them, when he had
pronounc'd those to be blessed, who in the
eye of the World do seem the most un-
happy; as, the *Poor in Spirit*; the *Meek*;
the

the *Mourners*; the *Persecuted*; and the like. But what he utters here, did, I suppose, appear to those to whom he spake these Words, rather a greater Paradox than any of them. For such a profound Veneration had the *Jews* generally for their *Scribes*, and especially for those of them which were of the Sect of the *Pharisees*; and such an high Opinion had they of their Wisdom and Sanctity, that it was in use among them as a Proverbial Saying, *That if but two Men only went to Heaven, one of them would be a Scribe, and the other a Pharisee.* How strange therefore must it needs sound to them to hear our Saviour saying, That neither one of these should go to Heaven, nor the other; neither the *Scribe*, nor the *Pharisee*, nor any other Person neither that was not better than either of them; *i. e.* who was not better than any of those were whom they accounted the most holy, and the most perfect among the Sons of Men? And yet this is what he says in the Text, *For I say unto you, that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall*

shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The word, *For*, at the beginning of the Verse, shews some Connexion of these Words with the foregoing; and that this Text was design'd as a Proof and Confirmation of somewhat that had been said before, either in the Verse immediately foregoing, or, at least, in some Verse not much before the Text.

Now what had been said in the Verse immediately foregoing, was this; *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, or shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: But whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.* And then it follows; *For I say unto you, that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* So that understanding these Words as connected by the Particle, *For*, to those Words immediately foregoing, they seem to be design'd as an Answer to an Objection that the *Jews* might be

370 *What is Pharisaical Righteousness,*

apt to make against what had been said in the foregoing Verse. For our *Saviour* had said, that the *breaking one* of his *Commandments*, even though it were the *least* of them, or the *teaching* Men so, would be sufficient to exclude from the Joys and Happiness of Heaven: But if so, might the *Jews* think and object, the case is indeed very hard, and Salvation is much more difficult to be obtain'd than we thought for: For even the learned *Scribes*, who are best skill'd in the Law; and they that live according to the strictest Sect of our Religion, the *Pharisees*, these come not up to this degree of Perfection; they are not in all points spotless and innocent; they, in their Practice, do offend in some things; and they, in their Teaching and Preaching, do not lay the same stress upon all the Commandments, but seem rather to give some sort of Allowance or Indulgence to such as they account smaller Transgressions of the Law; and surely, it can't be our Duty to be wiser than our Teachers, and more exact and punctual in our Obedience than they are who

who are appointed to be our Spiritual Guides and Instructors.

To which Objection therefore our *Saviour* replies, by granting the matter or ground of it, (which he knew to be too true) and then denying the Consequence which they drew from thence; *For I say unto you, that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* 'Tis as if he had said; Be it so as you think; That the *Scribes* and the *Pharisees* are not so faultless, neither in their Practice, nor in their Teaching, as I require you to be; All that follows from hence is, That *they* are not so good as they should be, and that therefore you must be better; that *your Righteousness* ought to exceed theirs.

And the Words thus understood, would give me a fair occasion to discourse concerning the evil Examples of others; and to shew, that it is our Duty to live by Precept, not by Pattern or Precedent; for as much as no Example whatsoever, no not the Example of our Guides and Teachers;

372 *What is Pharisaical Righteousness,*

not that of the wisest, (as the *Scribes*) not that of the best Men (as the *Pharisees* were accounted) is sufficient to warrant or justify us in the Transgression of any Law of God.

But it may be enough just to have mention'd this at present ; because I conceive that the Connexion between these Words, and what had been spoken before, is rather between this Verse and the 17th.

For there our *Saviour* had declar'd it to be the Design of his Coming, not to release Men from their Obligation to Obedience, but rather to increase it, and to require a more perfect Obedience, and higher degrees of Holiness than Men had before thought themselves bound to attain, or even to aim at ; *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* As a Proof of which, he declares at the 18th Verse, that it was the Will of God, that the Moral Law, or the Law enjoining Works of Piety, Justice and Charity, should continue in force as long as the World should last ; *For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and*

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and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law. Then, as a farther Proof of this, he declares at the 19th Verse, that this Moral Law was in every part and tittle of it most strictly obliging; that not so much as one single Transgression of one Law, even though it were of the least of all the Commandments, was allow'd by the Gospel-Covenant which he preach'd; *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven; i. e.* shall have no Portion there at all. And then, at last, in the Text, as a still farther Confirmation of that same Truth, that he came *not* to *destroy* the Law, but to amplify, enlarge and perfect it, he declares, that none could be his true Disciples, nor would be Partakers of that Kingdom of Heaven which he preach'd, unless they were better Men; *i. e.* more strict and regular in their Life and Conversation than even the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* themselves were, who yet were thought to be the most exact Observers of the Law; *I came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil:— For verily I say unto you, that except your*

374 *What is Pharisaical Righteousness,*

Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

In which Words therefore I conceive our Saviour to say no more in substance, and in effect, than he had said before in the foregoing Verses ; when he had declar'd, that the Moral Law would never be abrogated, but always continue in force ; and that no Transgression of it, in any one point, would be allow'd of, or dispens'd with. But, however, it was very needful, and to very good purpose, that he should express this same sense over again in such manner as he does in the Text ; *Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven* ; because there are very few Men that can be perswaded to set themselves to aim and endeavour after such strict Righteousness as the Law prescribes ; they can hardly induce themselves to believe, that so much as the Law commands is necessary to be done, or even to be aim'd at ; but if they do some things well, and are not scandalous and notorious

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rious Transgressors; if they live as well as their Neighbours do, I mean, not as the worst of them do, but as the best; if they live as well as those appear to do that are in fair esteem and reputation for Piety and Virtue, and have a good Name and Character in the place where they live, they doubt not but they shall do well enough; and that their Righteousness is such as God will accept, though it be not in all points such as the Law enjoins. For who is there, say they, that does every thing that is commanded? What Man is there upon Earth, that *doth good, and sinneth not*? Seeing therefore all Men have their Failings, and the best Men are not without Fault, and even they that are Heirs of Salvation are not made perfect in this World; we hope that our Failings may be pass'd over as well as theirs; that some Faults may be excus'd in us as well as in them; and that a less Righteousness than that which is perfect, will be accepted from us, as well as it must be from others, if indeed there be any at all that shall be saved: For the Scripture has plainly told us, that *there is*

376 *What is Pharisaical Righteousness,*

not a just Man upon Earth, that doth good, and sinneth not : And that if God should enter into strict Judgment with us, there is no Man living that could be justified in his sight.

Thus, I say, Men are very apt to content themselves with a comparative Righteousness; and to think that they are righteous enough, if they are but as righteous as their Neighbours, especially as the best of them are ; though they are conscious to themselves, not only that they are not in all points so righteous as the Law directs them to be, but not so righteous, not quite so unblameable as they might be, by taking better heed to their ways. They seem to think that Custom is the best Interpreter of the Divine, as well as in some cases it is allow'd to be, of Human Laws ; and that if they do but yield such Obedience to the Commandments as is generally given to them by such as are taken to be Men of Probity and Conscience, their Obedience will be such as the Law intends, though it be not exactly such as it prescribes ; and that they shall fulfil the design

sign of the Law, although they do not answer the Letter of it.

It was therefore, I say, very needful and expedient that our *Saviour*, after he had declar'd the perpetual Obligation of the Moral Law, and that the Obedience requir'd to be given thereto was such as allow'd of no wilful Transgression of it so much as in one point, should then expressly declare, that these Laws of God were to be interpreted according to right Reason, and the true and proper Meaning of the Words they were deliver'd in; and not according to the Customs and Manners even of the best Men, unless their Practice was in all points agreeable thereto. And because at that time, when our *Saviour* spake these Words, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were the Men that were had in greatest reputation for Piety and Sanctity; and yet our *Saviour*, who had inspected into their Behaviour more narrowly, and likewise saw into their Hearts, knew well that they were not such good Men as they were generally taken to be; he therefore instances particularly in them, and tells his Disciples,

ples, that unless they did yield a better Obedience to the Laws of God, than even these Men did who were the most fam'd for their Righteousness, their Obedience would not be such as the Promises of the Gospel were made to : *For I say unto you, that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

In discoursing on which Words, I shall do these two things :

I. I shall briefly enquire *who*, and *what* these *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were. And,

II. I shall enquire, *what* was *their Righteousness* ; and shew *wherein* it was *deficient*, and consequently, wherein *our Righteousness* must *exceed* theirs.

I. I shall briefly enquire *who*, and *what* these *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were.

And in general, *Scribe* is the Name of an Office, and *Pharisee* is the Name of a Sect. The *Scribes* were, as 'tis now generally thought, only of the Tribe of *Levi* ; according to that of the Prophet *Malachi* :
 Mal. ii. 7. *The Priests Lips should keep Knowledge, and they*

they should seek the Law at his Mouth ; for he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts : But the Pharisees were, or might be, of any Tribe, and were only a Sect of the Jews, which pretended to understand the Law better, and to keep it more strictly than others did ; and were therefore accounted more righteous and more religious than the other Jews. And thus St. Paul, speaking of himself before his Conversion, says, that he (who yet was a Benjamite by Tribe) was a Pharisee, and the Son of a Pharisee ; and in another place, That after the most straitest Sect of their Religion, he liv'd a Pharisee. So that it seems, that neither were all the Scribes of the Sect of the Pharisees ; neither were all the Pharisees, by Office and Profession, Scribes or Teachers of the People. But though it was not so always, yet it was so for the most part ; and therefore in the Histories of the Gospels, and of the Acts of the Apostles, we meet with them most frequently join'd together, as if they were one and the same Persons ; and of both of them our Saviour says, in Matth. xxiii. 2.

that

Acts xxiii. 6.

xxvi. 5.

Vid. Acts xxiii. 9.

that they sat in Moses's Seat ; The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses's Seat , i. e. they are the authoriz'd Guides and Teachers of the People.

The Scribes therefore being, upon the account of their Office, the most esteem'd for their Skill in the Law ; and the Pharisees, upon the account of their Sect, being thought the most exact Observers of the Law ; and yet the former being known by our Saviour not to have expounded it in all points according to its true meaning, and the latter being known by him not to be such exact Observers of the Law as they were taken to be ; he here tells his Disciples, that unless, as Teachers, they did expound and teach the Laws of God more truly and faithfully than the Scribes did ; and unless, as Scholars and Disciples, they did observe and keep the same more punctually and exactly than the Pharisees did ; their Service would be rejected by God, as maim'd and deficient : *I say unto you, that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,*

risees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And now I come in the second place to what I chiefly design'd ; viz.

II. To enquire what was the *Righteousness* of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* ; and to shew, wherein it was deficient, and consequently, wherein our *Righteousness* must exceed theirs.

And thus much must be granted to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, that it was not altogether without ground, that they were had in such great reputation among the *Jews* ; for it must be allow'd them, that they did some things well, that they had a *Form of Godliness* ; and that they made such a shew and appearance of Goodness, as might easily deceive those into a good opinion of them, who did not very narrowly inspect their Behaviour.

For if you consider them as Teachers of the Law, they were very diligent and assiduous in their Office ; *They sat in Moses's Seat* : They made the Study of the Law their business ; and their Exposition of it, though not in all points exact, was yet, in the

the main so found and orthodox, that even our *Saviour* himself charg'd and exhorted the People to follow their Advice, and to observe their Directions; *Matth. xxiii. 2, 3. The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses's Seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.* They were also very zealous, as in instructing their own People in the *Jewish Religion*, so likewise in endeavouring to gain *Profelites* to it; for they would compass *Sea and Land* to gain even one *Profelite*, as our *Saviour* bears them witness in *Matth. xxiii. 15.*

Or if you consider them as *Practisers* of the *Law*, they did many things worthy of commendation. For they were, to appearance, Men of great *Devotion*; they were very frequent and long in their *Prayers*; they fasted much and often; they were very remarkable for their *Austerity*, and bodily *Mortification*; they were likewise very punctual in the discharge of the *Priests Dues*, paying *Tithes* of all that they possess'd, even of the smallest
Garden

Garden Herbs, [of which it was a question whether they were tithable or not] They were also much noted for their Alms, which they did so publicly, that all Men might see their Charity and take example by it. But, above all things, they were most exact in the observation of the Sabbath-day, on which, rather than run the hazard of transgressing the Commandment by breaking the Rest of it, they would not allow either themselves, or others, to do even so much as works of Necessity, or very great Charity.

Such were the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; such was their Righteousness, which our *Saviour* here requires should be exceeded by all his Disciples. But would to God it were at least equall'd by all those that call themselves his Disciples; for if it were, the *Christian World* would not, I'm sure, be quite so bad as it is; but if there were not more true Religion in it than there is at present, there would be, at least, a better shew and appearance of it than there is; if there were not less Sin than there is
now,

384 *What is Pharisaical Righteousness,*

now, there would be, at least, less Scandal; and they that died in their own Sins only, would have an easier account to make to God, than they will have, who by the openness of their Wickedness, and the influence of their evil Example, draw whole Sholes of Sinners along with them into the same Pit of Destruction.

But now, *If (as St. Peter says) the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Ungodly and Sinner appear?* if these demure and Saint-like *Pharisees*, in whose Conversation there was no Spot or Blemish that was very discernable, were not yet qualified for the Kingdom of Heaven; what will become of those, whose Life is all over (if I may so speak) Spot and Blemish? who *do evil with both Hands, earnestly*, as the Prophet speaks? or who, in the Apostle's Phrase, *being past feeling, have given themselves over unto Lasciviousness, to work all Uncleanness with greediness.*

Micah.
vii. 3.
Eph. iv.
19.

And yet many such there are, even among those that have given up their
Names

Names to *Christ*, and have taken upon them his Profession, and who would take it ill, if you should not allow them to be *Christians* ; indeed, too many such there are among us, who are so far from out-doing the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in their Devotion, that they do very rarely lift up a Hand or an Eye to Heaven, and scarcely have God in all their thoughts, unless it be to blaspheme and affront him ; too many who are so far from exceeding them in their Righteousness, that whereas they made Conscience of paying some dues, these make no Conscience of any ; but, whether it be by Fraud, or Robbery, or Sacrilege ; whether it be from God or from Man, from the Poor or from the Rich, that they can get any thing, they matter not, so that they do but get it for themselves ; too many, who are so far from outdoing them in acts of Mortification and Self-denial, that they outdo even the worst of *Heathens* in acts of Sensuality and Uncleaness, practising with a bare Face, and an impudent Forehead, those unclean

386 *What is Pharisaical Righteousness,*

Lusts, which modest *Pagans* would have blush'd at, and being much more frequent and constant in their sinful Excess of Rioting and Drunkenness, than the *Pharisees* were in their Fastings; and making it the main design of their Lives, and the sum of all their Contrivances, by any means, *to make provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof*: Too many, who are so far from exceeding the *Pharisees* in zeal for the Truth, and in endeavouring to gain Profelites to it, that they are more ready to ask *Pilate's* Question, *what is Truth?* and that not seriously, but scoffingly, not with a desire to be informed, but only with a design to cavil at and ridicule all the Arguments that are brought for the Proof of Religion, and especially of that holy Religion which they themselves have been baptiz'd into; which they could heartily wish were quite banish'd out of the World, because it is too holy and too good for them, and such a Religion as, while they continue in their wicked course of Life, they can take no comfort in.

But

But to run thro' all the particulars wherein the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did exceed the Righteousness of a great many that call themselves *Christians*, would be endless; neither, as I suppose, would it be to much purpose; because if there be any such here (as I hope there are not) who having been baptiz'd into and instructed in the holy Religion of the Gospel, have not been yet persuaded to go so far in the way of Righteousness as the old *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did, it can scarcely be hop'd that they should now, by any thing that I can say, be persuaded to go farther; and unless they do go farther than the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, they will as surely come short of Heaven, as by staying where they are; but to them that have begun well, and have a good will to do all that is necessary (which, at least, is, I will presume, the case of all that are here present) it may be hop'd that a Discourse upon this Subject may be useful, to acquaint them what is still wanting, and to persuade them to pursue steadily

388 *What is Pharisaical Righteousness,*

the good course they have taken. For'tis some advantage to them that they have gone so far, if they proceed ; because the more way they have gone already, the less they have to go, and their further Progress will be still every day more easy and delightful ; but if they rest where they are, they will have lost all the Labour they have already taken ; and will at last also lose that Reward, which by a continuance and increase in well-doing they might have attained. For this was the very case of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, here spoken of ; some Righteousness they had, but not enough ; and except our Righteousness shall exceed theirs, our *Saviour* tells us, we shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,

What I am now therefore to do, is to shew wherein the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* was deficient, and consequently wherein our Righteousness must exceed theirs, if ever we hope to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.
And-----

I. They

1. They did some things well; but they did not do every thing so. They had regard to some of God's Commandments, but not to others.

Thus they were very strict in keeping the Rest of the *Sabbath*, but they neglected the *Religion* of it; they were very long in their Devotions, but then so much Piety and Religion towards God, they thought, would atone for some injustice to Men; *Ye devour Widows Houses*, says our Saviour, and *for a pretence make long Prayers*; they gave away much in Alms, but then they had little regard whether what they gave away was their own or their Neighbour's; they gave Tithes of all that they possess'd, and would not wrong the Priest of so much as one spire of Mint or Rue; but in the mean time they neglected, as our Saviour says, *the weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith*; they press'd much the obligation that lay upon Men to enrich the Treasury of the Temple, and at the same time discharg'd them from the obligation

that lay upon them, both by the Law o Nature, and by the Fifth Commandment, to honour their Parents, and to succour and relieve them when in Want Such was the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, it was partial, maim'd and imperfect ; and that's one Instance wherein it was deficient, and wherein our Righteousness must exceed theirs.

For to render our obedience accepted to God, it must be the best and the most perfect that we can give ; it must be entire, and uniform, and impartial. We must not neglect the weightier matters of the Law, while we observe the less ; neither yet, on the other side, may we be so very attent upon any some, altho' the weightiest matters of all, as to overlook or wilfully to neglect any other points of plain Duty, altho' they seem not to be so very considerable. 'Tis our *Saviour's* Judgment in the case, *Matth. xxiii. 23.* *These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone ;* and in the Verse before the Text, *whosoever shall break one*
of

of these least Commandments, shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven. We can't commute one Duty for another, because they are both alike required ; For he that said, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, said also, *Do not Kill* ; and he that commanded us to pray, has also commanded us to give Alms of such things as we have ; we must not therefore pick and chuse out of the Commandments those which we like best to observe ; for this is not to obey God, but to please ourselves ; and if Obedience to God be the true Principle of our Actions, we shall obey those which are most contrary to our Inclinations with the same readiness and willingness of Mind (altho' perhaps with more struggling and striving with ourselves) wherewith we obey any of the rest. And indeed, we can have a good assurance towards God upon no other Terms ; For *then shall I not be ashamed*, says the Psalmist, *when I have respect unto all thy Commandments* ; Psal. cxix. 6. and, on the other side, we are plainly told by St. James, c. ii. v. 20. that

whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

2. Another thing wherein the Righteousness of the *Pharisees* was deficient, was this, that it consisted chiefly in Negatives: They had some care to abstain from what was forbidden, but took little or no care to do what was commanded. Thus the *Pharisee* in the Gospel, when he meant to commend himself as much as he could to Almighty God, *Luke xviii. 11.* could say but very little of his good Actions: Fasting, and paying Tithes, were the only things he mention'd, or perhaps could mention of this kind; but that which he laid the most stress upon, and for which he seem'd to think he deserv'd the most Praise, was his not being guilty of some very notorious Transgressions of the Law: *God, I thank thee, says he, that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican.*

And with this same sort of Righteousness, a great many *Christians* likewise are very apt to content themselves: Many there

there are that have a good opinion of themselves, and a fair Character among their Neighbours, who yet, if they were put to it to say all that they could say in their own Commendation, could say little more than this *Pharisee* did, *viz.* That they are not so bad as some other Men are; no Whoremongers, no Adulterers, no Drunkards, no prophane Swearers, no Thieves, no Extortioners, or the like. And thus far it is well; but all this is not enough: He that is not a Whoremonger, will not be judg'd as a Whoremonger; nor will he that is no Drunkard, be punish'd as a Drunkard; no Man shall answer for more Sins than he has been guilty of; and *mighty Sinners shall be mightily tormented*. But if a Man be not a Whoremonger, or a Drunkard, or a prophane Swearer, still I say, such a negative Righteousness alone will not save him. For the same God who has commanded us to abstain from evil, has also commanded us to exercise ourselves in all well-doing; *Depart from evil, and do good,*
and

and dwell for evermore: So the Psalmist has express'd the Condition of our obtaining everlasting Happiness; Psal. xxxvii. 27. and in Psal. xv. 2. The first Part of the Answer to that Question, Lord; who shall abide in thy Tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy Hill? is in these Words, He that walketh uprightly, and worketh Righteousness. And the Description which the Prophet Ezekiel gives of a true and saving Repentance, in Ezek. xviii. 21. is after this manner; If the wicked turn from all his Sins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die: His Transgressions shall not be mention'd unto him; in his Righteousness that he has done, he shall live. And of this kind also are the Descriptions of Evangelical Righteousness which we meet with in the New Testament: He that doth Righteousness, is righteous, says St. John, 1 Joh. iii. 7. And St. Paul in 2 Cor. vii. 1. declaring the Evangelical Promises, and shewing how we may be made Partakers of them, expresses

ses himself in these Words; Having therefore these Promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit: That's one part of the Condition; but that is not all, for then he adds, *Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.* And the Author to the Hebrews teaches the same, Heb. xii. 1. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us;* (there's our negative Righteousness, which consists in abstaining from evil; and then it follows) *and let us run with patience the Race that is set before us;* (there is our positive or affirmative Righteousness, which consists in the doing of good.) The laying aside every Weight, the freeing ourselves from the Incumbrance and Load of Sin, is indeed a thing absolutely necessary to be done, because till we have done that we can't run at all: But when that is done, if after that we sit still, and keep in the place where we were, we shall be ne'er the better, we shall be never the nearer

nearer to our Journey's end ; for that which must bring us thither, is the *running the Race which is set before us.*

But it would be endless to mention all the Texts of Scripture that might be cited for the Proof of this Point ; and therefore I shall at present name only one more : 'Tis in the xxvth of St. *Matthew*, where our *Saviour* himself relates the manner of his own Proceedings in the Judgment of the last Day, and the Reasons thereof ; Verse 34. *Then shall the King say unto them on his right Hand, Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat ; thirsty, and ye gave me Drink, &c.* The reason of this Sentence, you see, was not because they had not done evil, but because they had done good : 'Tis not said, Ye were sober and temperate, ye did not eat or drink to excess ; Ye were just in your Dealings, ye did not wrong, or defraud your Neighbours ; Ye did not oppress the Poor, ye did not rob the Church ; therefore

fore come ye Blessed. Such indeed, without all doubt, they were on whom this blessed Sentence was pronounc'd; they had been sober, and temperate, and just; they had not been Drunkards, or Gluttons, or Whoremongers, or Extortioners, or Sacrilegious Persons: If they had, they could not have been entitled to this Blessedness and Reward: But, I say, this alone would not have been enough. The fewer Sins indeed a Man is guilty of, the less will his Punishment be in the other World; and he will not suffer as a Thief, or a Murderer, or a Drunkard, if indeed he was none of these: But there's no Salvation to be had without doing also those good things that are commanded.

And the same thing may be inferr'd from that other Sentence which will then be given upon wicked Men, at the 41st Verse of that Chapter; *Then shall the Judge say unto them on his left Hand, Depart from me ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. Why so? Is it said; For ye were Whoremongers,*

gers, or Drunkards, or Thieves, or Murderers, or Blasphemers of God, or the like? No: They might perhaps be some or other of these; and if they were, their Condemnation to be sure was greater, the more and greater Enormities they had allow'd themselves in: But, I say, it is not there said that they had been guilty of any of these Sins: The only reason there given of their Condemnation, is, because they had been wanting in doing the good that they had been commanded to do: *I was hungry, and ye gave me no Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no Drink, &c.* therefore go ye Cursed into everlasting Fire.

Thus also then, our Righteousness must exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*: We must have the same regard to the affirmative that we have to the negative Precepts of the Law; and be as careful to do the Good that is commanded, as we are cautious to abstain from the Evil that is forbidden: And after we have escap'd the Corruption that is in the World through Lust, we must seek
to

to promote the Honour of God and the Good of Mankind, by abounding in all Works of Piety and Charity, and embracing every opportunity of doing good, that is put into our hands.

But there are several other Instances wherein the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* was deficient, and wherein it must be exceeded by ours; which, because it would take up too much time to mention now, I shall defer discoursing of till another time.







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