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SERMONS

ON THE

Following SUBJECTS.

VIZ.

God no respecter of persons.	The nature of a heavenly conversation explained.
The scripture doctrine of justification explained.	On incredulity, and the morality of Faith.
Moral reflections on the history of <i>Joseph</i> .	The different characters of true Religion, and Enthusiasm.
Of the natural relation of men to God, and their common tie to each other.	Of theft, fraud, and extortion.
Of Murder, and the vices and customs leading to it.	The doctrine of a particular Providence considered.
Of Duels, and Self-murder.	Of the unity of God, and the <i>Jewish</i> theocracy.
On the example and moral character of Christ.	On the seventh commandment.

By JAMES FOSTER.

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S E R-

SERM. him, and think worthily and honourably

I. of his works and government. — But this
 alone is not sufficient: For we may all agree in acknowledging the *general attributes* and *characters* of the Deity, and still entertain very false and reproachful notions of him, for want of having a just sense of what is included in *each* of these general characters, and explaining them in a *right* manner. If, for example, we frame such an idea of his goodness and justice as is consistent with *tyranny* and *oppression*, or reconcile his being no respecter of persons, with *real partiality* and *arbitrary* proceeding, we use good words it must be allowed; but our *sentiments* are corrupted and dangerous. And what useful end can it answer, to speak of the maker and supreme governour of the world, in *decent* and *respectful* terms, if for want of knowing what is *implied*, in the propositions we assent to, and tracing them through their *natural consequences*, we maintain *other* principles that are directly repugnant to them? To what purpose is it, to have learnt a language that we do not rightly understand, to believe the infinite Being to be

God no respecter of persons.

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be both *merciful* and *cruel*, *wise* and *capricious*, *equitable* and *partial*; and, in short, to fancy that *contradictions* are true, which, in reality, destroy each other? Such inadequate conceptions, and *incoherencies* of thought, to must pervert the *sense*, and in a great degree frustrate the *influence*, of the best of principles.

SERM.

I.

AND the *mischiefs* resulting from it, with respect to that sacred and immutable part of the divine character, which I design to consider in the following discourse, are notorious and undeniable. For as on the one hand, either through ignorance of the *intent* and *use* of particular operations of providence, or of what is implied in this certain dictate of the light of nature, ‘that
‘God is no respecter of persons,’ many frivolous and weak objections have been started not only against *revelation*, but against a *providence*, and consequently against *religion in general*: So, on the other, *christians* themselves have too often set rash and impertinent *cavillers* at work, by extorting strange doctrines from *metaphors* and *peculiar idioms* of speech, the meaning of which they were altogether unacquainted

SERM. with ; by extending what is applied by the

I. writers of the New Testament, only to some *special* cases, to *other* cases of a quite *different* kind ; and, in a word, by not adhering to *plain general principles*, like that mentioned in the text, as the only *sure ground* and *standard* of their opinions and reasonings — with which obscure and dubious passages must always be made to *correspond*. I therefore proceed,

FIRST, To explain the proposition itself, (that there is no respect of persons with God.)

SECONDLY, I shall shew, what *conclusions* and *inferences* may fairly be deduced from it. And,

IN the THIRD place, point out the *religious* and *moral* uses, to which such reflexions and inquiries as these are naturally adapted.

THE FIRST thing is, to explain the proposition laid down by St. Paul, “ that there is no respect of persons with God.”

And

And in order to the explication of this SERM.
 subject, and to remove the most material I.
 difficulties by which the injudicious or the
 artful, may cloud and perplex it, it will
 be proper for us to consider, that God may
 be justly represented in *two* different views,
 as the original *proprietor* and lord of na-
 ture, and as the *moral* governour and judge
 of the world: Or, which amounts to the
 same, either as *wisely* and *freely* distribu-
 ting his *gifts*, to which his creatures could
 not possibly have an antecedent claim; or
 as *judicially* dispensing rewards and punish-
 ments.— Let us then, in the first place,
 consider God as the supreme and sovereign
 disposer of all things, *voluntarily* distribu-
 ting *gifts* to his creatures; in which light
 he must be absolutely *independent*, and *ac-*
countable to none. And this will enable us
 to account for innumerable *cases*, which
 the ignorance, discontent, and cavilling
 temper of mankind have render'd *confus'd*
 and *intricate*, and presumptuously taxed
 with *partiality*. For under *this* head will
 be comprehended most of the *present* cir-
 cumstances of human life, and all those
varieties and seeming *inequalities*, in the

SERM. condition of man, which we are so apt
 I. to complain of. The *gifts* of God are of
 a vast extent, but not subject to the *same*
rules as his *judicial acts*: And this *distinc-*
tion must always be remember'd, and ap-
 plied to every particular case that we are
 inquiring into; otherways we shall both
 disparage his *munificence*, and blindly cen-
 sure his *government*.

As *being* itself, so every *faculty* with
 which we are indued, was originally the
gift of God. All *superior capacities* of
 mind, and every *distinguishing excellence* of
 nature, are derived from his overflowing
 goodness, and the effects of his almighty
 power. And, of consequence, all the *va-*
rious degrees of *natural perfection*, which
 appear in the rational and more exalted
 part of the universe, and the *different ad-*
vantages for improvement, and the attain-
 ment of happiness, are divine *gifts*; and
 cannot, with the least propriety, be re-
 presented under any *other* character. "The
 " same may be said of the *situation* of
 " mankind, the *age* in which they live,
 " the *outward circumstances* in which they
 " were originally placed; of the *differenc*

“ of their *means of knowledge* arising from SERM.
 “ their *birth, education, opportunities* for I.
 “ getting light and instruction, and from }
 “ the *politeneſs, ingenuity, and refinement,*
 “ or the *ignorance, rudeneſs and barbarity,*
 “ of the particular country where their
 “ lot is caſt, from the *incouragement* that
 “ is therein given to freedom of thought
 “ and enquiry, or the *difficulties and oppreſ-*
 “ *ſions* which it labours under, and, laſtly,
 “ from the goodneſs and uſefulneſs, or the
 “ depravity and dangerous tendency, of the
 “ *public principles* that happen to prevail
 “ there, and are eſtabliſh'd by cuſtom and
 “ authority.” All theſe things, and what-
 ever there is beſides of a *like* kind, which
 either belongs to conſtitution of *nature,*
 or is merely owing to the diſpoſition and
 conduct of *providence,* are the *gifts* of the
 Creator and Preſerver of the world: Which
 he was, ſtrictly ſpeaking, under *no* obliga-
 tion to communicate; and may therefore,
 “ confer them in what *proportions,* and
 “ with all the *variety,* that his infinite
 “ wiſdom ſhall think moſt expedient.”

IF none are *injured,* the diſtribution of
favours is moſt certainly *free,* and at the diſ-

SERM. creation of him by whom they are bestowed.

I. And to assert the contrary, converts what is *pure bounty* into a *debt*; into a necessary act of *justice*: It leaves indeed no room at all for the exercise of *goodness*, nor for any *obligation* of the creature to its creator. But yet, in *none* of these instances, can it with the least face of reason be imagined, that the natural and sovereign proprietor of all things acts *arbitrarily*, or from an undue *respect of persons*; but solely for the more *complete* and *extensive* display of his wisdom and benignity. Being not obliged, in strict equity, to make *all* his creatures of the same rank, nor consequently to allot to *all* precisely the same advantages; and, “ for the same reason, being
 “ not bound to make *every individual*, in
 “ any *distinct species* of created being, ex-
 “ actly *equal* with respect to moral excel-
 “ lence, and capacities for knowledge and
 “ happiness:” He has in fact expressed his goodness to *all*, but at the same time, ordained and fixed a beautiful and most admirable *diversity*; which, as it was a consideration of *wisdom* only, he must be at full liberty to do.

God no respecter of persons.

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IGNORANCE and superficial conceptions SERM.
have generally this effect, to make men I.
captious and impertinently inquisitive, as
well as presumptuous and *rash* in their cen-
sures. We are apt to condemn not only
what we *plainly see* to be wrong, but every
method of conduct which we cannot tho-
roughly and distinctly *explain*. And this
is grounded on a principle that the pride
of human nature seems to be extremely
fond of, tho' it be too absurd to be openly
avowed and defended, and that is, that
every design and operation of divine pro-
vidence, that *is in itself* fit and reasonable ;
must *appear to us* to be fit and reasonable ;
or, in other words, that all the *springs*,
and *causes*, and *uses* of it, must be *particu-
larly* known and perceived by us : And if
we cannot *assign* the just and proper rea-
sons for it, we reflect no further, but draw
this conclusion all at once----that there is
neither *reason*, nor *wisdom*, in it. Whereas
our own *little* experience of what passes
among ourselves, and the *scanty tract* of
observation to which we are at present
confined, may justly be expected to teach
us greater *modesty*. For as the schemes
and

SERM. and designs of *some men* are quite impene-

I. trable by *others*, we may fairly suppose, judging by the rule of *analogy*, which in this case can hardly deceive us, that the designs of some *superior beings*, tho' perfectly right and well-conducted, may be equally impenetrable by the *wisest* of mankind: And if we carry this necessary analogy, and correspondence of things in the course of nature, still higher, it will follow, that the vast designs of *an infinite mind* in various instances, not only *may*, but *must*, be either absolutely inscrutable, or but imperfectly comprehended, by the most exalted *created* understanding. The *end* proposed may be at too great a distance, to be clearly discerned--- or the *means* too complicated, to be rightly and accurately distinguished--- and their *connections* with each other, and with the end itself, too minute and nice, to be traced in their proper order and influence--- and yet unerring knowledge may direct every step, and *harmony* and *good* be the result of all. However, shallow and perplexed as our apprehensions are, a thoughtful and curious enquirer will easily discover such appearances of *wisdom*

in *all* the more remarkable events of pro-
vidence, as are sufficient both to raise ad-
miration, and inspire reverence and humi-
lity : sufficient to silence *atheistical* objecti-
ons, and satisfy the mind *in general*, till
either the scene is more perfectly *disclosed*,
as it frequently happens in the present
world ; or that more improved and in-
larged state, which reason itself strongly
prompts us to expect hereafter, presents us
with *brighter* views, and enables us, by
means of superior capacities, to form more
adequate and just ideas of the wonderful
works and government of the almighty.---

In the mean time let us fix on this *basis*,
that as long as we can *trace* evident *foot-*
steps of wisdom, tho' we are unable to *un-*
ravel the *whole scheme*, there can be no
ground, in the nature of things, on which
to suppose, that the disposals and allot-
ments of providence spring in *any degree*
from capriciousness, or an arbitrary partia-
lity. For to be partial is to act without a
reason, from mere *fancy* and *pleasure* ;
and therefore to imagine this, while we see,
at the same time, evident marks of a *ra-*
tional and *wise* design, is supposing (merely
for

SERM. for the sake of supposing) that *contradicti-*

I. *ons* are united, and exist together in the same subject.


I HAVE insisted so long on these things, because, as was hinted before, the reasoning here pursued will help us to settle very considerable difficulties, which are chiefly indeed levelled against revelation, but must, in their consequences, overturn *all religion*. It is now proper to observe, that the phrase, *respect of persons*, has principally, if not always in scripture, a *judicial* meaning. Thus

Levit. xix. it is used, *Ye shall do no unrighteousness in*
15. *judgment : Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty.* Again, *Ye shall not respect persons in judgment ;* which is thus explained, *Ye shall hear the small as well as the great, ye shall not be afraid of the face of man :* And this is expressly said in the 16th verse, to be a *charge* given to the *judges* of the land. In another place *respect of persons*, still confined to a *judicial* sense, stands to denote *corruption* and taking *bribes*, which, as it is there said with great eloquence, *blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the*

Deut. i. words of the righteous. And this likewise

Deut. xvi. 19.

is the constant notion, when it is applied SERM.
to God, that there *is no iniquity with the* I.

LORD, *nor respect of persons, nor taking of* 
gifts. I shall only add, that thus it is evi- 2 Chron.
xix. 7.

dently used in the Text. The great God is considered only in his judicial character, as the whole passage taken together plainly shews: For thus it stands connected,---
The revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds---indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil---but glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God. And now, having taken so large a compass in explaining the proposition itself;

I proceed, in the second place, to mention briefly some *important conclusions* that directly follow from it.---And, first, if it be a certain truth that God is *no respecter of persons*, it necessarily follows, that there must be some *fixed and sure way*, in which *all* mankind may find acceptance with him; and that this way has been in *ages past*, is *at present*, and will be *in generati-*

SERM. *ons to come, one and the same* with respect

I. to all nations of men, according to their
 ~~~~~ respective faculties, stations, and opportunities for improvement. For if the governour of the world is absolutely *inaccessible* to *some* of his subjects, while he is clement and *propitious* to others, or favours and rewards those who are in *like* circumstances upon *unequal* terms, how is it possible that he should be an upright and *impartial* judge, when truth and equity are so manifestly perverted, and cannot indeed in the nature of things, upon this absurd supposition, be *duly* and *regularly administered*? We are forced therefore, in order to vindicate the rectitude and honour of God's judicial proceedings, to allow, that there is *one invariable rule* of judgment with relation to *all*, suited to the difference of their conditions and characters: And this can be nothing else ' but the eternal ' *moral law*, and their acting conformably to the *light* and *advantages* which they ' *severally enjoy* ;' so that *reason* plainly directs to the same sentiment, as St. *Peter* received by *revelation* in the case of *Cornelius*, viz. that the most convincing demonstration

monstration which can be given, that God SERM.  
 is no *respecter of persons*, is this, that, in I.  
*every nation, he that feareth him, and work-*  
*eth righteousness, is accepted with him.* Acts x. 35.

AND from hence, again, it must be inferred in the second place, that, by the impartial judgment of God, none will be either rewarded or punished on the account of *mere names* and *outward distinctions*; that his favour cannot be confined to the enjoyment of certain *natural* or *accidental* privileges, nor his displeasure be annexed to the want of them; that neither the *family* from which a person is descended, or the *country* to which he belongs, nor even his *religious profession*, are the *rule* of judgment; and, of consequence, that *christians* will not be accepted *merely* as christians, nor *heathens* rejected *merely* as heathens. For no reason can be assigned, why respecting the person of the *nominal* christian, and condemning the heathen consider'd *only as such*; no reason, I say, can be assigned why this should not be deemed as gross a corruption and violation of *natural right*, as accepting the *rich* and despising the *poor*, in judgment. Our blessed Sa-  
 viour

SERM. viour therefore, that he might discourage,

I. in the most effectual manner, all fond and presumptuous confidence in *titles* and *professions*, and *external characters*, expressly assures us; *that not every one that saith*

Mat. vii. 27. *unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he alone that doth the will of his father who is in heaven.* On

the other hand, St. Paul has asserted, in the strongest terms, that the God of the universe did not leave himself without witness, even among the idolatrous *Gentiles*, *i. e.* not without sufficient discoveries and testimonies of his being and providence,---- of his merciful disposition towards *all* mankind, and inclination to accept and reward their religious and virtuous services; in that *he did good, and gave*

Acts xiv. 17. *rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness.* And the same Apostle declares himself more fully to this purpose in his eloquent speech to the *Athenians*, in which this is the sum of his doctrine; that the goodness of the Deity, which is so gloriously display'd in his creation and providential care of the whole human race without exception, had



a *direct* tendency, and was indeed *actual-* SERM.  
*ly design'd*, to lead the *Gentile* world to 1.  
 worship and obey him, that they might  
 render themselves fit objects of his appro-  
 bation. His words are as follows: That Acts xvii.  
*God hath made of one blood all nations of* 26, 27.  
*men, to dwell upon all the face of the earth,*  
*and hath determined the times before ap-*  
*pointed, and the bounds of their habitation;*  
*that they should seek the Lord, if happily*  
*they might feel after him and find him.*

—It appears then upon the whole,  
 that the *tender mercies* of God, not only  
 as Creator and Preserver, but as Ruler  
 and Judge, are *unlimited*, and extend to  
*all his works*.

LET me add to this, that it necessari-  
 ly follows, from the principle laid down  
 in the text, *viz. That there is no respect*  
*of persons with God*, that those will be  
 most highly esteemed and honoured by  
 him, who most faithfully cultivate their  
 rational powers, and make the greatest  
 advances in moral rectitude and useful  
 virtue. And this is likewise agreeable to  
 Christ's own parable of the *talents*, in  
 which there is a most judicious and noble:

SERM. description of the equitable distribution of

I. things, in the great and solemn day of  
 general recompence. For the foundation  
 on which the whole is built is this *essential* law of equity, that every man's future reward will be in proportion to his *improvements*, and that his must bear a proportion to his *abilities*. If the *Heathen* therefore, whom we will suppose to be the person that has but *one talent*, makes a proficiency equal to that of the *Christian*, who is entrusted with *five talents*, he must at the very *lowest estimate* be intitled to the *same* reward, because his qualifications are the same: — but I should rather think to a much *superior* reward, because his advantages were less, and his obstructions and difficulties far greater; and, consequently, his integrity and diligence must have been more eminent, and, in the nature of the thing itself, more worthy and commendable. The profligate and *vitious Christian* likewise, as he offends against clearer light, and more powerful motives to a better conduct, must, upon every principle of common justice, deserve a severer punishment than  
 the

*God no respecter of persons.*

19

the *dark and uninstructed Pagan*: So that while he is captivated by evil habits, and indulges to uncharitableness, pride, or sensuality, his being a *Christian* is really his unhappiness; instead of affording any solid ground for arrogance and ostentation, and the hope of extraordinary and *peculiar* favour.

SERM  
I.

THE *religious and moral* uses, to which such reflections as have been offer'd in the foregoing discourse are naturally adapted, are these.—In the *first* place, they inspire *high and amiable* thoughts of God, and represent him as a Being whom we can reverence *without terror*, and contemplate with *delight*; and remove all such opinions concerning the *arbitrary capriciousness* and *rigor* of his government, as render him the object of a *superstitious dread* and *aversion*, and destroy the very seeds of a *genuine, filial*, veneration and love of him.—Another use of entertaining such apprehensions concerning the Supreme Governor and Judge of all, as have been now inculcated, is this,—that they give us agreeable and pleasing sentiments of the state of all our *fellow-creatures*, endowed as we

SERM. are with rational powers, and subject to

I. the same universal authority of heaven.

Whereas the thought of their being cut off from the hope of *divine favour*, and abandoned to *destruction* and *misery*, would necessarily create a sensible pain, and the most melancholy reflections in a good-natured and generous mind; and make him survey the world with a *pity* mixed with *horror*, which he now surveys with *complacency* and *inward satisfaction*. And besides, these notions of the Deity are directly calculated to inspire into mankind a more refined sense of *humanity*, and an universal spirit of *benevolence* and *friendship*, as well as a *delight* in each other. But if we conceive of that great Being, to whom we are accountable, as *arbitrary* and *partial* in his proceedings, this may have a very corrupt influence upon our own temper: For it is too natural for us to treat those with *contempt* at least, if not with *cruelty*, whom we imagine that *God himself* has rejected and *abandoned*. — *Thirdly*, we may learn, from the doctrine of *St. Paul* in the text, a very important branch of our own *moral duty*,  
and

and that is, the practice of strict and *uni-* SERM.  
*versal justice* in all the concerns and offices I.  
of life: And particularly that in all cases of *right* which come before us, whether as placed in stations of civil authority, or as parents and masters of families, we decide as exactly as possible according to reason and the *real merit* of things; being neither influenc'd by affection, nor sowerd by passion, nor blinded by prejudice; neither corrupted by the love of sordid gain, nor transported by anger or revenge. — In the *last* place, nothing can possibly be a stronger encouragement to virtue, and dissuasive from vice, in *all* ranks and stations, than this thought, — that the upright and impartial Judge of mankind will consider *no distinction* at his tribunal, but that of the *good* or *bad*, the *well* or *ill-deserving*; that the mean condition of the *poor* will not excite in him a false compassion to the perversion of justice, nor riches and the most pompous titles procure *one single mark* of approbation: In short, when the virtues of the lowest will be equally regarded with those of the greatest, the injured vindicated, the pride

SERM. of tyrants and oppressors humbled, and  
 I. the vices of all receive a suitable recompence.

AND it ought to be particularly remembered, that in that *grand* and most *awful* day of *decision*, nothing will procure the approbation of the supreme Ruler of men, but a character that is *consistent*, and carries, throughout the whole of it, a sincere regard to *every* branch of virtue. A character that is throughout vicious will indeed be *consistent*, but not *amiable*. But where it is an irregular compound of good and evil qualities, there is both a disagreeable *deformity* and a manifest *absurdity* in it, it may justly be stiled *monstrous* in the moral world, as it is a mixture of qualities that are utterly disproportionate, that necessarily destroy each other, and therefore cannot subsist together in reality, but only in outward appearance. If, for instance, a person is rigidly just, but at the same time of an *insensible* and *unrelenting* temper, destitute of mercy and compassion; it may fairly be presumed that he looks on *justice* in no other light, than as the most *prudent scheme* to advance his reputation and  
 tem-

temporal advantage. If he be generous, but abandoned to *sensuality* and *intemperance*; his *generosity* cannot be consider'd as an improved and cultivated virtue, but only as the result of a good *natural* disposition. If he affects a solemn air of piety, and is very exact and punctual in all the outward forms of devotion, but is at the same time *proud* and *vengeful*, and fraudulent in his dealings; his *religion* is nothing else but *solemn impertinence*. For what reason can be assigned why any man should be just but not *charitable*, generous but not *temperate*, devout but not *honest*; unless it be that natural constitution, or prudence, inclines him to cultivate the *appearance* of some virtues, which he has no *particular* temptation to relinquish, and that he hath no regard at all to virtue for *itself*, but only as it suits his inclination or his interest? Such an inconsistent behaviour must argue either want of sense, or want of resolution, or an absolute contempt of religion. The *virtues*, be they ever so amiable and beneficial, which are thus obscured and disfigured by being joined with gross and enormous *vices*, can

SERM.  
I.

SERM. neither expect esteem from men, nor a re-

I. *ward* from God. Whereas if we are careful to exemplify in our lives every instance of true goodness, and our regards to it are not *constitutional* and *capricious*, by short-lived starts and intervals, but steady and uniform ; our example, (allowing only for the necessary imperfection and frailty of human nature) will be a finished picture of moral beauty : Every particular virtue will adorn and illustrate all the rest ; and the peculiar loveliness and glory of the whole character will spring from their *united lustre*.







## S E R M O N II.




The Scripture doctrine of Justification explained.

---

R O M. x. 3.

*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

 S mankind, in all ages, have invented such *strange* and *un-* SERM. II.  
*accountable* methods of serving God and securing his favour, as, one would think, could never be depended on where there is the lowest degree

SERM. gree of *understanding*, or capacity for *rea-*


II. *soning*; and as Christians themselves be-  
 wildered and stupified by *sounds*, so as not  
 to attend to the *true sense* of revelation,  
 have devised various schemes to the same  
 purpose grossly *frivolous* and *absurd*, as  
 well as utterly *insufficient* to answer the  
 end proposed; whereby, notwithstanding  
 all their *superior* advantages, they  
 have really fallen short of what *the light*  
*of nature itself* plainly and strongly inti-  
 mates: I thought it might be of great use  
 to explain the necessary terms of *pardon*,  
 and *acceptance* with God, as they are  
 proposed and represented in the gospel;  
 and to shew that what may, at first sight,  
 seem *peculiar* in them, has nothing in it  
*capricious* and *arbitrary*; but is exactly  
 and wisely *adapted* to the *constitution* and  
*present state* of human nature, and, “ so  
 “ far *coincides* with the universal and im-  
 “ mutable law of *reason*.”

THE *favour* of the Deity is allowed by  
 all, who acknowledge him under the  
 character of supreme moral Governor, to  
 be an inestimable blessing, and an essen-  
 tial part of the true felicity of every intel-  
 ligent

ligent creature. It is likewise admitted, SERM.  
 as a necessary consequence from this first II.  
 unquestionable principle, that it is of the  
 highest possible moment to us to be the  
*objects* of his esteem and complacency. —  
 But when we come to resolve the next  
 question, how this supreme privilege of  
 our nature may be *most certainly secured*,  
 “ here the *confusion* begins; we are *di-*  
 “ *vided* in our sentiments, and *lost* in  
 “ dark disputations: We follow our *pe-*  
 “ *culiar* schemes, *all* expecting the same  
 “ happy event hereafter, though it be  
 “ manifest that these schemes, in the  
 “ *consequences* that directly result from  
 “ them, are quite *incompatible*, and sub-  
 “ versive of each other; and that the  
 “ same end cannot be served by *all alike*  
 “ (if they are pursued and acted upon ac-  
 “ cording to their most *natural* tendency)  
 “ unless it can be *equally* promoted by  
 “ plain and irreconcilable *contradic-*  
 “ *tions.*”

MISERABLE indeed, *inexpressibly* mi-  
 serable, would the fate of mankind be *by*  
*nature*, if this grand point was in itself  
*ambiguous*, and scarce *determinable*; mi-  
 serable

SERM. ferable would it be, and a solid founda-

II.  tion for gloominess and anxiety of mind, if there were so many *unavoidable chances* against our supreme happiness, as this notion must include in it: If we were thus necessitated to grope our way in the *dark*, in the midst of *dangers*; strongly *concern'd* and *sollicitous*, and at the same time *perplex'd* and *uncertain*, about the final result of our enquiries. But if we *actually miss* the direct and sure path, when, by attention and care, we might easily have discovered and traced it *right*, our misfortune is so far from being lessened, that it must, upon the whole, be increased and aggravated, by a conscious sense of *guilt*. Our *misery*, the less it is owing to an original cause in nature, and the more it may be ascribed to voluntary error, will always be, in proportion, the more severely and deeply *felt*. — And to what do these reflections lead? Most certainly to this general conclusion: That divesting ourselves of all *prejudice*, that with an *ingenuous uncorrupted* temper, with *calm, engaged* and *serious* minds, we apply ourselves to examine “ what is the  
“ *true*

“ true and only way, in which the infi- SERM.  
 “ nite Creator and sovereign Ruler of the II.  
 “ world is determined to dispense his  
 “ mercy; or, upon *what terms*, we may  
 “ reasonably expect to find *acceptance*  
 “ with him.”

THIS fundamental article of religion is styled by St. Paul, in the text, *the righteousness of God*: — And the sum of his doctrine on this head, and especially in his epistle to the *Romans*, is as follows. — That *perfect innocence* is not the *condition* insisted on, because it is what mankind can never expect to attain to, in their present state of weakness and frailty; and, upon *this* foot, they are absolutely excluded from the hope of *mercy*, since *all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God*. That the *Gentiles* in particular had, in innumerable instances, deviated from *the law of nature*, and therefore were in a *lost and desperate* state, if the term required was *perfect* obedience to that unchangeable moral law: And that the *Jews* could not be *justified* according to the strict tenor of their *law of works*; which was *rigorous and inflexible*, running

SERM. ning in this discouraging strain : *Cursed* is

II. *every one that continueth not in all things,*  
 which are written in the book of the law,  
 Galat. iii. *to do them.* — What then is to be done?

10. Is the misery of the *moral* world quite *remediless*? Is there *no way*, in which they may secure the *favour* of their supreme Governor and Judge? “ *None at all*, but “ by introducing a *milder* law condescending and merciful to our infirmities, and which accepts of *sincerity* instead of complete obedience.” Such a scheme, therefore, as *this*, St. Paul concludes from the whole, was *necessary* to be introduced; this he asserts to be the *Christian* scheme; this he strenuously argues for as the *only* scheme, by which any man can be *justified* in the sight of God: This he styles being *justified by faith without the deeds of the law; the righteousness of God without the law*, i. e. without the necessity of an *exact* and *unerring* conformity to it; *the law of faith*; and *the law of righteousness*.

BUT because this is a matter of the highest importance, as it immediately concerns the very *essential* frame and constitution

stitution of Christianity, and our just and well supported hopes of pardon and eternal salvation, I shall explain it a little more distinctly; in order to clear it both from the charge of being an *irrational* and *arbitrary* scheme, and from the *darkness* and *confusion* in which it has been involved.

SERM.  
II.

What then is intended by *the righteousness of faith*, which the text represents as *God's righteousness*? — The same Apostle's account of it is, I think, evidently this: That both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were upon embracing the gospel, and professing faith in Christ, freed from the guilt of all their *past sins*, and brought into a state of reconciliation with God. If it be asked *what faith* it was, that intitled them to this eminent and glorious privilege: I answer in St. Paul's own words, *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in 'thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* Should it be inquired farther, “What connection *this faith* has with “*sincerity*, which I have supposed to be “the *universal condition* of acceptance “with God under the dispensation of the “gospel,”

SERM. "gospel;" and the *general head*, to which

II. all the qualifications therein specified are, and must be, reduced? I answer, again, "that in the *first* age of Christianity, especially; the receiving and owning a religion against the *united* force of *prepossession, corrupt passion, and worldly interest*, the embracing a religion that was *condemned* by publick authority, and every where *despised* and *persecuted*, a religion that *restrained* all criminal excesses, and *required* sublime refinement and purity of heart, and the strictest outward virtue; that such a conduct, as this, was a *singular* proof of *integrity*; and, farther, that *faith*, in *this* view of it, was such an *uncommon* instance of *moral rectitude*, as was very properly *distinguished* by special marks of the divine approbation: And, finally, that the *faith* which justified could, in the nature of things, be that *only*, which the searcher of all hearts knew to be *sincere*; that *alone*, which was accompanied with an honest undissembled resolution to amend *all* former errors; and practise every branch  
" of



“ of the extensive and exalted goodness SERM.  
 “ which Christianity requires; and would II.  
 “ *actually* produce, as far as opportuni-  
 “ ties were allowed for it, *all* the fruits of  
 “ *moral righteousness.*” So that Christian  
*justifying faith* necessarily includes, in the  
 very idea of it, “ uprightnes and probi-  
 “ ty of heart;” and was therefore *ac-*  
*cepted* by the wisdom and condescending  
 goodness of the universal Sovereign, for  
 the *remission of sins* that were past. But  
 then it must be consider’d, that it was  
 for the remission of *these only*; and that  
 in order to our being justified at last, be-  
 fore the awful tribunal of God, *faith*  
 must be allowed to have its *natural* influ-  
 ence, and show itself to be a *lively* and  
*efficacious* principle, by regulating every  
 evil disposition, controuling all licentious  
 appetites, and exciting to a constant course  
 of piety, and to every good work. Hence  
 it is, that St. *John* has represented the  
 faith of a Christian as *untainted* by the  
 pollutions of the world, and *superior* to  
 all the snares and temptations of it: *This,* <sup>1 John v:</sup>  
*is the victory that overcometh the* <sup>10.</sup>  
*world, even our* FAITH. And St. *Paul*

SERM. has described the *substance* of true christi-

II. anity thus, *faith working by love* : Which  
 Gal. v. 6. he expresses in the parallel texts by other  
 Chap. vi. terms, by the *new creature*, or an entire  
 15. conversion from vice and impurity to ho-  
 lineſs and rectitude of life, as if the *moral*  
*constitution* of the man was quite *modelled*  
 1 Cor. vii. and *formed a new* ; and by *keeping the*  
 17. *commandments of God*.

FROM this ſhort ſtate of the doctrine, deduced not from *obſcure* and *figurative* *phraſes*, but from moſt *exprefs* and *plain* *teſtimonies* of holy ſcripture, every attentive mind will eaſily diſcern the entire correſpondence that there is between the two apoſtles, St. *Paul* and St. *James*, in the great point of *juſtification*. This affair has been ſtrangely puzzled by religious *ſchematiſts* without the leaſt apparent ground for it. Difficulties have been ſtarted about a thing in itſelf moſt evident ; and greatly increased by the laborious trifling, and the ſubtle blind diſtinctions, apply'd to the ſolution of them. Nay, too many among us, in the intemperance and heat of *controversy*, have been apt to repreſent one of theſe apoſtles as leſs  
 evan-

evangelical than the other, for no other SERM. reason but because there are fewer passages, II. in his writings, that can be accommodated to their favourite schemes. *I am of James, and I of Paul*, seems to be too just a description of the inward *sentiment* of the mind, upon these occasions; though they have not been actually used as *terms of distinction*. But be cool, and deliberate a little, and seriously ask yourselves the following questions, which are as rational and forcible *now*, as they were in the first times of christianity. — *Was James crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul? Or is Christ divided? Or can the doctrines asserted by his immediate followers, from whom we derive our knowledge of the essential principles of the gospel, clash and interfere with each other? Were some thoroughly versed in the mysteries, the deep things, of christianity, and others but slightly and superficially instructed; ministers of the letter, and not of the spirit? May one be exalted and another degraded, when the authority of both is exactly the same, and their commission and directions are equally di-*

SERM. vine? There *can* be no ground for suppositions of this kind, unless we allow, at the same time, that the very *foundations* of our religion are *shaken*; and, in the instance before us, there plainly *is* none.

II.

FOR what is it that St. *Paul* has advanced, why that we are *justified by faith without the deeds of the law*. — And what is the *sense* and *intent* of this proposition? Let it be interpreted by his own *avowed doctrine* in innumerable other passages (which is but common sense, and common justice) and it can possibly amount to no more than this. “That the only  
 “ condition of pardon and justification is  
 “ *a sincere faith*, producing a uniform  
 “ course of *sincere obedience* to the laws  
 “ of God; and not *absolute uncorrupted*  
 “ *innocence*, or the *perfection of virtue*.”  
 And has St. *James* ever asserted the *contrary*? Nay, is not this the very thing, which he so earnestly contends for; *this*, I say,  
 “ that *obedience* and *works of righteousness*  
 “ *are the life* of faith?” — Or suppose the *former* to have meant, that “ the  
 “ *ceremonial law* was, under the gospel  
 “ constitution, no part of *acceptable* reli-  
 “ gion; ”

“ gion ;” has the *latter* so much as inti-  
 mated any thing in *opposition* to it? — If  
 again we take St. *Paul* thus; “ That  
 “ upon *faith* in Christ considered (which  
 “ it justly might be in those days) as a  
 “ remarkable instance of *integrity* and  
 “ *moral virtue*, God was pleased to be  
 “ propitious and receive his guilty crea-  
 “ tures into *favour*, notwithstanding  
 “ their *former* irregularities ;” there is  
*still* no appearance of a *contradiction* :  
 For the other Apostle has not touched on  
*this topic*, but treated the subject in a  
 quite *different* light.

IF, indeed, St. *Paul* had asserted such  
 libertine principles as these “ that *faith*  
 “ *alone*, without the practice of immuta-  
 “ ble *moral* duties, was sufficient to our  
 “ *final justification* before the judgment  
 “ seat of Christ ;” if instead of *expressly*  
 declaring, that *without holiness no man*  
*shall*, he had affirm’d, “ that without  
 “ holiness any man *may*, see the Lord :”  
 he would then have contradicted St. *James*,  
 and the sober sentiment of every rational  
 being in the universe. His principles  
 must then have sunk his character, and

SERM. render'd his name infamous. No baser

II. asperſion can be thrown upon him, no  
 greater indignity offer'd to his memory.

To call him a deluded *enthuſiaſt* is doing him honour, in compariſon with repreſenting him thus as an *advocate* for *licentiousneſs*. But as he has, in all his epiſtles, inculcated *morality* as an indiſpenſable part of the *Chriſtian* character ; as he has declared, in the plaineſt and moſt forcible terms, that *to be carnally minded is death*, that *groſs* and *habitual* offenders, of *all* kinds, ſhall hereafter be infallibly *excluded* the *everlaſting kingdom of God* ; and that, *in Chriſt Jeſus*, nothing can be depended upon as of any real *ſignificancy*, but a *working faith*: What is this but laying it down as the ſcheme and fixed law of the goſpel, that in order to our continuance in a juſtified ſtate, and to our ſolemn abſolution by the ſupreme Judge, our faith muſt have this *effect* upon us, to produce *love* and *piety* towards God, and acts of *beneficence* and *goodneſs* to our fellow-creatures? — What is it but declaring with St. *James*, that we muſt *ſhew our faith by our works*, and that *as the body without*  
*the*

*the spirit is dead, so faith without works* SERM. II.  
*is dead also*; and subscribing, as the result of all, “to the same general conclusion, *viz.* that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only?” — According to the *one*, faith, as a conspicuous example and proof of virtue, *first* recommended to the favour of God; and this position the other has no where disputed: But according to *both*, if the professed Christian afterwards held *the truth in unrighteousness*, and continued to have *faith alone*, and had not *works*, “he was absolutely cut off from the hope of salvation.” Thus have I shown, upon the whole, the true sense of that phrase, *the righteousness of God*; which the unbelieving *Jews* were *ignorant* of, and in the place of which, they sought to establish *their own righteousness*.

What the Apostle intended by *that*, I now proceed, in the second place, to consider. — That none of the blind and giddy race of mankind can expect to be justified by a *law* that requires *perfect rectitude*, is the clear voice of *reason*, as well as the unquestionable doctrine of the *gospel*.

SERM. And that our moral righteousness, when  
 II. carried to the sublimest height, and cultivated in the utmost extent which it is at present capable of, cannot be said, in *strict justice*, to merit the glorious reward of eternal life; this likewise must be the *natural sentiment* of every wise and considerate man, as it is the *profess'd judgment* of St. Paul. Both these are certain and establish'd maxims in the nature of things, and not the *new* and *peculiar* principles of revealed religion.

But what of all this? — Because mankind are *incapable* of pleasing their Maker, by yielding an *absolute* and *invariable* obedience to the eternal laws of righteousness; does it follow from hence, “ that they cannot render themselves ac-  
 “ *ceptable* to him, by a universal course  
 “ of *sincere* obedience? ” Are *good* dis-  
 “ *positions*, and *sincere* endeavours to  
 serve and honour him, of *no* *significancy*  
 with the wisest and most compassionate of  
 all Beings, “ for want of something,  
 “ which the very *original constitution* of  
 “ our nature has put it quite *out of our*  
 “ *power*?” Is the *prevailing* turns and



biass of our minds insufficient to *plead* for us; “and are our *involuntary* and *unallowed*

SERM.

II.

“imperfections of weight enough, even  
“with *impartial* mercy, to *condemn* us?”

Because virtue does not *properly*, and in an *exact* notion of *equity*, *merit* the transcendent honour and felicity, to which it is the gracious appointment of God that it shall be hereafter advanced, “has it,  
“therefore, no *loveliness* and *worth* in it,  
“to render it a *fit* and *suitable* object of  
“*peculiar* favour and complacency?”

These, surely, are inferences drawn at random, and by confounding things that have no relation to each other: And it seems, on the contrary, to be one of the *first* principles that the light of nature teaches; that the righteous God must *necessarily*, and determin'd by his own essential *moral rectitude*, love *righteousness*, and take pleasure in the *upright*. St. Paul therefore, when he upbraided the mistaken and conceited *Jews*, with going about to establish *their own righteousness*, could not design to depreciate *personal* virtue and *inherent goodness*, because these are the *chief* excellence and honour of  
every

SERM. every intelligent Being; and, when they  
 II. are the prevailing temper and habit  
 of the mind, render a man more *worthy*  
 of the *esteem* of his fellow-creatures, and  
 better *qualified* for the *grace* of God,  
 than any other thing, without them, can  
*possibly* do.

IF we compare together *mere faith*  
 and *moral righteousness*, the latter has  
 vastly the *preference* with respect to in-  
 trinsic and real value. There may be  
 a faith perfectly *orthodox*, or a *clear* and  
*firm* assent to all speculative principles of  
 religion, in the *vilest* and most *detestable*  
 characters. For even *the Devils believe*,  
 and *tremble*. Nay, if God from his mere  
*pleasure*, and to shew forth his *sovereign-  
 ty* had so determined, these same *Devils*  
 might have been, as far as I can see, *im-  
 putatively* clothed with the righteousness  
 of another, and might also, under that  
 splendid covering have been presented be-  
 fore the supreme justice as *perfect*, with  
 the same strict truth and propriety, as  
 this privilege can be allowed to the un-  
 godly and sinful part of *Adam's* race;  
 continuing *sinful* and *ungodly*. And yet,  
 surely,

surely, if while they were dressed in these robes *not their own*, they retained their malignant and diabolical *dispositions*,  
 “ they must in every sense of the word,  
 “ that carries with it *guilt, horror, and ignominy*, have remained *Devils* still.”—  
 But could you suppose “ a *moral change*  
 “ to be effected, in the *temper and inward complexion* of the Apostate Spirits;” were it possible for them “ to  
 “ become thoroughly and habitually *benevolent, merciful, humble, reverent*  
 “ of God, and adorn’d with *complete rectitude* of nature;” they would no longer appear, as they did, before *disgraceful*, they would no longer excite *dread and abhorrence*, but be really turned into *angels of light*. The constitution of their nature would be harmonious and regular; and consider’d merely, with respect to the qualities they were *then* possess’d of, they must of necessity be *grateful* and *acceptable* to God. But the making them in themselves *amiable*, and *just* objects of *esteem*, is an effect that no clearness, extent, or strength of *faith*, no *imputation* of what does not inherently belong to  
 them,

SERM. them, no *borrowed* righteousness can ever  
 II. produce.

AND indeed the language of the gospel is evidently in this strain, that we are justified, not by the *perfect righteousness*, but by the *death* of Christ: The New Testament assures us, that not his obedience, but our own faith, is *imputed to us for righteousness*; that God sent his son in the *likeness of sinful flesh*, that the *righteousness of the law might be fulfilled* in, or by us, and not by him for us; and that the great Governor of the world, in the revelation of his just and impartial judgment, will *render unto every man*, not as works, performed by *another*, have been *transferr'd* and *placed* to his account, but *according to his own deeds*. Nay, farther, should we admit this doctrine to be *true*, mankind could no longer be consider'd as *in themselves*, and *solely in themselves*, *moral* and *accountable* creatures; nor would the future judgment “ be an e-  
 “ *quitable* distribution of *rewards* and  
 “ *punishments*, but only God's awful and  
 “ *uncontroulable* execution of his own  
 “ *arbitrary* and *irreversible* decrees:” —

By

by which supposition the *basis* of christi-  
 anity is undermined, and the whole frame  
 of it falls to the ground ; nor “ does it  
 “ fall *alone*, but buries in its *ruins*, the  
 “ religion of *nature* and *reason* too.”  
 And besides this, the doctrine, which I  
 am now opposing, renders *repentance*,  
*personal* reformation, and *inherent* recti-  
 tude entirely needless. For if a *solemn co-*  
*venant* was ratified between God and the  
 Mediator, that he should *fulfil the law*  
 for the *elect* race of mankind ; and that  
 they should be reckoned *perfectly righte-*  
*ous* in *his* righteousness, and as having  
*perfectly obey'd* in *his* obedience — What  
 is there *left* for *man* to do ? God has been  
*satisfied* in *all* his demands ; his *law*, his  
*honour*, his rigorous relentless *justice* are  
*all* satisfied ; and therefore, in strict equi-  
 ty, he can demand *nothing farther*. The  
 believer indeed out of *mere generosity*  
 may, if he pleases, add works of *righte-*  
*ousness* of *his own*, but his main interest is  
*secure* without it : And the *favour* of  
 God, in virtue of the antecedent *covenant*  
 made with Christ, (and *fulfilled* on his  
 part) is *certain* and *irrevocable*. Add to

SERM. all that has been said, that this notion, of  
 II. a *substituted* and *vicarious* righteousness, seems absurd even to common sense, and to the most *natural* and *easy* reflections of men. For *obedience* and *righteousness* are, in the nature of the things themselves, personal qualities, and entirely so. Every man is *that only* (and can be nothing else) which he is *in himself*. “If he is *prophane, proud, and intemperate*, he can never be the less so, for *another man’s* being perfectly devout, humble, and regular.” If he is *unjust*, he must be *unjust still*; if *unholy, unholy still*. And if his vices are *naturally* and *intrinsically* detestable, “he, also, must continue to be the *fit* and *proper* subject of dislike and aversion.” And it should be consider’d further, that the *obedience* of *Christ* (which, upon every scheme, he was *only* capable of yielding as a *subjected* and *dependent* creature) that the *obedience* of *Christ*, I say, was *wholly due for himself* and therefore could, by no means, be an *equivalent* for the *obedience* that was due from *any other single being* in the universe. Far be it from us, then, to impute this confus’d heap of er-

rors to the Christian doctrine, which SERM. is in *all* the parts of it worthy of God, II. and *chiefly* recommends itself to the esteem and reverence of the *truly wise*. — For the *sum* of it, as it results from the foregoing discourse, which has been built on plain evidences and demonstrations of scripture, is in short this, “ That the law of *faith*, “ by which *Christians* are said to be *justified*, amounts to *no more*, as to the “ main substance and *intent* of it, than “ the law of *sincerity* :” — That faith was never designed to denote the *bare assent* of the mind to principles of truth, nor ever stands for a barren and inefficacious *speculation* ; but always signifies an internal and genuine *principle* of *piety* and *habitual virtue*, is always consider’d as an *act* of integrity, an eminent *example* and *demonstration* of it. — That if our faith *really* led to *immorality*, it would be presumption and blasphemy to stile it a *divine* faith : But as it teaches us to aspire after the *sublimest* height and *utmost* extent of virtue, if our conduct be licentious and dissolute, it must, upon this very account, be the more scandalous and inexcusable.—

SERM. That immoral actions speak *intelligibly*,

II. and proclaim to all the world either that  
 it is our opinion that our faith is *good for nothing*; and ought not to be allowed its *natural influence*; or else, that we are to be held by *no tye* and can set at *defiance* the most sacred principles, which is an infallible sign, that scarce a spark of *honour* or *probity* of mind is subsisting within us. And for the very *same reason*, on which faith is *accepted* and rewarded when it is a mark of *integrity*, it must of necessity, be *rejected* as an insufficient plea, by our upright and all-discerning Judge, when it is attended with flagrant *dishonesty*. So that upon the whole, the law of *righteousness by faith* comes to much the same, if we take in the *foundation* and *true scope* of it, and *all the cases* to which, by a parity of reason, it *may* and *must* be extended; it then, I say, comes  
 “ to much the same with that more *gene-*  
 “ *ral* rule laid down by St. *John*, that *he*  
 “ *that doth righteousness is righteous.*”  
 For *justifying faith*, as it is above explain’d, may with great propriety be stiled an act of *moral righteousness*. It  
*springs*



*springs* from virtue, and *terminates* in it: SERM.

“ *In* virtue, the *sincere practice* of which,  
“ according to the *light* and *advantages*  
“ which they severally enjoy, may be  
“ consider'd as *an uniform* and *invariable*  
“ law of righteousness with respect to  
“ *all nations*; and a means of procuring  
“ indulgence and mercy for *many*, who  
“ never heard of *Christ*, from the Father  
“ and Friend of *the whole race* of man-  
“ *kind.*”

II.







# S E R M O N III.



Moral reflections on the history of  
*Joseph.*

---

G E N. xxxix. 9.

-----*How, then, can I do this  
great wickedness, and sin against  
God!*



HERE is no branch of ancient private history more remarkable, than that of the patriarch *Joseph*: Whether we regard the *characters* of the actors, the *surprising* revolutions, the *extremes* of

SERM. III.  
~

SERM. fortune, the *variety*, or *importance*, of  
 III. the events contained in it. And of this  
 history, there is no part more affecting  
 and useful than that to which the text  
 relates: If we consider it either as affor-  
 ding an example of *manly resolution*; or  
 of *heroick virtue first oppressed*, and, in  
 the end, *victorious and triumphant*; or  
 with respect to the *moral* instructions that  
 may be deduced from it. The substance  
 of the fact is this: *Joseph*, being betray-  
 ed by his brethren, was sold as a slave to  
*Potiphar*, an officer of distinction under  
 the king of *Egypt*. His good qualities  
 gained him the esteem and affection of his  
 master, who preferred him to manage all  
 the affairs of his family. — But here an ac-  
 cident happened, that was likely to have  
 blasted all his schemes of happiness. The  
 wife of *Potiphar* tempted him to *lowliness*:  
 Which he, reflecting on the heinousness  
 of the crime of *adultery* in itself,  
 (which is branded with *peculiar* infamy  
 by every *civilized* nation, and held in the  
 utmost detestation by almost all, who re-  
 tain *any sense* of the difference of good and  
 evil) reflecting likewise on the baseness  
 of

of ingratitude and treachery towards so kind a benefactor, and the great offence he should be guilty of against the Creator and Sovereign of the world, rejected with a warm and generous resentment. Upon this the passions of his mistress took another turn equally violent, and she brought a false accusation against him for attempting her chastity: And *Potiphar*, confiding in her honour, committed him to prison. “ Now he seems to have been quite lost, and abandoned to *misery* and *despair* ;” but vain are the counsels of man: For this very circumstance was the occasion of his being introduced into the presence of *Pharoah*, and of his appearing, again, on the stage of the world with extraordinary lustre and dignity, for the preservation and support of his own family, which afterwards sprang up into a great and flourishing nation. This account, every one must perceive, suggests several useful observations; among which I shall fix on two or three to be the subject of the following discourse.

AND the FIRST is immediately pointed out to us by the text itself, *viz.* that the fear

SERM. of God, and a serious regard to his authority, is a most effectual preservative from all criminal indulgences. It was *this* that restrained *Joseph* from complying with the loose solicitations of his mistress, and gave him a perfect superiority and *command* over his passions. A sense of the *injustice* of the action, and how highly provoking it must be to Heaven, had he been guilty of such *vile perfidiousness* against a man, who had used him with so much confidence and generosity, kept under the impulses of *sense* and *appetite*, and quite baffled the force of this dangerous temptation. And a becoming reverence of the Deity will have the *same effect* in all mankind, upon all *other* occasions, and in *every scene* of life. If it be only *occasional*, it will, indeed, do no more than *check* our inclinations in some *particular* instances, and *limit* our excesses; but when it is become a fixed *habitual* principle, it will have an *uniform constant* efficacy in preserving the passions *regular*, and the conversation *honest*, and *untainted* by any *gross* degrees of wickedness. For no man was ever yet of so re-

solite and daring a temper, as to allow himself in a dissolute course of life, under an immediate *quick* apprehension of the divine displeasure: He *cannot* offend the Deity *at the same time* that he feels an inward esteem of him, and gratitude for his benefits; nor *violate* any law, while he has a strong conviction of the *wisdom* and *goodness* of the power that enacted it. These things are as absolute contradictions, as that approbation and dislike, reverence and contempt, love and hatred, should be *exercised* towards the *same* object *at once*: So that our sinful pursuits must either entirely extirpate the *fear* of God, or that will, of necessity, reform and cure our vices.

AND that this excellent principle should have so powerful an influence against natural disposition, custom, the bewitching allurements of pleasure, and the most enchanting prospects of worldly advantage, will not seem strange to us when we consider; that it strikes every *passion*, every *spring* of human actions, and includes in it *all* the most powerful *motives*, by which the conduct of mankind is determined.

SERM.  
III.  
~~~~~

SERM. If *interest* be the principal thing that sways
 III. with us; *that*, surely, cannot be so cer-
 tainly promoted, as by securing the fa-
 vour of the infinite God, and avoiding
 his displeasure which is the forest of all
 evils. If we are governed by our *fears* ;
 “ he is the most formidable Being in the
 “ universe to a depraved mind, that has
 “ perverted its faculties, and transgressed
 “ the law of its nature :” If by *hope* ;
 “ he is the supreme and an eternal good :”
 if by *love* ; “ he is most amiable and per-
 “ fect excellence :” If by *gratitude* ;
 “ he is the cause of our existence, and the
 “ author of all our happiness.” Or do
 we regard *fitness*, *rectitude*, and *beau-*
ty in actions, and would be thought not
 to be *driven* by the *terrors* of authority,
 but to chuse virtue for *its own sake* and
 for the intrinsic *reasonableness* of it? — I
 would ask, “ what can be more *becom-*
 “ *ing*, more agreeable to *human nature*,
 “ to *eternal reason*, and *the nature of*
 “ *things*,” than to *esteem* supreme per-
 fection, to *venerate* unbounded wisdom
 and power, and to be *fearful* of offend-
 ing the greatest and most excellent of all
 Beings,

Beings, the compassionate Father, uncontrollable Disposer, and impartial Judge of mankind! The fear of God therefore, when it is a rooted principle in the heart, must restrain from the most intimate and highly favoured excesses; and beget an *invincible resolution*, which no assaults can subdue or intimidate.

SECONDLY, In the course of our observations, on this passage of sacred history, we are naturally led to consider “the *shamefulness* and *heinous guilt* of ingratitude.” This was the *principal* thing that *Joseph* urged, against committing the crime to which he was so strongly excited: That his *master* had committed all he had to his care, there was none greater in the house than he, neither had he kept back any thing from him but his wife, (whom all laws, divine and human had guarded as the most sacred and inviolable part of his property) — “How then, says he, can I do this great wickedness, how can I be guilty of this base breach of trust, against common equity and the most endearing obligations of friendship while I have any sense of ingenuity

SERM. “*nity towards my benefactor, or reve-*

III. “*rence of Almighty God!*” As a man, such a conduct towards one of his own species was absolutely *indefensible*; but from a *servant* to his master, who had highly careffed and honoured him, and loaded him with fignal favours, it was fo utterly *unnatural*, that whoever attempted it muft be *extravagantly* wicked, and funk to the very loweft pitch of degeneracy. *Ingratitude*, added to *adultery*, would have rendered what is, in itfelf, one of the *fouleft* ftains to *man’s* nature infinitely more black and deteftable; and have fwelled the guilt of it to fo vaft a fize, that it would fcarce have admitted of any further aggravation.

THIS, indeed, agrees with the unanimous opinion of mankind in all ages. They have ever *stigmatized* ingratitude, as the utmoft depravation and reproach of human nature. *Other* immoralities have been *moderated* and *specioufly* varnifhed over; but this has been constantly condemned, without one *professed* advocate to plead its caufe. And yet, how inconfiftent and unaccountable fo-
ever

ever it may seem, it is more generally practised, in some view or other of it, than vices that are not half so infamous and *shocking* to the mind. The reason of which I apprehend to be this: “ That
 “ the charge of *ingratitude* is, often-
 “ times, not capable of *clear* and *full*
 “ proof, because that depends on innu-
 “ merable circumstances and *secret* tran-
 “ sactions, which cannot be thoroughly
 “ *known* nor distinctly *specified*; upon
 “ which account, it is, *generally*, not
 “ cognisable by human laws: So that
 “ men escape that *punishment*, and in a
 “ great measure that *shame* and *ignominy*,
 “ which, as it can be fixed with more *cer-*
 “ *tainty*, follows likewise more *univer-*
 “ *sally*, on committing other acts of in-
 “ justice.” Besides they are apt in no-
 thing so much, as with respect to *parti-*
cular instances of ingratitude, to impose
 upon themselves. The *grosser* cases, in
 which *direct* abuse and indignity are of-
 fered to a benefactor, are freely exclaim-
 ed against; but such as are less *flagrant*,
 either pass without censure because they
 are *common*, or for want of *reflection* are
 not

SERM.
 III.


SERM. not duly attended to. I shall therefore

III. just mention a few examples of this vice, which appear to be the most *prevailing*; and then shew, briefly, that it is a heinous degree of wickedness, which argues a thoroughly corrupted and profligate mind, and is attended with most fatal consequences.

IN the *first* place, That man may be justly charged with *ingratitude*, who refuses, on all proper occasions, to *acknowledge* the kindness he has received to the honour of his benefactor. This is the *least return* that can be made for offices of generosity and compassion; and whoever declines it deprives them of their *natural just reward* the *respect* of mankind; and would, if possible, *efface* all *remembrance* of them. “ To be *shy* of
 “ owning an obligation argues an *ignorant*,
 “ *conceited, base* spirit, that aims at *independ-*
 “ *dency*, and would fain be thought to be
 “ *self-sufficient*; though it be obvious to
 “ all, that man by the very frame of his
 “ nature is *frail* and *impotent*, and must
 “ in innumerable respects, without the
 “ friendly interposition of others, be *helpless*
 “ and

“ and *miserable.*” A person of an *ingenious* SERM. temper, therefore, considers it as no more III. *a disgrace* to him to be indebted to his fellow-creatures, for relieving his cares and assisting his imbecillity, than it is to be under a necessity of satisfying the appetites of hunger and thirst, and taking in animal or vegetable nourishment for the support of life. On the contrary, he thankfully adores the *wisdom of providence* in ordaining the *mutual dependencies*, that there are amongst mankind, as they are the most powerful *motive* imaginable to universal love and charity ; and is always ready to acknowledge the benefits which he has received, for the *encouragement* of good and beneficent actions.

AND if it be ungrateful not to *own* an obligation, we must deserve the same bad character, if we endeavour, by any means, to *lessen* it. This may be done various ways : — By imputing it to *wrong principles*, to a desire of popularity, and the like ; by insinuating that our benefactor did not design to do *us* good, so much as to serve *himself*, and, in the *ostentation* of his beneficence, acted only from *selfishness* ;

SERM. *ness*; that the service he did us was not

III. the effect of a *charitable disposition*, but
 ~~~~~ extorted from him by *importunity*, and  
 the *influence* of those whom he could not  
*in prudence* offend; that it was but a *com-*  
*mon* favour that *any* man would do for  
 another, and which was performed with-  
 out *difficulty* or *expence*. — Thus will un-  
 grateful suspicions *tarnish* the best actions,  
 and give them such an invidious turn as  
 shall derogate greatly from their *merit*.  
 This species of ingratitude proceeds from  
 the same source as the former, from a  
 stiff inflexible *pride* that cannot submit to  
 acknowledge an obligation, and therefore  
 industriously and maliciously *detracts* from  
 it; from *envy* at superior goodness, that re-  
 pines till it be blasted, and its lustre obscur-  
 ed; and from a malignant cankered heart,  
 that does all its *seeming* specious offices of  
 generosity from low and vile motives, and  
 is, therefore, disposed to ascribe to others  
 the same *iniquity* and *baseness* of temper,  
 which it feels in itself.

AGAIN, “ a man may return the ser-  
 vices done him in *kind*, and yet be un-  
 grateful.” If he confines himself to a  
 strict

strict retaliation, to just the same *instances* SERM. and *degrees* of help, he may, in the opi- III. nion of the world, discharge the debt of *justice*, but be shamefully defective in point of *gratitude*. — “ For perhaps the  
 “ person, who assisted me, was one from  
 “ whom I could have no *claim*, or *just*  
 “ *expectation*, of particular friendship;  
 “ and can I think him sufficiently paid  
 “ for a *free unmerited* act of kindness  
 “ by doing him *no favour* at all, and on-  
 “ ly returning what he had a right to in-  
 “ sist upon as his *due*?” — Or else the  
 service he has done me might, in pro-  
 portion to his circumstances, be exceed-  
 ingly *generous* and *noble*; my performing  
 the same for him and going *no farther*, if  
 my condition be much more easy and  
 plentiful, may be niggardly and penurious  
*charity* even to a stranger; but however  
 that be, to such a benefactor it is so far  
 from being a *proper exercise* of *gratitude*,  
 that it *falls short* of common equity. —  
 Or finally the relief which he afforded me  
 might be *critical*, in some special exi-  
 gence and season of distress that threatened  
 the ruin of my family, or, at least, the  
 involv-

SERM. involving it in next to inextricable diffi-

III. culties. If, therefore, when his affairs  
 are embarrassed, and he requires a much  
 larger succour, than my necessities de-  
 manded, to redeem him from want and  
 misery, I am *unaffected* by his deplorable  
 circumstances, and content myself with  
 rendring back the very *same proportion* of  
 help which I received from him, I may  
 do him *no* service who did me the great-  
 est; and, where there is a capacity of be-  
 ing more generous without *any considera-*  
*ble* inconvenience to myself, this must cer-  
 tainly argue a very *insensible* and *barbarous*  
 disposition. ‘There are some *single fa-*  
 ‘*vours* so gracefully and obligingly be-  
 ‘stowed, so well-timed and adapted to  
 ‘particular cases, and so vastly important  
 ‘in their consequences, that they cannot  
 ‘be *fully* requited but by the affection  
 ‘and *devoted friendship* of a whole life.’


IN the *last* place, ingratitude may be  
 shewn even in *resenting* injuries done by  
 a benefactor. For the offence may be the  
 result of *sudden passion*, and should there-  
 fore be gently overlook’d; the service he  
 did us might proceed from an *established*



*habit of goodness* and a real concern for our welfare, and therefore ought never to be forgotten: Or else the benefits we have received may be so *many*, or so *valuable*, as ought to cancel and obliterate a great number of lesser injuries. And, in both these cases, the same resentment that might be *lawful* on common occasions, must be highly indecent and excusable.

AND, now, it will easily be made to appear that ingratitude is so monstrous a vice, so foul a stain upon humanity, that it loudly calls for our utmost horror and detestation. — To render evil for evil merely from a motive of *private* revenge, or, in other words, to be pleased with the sufferings of our fellow-creatures only because they have done us wrong, and without any regard to the *publick good*, is savage and unnatural. It must be a *more* aggravated crime to injure those who have never *offended* us; because this is cruelty without any *provocation*. Surely, then, we cannot conceive how any reasonable creature can be more depraved, or arrive at a more diabolical excess of wickedness,

SERM. than when it returns *evil* for good, *abuse*,  
 III. *calumny*, and *injustice* for friendship, protection, and acts of charity. This is not only being malicious *without a temptation*, but *against* the strongest *reasons* to the contrary; and consequently argues, that we have, in a great measure, rooted out all our *humane* and *benevolent* affections. — Again acknowledgment, respect, and returns of kindness to a benefactor are a debt of *equity*, and therefore ingratitude must be a vile mixture of injustice and inhumanity in the *extreme* of both; a compound, which includes in it the *seeds* of all the blackest enormities that were ever committed. — This vice is likewise inconsistent with the exercise of *every* social virtue. The ungrateful man will doubtless cheat and defraud his neighbour, and practise any other villany, when he thinks it to be for his *interest*, and that he may do it without being *discovered*: — For what should *restrain* him? — He feels *no remorse* for an offence of uncommon malignity, and it is not to be imagined, that he will be so *absurdly squeamish* as to stick at lesser immoralities. It cannot be ex-

pected unless it be from a principle of SERM.  
*self-love* (which will but seldom operate III.  
this way) it cannot, I say, be expected,   
that he will do good to those who never  
obliged him when he uses his *benefactors*  
*ill*. There can no *friendship* be maintained  
with the ungrateful, who repay the most  
considerable services with indifference  
and contempt: And should this crime  
*generally* prevail, it must be an effectual  
*discouragement* to kind and compassionate  
offices among mankind, and have a direct  
tendency, in the end, to destroy *public be-*  
*nevolence* altogether. For there are few  
but would be weary of doing good, if  
they met with none but *ungrateful* re-  
turns; the *ardor* of their charity would  
by degrees abate; *mutual assistances* must  
be bargained for, as is now the case in  
matters of private *right* and *property*:  
“ And there could be but little of that of-  
“ *ficious* goodness, that open communica-  
“ tive *unsolicited* benevolence, which  
“ *searches* for objects on which to exert  
“ itself, *prevents* the complaints of the  
“ miserable, and is, in short, the *spring*

SERM. “ of the most *desireable* conveniencies and  
 III. “ comforts of human life.”

ADD to all this, that ingratitude to our fellow-creatures and to the infinite Creator are *inseparably* connected, and must necessarily go together. “ He that  
 “ is unjust to *one* person will, in the o-  
 “ pinion of the whole world, act a mere  
 “ solemn farce, if he pretends *Conscience*  
 “ for the exercise of strict justice to *ano-*  
 “ *ther*. His Conscience can be only *in-*  
 “ *terest*, or the *necessity* of his affairs that  
 “ obliges him to be honest. If he im-  
 “ poses on *strangers* who place a confi-  
 “ dence in him, no man will believe him  
 “ when he professes, from a principle of  
 “ *morality*, to be either true to his *friend*,  
 “ or faithful to his *prince*. And 'tis an  
 “ equal contradiction to suppose, that he  
 “ who is ungrateful to *men* can be grate-  
 “ ful to his *God*.” So that this abomi-  
 nable vice eradicates all sense of *piety*,  
 and, together with that (as has been be-  
 fore observed) destroys the very seeds of  
 every *social* virtue.

SHOULD it be asked, how it comes to pass SERM. that a crime, so full of baseness and guilt, is III. not expressly condemned by the *Christian* religion; the answer is natural, that the deformity and monstrous qualities of it, are so plain to the *first* reflections of mankind, so universally allowed and highly resented, that there is no need of its being *distinctly specified* in any scheme of morals: — “ For it can never be a sin of ignorance.” — But to this we may add, that our Saviour has expressly told us, that even the *Publicans*, who are represented as some of the most *notorious* sinners in his time, *loved those that loved them, and did good to those from whom they received good*; strongly intimating, that ingratitude *shocks* the temper of some of the worst of men, and is therefore *vice* in its most *unnatural* excess. And if the *unrighteous* in general, by the wise constitution of the gospel, shall not *inherit the kingdom of God*, the argument must hold, with much greater force, against admitting the *ungrateful* into that glorious state; in which exercises of *love* and *cheerful obedience* to the Deity,

SERMON. and *benevolence* and *good-will* towards the  
 III. blessed inhabitants, refined from all alloys  
 of pride, envy, insolence and ill-nature, will not only be our constant *employment*, but the principal *ingredient* in our happiness.


IN the *last* place, it is one of the most remarkable parts of *Joseph's* history, that the *lowest scene* of his disgrace, the most *melancholy*, and, to human probability, *desperate* state of his affairs was the means of his *advancement* to eminent dignity in *Pharaoh's* court, and to be the first minister in his kingdom. From whence we are led to reflect on the *wisdom* of providence in so framing the condition of human life, "that the events of things are "unknown to us." Such a disposition, in a state liable to infinite *vicissitudes*, is followed with great advantages, whereas a clear foresight of the *whole* issue and result of things, and of every scene through which we are to pass, would be attended with innumerable inconveniencies, and have consequences very fatal to *religion*, and to the *peace* of our own minds. If

a man, for instance, could *certainly* say SERM.  
in his flourishing circumstances, as *David* III.  
did *presumptuously*, that he should *never*  
*be moved*, but enjoy an uninterrupted  
course of affluence and worldly honour,  
he would probably be elate with *pride*,  
and give larger scope to his *luxury*: While  
the *uncertainty* of the highest stations,  
and the variety of unforeseen accidents  
that may *reverse* his fortune, *checks* the  
insolence of prosperity, and *suppresses* vain  
imagination; and is a perpetual *incen-*  
*tive* to frugality, moderation, and other  
social virtues. On the other hand, were  
he sure that his miseries were remediless,  
and the difficulties in which he is involv-  
ed *insuperable*, the gloomy prospect would  
quite *dispirit* him, enfeeble his *resolution*,  
indispose him for the duties of *religion*,  
and a regular discharge of the *common of-*  
*fices* of life: In *many* cases, it is very pro-  
bable, it would impair the *health* and  
disorder the *understanding*, as it must, in  
*all*, be a most effectual bar to *industry*,  
*arts*, and *ingenuity*. But as the world is  
now governed, and we see only the *past*

SERM. and *present*, but not the chain of events

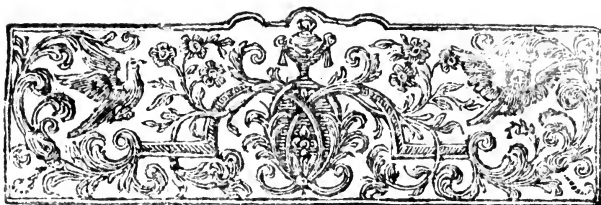
III. that are *before* us, the most afflicted may support themselves with the hope of better times to come ; and this must be a considerable relief to their cares, and keep them from sinking under the weight of their sufferings, which would otherwise be grievous indeed, and intolerable. In such a situation, where so great a part of the scene is wrapt up in *darkness*, and what is *concealed* from us may be so often varied, our duty lies plain and obvious to every capacity : And the sum of it is, “ that we take care that riches, “ ease and plenty do not make us *luxuri-* “ *ous* and *dissolute*, nor *high-minded* and “ *arrogant* ; nor adversity, *irresolute* and “ *desponding* ; but that we maintain a “ constant *equanimity* and *steadiness* of “ temper, an *unruffled* patient spirit, and “ a humble calm resignation to provi- “ dence : ” Firmly believing that amidst the present *seeming* confusions, and strange revolutions that happen in human affairs, all is conducted with unerring wisdom, and by invariable rules of right-



teousness and goodness; and directing our SERM.  
views *forward*, with delight and thank- III.  
fulness, to the world of perfect peace and   
bliss unchangeable, in which there shall  
be *no more sorrow, nor pain, nor death*,  
but we shall be exalted to a higher rank of  
existence, and be made like *unto the An-*  
*gels of God.*







## S E R M O N I V.



Of the natural relation of men to  
God, and their common tie to  
each other.

---

A C T S xvii. 28.

*-- For we are also his offspring.*



HERE is no thought that de-  
scribes human nature more  
*honourably*, or represents the  
original and unchangeable re-  
lation, which mankind stand in to the  
supreme Being, in a more *pleasing* and *a-*  
*greeable* light, than that suggested in the  
text. The thought itself is extremely  
just

SERM.  
IV.




SERM. just and natural, one of the *first* and most  
 IV. *universal* dictates of reason; which all the  
 superstitions and prejudices, that ever prevailed in the world, have not been able to *efface*. And as it springs from genuine and uncorrupted nature, it must undeniably be a proper and *wise* reflection; and, withal, nothing can be of greater importance “to teach us the right knowledge “of our *Maker*, of our *fellow-creatures*, “of *ourselves*,” and point out the various dispositions and duties that become us. For all which reasons, which I shall have occasion in what follows to explain more at large, St. *Paul*, in his speech to the men of *Athens*, did not think it any disparagement to his *Apostolic* authority to adopt this *noble* maxim of a *Greek Heathen* poet, and establish it as a *Christian* doctrine, *viz.* that *we are all the offspring* of God. — A clear and uncontestable proof this, that the gospel is *built upon*, and therefore could never be intended to *discredit*, the discoveries made by the light of nature; and, withal a remarkable instance of the Apostle's excellent *address*, who, by arguing with *Pagans*

gans on principles *allowed* by the wisest SERM.  
 among themselves, took the surest me- IV.  
 thod to sooth and allay their prejudices, to  
 insinuate truth with the greater ease, and  
 secure to it its just force and energy.

IT is very evident, that we are declar-  
 ed, in the text, to be *the offspring of God*  
 by *nature*. “ It is from our being his  
 “ *creatures*, that we derive the character  
 “ of being his *children* and his *family*.”  
 — May it then be fitly said of *all* the crea-  
 tures of God that they are also *his off-*  
*spring*? I answer “ that a title may be  
 “ *so far* founded in *creation*, that that  
 “ may be necessary to give a *right* to it,  
 “ and yet it may not have its *sole* founda-  
 “ tion *there*: Or, in other words, it may  
 “ properly belong to a *certain order* of  
 “ creatures, but not to *all* creatures with-  
 “ out *distinction*.” And agreeably here-  
 to, both *revelation* and the voice of *rea-*  
*son* concur, in *appropriating* this exalted and  
 honourable character to *rational* Beings;  
 who are not only the *workmanship* of the  
 Deity, but *partake* of his *nature*, and  
 bear a *peculiar resemblance* of him in his  
 most excellent *communicable* attributes.

SERM. To represent mere *material* and *insensible*

IV. beings as the offspring, though they are the *creatures*, of the living God, of that *active* and *vital* Spirit who animates the universe, must appear at first sight to be *harsh* and *unnatural*. And to describe *those* as the offspring of a *pure spirit*, possess of perfect and infinite *intelligence*, who enjoy only *animal* life, and are guided by no higher principles than *appetite* and *instinct*, must at least carry with it the face of great *impropriety*, and be a very *bold* and *unusual* figure of speech. — But mankind have a distinguished and peculiar *claim*. “ Their souls are a kind  
 “ of *emanation* from the spiritual nature  
 “ of the Deity ; their reason is a *ray* of  
 “ his intelligence ; and the moral powers,  
 “ with which they are endued, are *gene-*  
 “ *rated*, as it were, from his moral excel-  
 “ lencies ; their *kind*, *benevolent* and *com-*  
 “ *passionate* dispositions from his essential  
 “ and absolute goodness.” From whence we form the *general conclusions*, which are the *foundation* of all our just reflections and reasonings upon this subject : *viz.* That we are the *offspring* of God  
 with


with respect to the frame and constitution SERM.  
of our *minds*, on account of the *spirit* IV.  
within us, to which the *inspiration of the*   
*Almighty has given understanding*, and of  
our more *sublime faculties*; not as we are  
subject to animal sensations and passions,  
but as intelligent and moral creatures. And,  
of consequence, that we can never support,  
and much less display in its full glory,  
the *dignity* of our peculiar relation to God  
as our *Father*, by any pursuits that res-  
pect merely the *lower* and *brutal* part of  
our frame; not by striving to excel in  
luxury, and outshine one another in the  
splendor of dress and equipage, and the  
tinsel pomp of worldly grandeur; but  
only by cultivating our *rational* powers,  
and improving in those *amiable moral* ha-  
bits which will really *enoble* our nature, and  
are the *chief excellence* in the character of  
that great Being, from whom we *claim*  
to be descended. And this leads me to  
shew the various and eminent *uses* that  
may be served, by making the principle,  
on which I am now discoursing, *intimate*  
and *habitual* to the mind: From whence  
it will appear, “ that it is the support of  
“ *rational*

SERM. “ *rational religion, the cement of social*

IV. “ *virtue, the source of refined and generous sentiments, and a constant spur to great and laudable pursuits.*”

IN the FIRST place, the thought suggested in the text may be considered as a *principle* of the utmost importance, to *direct* all our *inquiries* and *reasonings* concerning the Divine providence and government ; and to *assist* us both in forming *right general* notions of religion, and in explaining the *doctrines* of revelation. That mankind are the *offspring* of God necessarily implies in it, “ that God is “ the *Father* of mankind ;” who has an unalienable *right* to this title, and to all the *powers* and *honours* resulting from it, founded in *nature*, and in eternal laws of *equity*. And it must belong to him in an appropriate and *eminent* sense, as he is not a secondary, but the first *efficient*, cause ; not merely the *instrument* by which existence is communicated, but the *original spring* of life and activity, the *Author* of human nature and all its faculties. So that as it may justly be affirmed that he is the *only source* of being, and the



the *sole monarch* of the world; it SERM. must also be allowed, if we confine IV. ourselves to strict truth and propriety, that *he alone* is the *Father* of mankind: 

“ There being but *one Father* of the  
 “ whole rational and moral creation, in  
 “ exactly the same sense as there is but  
 “ *one God* and *one Governor*.”

BUT we must be extremely careful, while we ascribe the appellation of a *Father* to the infinite and all-perfect Deity, that our ideas be *exalted* and *refined*; “ and not suffer our apprehensions concerning this his *relative* character to “ *shade*, or *stain*, the glories of his *moral* “ character : ” We must still *know*, and *remember*, that he is *God*, i. e. a Being possessed of *all possible* perfections and excellencies. It is necessary, therefore, that we consider him as the *Father* of mankind *supreme* and *uncontroulable* in *power*, able to *provide* for the necessities of all his children, to *punish* the obstinate and incorrigible, and *advance* filial reverence and piety to the highest stations of dignity and happiness : — As the *Father* of man-

SERM. kind *infinite* in wisdom, incapable of *blind*  
 IV. and *misguided* affections, of unreasonable  
 fondness, prejudice, or partiality; but in  
 all his operations, in all the distributions  
 of his favour and munificence, steadily  
 directed by *one* principle, viz. the *un-*  
*changing rule* of right reason: — Again,  
 as the *Father* of mankind *unconfi'n'd* and  
*immutable*, with respect to his *goodness*,  
 condescending, generous and compassio-  
 nate, beyond the *conception* of a finite un-  
 derstanding; in whose nature, oppression,  
 revenge, cruelty, peevishness, or the least  
 malignity of temper, can find *no place*:  
 And, finally, whose *absolute* moral recti-  
 tude renders it altogether as impossible for  
 him, by an improper *lenity*, to indulge  
 and cherish vice, and render it more  
 headstrong and insolent; as it is contrary  
 to his essential attributes to govern with  
 an arbitrary inflexible *rigor*, or pursue any  
 schemes that are *necessarily* inconsistent  
 with the welfare and felicity of his crea-  
 tures.

THE moral government of God is the  
*ground* of all religion, and, to a discerning

honest well-regulated mind, it is also the noblest and most engaging subject of contemplation. “ Virtue, if bereft of this, “ would lose its most substantial prop, “ and be too easily overborne by passion “ and self-interest. Having nothing to “ defend it but its own intrinsic beauty “ and worth, (which are found, in innumerable cases, insufficient to repel “ injury and violence) and enjoying no “ longer that inward calm resignation, “ that ardor and undaunted spirit, which “ the presence and superintending care of “ an all powerful wise and friendly Deity “ continually inspire; it will be apt to “ decline and languish, and sink under “ the weight of oppression.” And yet that supreme moral rule, without which, the best part of the universe would be in danger of falling into the utmost disorder and confusion, and on which, the effectual enforcement and support of righteousness and integrity, and the happiness of all the truly wise and good immediately depend; the supreme moral rule has, I say, been so absurdly and injudiciously represented, as in

84 *Men's natural relation to God,*

SERM. fact to *discourage* virtue, and convert,

IV. *what should have been a rational, cheerful, generous piety, into a sullen, dispirited, servile superstition; and what is, in itself, formidable only to the worst of men has proved a disconsolate reflection, and an object of terror, to some of the best: And thus their uprightnes and probity have suffer'd great wrong, through the weakness of their judgment. And from whence has this proceeded? " From representing the government of God as " capricious and partial, rigorous and oppressive; and not describing it, in the " manner in which it ought to be described, as a mild, propitious, paternal government: At the thought of which " rightly digested, and impressed upon the " mind, all the groundless gloomy suspicions, all the extravagant frights and " horrors of superstition will naturally " vanish."*

FOR if we consider the *laws* of God as laws given by a *Father* to his *children* (taking it only granted, that he is not a *hard unnatural* Father) what are the *con-*


sequences, which every rational being might immediately draw from hence? SERM.  
IV.

Why, in the *first* place, that these laws are all *righteous* and *equitable*, proportion'd to our *abilities*, and adapted to our *state* and *circumstances*; and, moreover, that they are *gracious* and *beneficent* laws, which are either absolutely necessary to *preserve*, or at least have a manifest subserviency to *establish* and *advance*, that moral rectitude and order, which are the chief excellence and honour of human nature, and the source of its happiness. Again, the condescension and goodness, that are inseparable from God's *paternal* character, directly lead to these conclusions: — That he considers our *frame*, is disposed to make *favourable* allowances for the darkness and confusion of our understandings, for *constitutional* frailty and strength of passion, and tenderly commiserates our *involuntary* errors. — That even the *wilful* disorders and irregularities of his *children* are not an *absolute* and *eternal* bar to the obtaining his favour; but that he is ready to shew *mercy* even to the

SERM. rebellious and disobedient, upon their sin-

IV. cere repentance and reformation. — That  
 the *whole* administration and conduct of  
 his providence is intended for their *good*:  
 — That as *all* mankind are *his offspring*,  
 he desires the *happiness* of *all*; and is ever  
 prompted, by his unbounded and *universal*  
 goodness to afford them *those assistances*,  
 which are necessary to advance the per-  
 fection of their natures, to confirm good  
 resolutions, and carry them on to matu-  
 rity, that *wisdom's ways* may be found, by  
 experience, to be *ways of pleasantness*,  
 and *her paths peace*: For if ye, being evil,  
 know how to give good gifts unto your  
 Children; how much more shall your hea-  
 venly FATHER give the holy spirit to them  
 that ask him? And in these words of our  
 blessed Saviour, there are two things very  
 observable. — The one is, that he plainly  
 supposes the doctrine of *Divine assistances*  
 to have its foundation *in the nature of*  
*things*; and that it is a point which might  
 be argued, with a high degree of *proba-*  
*bility*, even from *common principles of rea-*  
*son*. For, “ *wherever God may be known*

“ as

“ as the Creator and *Father* of mankind, SERM.  
“ that is, indeed, *every where*, and even IV.  
“ in the most *rude* and *unpolish'd* nations ;   
“ *wherever* the *relation* of *father* *subsists*,  
“ and the *sense* of *paternal* duty and af-  
“ fection is not utterly *extinguish'd* ; ”  
the same *general conclusion* may be form'd,  
as our Lord has so forcibly inculcated :  
*viz.* that God is always ready, so far as  
is consistent with the *rectitude* of his na-  
ture, and with the *wisdom* and *honour* of  
his government, to aid and encourage all  
his rational offspring in the necessary work  
of correcting their errors, and in the pur-  
suit of virtue and happiness. — The other  
remark is this, that the *whole* of the argu-  
ment, as it here stands, is built on this  
*general maxim*, that, in the relation of  
*Father* of mankind, God must, of neces-  
sity, vastly *exceed*, with respect to every  
instance of *rational* and *wise* affection,  
the *best* and most *perfect* of earthly pa-  
rents : And, of consequence, our Lord's  
observation strengthens and confirms *every*  
*inference*, that I have hitherto drawn  
from God's *paternal* character. I shall

SERM. only add that this thought, that we are  
 IV. *the offspring of God*, naturally suggests to  
 us what is the true *principle* of virtue, the  
 true *spring* of our obedience and submission  
 to the Deity; “that it ought not to  
 “ proceed from *compulsion* and *terror*,  
 “ like the obedience of *slaves* to a *tyrant*,  
 “ but from *ingenuity* and *gratitude*, from  
 “ *filial love* and *veneration*; not as if it  
 “ was a *task* exacted by a *morose* and *evil*  
 “ Being, whom we *dreaded*, and, at the  
 “ same time, *abhorr'd*, but as a *volunta-*  
 “ *ry homage* directed wholly by *reason*,  
 “ and in which *inclination* and *duty* both  
 “ concur.” Thus religion appears to be  
 entirely rational with respect to its *princi-*  
*ples*, and amiable and pleasant in the  
*practice*; in a word, to be *honourable* to  
 God, and *friendly* to men.

BUT if any want *fuller* satisfaction  
 that all, which I have now advanced, is  
 justly deduced from the principle asserted  
 in the text, *that we are the offspring of*  
 God; let them *reverse* the scene, and see  
 in what light it will then appear. — Can  
 the *Father* of mankind *enjoin* things that  
 are



are impracticable, or punish any one for what it was not in his power to avoid? SERM. IV.

Can the *Father* of mankind impose unnecessary burdens on his children, and, for the display of his sovereign power, enact hurtful, or even unprofitable useleſs laws?

Can the *Father* of mankind be stern and inexorable, severe to infirmities of nature, to involuntary and lamented imperfections? Can the *Father* of mankind have no mercy for penitents? Can God be the

*Father* of all mankind, and yet not good, not propitious, to all? Can he bring children into being on purpose to make them miserable, absolutely, finally, and irremediably miserable? “ What then

“ does the appellation of FATHER signify, when it has no more of indulgence “ or grace in it, than that of implacable “ enemy, tormentor, and executioner? ”

Let me add to all this, that those seem to have lost all sense of God as the *Father* of mankind, “ who tremble at the thought “ of his presence and inspection, as if he “ noted their conduct with the severity “ of an inquisitor; and watched, as it “ were,

SERM. " were, to *spy out* evidence against them

IV. " that, though they are in the main *sin-*

~~~~~ " *cere*, they are not *perfect*; with no

" other view but to be able to satisfy

" *stern rigid justice*, without at all con-

" sulting *mercy*, that he does *no wrong*

" in punishing."

AND as a proper reflection, on our being *the offspring* of God, directly inspires all that affectionate and humble *piety*, which is due to the Deity himself as the *common Father* of mankind; it has also a natural tendency to produce, and cultivate all that *benevolence* and *mercy*, that mutual and tender *sympathy*, which we owe one to another. If God be the *Father* of us *all*, we *all* are *brethren*. Our *obligation* therefore, to discharge the duties which I have now mentioned, is as obvious to the very lowest capacity, as is the *relation* in which we stand to the rest of mankind. And, consequently, if we are only *insensible* of the distresses of those, to whom we are most *nearly allied* by ties of blood and common humanity, and much more if we *aggravate* their miseries

ries by oppression and injustice ; our conduct must be to the last degree *vile* and *unnatural*. Besides, by not cherishing in our minds sentiments of benevolence and mercy, we treat the *Father* of the universe with *contempt* and *indignity*. We *oppose*, we *reproach*, nay we, in a manner, *insult* the pattern which he has set before us, of *diffusive* and *unlimited* goodness, if we confine our regard or friendship to *one part* of the species, and neglect *all the rest*, who are *equally* his children ; and bear, perhaps, as *strong impressions* in their rational and moral powers, as we ourselves can boast of, of his excellent, his divine, *image*.

“ BROTHERHOOD and *amity*, brotherhood and *cordial* friendship, brotherhood and *community* of interest, brotherhood and an *indulgent* condescending temper, together with a *generous* concern for each others welfare, are very nearly *coincident* ideas ; because in the reason of things they neither *are* nor *can* be separated.” When, therefore, all mankind *love* as brethren, they
support

SERM. support that character with *propriety* and
 IV. *honour*. But when about matters of *re-*
 mote concern, in which their *general re-*
 lation is not at all interested, they split
 into factions, and pursue opposite views,
 with *estranged* and *alienated* affections;
hateful, and *hating one another*: This
 shocks our very *first* reflections as a scan-
 dal to *human nature*, and infinitely dis-
 graceful to *all religion*. “ But on the
 “ contrary, as in the *natural* world, it
 “ strikes us with an agreeable surprize
 “ and pleasure, to see the *various effects*
 “ of divine wisdom and omnipotence
 “ *connected* in their use, and *conspiring*
 “ jointly to one grand design, by the in-
 “ fluence and force of *necessary* laws; it
 “ must appear at least equally *beautiful*
 “ to every mind that is not either blind-
 “ ed, or prodigiously depraved, to find
 “ the vastly *different humours, charact-*
 “ *ers*, and particular *interests* of *moral*
 “ agents, *voluntarily* directed to the *uni-*
 “ *versal good*. When a sedate and un-
 “ disturbed benevolence and harmony is
 “ *fixed* and *established* in the *best* and *no-*
 “ *blest*

and tie to each other.

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“ *blest* part of the creation; this is an
“ object, that every wise and good man,
“ must, one would think, survey with a
“ *sensible* and *strong* complacency, and
“ God himself with *approbation* and *calm*
“ *delight.*”

SERM.
IV.

I SHALL only add, in the *last* place, that a just notion of this important truth, that God is our *Father*, naturally tends to inspire a strong *sense* of our own *honour*, a *contempt* of mean compliances and *irregular* excesses; joined with an *ardent emulation* to excel in every thing that is praise-worthy and amiable, and *raise* our virtues to the highest pitch of purity and perfection. — When any one pursues the contrary course, to what I have now recommended, he evidently *wanders* from the eternal *rule* of right, from *nature*, and the *law* of his creation; he follows error *quite* habited and adorned with *spurious* decorations; which, thus *disguised*, throws a mist before the *moral sense*, and entertains the *fancy* with groundless hopes and splendid amusing prospects, but must of necessity *terminate*
in

SERM. in remorse and confusion. “ He may be
 IV. “ a person of some *account*, nay, per-
 ~~~~~ “ haps, of *eminence* and *distinction*, a-  
 “ mong those whose imagination is e-  
 “ qually *vitiated*, and who are, jointly  
 “ with himself, the *votaries* of vanity  
 “ and libertinism ; but entirely forsakes  
 “ the *only path* that can lead to true dig-  
 “ nity : He may be a *lively, pert, un-*  
 “ *meaning, unanxious* animal ; but must  
 “ be an *unhappy* reasonable creature, and  
 “ a *degenerate* child of God.” Let us  
 demonstrate, then, that we are truly  
*wise*, by improving in ourselves, and o-  
 thers, the *lively* and *habitual* influence of  
 this principle that we are of *divine extrac-*  
*tion*. Let us assert and vindicate the ho-  
 nour of our nature. Let us *disdain* to be  
 enslaved to appetite, the grosser and baser  
 part of it. Let it be our *ultimate ambi-*  
*tion*, in proportion to the *extent* and *scope*  
 of our faculties, *to be perfect, as our Fa-*  
*ther who is in heaven is perfect*. Then  
 may we expect, in conformity to the ex-  
 ample of Jesus Christ, who is stiled *the*  
*first-born among many brethren*, to ascend

to his *Father* and our *Father*, to his *God* SERM.  
and our *God*; there, in mansions of un- IV.  
clouded light and joy ineffable, to be  
crowned with *transcendent* rewards and  
honours. To this purpose are the words  
of *St. John*, with which I shall conclude  
this discourse: *Beloved, now are we the* 1 John ii.  
*sons of God, and it doth not yet appear* 2, 3.  
*what we shall be; but we know, that*  
*when he shall appear; we shall be like him:*  
*For we shall see him as he is: And every*  
*man, that hath this hope in him, purifieth*  
*himself, even as he is pure.*









# S E R M O N V.



Of Murder, and the Customs and Vices leading to it.

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EXODUS xx. 13.

*Thou shalt not kill.*



THESE words are much better rendered in an older translation of the Bible thus: —

SERM. V.

*Thou shalt do no murder.* For all killing, or taking away the life of a man, is not unjustifiable; and therefore it could never be represented as a crime, *universally*, by any commonly wise and equitable, and much less by a *divine* law; but *murder* is absolutely prohibited. The

SERM. latter reading, therefore, clearly expresses

V. the *determinate* and *compleat* sense of this precept; and it is hard to account how it came to be *exchanged* for another, that can give us *no* just notion of the offence forbidden. For killing *may* in various cases, but murder *never can*, in any possible situation or most *extreme exigence* of human affairs, be *innocent*; the one is promiscuously and indifferently used to denote both a *good* and a *bad* action, the other is always a term of *guilt*, which is inseparable from the idea affixed to it.

It is indeed a crime so entirely *inhuman*, so *foul*, so *black*, so *monstrous*, that at the bare mention of it, human nature is apt to be thrown into *disorder*, and struck with *horror*. It argues (especially if it be *deliberately* and *coolly* perpetrated) a mind *averse* to all sentiments of goodness, and *hardned* in a vicious temper; a mind *malicious*, *fierce*, *daringly* and *inflexibly* wicked, and trampling under foot all the common ties of *nature* and *justice*. It was therefore most wisely and righteously appointed, by a particular *positive* sanction of the Almighty, that *murderers* should

should be punish'd with *death*; and this SERM. is plainly pointed out to us as what was *fit* V. to be observed, for a *perpetual* and *irre-*  
*versible* law and ordinance of justice, under *all forms* of human government. With which solemn determination, the *principles* and *impressions* of equity, *still* subsisting in the most ignorant and uncultivated parts of the world, do in the main correspond. Men, in other respects extremely licentious and dissolute in their morals, who make but little scruple of theft and robbery, and many lawless acts of *violence*, are shocked and terrified at the very *suggestion* of a *murder* — and, frequently, even *murderers* themselves find that they are surrounded with *heart-corroding* and *never-ceasing terrors*. Their *peace* of mind is irrecoverably lost with their *innocence*. They experience a *deep* and *settled gloom*, which all their art, all their shifts and amusements, can never dissipate; and through which there passes not *one beam* of true and solid comfort. They are hourly disquieted by *distractions* from within, and *fears* of danger from without. *Darkness* and *solitude* start and raise

## Of Murder.

SERM. new horrors. And even in their dreams,  
 V. the *guilty imagination* is often *restless* and  
 active in tormenting itself, exhibiting *dif-*  
*mal* and *unnatural* scenes of blood and  
 cruelty, and haunted to such a degree by  
*pale, melancholy, ghastly, and menacing*  
*spectres*, as has occasioned *agonies* of dread  
 and amazement; *spectres* so *strongly* paint-  
 ed, and with such *natural* and *lively* ter-  
 ror, that even the *waking sense* has still  
 been inclin'd to believe them *real*. And  
 the whole of what has been offer'd upon  
 this head, evidently demonstrates “ the  
 “ strong *checks*, which are provided in  
 “ *nature*, to restrain from such barbari-  
 “ ties; how many *fences*, kindly *inter-*  
 “ *posed*, must be broken down, before  
 “ we can arrive at this dreadful pitch of  
 “ total depravation; and the severe ven-  
 “ geance on account of it, which *nature*  
 “ itself, *God's minister*, is so constituted  
 “ as to be able to execute, in the present  
 “ life, not as *full* retribution; but only  
 “ as an unhappy *presage* of those more  
 “ *ample, lasting, and inexpressible* hor-  
 “ rors, into which the guilt of blood,  
 “ without a most bitter and exemplary  
 “ repen-

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“repentance, will sink the Soul here—  
“after, when it has stood its trial before  
“the tribunal of *impartial justice*.”

SERM.  
V.  
}

I HAVE endeavoured, in the beginning of this discourse, to describe the guilt, and consequences, and punishment of murder in affecting and lively colours, that our *attention* may be the more closely engaged to what is intended to follow; and such a *detestation* of it, and *dread* of its tremendous effects, may be fixed and rooted in our minds, as *no* temptation, in any *future* scene of life, shall ever be able to overcome. There are *none*, I would hope, in this Assembly, to whom this foul offence can be justly imputed even by their own *consciences*, or by the *omniscient* God from whom no secrets are hid; and *none*, perhaps, but who, if the least distant intimation was given that it was possible for them ever to become so *degenerate*, would be ready to reply in a strain somewhat like that of *Hazael* to the prophet *Elijah*—“*What, is thy*  
“*servant a dog, actuated by furious bru-*  
“*tal instincts, and bereft of all the kind*  
“*and tender feelings and affections of*

SERM. “ *humanity*, that he should commit so

V. “ vile an enormity as this.” But notwithstanding this *generous* and, I make no doubt, *konest* resentment of heart, which we experience to rise within us, it cannot be at all amiss to have our *horror*, upon particular occasions, *afresh* excited, and improved, if it may be, to a *still* greater height; because there have been examples of persons, who thought themselves compleatly, and almost *invincibly*, fortified against every temptation of this kind, that have been betrayed, and led on *gradually*, to such an utter stupidity of mind with respect to all *moral sense*, as not to *stick* at the shedding of innocent blood. And this, when it is properly adverted to, and *traced* regularly in its several *distinct* stages of progression, will not appear to have any thing really marvellous and incomprehensible in it, but to be the stated *course* of nature; “ which  
 “ has *an order*, and for the most part an  
 “ *uniform train* of consequences, in its  
 “ *perversions* as well as in its *improvements*,  
 “ in its *crooked* and *irregular* as in  
 “ its *streight* and *even* paths.” For as  
 the

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the *pursuit* of good, steadily maintained, naturally leads to the *perfection* of good; so vice, being in itself *extravagance*, must, the *farther* we proceed in it, be necessarily *greater* error and extravagance, and tend to *dangerous* extremes, and to the very *worst* extremes. Thus we find scenes of *adulterous lewdness* closed with *blood*. Hence it is, that *furious*, *precipitate*, and *ungoverned passion* so frequently ends in *murder*: And that *luxury*, or the *pride* of *elegant* distinction and *splendid* appearance above our *just* rank and circumstance, produces, first, *perplexity* and *distress* in our affairs; *that*, not being able to create just reflection as the means to *subdue* our pride, puts us upon *indirect courses* to supply our necessities; our indirect courses within the *shelter* of law failing, we must have *some other* resource to support our extravagance; we are then perhaps hurried on to attempt such notorious and *violent invasions* of our neighbours right, as all *wise* societies must, from principles and motives of *self-preservation*, devote to *infamy* and a distinguished *punishment*. — Should it *now* happen from our being

SERM. personally *known*, or from the danger of a

V. public *alarm* and close *pursuit* being raised, that the thought of a *murder* is suggested, what *security* have we against this unnatural crime? — “ All which demonstrates the undeniable *use* of preaching  
 “ sometimes, on the *subject* of murder,  
 “ before *others* besides *murderers*; be-  
 “ cause while *excess* of *pleasure* and *ex-*  
 “ *cess* of *pride* and *passion* prevail, we  
 “ are by no means out of *danger*. It is  
 “ not the *mere resolution* of an offender  
 “ that may be depended upon to *save*  
 “ him, when the *connection* of his *pre-*  
 “ *sent* vices with others *future* will, in  
 “ all probability, be *an overmatch* for  
 “ such a resolution.”

OF this there have been most *fearful* examples within the experience of all ages. And of late years such most execrable murders have been committed among ourselves, as for the *deliberate* execution, the *steadiness* and *unconcern* of the criminals, and the almost *incredible* circumstances of *barbarity* attending them, scarce admit of a parallel; as if *cruelty* and a *savage* disposition were gaining  
*ground*



ground upon us, and we were more and more *lost* to a *sense* of benevolence and compassion. This is chiefly owing to the general decay of *virtue*, and contempt of *religion*, and want of serious *consideration*, that are at present too visible. But I believe it may be ascribed likewise, in a great measure, to *another* cause, and that is, “ the barbarity of our *public diversions*; and the delight which this nation seems to take, above all others, in *spectacles* of inhumanity and terror.” The being *entertained* with these *sights* of blood, and the *dexterity* of *savage animals* (unjustly claiming the name of *men*) in abusing, wounding, and maiming each other, has a natural tendency to drive *all* commiseration and pity from the heart; and to raise and propagate the very *worst spirit*, that can possibly take place in beings endowed with rational powers, — “ a Spirit *sedately*, and without *emotion*, cruel.” They *familiarize* to us the *agonies* of human sufferings, and some of the most *affecting* circumstances, that can ever be supposed to happen in the most *horrid*

mur-

SERM.  
V.  
~~~~~

SERM. murders. We are inured to behold all
 V. this without *a sigh*, without *reluctance*,
 nay with *exultation* and *loud* applauses.
 And is it possible for us, after this, to re-
 tain any thing of a *soft relenting* heart?
 While we allow ourselves to *sport* with
 the *pangs* and *miseries* of one of our own
 species, can we look upon *his life* as sac-
 cred? The *loss* of a life, in these *worse*
 than savage spectacles, we know strikes
 but little; and the impresson, which it
 appears to make, has more of *formality*
 and the force of *custom* in it, than of real
generous and *tender feeling*. And can it
 then, upon any principles of reason, be
 imagined, that our *horror*, at the thought
 of taking away life, can proceed from
 notions of *equity*, and a sincere *love* of
 mankind; or that it does not arise, al-
 most entirely, from the restraint of *hu-
 man laws*, and the fear of *civil punish-
 ments*; and, of consequence, that it will
abate in proportion as this our *fear* a-
 bates, and as we think that we have
 ground to believe that our designs are
secret, and run no *risque* of being
 discovered? — So that we may look
 upon

upon the *infamous* places, where these SERM. shocking and *unnatural* scenes are exhibited, “ as the *haunt* and *school* of the V. murderer, and as having no tendency “ to cultivate that *true valour*, which is “ the distinction of the *noblest*, and shines “ most illustriously in the *gentlest* and “ most compassionate spirits; but as calculated only to *fix* upon us, what has “ long been imputed to us by *foreigners* “ as a *national* reproach, *viz.* that we “ have more of *roughness* and *ferocity*, “ than of *humanity* and *tenderness* in our “ dispositions.”

BUT leaving these more general reflections, I proceed to consider (as what is necessary to do justice to the subject itself, as well as most evidently so on account of our *public temper* and *manners* as a people) I proceed, I say, more particularly (but briefly) to consider the true nature of that most flagrant and horrid crime, to which the sixth Commandment directly relates. And as our Translation has so express'd this precept, that exceptions are necessary to be made, it may be proper distinctly to specify what *these exceptions* are; and then

SERM. then the whole of what remains, that is

V. not and cannot in reason be excepted, will necessarily fall under the denomination of *Murder*, and help us to form the exact idea and definition of it — And the *first* case, that plainly appears to be exempted from the cognizance of this Law, is, when a person is killed by mere chance, without any *intention*, any *foresight* or remote *suspicion*, of such a deplorable event, by the unhappy but *involuntary* instrument of his death. If there was the least *presumption* in his mind that any *Act* of his (notwithstanding this presumption *deliberately* performed) might prove in its consequences *fatal* to his Neighbour, he must certainly incur, to a very considerable degree, the guilt of a *murderous* disposition, if not from direct and formal *Malice*, yet at least from an *indifference* and *levity* of mind, which, when his Brother's life is *discerned* to be in danger, is not barely *inexcusable*, but highly *criminal*. But if the whole affair was in its *rise* and *conduct* entirely accidental, he is altogether *clear* of the imputation of Murder, though upon other Accounts he

may be justly *blameable*. I say, justly SERM.
blameable upon other accounts, because V.
 if such an accident as this should be
 owing to *carelessness*; if a person grown
 to years of *discretion*, and whose *reason*
 in all points of moment ought to be
 consulted, should indeliberately and pre-
 sumptuously *sport* with *instruments* of
Death; or should destroy the life of
 another in the *execution* of some *wild*
 design, in the *impetuous* pursuit of plea-
 sure, or in any *unnecessary* and *wanton*
 competitions; he would have reason
 to *lament* it, as one of the most solid
misfortunes of his life, brought upon
 him by a large share of guilt, though it
 might not be necessary for him (with the
 inward pangs and terror which he felt)
 to offer up *David's* petition — *deliver me* Psal. li.
from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God ¹⁴
of my Salvation — Again killing in *neces-*
sary Self-defence is not only excuseable,
 but perfectly innocent. For then the
fault wholly lies on the side of the *Ag-*
gressor; every Man having a natural and
 unquestionable *right* to stand up and exert
 himself, in the *support* of his own life,
 against

SERM. against all *rude* and *violent* practices. But
 V. if when the ends of *Self-defence*, and
Self-preservation, may be compleatly answered without bereaving the aggressor of Life, the party attacked and injur'd is hurried on, by an *excess* of *passion* to this fatal extreme; and, especially, if a spirit of *revenge* has any share in urging him to so immoderate a resentment of the injury received; he loses, in proportion to the *degree* of the vindictive temper, and as such a severe and rash method of asserting his right was *unnecessary*, he proportionably, I say, loses his *innocence*, and is intitled to the *character*, and involved in the *guilt*, of a Murderer — In the *third* place, all such slaughters as are occasioned by *Wars*, which are entered into from just and necessary motives, and especially in *defensive* Wars (without which, not only the *rights* of *Nations* cannot be supported, but many public communities must have been *enslaved* and over-run with universal *ruin* and *desolation*) these, I say, are plainly *exempted* from the rigid charge and imputation of Murder. But the *Wars* of *oppressive Tyrants*, Wars undertaken

Of Murder.


III

undertaken with *ambitious views*, from the mere pursuit of *false glory* and *extent of Empire*, are loaded with a *complication of Murders*. And all such turbulent Princes (who delight in the effusion of human Blood) instead of having their names celebrated with honour, ought to be detested, and devoted to peculiar infamy, as the pests and scourges of *human nature* and *human society*: As they will undoubtedly sink into the lowest *disgrace*, when they stand at the bar of God, the supreme *Monarch* and *Judge*; before whose infinite Majesty, and eternal high-lifted Throne, all created distinctions must vanish, and *bad Kings* be reduced to the rank of *Men*, and to a level with the meanest of their subjects. — I shall only add that the putting to Death notorious Criminals, by way of *terror*, whose lives are a *just forfeit* to society, cannot be included within the prohibition of the sixth Commandment; because without such *exemplary severities*, in some cases at least, the *fundamental principles* of all civil institutions of Government must be overthrown. But when the *ends* of Govern-

SERM. ment may be answered, with *equal* terror
 V. and *more* public use, without inflicting
 ~~~~~ *capital* punishment on the offender, the  
 depriving him of Life cannot be so easily  
 defended: And both *reasons* of *policy*,  
 and the *precept* contained in the Text,  
 seem to demand the exercise of greater  
*lenity*.

AND NOW from the *exempt* cases, which  
 have been particularly proposed, the pre-  
 cise nature, and true definition, of the  
 crime of *Murder* will be easily collected.  
 It is not *accidental* killing; and therefore  
 it must be *essential* to it, that the life of  
 our neighbour be not only destroyed by  
*violence*, but with *design*. It must be  
 done without a *just cause*, without any  
*necessity*, and not either in *private* or *pub-  
 lic Self-defence*. It is the taking away of  
 a Life not *forfeited*, a Life that ought to  
 have been *preserved*, a Life over which  
 we have no *authority*, no right of *dispo-  
 sal*, and of one who has either never *of-  
 fended* and deserved *ill* from us, or whose  
 injuries ought to be absolutely overlook'd,  
 or, at most, *corrected* by a *lighter* punish-  
 ment; but, in the most rigid construc-  
 tion,



tion, cannot merit *Death*. And I desire SERM.  
 that it may be remembered, for the use V.  
 which may hereafter be made of it, 

“ That in all cases, particularly, of *privately revenging* whether real or imaginary wrongs, where *Death* is not, and cannot be, a *deserved* punishment, the infliction of it must of necessity be *a degree of Murder.*” — Having thus

shewn the *nature* of the crime itself, it will be proper just to observe the several *aggravations* of it. The *lowest* of all is, when it proceeds from *sudden* and *tumultuous* passion, which darkens and disorders reason, and hinders its *interposing* to prevent malignant and pernicious effects. This may be a *comparative* extenuation in respect of *worse* causes, but will not be sufficient to justify us before the *Divine*, or any *impartial human*, Tribunal; because it is urging *one immorality*, which we *might* and *ought* to have avoided, in defence of *another*. “ And no solid rea-

son can be assigned, why my Life may, with more *equity*, fall a sacrifice to *precipitate passion*, than to *deliberate*  
 VOL. III. I “ *malice.*”

SERM. "malice." The thing last mentioned,  
 V. *viz. cool revenge and considerate malicious-*  
 ness, is the next degree of aggravation of  
 the guilt of Murder, the former being as  
*truly* Murder, and as *really*, though not  
*equally*, criminal. But the *worst possible*  
 circumstance that, I think, we can con-  
 ceive of, and which argues a habit of vice  
 little less than *desperate*, is, when Mur-  
 ders are undertaken (as they often have  
 been) neither from a *too harsh* and *bar-*  
*barous* resentment of injuries, nor from  
 any *personal* provocations, but merely for  
*hire*. "This Trade of *Death* represents  
 " to us a most *stupendous* Monster in ra-  
 " tional nature; and exhibits a pitch of  
 " depravity, beyond which even the De-  
 " vils themselves, however *emulous* to ex-  
 " cel in vice, can hardly be thought to  
 " aspire."

To all that has been already offered, it  
 may not be improper to subjoin, that there  
 are *several ways* of committing Murder,  
 besides that of an *immediate* attack upon  
 our Neighbour's life. He that by a false  
 oath, in a Court of Judicature, is the  
 means

means of an innocent Person's being con-  
 victed of *a capital* offence (on account of  
 which he *unjustly* suffers *Death*) is as  
 much a *Murderer*, as if he had been *di-*  
*rectly* and *personally* the cause of his *Death*  
 by *poison* or the *sword*. And a greater  
 dishonour and shame to Human nature,  
 one more pernicious in society than this,  
 'tis impossible for us to form an idea of ;  
 who adds *Perjury* to Murder ; and de-  
 stroys the *good name* and *character* of the  
 undeserving Sufferer, together with his  
*life*. This case is *flagrant*, and capable  
 of having no *false* colours put upon it  
 that will, in the least, *palliate* its malig-  
 nity. But there are others, where,  
 though there be a considerable share of  
 the same *unnatural guilt* contracted, the  
*Conscience* of the Offender does not appear  
 to give him any such *alarm* ; and where,  
 as there is no *legal cognizance* of the  
 crime, the *censure* of the World is gene-  
 rally more *mild* and *favourable*. — He,  
 notwithstanding, may justly be denomi-  
 nated a *Murderer*, who, by his *severe*  
 and *cruel* treatment of those who are sub-


SERM. jeēt to his Authority, brings them to an  
 V. *immature* and *untimely* Death; and cannot be prevail'd with to relax, and abate of his *rigour*, though he plainly sees that their strength is *gradually* exhausted, and that they droop, and languish, and pine away under their *oppression*. — A wicked and unnatural Son, likewise, who finding his stubborn insolent carriage, and riotous living, to be the cause of *deep* and *mortal* grief and affliction to his Parents, will not be brought within the limits of his duty, nor relinquish his infamous pleasures, though their comfort, their health, their *life* (through an *excess*, indeed, of affection towards an object so undeserving) depend upon his reformation; what is he less than a kind of *Murderer*, nay an impious *Parricide*, involved in the guilt of most aggravated and *sacrilegious* Murder! — And the case will be much the same, if an Husband forgetting his *obligations*, and repaying tender affection with *contempt* and *barbarity*, and *adulterous violations* of the sacred Marriage vow, first renders

*miserable*, and then *shortens* that life, SERM.  
 which he ought, in *duty* and *honour*, to V.  
 have cherished and preserved. “ He is  
 “ *convinced*, that his unkindness and in-  
 “ *fidelity operate* in the manner of a *slow*  
 “ *poison*, and as *certainly* and *effectually*  
 “ *tend to Death* ; to a *tedious* and *lin-*  
 “ *gering Death*, occasioned by a *success-*  
 “ *sion of Torments* and *Disquietudes*.  
 “ How then can he, in *equity*, be ex-  
 “ *cused from the guilt* of one that had  
 “ *actually administered poison*, and of  
 “ *such a kind* too, as must subject the  
 “ *Patient to most exquisite sufferings*, and  
 “ *multiply the pangs and horrors* of her  
 “ *dissolution?*” — This it may be  
 thought is *straining*, and carrying mat-  
 ters to an *unusual height* : For the *excess*,  
 allowing it to be such, is *common*, espe-  
 cially (it may be scandalously insinuated,  
 to lessen the odium that would otherwise  
 universally attend it) in higher and  
 more independent life ; and very few  
 surely will, therefore, be so *extremely ri-*  
*gid*, as to load it with the imputation of  
*Murder*. But, in opposition to this *loose*

SERM. and *careless* way of *moralizing*, let it be  
 V. considered, that neither *common practice*,  
 nor any outward *distinctions* of rank and  
 title, nor pretended *politeness* and *elegance* of taste are a *rule of action* to reasonable Beings; but the *fixed* and *immutable nature* of things only, and the *revealed will* of God. But if the voice of *reason* be attended to, if the authority of *revelation* be *reverently* acknowledged and allowed its due weight, the conduct, which I have endeavoured to expose in its true colours, will infallibly fall under condemnation. What *it is in itself* every Man may easily discern; if it be grossly *immoral*, neither the *multitude* of transgressors, nor their *exalted character*, will avail at all towards its *justification*: And it must be much better for us (if *any degree* of *Murder* there be, or any *affinity* to a crime against which eternal damnation is denounced) to be *informed* of it while it is in our power, in many cases, to *prevent* the *guilt*, than to be *utterly* and *irrecoverably* confounded, by having the *first charge* brought  
 against

against us by omniscience and unerring justice, to which no *answer*, no *objection*, can be made; and from whence, as supreme in Majesty and right of *decision*, no *appeal* can possibly arise. SERM. V.

To all which I beg leave to add, for a conclusion of this discourse, that the heinous offence prohibited in the Text is not only a most *signal*, but an *irreparable*, injury done to a *fellow-creature*; irreparable with respect to *the loss of present animal Life*, and irreparable, likewise, with respect to *the state of the Soul*, whatever it be, as to its *everlasting existence* hereafter: That it is an *indignity* offered to *human nature* itself, and a *preying* upon *our own kind*; which is to the the highest degree *unnatural*: That it is, with most impious boldness, usurping the *authority* of the *Lord*, the *giver* and *sole proprietor* of Life, by whose *laws alone* therefore, of direct and plain consequence, both *Life* and *Death* are to be regulated and determined: And to mention no more, that it hurts *society* by depriving it of *one* of its members, makes

SERM. disconsolate *Widows* and helpless *Orphans*,  
 V. and may occasion most deplorable *confu-*  

*sion* and *distress* in *families*. These things,  
 “ together with the *depravity* of *heart*  
 “ discovered, the utter alienation from  
 “ *God*, from *moral rectitude*, from all  
 “ *social affections* and *inclinations*, the  
 “ *insensible* temper, the *contempt* of *jus-*  
 “ *tice*, the *preparedness* of mind for *any*  
 “ *villany*,” evidently demonstrate the  
 character of the *Murderer* to be the most  
 infamous and hurtful in the whole scope  
 of *immoral* and *wicked Life*; and should  
 put us upon *guarding* strictly against every  
 thing that has the *least tendency*, the most  
*remote assimilation*, to it — “ Against rash  
 “ anger, headstrong and impetuous pas-  
 “ sion, all schemes of revenge, all *pro-*  
 “ *fuse gratifications* of luxury, midnight  
 “ revellings, hasty quarrels, &c. which may  
 “ put it out of our power to *retreat* from  
 “ the *ignominy* and *guilt* of Murder itself,  
 “ and *its everlasting loss of peace*.” And,  
 above all, let us not suffer our minds ever  
 to degenerate into an *established rancour* a-  
 gainst, and *hatred* of our Brother: For as  
 this



## Of Murder.

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this is the *direct* source of so tremendous SERM.  
and fatal an evil, St. *John* hath expressly V.  
declared; that he that *hateth his Brother* ~~~~~  
*is a Murderer* — *And ye know that no* <sup>1</sup> John  
*Murderer hath eternal Life abiding in* iii. 15.  
*him.*



S E R -





## SERMON VI.



### Of DUELS, and SELF-MURDER.

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EXODUS XX. 13.

*Thou shalt not kill.*



IN my last Discourse, I en-  
deavoured to state, distinctly,  
the nature of the foul and hor-  
rid sin of *Murder*; which is  
so clear to the universal sense of mankind,  
that it is generally a heavy and insupport-  
able burden upon the conscience of the  
Criminal himself, and cries aloud to Hea-  
ven, for the infliction of peculiar and di-  
stinguished Vengeance, in the judgment  
of the most *barbarous* nations. I likewise  
briefly

SERM.  
VI.

SERM. briefly considered the several *Degrees* and

VI. *Aggravations* of this crime, and tried to  
 inspire such a lively Dread and Abhorrence of it, as would put us upon maintaining, always, the strictest guard against every *Approach* towards it, against every thing that might, in its *Consequences*, lead to it. And this was thought the more necessary, because vice is in the nature of it *progressive*; and the larger scope it is allowed to take, the human temper, however *naturally* well disposed and *inclined* to virtue, becomes more and more *estranged* from it, more and more stupid and *insensible* of ill, and consequently prepared for proceeding, gradually, to the very worst *Extremes*. So that those who never were, as yet, *actually* Murderers may have, in the vices which they *now* indulge and cherish, the *latent seeds* of Murder; and however they may flatter and practice upon themselves the smooth arts of *Self-Deceit*, they really know not, blinded as they are, and hurried on as they may be, by their extravagancies, what *fatal violences* they may in the end be rendered capable of committing. But

as there are some excesses, that have a SERM. more close and visible *Connection* than VI. others with the crime forbidden in the text, it was advised that we be particularly careful to avoid *these*, as snares of *Blood*, from whence we have reason to apprehend uncommon danger.

I NOW proceed to consider, particularly, two Cases that are of special importance, and they are, *Duelling, and Self-Murder*: Which must be allowed, on the first proposal of them, to have at least an evident *relation* to the present subject, and therefore a discourse upon them cannot be thought a *needless* and *arbitrary* digression. — I shall begin then, according to the order in which they were mentioned, with *Duelling*, — “ an infamous, and I think I may justly add, *savage* practice, fit only to be retained among fierce untamed Barbarians; but which ought to be banished from every Country professing *Humanity*, and where *Justice, Generosity, and Placability* are acknowledged to be *social* *Virtues,*

SERM. “*Virtues, and Ornaments to Human*

VI. “*Nature.*” Were Mankind entirely given up, in their *original Make*, to the direction and guidance of their *Passions*; or were there *implanted* in them strong and irresistible instincts of *Revenge*, blindly prompting to *destroy* each other; or were they *wild* and *undisciplined* as the brutes are, and subject to no *Orders* and *Regulations* of Civil Government; nothing *better* could be expected from them, but that they would furiously assault and prey upon each other. But as they are indued with a superior principle of *Self-Government* to *temperate* and *controul* all sudden impulses of *Rage* and *Anger*; as they find with themselves *social* affections, and sentiments of *common Benevolence*; as they know, by experience, that *every one* stands in need of indulgence, and of having candid allowances made for innumerable indiscretions and involuntary errors, which spring from *Incautiousness* and *Precipitation*, and not from a real *Intention* to offend; as they are capable, by the exercise of just Reflection, to *distinguish* Crimes, and allot to each an *equal*,

equal, and not an *indiscriminate* and *dis-* SERM.  
*proportioned* punishment; as they are VI.  
 united together in *Society*, and, of consequence, are bound to submit to the *Laws* of it for the preservation of publick Order; and, finally, as they are inspired with a *native Horror* of *Cruelty*, and of thirsting after *human Blood*: It is *surprising* extravagance that they are so apt to magnify trifles into *capital* Offences, and suffer themselves to be transported by a vindictive temper to such *violent Resentments*, as are notorious breaches of *Equity*, and oftentimes occasion most melancholy scenes of *Distress* and *Confusion*. Men may call this *boisterous* and *inhuman* method of proceeding by what *Names* they please; but it is impossible, in the nature of things, that it should ever be reconciled with *Virtue*, *Religion*, *universal Benevolence*, or with any *worthy* notions and principles of *Honour*: “ Unless it be  
 “ essential to constitute a *Man of Honour*,  
 “ (as the *modish* affected phrase is) that  
 “ he be *inflexibly rigid*, and prone to *Re-*  
 “ *venge*, without any thing of *Forbear-*  
 “ *ance* and *Mercy*, any thing of *Benevo-*  
 “ *lence*

SERM. “ *lence and mildness*, i. e. in short, with-

VI. “ out any thing truly *refined and amiable*

“ in his composition.” And if this be really the notion of *Honour*, among these *Sons of Anger* and of captious hasty *Re-sentment*, it will not be the *only* instance, in which they have substituted *mere Names* in the Place of substantial *Excellence*; nor, indeed, in which they have made use of them to *supplant* most important virtues, and *recommend* Folly and Extravagance.


BUT that I may not be thought to have nothing to offer against the practice of *Duelling*, besides general *invectives*, I beg leave to enter a little more distinctly into the Subject; being, myself, firmly persuaded, that the more minutely and largely it is considered, it will only appear so much the more *indefensible*. — The *first* Enquiry then that naturally occurs, especially in a discourse on the sixth Commandment, is, how far *Duelling* falls within the scope of the Crime therein forbidden; or in plainer terms, and paying no regard at all to the prejudices either of the *Great* or of the *Vulgar*,  
whether



whether or no, in a strict and fair way of reasoning, it falls under the denomination of *Murder*, the *last extreme* of human corruption, and the most aggravated offence, that can possibly be committed, against the *nature and happiness* of Man, and the *wise purposes* of Society. And in order to determine this point, let us attend once more to the true idea and definition of Murder. — It is the taking away the life of a man without a *cause*, i. e. without a *sufficient cause*; or, if we were to add without a *provocation*, it must still mean without a *sufficient provocation*; If “ therefore, in any cases of injury, the offence does not *merit* death, but a much “ flighter and gentler correction, the infliction of death being absolutely *unjust*, and destitute of any *proper authority*, any *solid reason* in the nature of “ things, to support it, it can be nothing “ else but *Murder*; since it answers fully “ to every branch of the above mentioned uncontestably *right* and *exact* “ description of it.”

130      *Of Duels, and Self-Murder.*

SERM.      EXACTLY in proportion as a punishment is *undeserved* (I speak now of the  
 VI      *strictest* and most *accurate* calculations of  
 equity) so far innocence *unjustly suffers*:  
 “ If the punishment be only bodily tor-  
 “ ture, innocence is *unjustly tortured*; if  
 “ it be death, an innocent person is *un-*  
 “ *justly deprived of life*, or, which is the  
 “ very same, *murdered.*” And in the  
 case of *Duelling*, where it happens that a  
 life is *actually* destroyed, there is both vi-  
 olent killing, and a design to kill. The  
 violence is without a just ground, with-  
 out a sufficient authority; the life that is  
 taken away ought to have been preserved;  
 “ would not have been *forfeited* were  
 “ mankind in *a state of nature*; and is  
 “ *protected* by the *laws of civil society.*”  
 — What then can the instrument of  
 such destruction be but a *Murderer*, a *de-*  
*liberate cool* Murderer, the worst of cri-  
 minals; since there is not a *single* circum-  
 stance wanting, that is *essential* to the  
 constitution of this crime? I have all a-  
 long taken it for granted, that upon those  
 occasions, from whence *Duelling* usually

commences, the punishment is *inadequate* SERM.  
 to the offence. And I believe even those VI.  
 persons, whose nice *fantastical* honour   
 has in a great measure perverted their  
 judgment, and extirpated their sense of  
 humanity, will not deliberately venture  
 to assert, that a *hasty word*, a *passionate*  
*reflection*, or even a *wilful aspersion*  
 thrown upon their character, are always  
 crimes so great, that nothing but the  
*blood* of the defamer can expiate. If they  
 are, they may justly be made *capital* by  
 the *public laws* of the community; but  
 sure I am, that if any government should  
 punish such offences as these with *death*,  
 it would be universally exclaimed against  
 as *excessive injustice* and *cruelty*: “ Which  
 “ evidently shews that it is unjust and  
 “ cruel *in itself*; and that there is no  
 “ other difference between such a pub-  
 “ lick sentence and private revenge than  
 “ this, that the one is MURDER *esta-*  
 “ *blished by a law*, and the other *lawless*  
 “ MURDER.”

I KNOW but of one thing, that can,  
 with the least face of plausibility, be ob-

SERM. rejected to invalidate the force of this reasoning, and that is, that in these *inhuman revenges* the supposed criminal is not *absolutely* devoted to death; but that the person injured puts himself upon *a level* with him, and gives him a fair chance of taking away his life, and preserving his own. But to this I would answer—that the presumed offence is of such a nature, that the life of a man ought not, upon the strict principles of *justice*, to be put in *any danger* upon the account of it. And if it be actually destroyed by *design* and *violence* (as in the present case) when in equity it ought *not* to be destroyed, it must be impossible, for the mildest and most indulgent casuist, to find any other denomination for such an action but *Murder*, whatever its accidental concomitant circumstances are. And how monstrous is the *plea* offered to extenuate this guilt, “ that the *injured* person (as he asserts “ himself to be) voluntarily *invites*, and, “ as far as in him lies, *compells* the *injurious* to repair *one* injury by a *greater*; “ and calls this, in very *ridicule*, as it “ should

“ should seem, and *despite* of justice, SERM.  
 “ and insolent behaviour to the common VI.  
 “ sense of mankind——*Satisfaction!*”

Such topics as these will scarce bear a *moral* debate, they are so extremely absurd and frivolous; and must therefore be look'd upon as the effects of an unbridled licentiousness, and one of the *frantic sallies* of *false Honour*: I say *false Honour*, because such turbulent spirits can with too much freedom, and without any checks either of *ingenuity* or *shame*, allow themselves a scope in *oppression*, *lewdness*, *adultery*, *corruption*, and other scandalous vices, which render them *base* and *despicable* in themselves, and *actually despised* by the sober and considerate part of mankind.—And yet they are very *delicate*, and *nice*, and *tender* of their *Honour*—What an inconsistency, what a most palpable and shameful contradiction, is this? and how evidently does it demonstrate, that not *real* honour, but *fancy*, *passion*, *pride*, and a *disordered impatient* spirit, are the predominant principles in the whole of their conduct.

SERM.

LET me add to all this, that this species of *Murder*, though it be sheltered under the name of honour, cannot possibly be reduced to any *certain* and *uniform* laws or rules of equity. This observation is founded on the *necessary difference*, that there always will be, in the particular situations and circumstances of men — Suppose then that a person without a *family*, or any that are nearly *dependent* upon him for their well-being, should think himself affronted by another, whose life is the surest pledge of felicity to many, who are united to him in the strictest and most indearing bonds of Nature ; or suppose a very great *disparity* in *fortune* ; or in respect of *importance* and *usefulness* to the public ; it is hardly possible, in cases of this kind, that any *face* of *reason* or *equity* can be preserved : Especially when, as it commonly happens, the affront is *slight* or entirely *imaginary*. This crime, therefore, must argue such a *defect* in notions of justice, as would hardly be excusable in the most ignorant and unpolished *Heathen Nations*. — And this leads me to another remark, very proper to be made

made in a *Christian* audience, and that is, SERM. VI.  
 that *Duelling* is most evidently repugnant to that *mild* and *gentle* temper, that *soft* spirit of *forbearance*, which the Gospel inculcates as an essential part of *true religion*. *Forgive one another, even as God*, Eph. iv. *in Christ, hath forgiven you; if ye forgive not Men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*; this is the <sup>32.</sup> <sup>15.</sup>

constant strain and tenor of the New Testament. But men of an inflexible and stubborn revenge and *blood-thirsty* honour, instead of being propitious and condescending, demand a most cruel and barbarous satisfaction for the most *trivial* injuries. — “ And therefore I see no substantial ground, according to the Christian scheme, on which they can possibly *hope for Salvation*.”

BUT perhaps the persons, of whom I am speaking, may be but little influenced by the declarations of *revealed* religion, or, in their present *fantastic* taste, they may think *infidelity*, as well as *Duelling*, to be a point of *honour* and genteel distinction; and, indeed, unless their *morals* were more conformable to the rules of our holy reli-

SERM. gion, one could scarce, in *Charity*, wish  
 V.I them to be Christians. — But I favoura-  
 ~~~~~ bly presume, however, that they are not  
Atheists: For if so, I know of no rea-
 sonings that will probably be effectual
 with them, but what are built on motives
 of *interest* and *present good*. Arguments
 drawn from the *constitution* of Nature,
 and the visible *established laws* of Nature,
 can have no weight; because *Nature it-*
self may be erroneous, if it be not the *effect*
 of some intelligent discerning cause. The
Atheist, as long as he retains his prejudices
 against Deity and a supreme Government
 of the Universe, I must for ever despair
 of being able to *instruct* in any principles
 or duties of *morality*. But if the *Duellist*
 be a *Believer* in God; if he believes also
 a *Providence*; that the present Life is a
probationary scene with respect to man-
 kind; and that there is another state to
 come of *exact* and *equal* retribution, in
 which their happiness or misery will be
 finally determined according to their
 character and behaviour here: — I would
 then propose, to his more retired and se-
 rious reflections, the following *case*, and
 leave

leave it to make what *impression* it naturally *may*, and *ought* to, make, for the regulation of his future temper and conduct. It is beyond question, upon the principles here presumed, a *possible* case; and I shall state it as if it was that of an *indifferent* person, in which he himself has no *immediate concern*, that he may examine it with a more disinterested impartiality. “ Suppose then *any man*,
 “ with whose *character* and *situation* in
 “ life you are entirely unacquainted, to
 “ have *challenged* another for a *passio-*
 “ *nate* expression, an idle rumour, or,
 “ if you please, for a malicious re-
 “ flection and directly calling in que-
 “ stion his *veracity*; and suppose that,
 “ in this contest of *honour*, the person
 “ *offending* should be sent to his ac-
 “ count *careless*, *licentious*, and *unprepar-*
 “ *ed*, with *all his sins* fresh and heavy
 “ upon him, without having an oppor-
 “ tunity for one thoroughly *sedate* and
 “ *serious* thought of repentance and re-
 “ formation — A most *affecting* circum-
 “ stance, and beyond expression *terrible*
 “ — And imagine, likewise, the *aggres-*
 “ *for*

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SERM. “ *for* to have received at the same time,
 VI. “ with many *crimes* and *stains* upon his
 “ Soul, his *passport* into immortality.
 “ — What the *consequence* must be I al-
 “ most tremble to mention, and every
 “ one here present will *anticipate* with
 “ horror. — He sues for *mercy*; but is
 “ answered, that he himself discovered a
 “ temper most *severe* and *implacable*, and
 “ prosecuted his Brother, with *unnatural*
 “ *revenge*, for an offence that was in it-
 “ self *inconsiderable*; that he destroyed
 “ his *life*, involved his *family* in *inconsol-*
 “ *able* sorrow, cut him off *unthinking*
 “ and *impenitent*, and, by that means,
 “ completed his *ruin* to *eternity*: And
 “ can he *expect* mercy for his own infi-
 “ nitely *more aggravated* crimes, who,
 “ during the state of his probation, was
 “ thus absolutely *destitute* of mercy?”
 Should *this reply* be made to him, as it
 most fitly may by the supreme Judge,
 though his *clemency* be equal to his *justice*,
 he must, in my opinion, necessarily sink
 under the confusion and weight of his
guilt; his own *reason*, and every *moral*
principle

principle within him, justifying and con-
firming the sentence.

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HAVING thus largely considered the case of *Duelling*, and evidently shewn that it is a species of the *unnatural* crime forbidden by the *sixth* Commandment, and utterly inconsistent with *reason, equity, benevolence, true honour, and Christianity*: I am now, according to the Method which I proposed to follow, to treat of *Self-Murder*, a practice equally shocking and horrible, and equally, though in a different sense, an offence against *Nature*; a suppression of some of its most lively and powerful *instincts*, and a violation of its original and universal *laws*. The love and desire of *life* is a passion *inseparable* from the present constitution of *humanity*; and, of consequence, some degree likewise of aversion and shrinking back from *Death*, especially from a *violent* Death, though in a just and worthy Cause. And, therefore, for a man to become his own executioner is so absolutely *unaccountable* upon all principles, whether of *reason* or *instinct*, that it is, by the general suffrage of Mankind, ascribed

SERM. cribed to a *crazed* and *distempered* mind.

VI. The unhappy person is supposed to have lost the regular use of his understanding, and, by that means, the very power of *Self-command* and just *Self-direction*, before he could be rendered capable of committing so fatal and dreadful an extravagance. Which is the same in effect with asserting, that no other specious or colourable excuse can be assigned for it than this, that the Self-Murderer was, before, in a manner *extinct* and *blotted* out from among men; that he was deprived of the noblest *distinction* of his Nature, and had ceased to be a *moral* agent; that he was no longer a *fit subject* of laws, no longer *accountable*; but that his conduct was the result of mere *animal* and *brutal* impulse.

WHETHER this be *strict* and *right* reasoning there is great room to question; because it has no other foundation than this to support it, that the action is in itself *strange*, and to the last excess *unnatural*.

“ But we see, in various other cases, that
 “ Mankind can offer the *utmost violence*
 “ to Nature, and to its plainest and
 “ strong-

“ strongest dictates and affections, through
 “ a *viciousness* and *depravity* of mind
 “ which they have *voluntarily* contract-
 “ ed; and *violences* too, that are in all
 “ respects equal to the *worst* that, we
 “ can represent to ourselves, have been,
 “ or ever will be, occasioned by any
 “ *accidental disorder* in its faculties.”

Every one, therefore, that acts *unreasonably* is not to be esteem'd as destitute of the *internal powers* of reason; the wild and *thoughtless* libertine must not be judged as if he wanted a *capacity* to think; and, by the same rule, a man that behaves in such a manner as if he was under the influence of a *real* and *unavoidable* phrenzy (which is the case of many *other sinners* besides the *Self-Murderer*) may not be *innocently* or *excuseably* mad. He may be violent, furious, raving, and frantic with *design*. *Nature* may have done *her part* by seasonable and friendly admonitions, and repeated checks and remonstrances, to prevent all such scandalous and hurtful excesses: And then in the most gentle, if it be also a wise and equitable, construction of the case,

SERM. case, the offender must be *blame-worthy*,
 VI. and deserve some *punishment* that bears a
 proportion to the *degree* of *extravagance*
 in his way of thinking, in his passions, in
 his common practice, or in any particu-
 lar action; to the *degree*, I say, of that
 extravagance which the indulgence and
 pursuit of *vice* has been the sole cause
 of; which springs from the want of *due*
reflection; from stubbornness, pride, dis-
 content, or any *criminal* principles;
 or from a *licentious* and *ungoverned* tem-
 per.

I MAKE no doubt, indeed, but that, in
 many instances, those who have so far re-
 nounced and shook off the *ties* of *Nature*,
 as to commit the *detestable violence* of
 Murder upon themselves, have been *ac-*
tually impair'd in their reason, and the
 proper use of their intellectual powers.
 But of this the *fact itself*, monstrous as
 it is, and extremely hard to be otherwise
 accounted for, is no *certain* demonst-
 ration; "because *vice* can be altogether as
 " bloody and barbarous as the most un-
 " governable *distract*ion, and disorder'd
 " *passions*

“ *passions* may operate as blindly and out-
 “ rageously, and produce the very same
 “ mischiefs and fatal consequences, as a
 “ disorder’d *understanding*.” Besides,
 even upon this most favourable suppositi-
 on, there is still a *distinction* necessary to
 be made, in order to fix, in particular
 cases of Self-Murder, the *just degree* of
 guilt; because there may be a difference
 of *circumstances*, that will oblige us to pass
 a different *judgment* upon *two* facts of the
 same *seeming* horror and *melancholy* aspect,
 even where a state of *lunacy* is allowed to
 be, in *both*, incontestable.—If this *dis-*
temper of the mind, which so wofully
 effaces the proper *characters* and *signa-*
tures of humanity, and every thing with-
 in us in which we have the honour to
resemble our Maker, be entirely our *mis-*
fortune, and *such* an effect of natural
 causes as it was not in our power to have
avoided; we are then most certainly *in-*
nocent with respect to any *consequences*
 that may happen to follow upon it. If
 we are raging and mischievous, we are
 reduced to the *condition* of ravenous and
 savage *Animals*, who find themselves
 prompted

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SERM. prompted (and irresistibly prompted, as
 VI. they have no superior principle of reflecti-
 on and choice) to hurt and destroy. And
 this, as to all guilt and an after-reckoning, must and will excuse us. “ But
 “ what if the fit of *Madness*, in which
 “ *Self-Murder* is committed, be brought
 “ upon us by our own *fault*? What if it
 “ be the *genuine fruit* of our *luxurious*
 “ and *extravagant* living, the product of
 “ *vanity* and of a *proud aspiring* tem-
 “ per, or owing to the *voluntary* indul-
 “ gence of any *excessive* and consequent-
 “ ly *unnatural* passion? This must un-
 “ doubtedly make a wide difference be-
 “ tween the *present* case, and that *already*
 “ stated.—Self-Murder *here* is the con-
 “ sequence, the *natural* consequence, of
 “ *guilt*; and, therefore, it is almost a con-
 “ tradiction in terms to assert, that the
 “ *act* of violence itself may be absolutely
 “ *clear* and *free* from *guilt*. It sprang
 “ indeed, more *immediately*, from a *di-*
 “ *straction* of mind: But from whence
 “ did *that* distraction spring? — from a
 “ *depraved* inward disposition, from *per-*
 “ *verted* affections, from *ambition*, *im-*
 patience,

“ *patience, intemperance, and voluntary*
“ *self-corruption*: And it is impossible
“ that the *effects* of such *bad causes* should
“ be innocent. They are not *so* reputed
“ upon the established principles and me-
“ thods of justice, that take place in *hu-*
“ *man* governments. If one man kills
“ another in a *furious transport* of passi-
“ on, which throws the whole *soul*, and
“ the *body* too, into such agitations and
“ distortions as very nearly resemble a
“ *natural phrenzy*; he is, notwithstanding
“ this *violent disorder*, which, while
“ it lasts, *blinds and controuls* all his su-
“ perior faculties, convicted and punished
“ as a *Murderer*. The very *same degree*
“ of wild *tumult* and *confusion* within,
“ and *incapacity* for reasoning, had it
“ been an *accidental* distemper which he
“ was not able to *prevent*, would have
“ been thought sufficient to *acquit* him
“ in any reasonable and impartial court
“ of justice; but he is righteously *con-*
“ *demned* when it is *passion voluntarily*
“ *indulged*. And just so the *Self-Mur-*
“ *derer*, though a *lunatick*, must expect
“ to be cited and dealt with as a *criminal*

SERM. “ at the bar of supreme justice, if the
 VI. “ distemper, which *occasioned* this execrable attempt, was procured and entailed upon him by his *vices*. And as I believe that this will be found, upon an accurate examination, to be nearest the truth, in *most* of the deplorable events that happen of this kind; we have too much reason, upon the whole, to fear, that *few* of these unhappy persons will be treated with so much tenderness and lenity *hereafter*, when it will be of the greatest and of everlasting importance, as are generally allotted to their character and memory by their fellow-creatures *here*, where it can to them be of *no possible use*.”

LET me farther add, that upon the same foundation on which Self-Murder is so readily and constantly imputed to *lunacy* (as what, in the common sentiment of mankind, can never be justified on any *sober* and *rational* principles, and thwarts every *implanted instinct* and *propension* in human nature, as well as the *presiding directing* power the understanding) upon the same foundation, I say, it

is, that the *instances* of this vice, which occur, are so prodigiously *few* in number, in comparison of most others that can be named. The bulk of the World are too apt to be *discontented*, *restless*, *apprehensive* of injury and ill usage. They *eagerly desire* more than they *enjoy*, or are ever *likely* to enjoy. They form *absurd* and *fanciful* schemes of happiness, in which they are *disappointed*. Their pride is *mortified*; their passions are *violent*; they complain of the *tiresome load* of Life, the *dull* and *nauseous repetition* of its pleasures: they complain of *themselves*, and inveigh, with *ill-nature*, against the *World* around them. Great multitudes are *distress'd* in their circumstances, *unhappy* in their families, *deserted* by their friends, forced to *descend* below their *former* appearance, linger under *gradual* infirmities and decays of Nature, or are exercised by such *severe* and *acute* pains, that what *calm* and *free self-enjoyment*, what *small taste* of happiness they have, can in propriety be only stiled a *short cessation*, or a *gentle interruption* and *abatement* of their *Miseries*.—And yet though

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SERM. one or other of these is generally the


VI. *source*, from which *Self-Murder* takes its
 ~~~~~ rise, “ there is not *one* in *ten thousand* of  
 “ the *disappointed proud*, the *depressed*  
 “ and *dejected ambitious*, of the *peevish*  
 “ *passionate and complaining*, of the *dis-*  
 “ *quieted anxious* and *desponding*, who  
 “ *curse* the day of their *birth*, and *ex-*  
 “ *claim* against the *infelicities* of human  
 “ nature ; ” there is not *one*, I say, in  
*ten thousand* of this whole tribe (whether  
 in *reality*, or in *imagination*, miserable)  
 that proceed to the dreadful extremity  
 which I am now considering. And  
*this* I urge as a very fair and probable  
 presumption, “ that *Nature itself* is  
 “ strongly against it: For otherwise, as  
 “ we constantly see in the *undoubted* ope-  
 “ rations and course of nature, where the  
 “ *causes* are the same, the same *conse-*  
 “ *quences* would more regularly and uni-  
 “ versally follow.” But yet as examples  
 of this kind *sometimes*, and whenever it  
*so* falls out, *too often* occur, a discourse on  
 the subject cannot be unnecessary; and  
 especially as it is a subject scarce ever

treated of; and the people of *England* are more apt than *any other* nation in *Europe* (where such a dismal catastrophe is very *rare* and *unusual*) to *assault* a *Life* so strongly and *peculiarly* guarded by the wise Author of our being. Which, whether it be owing to the *climate*, to any thing *singular* in the *complexion* of the inhabitants, or to the *gloomy sentiments* of *Religion* (naturally tending to the *distraction* of weak minds) which, in a land professing *universal liberty*, will very *probably* take place, as being most adapted to some *particular tempers*; I certainly know not, and therefore will not pretend positively to determine. It is a sufficient reason for my intermeddling in this affair, that I believe the thing itself to be a *vice*, and an opposition to the *will* and *law* of God; and that it is imputed to us as a national *distemper*, and what reflects *dishonour* on our country. And if I may be the means of saving but *one Life* to the *community*, one *Husband* and *tender Friend* to an otherwise drooping and disconsolate *Widow*, one *Father* to other-

SERM. wife destitute, abandoned, and helpless

VI. Orphans, one *Christian* from dishonouring his *profession*, one *Man* from attacking and destroying, in his own person, *human nature*, one *Reasonable Creature* from rebelling against the *constitution* and *order* of Providence, or one *immortal Soul* from *rashly urging its way* into the *presence* of an omniscient judge, from whom no *circumstance*, no *motive* influencing his conduct, can possibly be hid: I shall think myself not to have laboured, not to have preached in vain. Let me now proceed to suggest *other* arguments, more directly and in form, against the detestable crime of *Self-Murder*.


AND, in the *First* place, as this discourse is grounded on a passage of *Scripture*, it must be proper for us to consider in *what account* this practice stands, upon the *principles* of *revealed Religion*. In the sixth commandment the *Murder*, i. e. the *unjust killing*, of *A MAN* is prohibited: And though this, without doubt, was originally designed only to prevent the violent attack of *one* man upon the life

life of *another*; yet that does not at all SERM.  
 hinder, but that an assault upon *his own* VI.  
 life may be *Murder* likewise, upon the *same*   
 general foundation in the *nature* and *truth*  
 of things. It is not indeed the thing *direct-*  
*ly* and *explicitely* condemned; but if the  
 argument *corresponds*, it must, if not coin-  
 cide with the immediate and express *in-*  
*tent* of the prohibition, fall however with-  
 in the fair and rational *Scope* of it. Let us  
 therefore only *assume* it as an indisputable  
 principle, that by this precept *Murder* is  
 condemned; that must of necessity be *all*  
*Murder*; whether it be, in the *distinct*  
*Cases* and *Examples* of it, actually expres-  
 sed or not: For *a single instance* is fre-  
 quently put, in *moral* writings, to denote *a*  
*species* or *kind* of action, which, in every  
 parallel Case, must be *equally criminal* with  
 that which is particularly alledged.—  
 “ Now *Self-Murder* is the *killing* of *a*  
 “ *Man*, whom it would have been abso-  
 “ lutely *unlawful* (in the same circum-  
 “ stances) for *any other* human Creature to  
 “ *destroy*; from whence it must follow  
 “ that it is the taking away of *a life*, which

SERM. “ the Self-Murderer *himself* can have *no*  
 VI. “ *right* to destroy : Because if that be a  
 “ right essentially inherent in *him*, he  
 “ must have an authority, by the Laws  
 “ of Nature, to *transfer* to others. Nay,  
 “ as *no life*, in the present *community* of  
 “ situation and interest, can be *justly* cut  
 “ off, unless it be *expedient* for the  
 “ good of Mankind in general ; from  
 “ hence it will follow, that any person,  
 “ judging it to be thus *expedient*, is as  
 “ effectually *warranted* in being a *Mur-*  
 “ *derer*, as another can possibly be in  
 “ being a *Self-Murderer.*” The ground  
 of the Law therefore being equally *a-*  
*gainst* both, the *Law itself* must equally  
*condemn* both.

SHOULD it be said, that the Murder,  
 intended in the Text, is forbidden on ac-  
 count of the *vast*, the *irreparable injury*  
 done to a *Fellow-mortal*; who with re-  
 spect to the *rights* of *Human Nature*  
 (one of the chief of which is the *right*  
 to *life* not justly *forfeited*) must be  
 upon an absolute foot of *equality* with  
*every other* Member of the universal col-  
 lective



lective body of Mankind : I answer that SERM.  
 even this does not make the two Cases un- VI.  
*similar*. In the *principal* point, the un-   
*equitable* and *unauthoritative* destruction  
 of the life of a Man, they both agree :  
 “ Which is the *single* consideration that  
 “ constitutes the *crime* of *Murder* ; and  
 “ all others are only *circumstances*, rela-  
 “ ting to the different *aggravations* of the  
 “ guilt of the Murder committed. And  
 “ to *Families*, the mischiefs are the same ;  
 “ to the *Public*, the same.” To which  
 let me add, that “ the most *explicitè*  
 “ reason against *Murder* in the whole  
 “ doctrine of revelation — *For in the* Gen. iv.  
6.  
 “ *Image of God made he Man* — con-  
 “ cludes with equal force against *Self-*  
 “ *Murder* : For the Self-Murderer being  
 “ *a Man*, must have been originally  
 “ formed in the *Image* of God, or *Man-*  
 “ *kind*, universally considered, cannot  
 “ *deserve* to be represented under that  
 “ Character.”

THUS have I intermixed arguments,  
 drawn from *natural* principles of truth,  
 with reasonings on the sense and meaning  
 of

SERM. of *revelation*, that they may mutually il-

VI. *lustrate* and strengthen each other, and  
 unite their influence. And though I think what has been already suggested fully sufficient to *restrain* and *deter* from an action, which our very make and constitution *abhors*; yet I shall briefly add some other Topics, from whence the impiety and evil of it may be more plainly demonstrated. — As that Mankind are placed, *here*, in a *probationary* state which they *are not* and *cannot* be, from the *dependent* condition of their Nature, at liberty to *desert*. “ For a state of *moral discipline* necessary implies in the  
 “ very idea of it, that the supreme and  
 “ universal governor of Mankind has  
 “ the *absolute* and *sole* right, not only to  
 “ appoint the *place* of this discipline, but  
 “ to determine the *duration* of it. For,  
 “ otherwise, his *creatures* and *subjects*  
 “ must be *exempt* from his *jurisdiction*,  
 “ any farther than their own *imperfect*  
 “ and *superficial reason*, or *passions* usurping the *seat* of reason, shall allow it  
 “ to be *properly* and *wisely* exercised.”

This

This was represented in the Heathen SERM. Philosophy, by a very significant and VI. expressive metaphor, “ that of a Cen-  
 “ *tinel*’s deserting his *post* without or-  
 “ *ders*; for which he ought to suf-  
 “ fer an *exemplary punishment*; be-  
 “ cause, without it, *no command* can  
 “ be maintained.”

AGAIN, it may be farther argued,  
 “ that no Man *has*, or *can* have, the *full*  
 “ and *independent* right of *disposal* with  
 “ respect to *his own* life. *Society*, his *Fa-*  
 “ *mily*, and *all those* who are more par-  
 “ ticularly intrusted to his *care*, have a  
 “ *claim* in it.” He cannot, as was ob-  
 served before, make over that right of  
 disposal to *another*; as he *might* do if it  
 was an *absolute* right, and *essentially* be-  
 longing to him as a *Man*: “ Nor could  
 “ he ever be *retained* under the *govern-*  
 “ *ment* and *discipline* of God himself,  
 “ should such a right be *allowed*.”

AND let me observe, besides all this,  
 that *Self-Murder* though it be so aggra-  
 vated a crime, and repugnant to all the  
 principles of natural and revealed reli-  
 - gion,

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gion, “ is a sin that can never be repent-  
 “ ed of till *repentance is unavailable* ;”  
 and that there have been *scarce* any Ex-  
 amples of it, where the violent Mur-  
 derer has shewn, in general, a *real sense*  
 of piety, or any *consistent* appearances of  
 virtue. *Cato*, I know, is *applauded* as a  
 person of most *blameless* and *illustrious*  
 morals: But what was his *profession*!  
 What were his principles! “ Those of  
 “ a *Stoick*; which was a Sect that pro-  
 “ fessed a *proud, stiff, arrogant, and un-*  
 “ *amiable* virtue, and an *extravagant un-*  
 “ *natural* contempt of *pain* and *death*.”  
 And in *him*, Self-Murder seems rather to  
 have proceeded “ from a *haughty disdain*  
 “ of submitting to a *Conqueror*, and ac-  
 “ knowledging a *Superior* and *Lord* in  
 “ *Rome*, than from any disinterested and  
 “ generous sentiment.” And to leave,  
 for the present, *religion* quite out of the  
 argument, “ he would have acted a part  
 “ much more *becoming* the Character of  
 “ a *Patriot*, a Man of *true courage* and  
 “ *invincible resolution* ; if, instead of dis-  
 “ piriting and distressing his *Friends*, and  
 “ aban

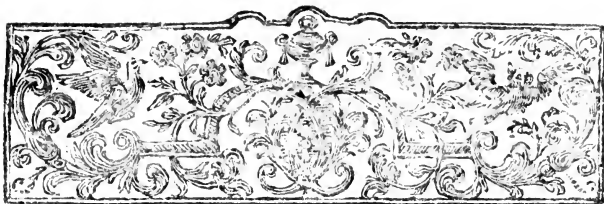
“ abandoning the *Public* to ruin, he had  
“ GREATLY *dared to live*, and reserved  
“ himself for *future service* to his Coun-  
“ try.”

As his character is *now* transmitted down to us, it is obscured and debased by strong appearances of a *sullen pride*; of *impotency* of mind, that was unable to support itself under disappointed hopes, and the reverses of fortune; of a *stubborn spirit*, unyielding to the suggestions of nature, nor duly awed by the regards due to the supreme governing mind; and of a temper too *self-centered*, and *negligent* of the *common good*.

“ *Cato* was *great* in many instances of his  
“ conduct; but when the *strength* of his  
“ mind was called out to *combat* with his  
“ *predominant* passion — *then he fell*.” And his *mean* example of *dying* especially (so much beneath the dignity of a philosopher and of a man) a *Christian* should *disdain* to imitate, whose religion inculcates those infinitely more sublime and generous maxims than appear to have influenced *Cato's* morality — *viz.* “ neither to *fear*, nor to  
“ *court*, death; to be neither *rash*, nor *pus-*  
“ *sillanimous*; to *suffer* with firmness and  
“ *intre-*

SERM. “ intrepidity ; to resolve for the good of  
 VI. “ mankind, and ’till *providence itself*  
 “ closes the ungrateful scene, to stand  
 “ our ground as illustrious *examples* of a  
 “ *depressed, conflicting, triumphant* virtue ;  
 “ and, in a word, to wait the regular  
 “ *summons* of nature, which is the only  
 “ authentic *call* of heaven, to quit the  
 “ the *trials* of the present life, and enter  
 “ upon the rewards and honours of im-  
 “ mortality.”





## S E R M O N VII.




On the Example, and moral Character of CHRIST.

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I P E T. ii. 21.

*---Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

 HE examples of great and illustrious persons, who were eminent for superior degrees of moral goodness, and for the purity, strength, and sublimity of their virtues, have in almost all ages of the World been held in high veneration; and it has been thought of considerable service to the cause of *virtue*, as well as a *respect*

SERM. VII.

SERM. *respect* due to the memories of those who

VII.  have excelled in it, to propose such uncommon, such noble and useful characters, as a proper *pattern* for the rest of Mankind to imitate. And for this there is an evident foundation in *reason*, and in the frame of *Human Nature*. For it is undeniable from experience, that the *force* of good examples is much more universally felt, than that of the wisest precepts, or the most exact and accurate reasonings: They not only *instruct* but powerfully *persuade*; they excite *admiration*, inspire *resolution*, work upon the inward *native* sense of *ingenuity*, and charm and animate it to *exalted* and *divine* improvements. Were we to have the most elaborate draught of moral excellence presented to us in *speculation* only, we should be apt to esteem it as *a fine picture*, and be struck, perhaps, with the *beauties* and *graces* of it; but might think it, at the same time, wrought up to a *romantic* strain, and too *sublime* to be copied in real life. But when we see it as it were *substantiated*, and are fully convinced that it has been actually exhibited in *living*

Charac-



Characters, the ground of *despondency* and *inactivity* is removed; a worthy *emulation* is excited; and we ourselves are not only *prompted*, but *encouraged*, to excell.

SERM.  
VII.

As for the Example which the Text speaks of, and which Christianity has called us to imitate, it is by far the most *high* and *noble* that was ever proposed to the World: As the Person who set it was, both in *office* and original dignity, the *first* and *chief* of Men; being indeed, before his incarnation, at the head of all the *angelical* powers; and voluntarily condescending to assume *our Nature*, for this among several other most wise and gracious purposes, that he might go before us as our *Pattern* and *Conductor* in the paths of virtue and piety. And the Example of Christ contains more *ample instruction* in it than any other, and is adapted to all *ranks* and *stations* in human life, as it abounds both with *common* and *universal*, and with more *extraordinary* and *heroic* virtues; it is an Example of *unspotted innocence*, and therefore, when rightly understood, an unerring and invariable

SERM. riabile *rule* : And finally it is an Example

VII. that is peculiarly *persuasive*, calculated to impress our minds, and determine and influence our conduct — being that of the *Author* of our Religion, of our amiable and compassionate *Saviour*, of the greatest *benefactor* and *friend* to Mankind. We ought therefore, though we can never hope to conform *perfectly* to it, to aim at as near a *resemblance* of it as is possible, from every motive of *decency*, *gratitude*, and *interest*. “ By this we shall adorn  
 “ the *Christian name*, render it glorious,  
 “ and the object of delight and veneration ; whereas when it is debased and  
 “ sullied by *vice*, by a *low irregular brutal*  
 “ *life* quite the reverse of the *pure*  
 “ and *sublime* life of Christ, it is a *vain*  
 “ and *insignificant distinction* in itself, the  
 “ *jest* of the licentious and prophane,  
 “ and the *scorn* of the sober infidel.”

BUT then, on the other hand, it must be remember'd, that there are certain *general rules* necessary to be observed in the imitation of *all* examples ; and especially of *such* as *transcend* common life, and are adorned and heighten'd by *great*  
 and

and extraordinary actions.—It is absolutely necessary, in the *first* place, in order to our forming a just estimate of *particular actions*, that we carefully examine into the true *springs* and *occasions* of them, and consider the *situation* and *character* of the agent, and the *views* and *motives* by which he was directed and governed; because without this it is impossible for us to know, in several cases at least, whether they actually *deserve* and demand our imitation, or, indeed, whether they are *right* and *fit* in themselves. The very *same instances* of outward conduct, as they are differently *circumstanced*, and flow from different *principles*, may be either eminently wise, or as notoriously *absurd*; *moral* or *irregular*; proofs of a rational and sober *piety*, or marks of a heated and blind *enthusiasm*. And, therefore, unless this point be fixed with a tolerable degree of exactness and good judgment, we may happen entirely to *desert*, or however widely to *vary from*, the *pattern* which we pretend most strictly to copy after, even when the *external behaviour* is, in both, the same.

SERM. FROM hence we are naturally led to  
 VII. another rule, and that is, that in follow-  
 ~~~~~  
 ing Examples which are proposed to us, and most of all *distinguished* and *singular* examples, we endeavour to find out *those parts* which are more immediately *adapted* to our own condition, to our abilities, rank, and employments, and the relative stations, in which the all wise Providence of the supreme disposing mind has thought fit to place us. For besides *those* virtues which are immutably and universally *essential* to a good character, and such as are directly *suited* to the peculiar relations which we ourselves sustain, we shall probably, upon reflection, find some *other* parts, to which we are not *capable* of attaining: And to attempt *these* may be as injurious and unbecoming, as the discharging our *proper* obligations, and the duties of religion that bind *invariably* in *all* circumstances, is beneficial and praiseworthy. And as it will, I believe, plainly appear, if we consider the subject impartially, that these *peculiarities* relate not, in most cases, to the *habit* and inward *temper* of piety and moral rectitude,
 but

but chiefly to the outward *expressions* and *demonstrations* of it; must upon this account it be highly expedient for us, with respect to such shining Examples as we find within us a generous and aspiring *emulation* to resemble, to make a distinction between the *general Character*, and the *particular actions* that illustrate and display that character. For the *latter* may be *extraordinary* instances above our capacity, and too *sublime* for vulgar imitation; while the *former* is of such a kind, as *every Man* has it in his *power* to cultivate, and carry to a considerable degree of perfection. And this remark is not confined to *entire Characters*, but may be extended to all the *single virtues* of which they are composed; by whose *united lustre* and influence it is, that they are *completely* formed, and rendered *amiable* and *resplendent* patterns of moral beauty and dignity. — Thus the *habit* and *temper* of piety, of generosity, of benevolence and mercy, may be *imitable* in all Examples, be they ever so great and excellent; but it is obvious to the common sense and experience of Mankind, that

SERM. there are *some acts* of piety, *some expressions* of benevolence, *some discoveries* and *proofs* of a generous and merciful disposition, that cannot be *universally* imitated: So that the *inward*, i. e. the *true* and *proper*, Character may be *one* and the *same*; even when there is a necessity, in the nature of things, that it should *shew* itself in very *different* instances. And this can never appear in a stronger light, than by applying it to the most *holy* and *finished* Example of the blessed Author of our Religion. To endeavour to be *like* him in a constant and ardent *propensity* to do good, and in *a life* of the most exalted and extensive usefulness, is the *eternal duty* of *all* his disciples; but to *perform* precisely the *same* beneficent actions, to communicate relief and happiness, to reform the errors and vices of the World, in the *same extraordinary* way in which he did it, these things can constitute *no part* of *our* moral obligations, because they are in our present circumstances absolutely *impossible*. And, in many other cases, unless we take care to maintain the *like just distinction*, and, by that means, acquire

acquire a right notion of *what it is*, we are obliged to copy, in the pious and moral Example of our adorable Saviour, our Religion must run into *extravagance*; and our virtues, instead of being reasonable and attractive, will be justly censured as absurd and unnatural *affectation*.

I SHALL only add one preliminary observation more, which is this, that the most bright and justly celebrated Examples of virtue are likely to make the most *sensible* and *deep* impression, when they are *distinctly* illustrated. The *general* excellence, of the *whole* Character taken together, may appear *great* and *admirable*; but our esteem and veneration of it will of course *increase* and be better *established*, when we see it represented in a *variety* of agreeable lights; and the *uses* of it will be *accommodated*, with less danger of error and greater ease, to the *various* scenes and conditions of human life. For as in our *inquiries* into the works of nature, the *further* we go in unravelling the curious texture of their parts, their properties and uses, their stupendous form as branches of the general system, their

SERM. connection with and dependence on each
VII. other, and subserviency to the common
grand design of order, harmony, and the
communication of happiness; as, I say,
the more *exact* we are in these *inquiries*,
our *wonder* and *delight* are greatly height-
ned; and the more *enlarged idea* we have
of the exquisite constitution of the uni-
verse, and the boundless perfection of its
infinite author: So it is likewise with re-
spect to *moral examples*. The considera-
tion of their *general propriety* and *recti-
tude* is but an inadequate and superficial
view, in comparison of that which must
be opened to us, by a distinct display of
their *particular beauties* and *excellencies*—
I shall therefore pursue this method in
the following discourse, and endeavour,
with reverence and humble admiration,
to delineate the several perfections, that
were eminently exemplified in the life of
Christ; not presuming that I shall be
able to do *strict justice* to the fair and un-
spotted original; but hoping, however,
to give such a *transcript* of it, as may be
adapted to warm our more *refined* and
generous affections, to inspire an *honou-
rable*

nable opinion of Christ and his religion, a SERM.
 love of virtue for its intrinsic divine ex- VII.
 cellence, and more *vigorous resolutions* to
 improve in it.

THE *first* thing, that I shall propose, is the example of our blessed Saviour's *piety* ;
 “ which was indeed *sublime* and *fervent*,
 “ but yet, in all the expressions of it,
 “ *discreet* and *temperate* ; being *founded*
 “ in reason and the immutable law of all
 “ derived and dependent natures, and en-
 “ tirely *regulated* and *guided* by it.” I
 chuse to begin with *this*, because it shone
 so brightly, and with such a superior and
 excelling lustre, in the life of Christ, and
 appears to have been, as it were, the *vi-*
tal and *animating* principle throughout
 his whole character ; and because it is, in
 itself, the *first* and *supreme* obligation in-
 cumbent on *mankind*, and on all *intelli-*
gent and *moral* creatures.—In the opinion
 of many indeed, who would be ranked
 with the most *discerning*, piety seems not
 to be a *necessary ingredient* in great and
 exemplary characters. In some of the
 most *applauded*, especially in *modern* times,
 there are found but *few* and *slight* traces
 of

SERM. of it. And yet I can, I think, scarce
 VII. conceive of any truth, that is more demon-
 strable and obvious to human reason than this, that there can be no such thing as a strictly *moral*, and surely then not a *finished* character, while the duties of *piety* are entirely neglected. It may indeed have a *partial* dignity, and be justly celebrated for its *other* distinguished and useful qualities; but the want of *this* is so fundamental a defect, that it must, at least, *tarnish* and *obscure* all the rest of its boasted excellencies.—For is it *natural* to the mind of man to acknowledge and honour real merit, and cannot refuse to adore *infinite rectitude*? Can it sincerely admire *lower characters* of virtue, and not be charmed with that of the *best* of all Beings? can it love, and be struck with, a *confined* and *defective* goodness, and not find its contemplations *raised*, and its affections *warmly excited*, by a goodness that is *unbounded* and *immutable*? Can it approve of *gratitude*, and not be *grateful* to the eternal source of mercy? Such a conduct as this must fail in *essential* points; and has neither *fitness* nor *consistency* to commend

commend it. For the duties of *piety* are, SERM. properly speaking, nothing else but the VII. exercise of *respect*, *love*, and *gratitude* to the supreme Being; which, if they are *moral* and *unalterable* obligations with respect to our *fellow creatures*, must deserve, *much more*, to be improved and cultivated with respect to him, who is the *gracious* and *universal creator*. This therefore is the natural, the inevitable, conclusion from the whole—that it is altogether as impossible, in *reason*, that there should ever be a truly *noble* and *complete* character without lively sentiments of *devotion* and *piety* towards God; as it is that any character should be *amiable*, without *justice*, *clemency*, and *generosity* to men.

BUT *both these*, which are in the nature of things inseparably linked together, were *illustriously* displayed in our blessed Saviour's example: And it was this *union*, and admirable *harmony*, of all the moral virtues, which give it such a transcendent and incomparable glory, that all other examples sink and fade before it. This perfect pattern of all moral rectitude ever main-

SERM. maintained and cultivated the most *raised*
 VII. and *honourable* apprehensions of God, and
 lived in an *habitual reverence* of his un-
 derived and independent glory and maje-
 sty, his boundless dominion, his supreme
 authority; and under an *efficacious* and
invigorating sense of *his own* constant de-
 pendence upon him. “ The *piety* of the
 “ Saviour of the World was *free* and *ge-*
 “ *nerous*; not a homage paid to a *tyrant*,
 “ but to the *Father* and *friend* of man-
 “ kind.” It appears to have been a *sted-*
dy and *uniform* principle, from all his dis-
 courses; from his frequent *occasional* ad-
 dresses to the Deity in prayer and praise;
 as well as from his more *uncommon* and
intense devotions. He gave continual and
 daily proofs of an ardent *zeal* for the *ho-*
nour of God; or, in other words, “ for
 “ promoting the right knowledge of his
 “ *perfections* and *laws*, and an exact and
 “ *universal resemblance* of him.” He
 thought it his *meat* to do the will of him
 that sent him into the world, and to finish
 his work; i. e. “ it was the *refreshment*,
 “ the *delight*, of his mind, infinitely su-
 “ perior to the false adulterate gratifica-
 “ tions

“ tions of sensual excess and luxury, to support honourably his *place* and *rank* in the universe, and execute the orders of infinite wisdom.” And being convinced, that *it* was necessarily determined by the *best* and most *important* reasons, he ever preserved that *calm*, *humble*, and *sublimely rational* temper as to be able to say; “ I not only esteem myself *constrained* by the *duty* which I owe to a *superior*, but *I delight to do thy will O my God.*” A very illustrious instance of his command over mutinous and rebellious passions, we find in the last and most *distressful* scene of his life. For though *Nature* was shocked, and expressed a strong reluctance, at the prospect of undeserved scorn and indignity, and of the shame, tortures, and horrors of a violent and ignominious death; yet he still preserved his *constancy*, and *invincible temper of resignation*: O my Father, says he, *if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

SERM.
VII.

Matt.
xxvi. 39;

BUT perhaps it will be thought, that the *agony* and *consternation*, under which

SERM. our Saviour laboured, and by which he

VII. was so much *oppressed*, is very surprizing and unaccountable, considering the *greatness* of his person and the unblemished *innocence* of his life. This, it may be said, was surely a *weakness* in him, and a *dishonour* to his character; since many *common* men have met *death*, in all its forms of terror, not only without that *confusion*, and *disconsolate anxiety* of mind, which he expressed, but with an *intrepid* and *invincible resolution*. — To which it is obvious to reply, that this *dejectedness* and *distress* of mind, which is thought so strange and wonderful, and, in some measure, disgraceful to the character of Christ, “ might arise from a *conjunction* “ of several circumstances, which pro- “ duced the effect *mechanically*; without “ any, the least, reflection on his *moral* “ *Example*.” It may be presumed to have sprang, very much, from *natural constitution* of *body*; nor is this, at all, an *absurd* and *foreign* supposition, when we are expressly told that, as a


Heb. ii. 17. Man, he *was in all things made like unto his Brethren*; and, of consequence, must have

have been necessarily exposed to the general *infirmities* and *temptations*, which attend human Nature. And this *constitutional* disposition, subject to strong impressions of *fear*, might perhaps be aided and strengthened by his reflecting on — the *ill success* of his heavenly mission; the *stubborn* and almost *desperate* incredulity of the *Jewish Nation*; their *ingratitude* in offering such heinous indignity to him, whose life had been one continued scene of *beneficence*, of a noble *concern* and *effort* to promote their highest interest: And, consequently, the distress of his mind (which, increasing the *inbred aversion* of Human Nature to a violent and disgraceful Death, produced his most *stupendous* agony,) might spring in a great measure from *the love* of his *Country*, and a tender *compassion* for its unhappy state. Others, again, suppose, that it might be occasioned, or at least heightned, by *præternatural* causes, and particularly, by the influence of evil Ministers to disturb and terrify the *imagination*; upon which account, they think, it was, that good Angels were sent from Heaven, after his

SERM. virtue had *sustained* this *arduous* conflict,
 VII. to *raise* and *comfort* him. But which

way soever we determine about these things, most certain it is, that his *extraordinary* terror, at the apprehension of an ignominious and tormenting Death, is so far from being an objection against the *strength* of his *piety*, that it is rather a more *full* and *bright* illustration of “ it: For the *greater* his dread of “ Death was, *proportionably greater* must “ the force of his *religious reverence* of “ God be, to controul and dispel it.” And, perhaps, this dark scene might be wisely ordered, in the course of providence, with *this* among other views; “ to give us an *unquestionable Example* of “ the surprising effect of a rooted habi- “ tual piety, to *support* the mind in ex- “ treme exigencies, and render it *unconque-* “ *rable* by the most *formidable trials*. —”

To conclude this head; the religious Example, which Christ has in our own Nature proposed and set before, “ is an “ *easy* and *imitable* Example, free from “ *unnatural* and *extravagant* raptures and “ transports. It does not consist in me-
 “ *chanical*

“ *chanical impulses and variable fervors of* SERM.
 “ *devotion; in superstitious austerities and* VII.
 “ *enthusiastical visions and intercourses with* 
 “ God; but in worshipping the *Father of*
 “ the Universe *in Spirit and in Truth,*
 “ with an *enlightened* understanding, and
 “ a *serene and purified* Conscience. The
 “ *fruits of it were — zeal regulated by*
 “ *knowledge, and tempered with humani-*
 “ *ty and compassion; the practice of vir-*
 “ *tue in all its branches; humility, con-*
 “ *tentment, sobriety, the love of man-*
 “ *kind, and a delight in doing good? It*
 “ was not *reserved and unsociable,* but
 “ familiar and affable; and aimed at this
 “ as its *ultimate* end — to promote the
 “ *glory of the infinite Creator by the mo-*
 “ *ral rectitude, the private and public,*
 “ the present and eternal *happiness,* of
 “ his *intelligent,* which are the *noblest* of
 “ his *Creatures.*”

I MUST crave your patience, while I
 suggest one instance more of our Saviour's
piety, which I have not hitherto touched
 upon; but it ought by no means to be
 omitted, because it will afford several per-

SERM. tinent and useful observations, directly
 VII. suited to the state of Christianity in these
 present times. The Author of our Religion, while he conversed with Men here on earth, was not only constant, at all fit seasons, in meditation and private prayer; but regularly and seriously attended the solemn offices of public devotion; and particularly it was, in his opinion, “an essential proof of the respect due to Almighty God, to acknowledge his authority in the appointment of positive laws, as well as by a strict observation of those which are unchangeable and moral.” It was upon this principle, that he thought himself obliged to submit to John’s baptism. And therefore when John, who was a minister of God far inferior and entirely subservient to him being commissioned only as a preparatory messenger, to open the way for the introduction of his mild and glorious reign, or as a herald, to proclaim to the Jewish Nation the coming of their King; when John, I say, made a scruple of performing the office of baptism

tism for one who was advanced so vastly above him; the Son of God, notwithstanding his *superior* character and the *consummate* rectitude of his Nature, would not be *diverted* from discharging an *obligation* which he thought *indispensably* incumbent on HIM: *For thus*, says he, Matt. iii. *it becometh us to fulfil ALL righteousness.* ^{VII.} ^{15.}

AND what *excuses*, now, that are *plausible*, and carry the least distant *colour* of reason, can any of us invent, for *depreciating* and neglecting laws of the very *same kind* under the *Christian* institution, with *that* which our Lord himself so remarkably *honoured*, and hath in so forcible a manner recommended to our esteem and veneration, by *his own Example*?
 “ We shall not, surely, pretend, that
 “ the holy *rites* of our religion are *signs*
 “ and *emblems*, that can be of *no use* but
 “ to the *vulgar*, the weakness of whose
 “ reason must be *aided*, and their affec-
 “ tions *raised*, by *sensible* images; but
 “ that we are too *wise*, and our notions
 “ of things too *just* and *refined*, to receive
 “ any real improvement from such *de-*

SERM. “ *based* and *popular* ordinances ; we shall
 VII. not, I say, think it *decent* to make *this*
 { pretence ; when we have his *Example*
 and *authority* both directly against us,
 who was *the Wisdom of God*. What
 then shall we offer ? Is it this ; “ that
 “ we are already so far *advanced* and
 “ *confirmed* in virtue, as to stand in *no*
 “ *need* of any *external* helps ?” Certain
 it is, that in such cases, our *partiality*
 and *pride* may easily deceive us ; upon
 which account, it is our wisdom to be
 more *cautious* and *diffident* : But not to
 insist on this ; it is evident to the very
 lowest understanding, that what is here
 suggested is a *frivolous* and *insufficient*
 plea, since the Saviour of the World did
 not think it to have *any weight* in *his own*
 case, though he was perfectly *innocent*.
 On the contrary, he looked upon an act
 of obedience, even to a *positive* law, to
 be absolutely necessary to *complete* his *mo-*
ral Character ; necessary to maintain a
 becoming *respect* to the authority of God ;
 necessary as an *Example* to instruct and
 influence others ; and highly necessary to
 prevent

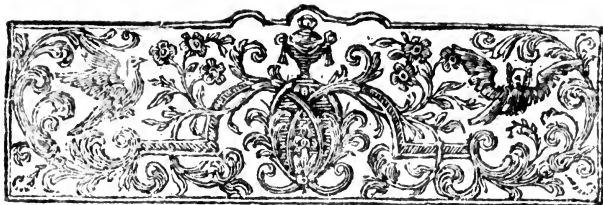
prevent *contempt* from being thrown on SERM.
any one of the Divine Laws, which, by VII.
 a too easy transition, would devolve upon
all the rest. “ For as every *act* of obe-
 “ *dience*, by the established *constitution*,
 “ and the *laws* that take place with re-
 “ spect to the human mind, must streng-
 “ then the *habit* of obedience ; so on the
 “ other hand, according to the fixed and
 “ and invariable progress and course of
 “ *habits*, repeated instances of *disobedi-*
 “ *ence*, even to laws that are in their in-
 “ tention *inferior* and *subordinate*, must
 “ directly lead to the same wrong con-
 “ duct in *grosser* and more *heinous* cases ;
 “ and may therefore at length, by gra-
 “ dual advances, proceed to an open vio-
 “ lation, if not an avowed contempt, of
 “ the *immutable duties* of *natural* reli-
 “ gion, as well as the *peculiar institutions*
 “ of *revealed.*” — In what I have said
 under this head, I must be supposed to
 address myself to *Christians* only ; who
 will find themselves miserably embarrass-
 ed, if they endeavour to reconcile their
neglect of plain and acknowledged pre-

SERM. cepts of the Christian Religion, with the
 VII. principles which they publicly profess, or
 with their maintaining a *consistent* and
honourable character. Suffer me just to
 add, that as the *obligation* of *positive* du-
 ties derives itself, *entirely*, from the *will*
 of the supreme Legislator *expressly* declar-
 ed : it from hence necessarily follows, that
 the *primitive model* of institution, ought
 to be conscientiously and *strictly* adhered
 to. “ To *annul* the law altogether, is a
 “ direct opposition to the authority of
 “ God ; to *alter*, so far as the alteration
 “ extends, is the same as to *annul* :” So
 that no pretence of greater *propriety*,
 nor any plea of *inconvenience*, can ever
 justify our substituting a *human ordinance*
 (whether in *whole*, or in *part*) in the
 place of a *Divine*. “ There are cir-
 “ cumstances to be supposed, in which
 “ the *observance* of it may, for a time
 “ at least, be *omitted*, with perfect in-
 “ nocence ; but *none*, wherein, with-
 “ out gross arrogance and superstition,
 “ we can presume to *mend* it.” The
reason of the thing is clear and strong
 against

against all such *innovations*, as well as SERM.
our Lord's *Example*: — The excellen- VII.
cies of which will be more largely illuf-
trated in my next *Discourse*.







S E R M O N VII.



On the Example, and moral Character of CHRIST.

I P E T. ii. 21.

---*Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

P I E T Y, and universal *Virtue* SERM. and good *Morality*, are, by VIII. the natural connection and order of things, absolutely *inseparable*. For all the *rules* of moral goodness being eternal *laws* of God, and many of them transcribed, as it were, from his own *essential* *perfections*; the allowed and habitual neglect of *any* of them must,

SERM. must, of necessity, be inconsistent both
 VIII. with the just esteem of his *lovely* and *ex-*
 ~~~~~ *cellent character*, and with a sincere re-  
 gard and submission to his *authority*. Nor  
 can it ever be imagined, without the  
 most manifest absurdity, that the supreme  
*wisdom* of the infinite mind will think it  
*sufficient* for us to practice those *outward*  
*respects* and *honours*, which his matchless  
 dignity, and the relation we stand in to  
 him, demand from us, if we are, at the  
 same time, careless about discharging  
*other duties*, which he has declared, to  
 be equally *inviolable*, in the very contri-  
 vance and frame of our nature; or live  
 in the omission of those *necessary offices*  
 which must be of perpetual obligation,  
 as long as the *various relations* continue  
 to take place (*established* by his Wisdom  
 and Power, and throughout all ages  
 maintained between the several parts of  
 his Creation. Such a supposition as this  
 would plainly infer, that the great and all-  
 perfect Deity is in reality neither *perfect*,  
 nor *truly great*; or, in other words, that  
 he is more concerned for the mere *pomp*  
 of *supremacy*, and useless *compliments* of-  
 fer'd

fer'd to himself, than for rectitude of SERM.  
*temper*, or integrity of *moral conduct*; and VIII.  
 that for the sake of flattering praises and  
 servile addressees, he will *dispense* with his  
 own laws. But of all the *moral* virtues,  
 there is none more intimately connected  
 with the genuine spirit and proper duties  
 of *piety*, than universal *benevolence* and  
*mercy*.—For if we reverence the authori-  
 ty of God, *that* has enjoined and enforced  
 it upon us; if we honour his *example*, in  
*that* we find it most amiably and gloriously  
 display'd; the *nature*, which *he* has  
 given us, strongly inclines and prompts  
 us to it; and *his creatures*, whose happi-  
 ness he sincerely desires, are the *objects*  
 of it.

FROM the consideration of our Saviour's  
 piety, we, therefore, naturally proceed  
 to contemplate his *benevolence*, his *lively*  
 and *unconquerable* benevolence. This is  
 the virtue, that, above any other, consti-  
 tutes *loveliness* of character; and it is,  
 withal, the inseparable *companion* of true  
 greatness of mind. And, with respect to  
 this generous and *God-like* virtue, the ex-  
 ample of Christ deserves a very particular  
 I *attention*,

SERM. *attention*, and to be admired and celebrated with the highest *applauses*. It may be extremely serviceable for our direction, as to the excellent *nature*, the great *importance*, the immutable *necessity* of universal Love and Charity: It may likewise be peculiarly serviceable to *warm* and *animate* every *kind* and *friendly* affection, that *nature* hath implanted within us; to extirpate all the *seeds* of *base* and *selfish* passions; to inspire a *disinterested*, *steady*, *diffusive*, goodness; and a generous unextinguishable *ardour* and *delight* in beneficent actions.

FOR, in the first place, our Lord has plainly shewn us, and represented it to us, in the strongest light, by several remarkable instances in his own life, “ that  
 “ the external observances and duties of  
 “ *piety* ought, upon no occasions, to be  
 “ suffered to interfere with the necessary  
 “ offices of *humanity* to our fellow-crea-  
 “ tures.” He made no scruple of *helping* and *relieving* the distressed, and acting, *publicly*, the part of a *friend* and noble *benefactor* to mankind on the *Sabbath-day*; tho’ the prejudiced and su-

PERSTITIOUS *Jews* had so far extinguish-  
 ed *the light of Nature*, that they censured  
 and condemned this conduct as a mon-  
 strous height of *prophaneness*, and an op-  
 pen violation of the express *command* and  
*law* of God relating to the *Sabbath*. But  
 the Son of God being infallibly assured,  
 that his Father could not be more *honour-*  
*ed* than by *imitating* his most amiable  
 perfections, and having his heart inflexi-  
 bly intent on *doing good*, (which he knew  
 was one main end of all *instituted* reli-  
 gion) chose rather to expose himself  
 to the insolent scorn and persecutions  
 of *ignorant bigots* and *designing hypo-*  
*crites*, “ than to raise to himself a *false*,  
 “ but *splendid*, character for *devotion*  
 “ and *piety*, by making a sacrifice to  
 “ it of *humanity* and *mercy*.” He saw  
 it to be an eternal dictate of *Nature*,  
 as well as that it was expressly revealed  
 by one of the ancient *Prophets*, that God  
 would have *mercy* rather than *sacrifice*; Hof. vi.  
 and gave such other solid and undeniable<sup>6</sup>  
 proofs, of the *rectitude* and *honour* of his  
 conduct, taken both from Reason and  
 Scripture, that his Adversaries were total-  
 ly

SERM. ly *confounded*; though at the same time,  
 VIII. as it generally happens with thoroughly  
 } *perverse* and *incorrigible* tempers, their *pre-*  
*judices* were *beightened*. So that through-  
 out the whole of these transactions, of  
 which several are distinctly mentioned in  
 the Evangelical History, both the *wisdom*  
 of Christ, and the exalted *goodness* and  
*generosity* of his disposition, are gloriously  
 and with a *united lustre* exemplified.

AND if we review the particulars of  
 our blessed Saviour's *benevolence*, we shall  
 find it to be, in *all*, *noble* and truly *divine*.  
 To do good was the constant *employment*,  
 the principal *business*, of his life. His  
 very *retirements*, his *meditations*, his  
*prayers* were in a great measure devoted  
 to the most substantial happiness of man-  
 kind: But his *public converse*, with the  
 World, was almost one entire scene of  
 kind and useful offices. Wherever he ap-  
 peared, *ease* and *joy* were his constant at-  
 tendants. He recovered speech to the  
*dumb*, sight to the *blind*, the calm and re-  
 gular use of reason to the *distempered* in  
*mind*; restored those to the *privileges* of  
*sociable* creatures, who, for *foul* and  
 loath-

loathsome diseases, were excluded from human society; and relieved the sorrows of tender parents and affectionate relatives, by miraculously raising their *Children* and *Friends* from the dead. In a word, the far greater part even of his *extraordinary* operations were, like the *fixed* and *constant* temper and habit of his mind, friendly to all objects that presented themselves, and scattered the blessings of *health* and *peace* all around him. — But great and Godlike as all this may appear, the benevolence of Christ had a far *nobler* aim, and took a much *wider* and more *extended* scope. His *chief view* was to instruct the ignorant, and reform the erroneous and vicious, to establish truth, and promote universal virtue and rectitude of life; and, consequently, to advance the *supreme honour* and *endless felicity* of *reasonable* Beings. For *this* he underwent innumerable *fatigues*; with a view to *this* he directed all his *studies*, and was fearless of *reproach* or *danger*; and at last, the more effectually to accomplish this *high* and *grand* design, he *freely*, and with an *heroic greatness* of mind,

SERM. mind, consented to submit to *death*. So  
 VIII. that he may be properly said to have died  
 a Martyr for the *universal* good, the *supreme* and *everlasting* good, of mankind:  
 “ And thus, his benevolence which, in  
 “ the former parts of his life, no *difficul-*  
 “ *ties* could controul, no *ingratitude* re-  
 “ strain, no *injuries* discourage, was *ele-*  
 “ *vated* to its utmost pitch of *perfection* by  
 “ triumphing over the *ignominy* and *ter-*  
 “ *ror* of Death.”


AND as, the most *humane* and *nobly* *benevolent* hearts, have always been distinguished by a strong sense of *compassion*, so we find it in the life of Christ; in which this tender and generous virtue was most admirably displayed. It is the property of *little* and *contracted* minds to be hard and insensible; but *great* Spirits easily melt, and relent at the distresses of their Fellow-Creatures. To be softened by *benevolent* affections, and dissolved in *pity*, is an honour to the human mind, but to be dissolved by the effeminate pleasures of *luxury* is mere animal passion, that depresses reason and the moral faculties. The latter of these therefore, could find



no place in the perfect Example of the SERM.  
 Son of God; but the former was glori- VIII.  
 ously displayed, and shone in its utmost  
 lustre. Compassion was so natural to his  
*elevated and divine* temper, that the most  
*common incidents* of life were sufficient to  
 raise a strong and lively sense of it — And  
 it exerted itself towards his most determi-  
 ned and inveterate *enemies*. For when,  
 a little before the destruction of that blind-  
 ed and ungrateful City, he beheld *Jeru-*  
*salem* at a distance, we are informed by the  
 sacred Historian, that with the most sensi-  
 ble and deep concern he *deplored* her un-  
 happy fate, and the desolation that would  
 shortly be brought upon her by the *Ro-*  
*man* arms, as a punishment of her un-  
 belief and impenitence.

ADD to all this, that we find, in the  
 life of Christ, a bright Example of the  
 tenderest affection and sympathy of  
*friendship*. For when the relations and  
 friends of *Lazarus* were lamenting, and  
 in sore affliction, at his Death, his Soul  
 immediately took the *impression* of their  
*grief*, and *Jesus wept*: *Jesus wept*, though  
 he knew their *loss* would soon be *repaired*,

SERM. and though he came *determined* to repair  
 VIII. it by his miraculous power. — *Jesus* there-  
 fore *wept* not for the *death* of *Lazarus* ;  
 but from a mind strongly *susceptible* of  
*compassion*, and that naturally bore a *part*  
 in the *sighs* and *complaints* of the afflict-  
 ed. “ From whence we learn, that the  
 “ *soft heart* which easily relents, and the  
 “ *tear* of *commiseration* that kindly falls  
 “ for the distresses of others, is one of  
 “ the most infallible indications of a *sub-*  
 “ *lime* and *great* Spirit, and an orna-  
 “ ment to the most *exalted* characters.”  
 There is indeed such an inward *satisfac-*  
*tion*, such a consciousness of true *dignity*  
 attending it, as is not to be described.  
 From *pains* of *this* kind springs one of the  
*noblest* of all our *pleasures*, — “ So *wisely* and  
 “ *graciously* has the God of Nature or-  
 “ dained it, that the compunction and  
 “ uneasiness, which we feel from so *ge-*  
 “ *nerous* a principle, should not be *un-*  
 “ *mixed* sorrow ; but be accompanied  
 “ with inward approbation and end in  
 “ *joy* : That, whilst it is in its *conse-*  
 “ *quences* so highly *beneficial* to our *Fel-*  
 “ *low-creatures*, we *ourselves* might not  
 be

“ be the only sufferers by it ; nor conse- SERM.  
 “ quently be tempted to *discourage* or re- VIII.  
 “ *sist* that *implanted sense* of humanity,   
 “ which is the Orphan’s *hope*, and the  
 “ *refuge* of the poor and miserable.”

HITHERTO, then, the Example of our blessed Saviour’s *benevolence* appears, in all the branches of it, to be extremely natural and beautiful ; and to be built, not merely on instincts of *Nature*, but on principles of *reason* and *religion*. There is such a thing no doubt, in many characters as an uncommon *constitutional* tenderness and friendliness of disposition, and a *peculiar* degree of propensity to kind and generous actions : And this deserves to be highly valued as a signal privilege of *Nature*. But to be swayed and governed by it, as we may be by any other *mechanical* impulse, without reflection, and the deliberate judgment and determination of the mind, seems to have, in a *moral* sense, very little that is truly praise-worthy in it. “ For it is possible, in  
 “ such cases as these, that a man may be  
 “ *humane* and *compassionate* only, or at  
 “ least chiefly, for *self-gratification* ;”

SERM. and his kind affections, not being bound-  
 VIII. ed and regulated by a *presiding intelligent*  
 and *moral* principle, may often times  
 prompt him to communicate *private relief*  
 and pleasure, against all rules of *discretion*,  
 and in opposition to the *common* good.  
 But when benevolence is directed by *rea-*  
*son*, springs from *approbation* and *choice*,  
 and is cultivated as a *law* of the Supreme  
 Being, and an unalterable and most im-  
 portant branch of the *moral rectitude* of  
 human Nature; it then claims a *rank*  
 among the most shining and eminent vir-  
 tues. Then, as in our Saviour's most  
 correct and holy Example, it will be *dis-*  
*interested*, *free* and *diffusive*; compassio-  
 nate without *weakness*, and generous be-  
 yond *controul*. With respect to the *dis-*  
*position* itself it will be large and uncon-  
 fined, and, in the *exertions* of it, have all  
 the scope that is desirable for the real  
 good of mankind; nor defeat the ulti-  
 mate *end* of our natural sentiments of com-  
 miseration and mercy, by converting *pri-*  
*vate favours* into *public injuries*.

BUT to proceed: Another excellent  
 property of that benevolence and good-  
 ness,

ness, which so illustriously distinguished the life of Christ, is, that it was *calm*, *gentle*, and *forgiving*. It could not be irritated, by any provocations, to a desire of *revenge*, nor be prevailed upon, by the most gross and undeserved indignities, to attempt a retaliation; but preserved an entire command over all *resentful* and *boisterous* passions, and ardently desired the *happiness* of the enemy and the persecutor, whilst it suffered by their *malice*. It was a constant maxim with the Son of God, to triumph over the insolence and injustice of his oppressors by an uninterrupted course of good offices; and conquer his enemies, not by *force*, but by meekness, compassion, and generosity. *He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth: When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatned not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* And this branch of his *Example* is, for its extraordinary amiableness and dignity, particularly recommended by the Apostle Peter,

SERM.  
VIII.

If. liii. 7.

1 Pet. ii.

23.

SERM. *ter*, just after the Words of my Text, to  
 VIII. the strict imitation of all *Christians*. And,  
 surely, with the highest reason; because  
 it discovers “such a *freedom* and *great-*  
 “*ness* of mind, such an *established* vir-  
 “*tue*, such a *steady* and *insuppressible* be-  
 “*nevolence* of temper, as are never  
 “found but in the most raised and *God-*  
 “*like* characters.”

BUT the excellency and uncommon lustre of our blessed Saviour's Example, in this respect, will appear in a yet stronger light to excite our esteem and admiration, if we turn our thoughts to *particular instances*. — We shall then find, that the mild and charitable Author of our Religion was a declared enemy to PERSECUTION, and to all methods of *severity* and *violence*, though upon the most plausible and specious pretences. For when two of his Disciples, transported by a *frantic* and *cruel* zeal, proposed to him to command *fire from Heaven* to *destroy* the rude and ungenerous *Samaritans*, who refused him a passage through one of their *villages*, for no other cause but because he was going to *Jerusalem*; and who,

who, besides the affront which they offered to *him*, and their contempt of his prophetic character, were notorious Apostates from the true Religion, that was revealed and instituted by God himself: When two of his Disciples, I say, proposed his revenging himself in so signal a manner on these inhospitable, schismatical, and apostate Samaritans; he rejected the motion with a noble resentment, and a severe rebuke of their intemperate zeal, in these remarkable Words. — *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of: For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* “ To injure any on account of their disrespect to him, and for the sake of their errors and corruptions in faith or worship, was absolutely repugnant to the genius of his Religion, and to the uniform course of his meek and beneficent life.” — A clear and uncontestable proof this, that the Church of Rome, which is all over stained with Blood, and has, for so many ages, practised the most horrible barbarities to maintain her unjust claims and infinite superstitions, “ is

SERM:  
VIII.  
~~~~~

Luke ix.
55, 56.

SERM. “ a *false* and *Antichristian* Church ; and
 VIII. “ justly held by all who have a reve-
 ~~~~~ “ rence for *Christ*, nay, by all who have  
 “ not extirpated the common principles  
 “ of *humanity*, in the utmost *scorn* and  
 “ *detestation*.”

BUT not to disturb our thoughts, at this time, with a more particular representation of such *unnatural* and *shocking* characters, let us go on to survey a more delightful subject, the *lovely* and *admirable* Example of the Friend and Saviour of mankind. — Let us view him when most heinously *insulted*, and under the most grievous scenes of his *distress* and *suffering*, and we shall find that “ the same  
 “ *sweetness* of disposition, the same *un-*  
 “ *ruffled* Spirit of *soft* and *mild* benevo-  
 “ lence still possessed him, and triumph-  
 “ ed compleatly and gloriously over *proud*  
 “ and *malignant* passions.” We all of us feel, that when our honour is stained by the rude attacks of *calumny*, when we are unjustly *despised*, and suffer groundless *abuse* and *wrong*, through the baseness and ingratitude of the World ; it is extremely difficult, and an excellence that  
 few,



few, very few, attain to, to preserve the SERM.  
*evenness* and *composure* of our tempers. VIII.


*Passion* is apt to grow *unruly*, and inspire designs of *revenge*; and, in the midst of this *tumult* within, the voice of *reason* is not heard, and the motions of *benevolence* are scarcely felt. But if we would accustom ourselves to contemplate, frequently, the *Example* of the Son of God with a becoming seriousness and veneration, this would be a most effectual means to extirpate all the seeds of *malice* and *ungoverned resentment*; and while we *abhorred* the *injury*, it would teach us to maintain humanity and tenderness towards the *injurious*. For this Divine Person had led an *innocent*, *peaceable*, and *inoffensive* life; he was conscious to himself of no *views*, but what directly tended to the *good* of mankind; he never gave to any one of his countrymen the least ground for just *complaint*; but for his exemplary services to the World deserved universal *love* and *honour*. But when, notwithstanding all this, he was branded with public *infamy*, apprehended as a notorious *Malefactor*, and his life sacrificed

to

SERM. to save that of a vile detestable *Murderer*;  
VIII. when the Priests and leading men of the

~ Jewish Nation made it an act of *Religion*,  
and a point of eminent *merit*, to conspire and  
procure his *death*; when he was exposed,  
with *mock-pageantry*, to the derision and  
rage of the multitude; and, after many  
*preparatory* indignities, was at length, to  
glut the insatiate cruelty of his enemies,  
devoted to Death, even the Death of  
*Slaves* and of the worst of *Criminals* —

“ Do we find, under all these unparal-  
“ leled provocations, that his meekness  
“ and universal benevolence deserted him,  
“ and gave him up a prey to *anger* and  
“ *impatience*? Was there so much as *one*  
“ expression dropt from him, which *sa-*  
“ *voured* in the least of *fierceness* and *in-*  
“ *humanity*? Did he discover the least  
“ *tincture* of an *implacable* and *unforgiv-*  
“ *ing* Spirit?” His friends will not blas-  
pheme his character so much, as to cast  
such a dishonourable imputation upon  
him; and, in this particular, his very  
*enemies* must be *ashamed* to defame him.  
For his *passions* were entirely calm, his  
*commiseration* was strong and lively, and  
his

his *generosity* unconquerable throughout SERM.  
the whole course of his Sufferings. He VIII.  
repented, with a lively feeling of huma-   
nity, every thing that had the appearance  
of *cruelty*, even against those that sought  
his life ; and therefore miraculously heal-  
ed *the High-Priests servant*, sent to ap-  
prehend him, whom one of his Disciples  
had wounded : And he *died* gloriously,  
*praying* for his *persecutors* ; “ and as a  
“ proof of the *noblest* benevolence, and  
“ a perfectly *serene* and *undisturbed* mind,  
“ urging the *only* circumstance, that could  
“ be thought of, in *extenuation* of their  
“ guilt.” This remarkable prayer is re-  
corded by St. *Luke*, in these Words,  
(which will doubtless be remembered to  
the *everlasting honour* of our Saviour’s  
Example) *Father, forgive them ; for*  
*they know not what they do.* Luke  
xxiii. 34.

WE read indeed, sometimes, of his  
giving *severe* and *reproachful* names to  
persons eminent, and distinguished by  
their *wickedness* : But this is consistent with  
the utmost meekness and composure of  
Spirit, whenever it is necessary, as it *then*  
was, to expose *popular* vices ; hypocrisy  
and

SERM. and malice under the *masque* of devotion ;  
VIII. and craft, rapaciousness, and oppression,

skreened and recommended by their appearing in *high* characters. Our Lord's censures were only just *reproofs*, seasonable *protests* against flagrant immoralities ; and from which (as he appeared in the sublime character of the *Messenger* and *Prophet* of God) “ no considerations of *prudence*, *complaisance*, or *decency* could “ be sufficient, in *reason*, to restrain him.” For his office was to rebuke sin *impartially* ; and the extraordinary *credentials*, which he brought Heaven, would support and justify him in *detecting* and *shaming* vice wherever he found it, even in the most *sacred* and *exalted* stations. “ The *weight* and *authority* of his own “ *mission*, and the *rectitude* and *happiness* of the World, both demanded “ it.”

AND when, in some passages of the New Testament, *anger* is ascribed to Christ ; it never denotes “ that *wild* and “ *extravagant* passion, those *transports* “ of rage, that *confusion* and *perturbation* “ of thought, that thirst after *revenge* “ and

“ and *blood*, which are too usual marks SERM.  
 “ and discoveries of anger in *precipitate* VIII.  
 “ and *ungoverned* tempers, and drive hu-  
 “ *manity* and *mercy* from the heart of  
 “ man,” — but a *generous indignation* a-  
 gainst *sin*. His resentment was not level-  
 led at the *person* of the offender ; but at  
 his diffimulation, perfidiousness, cruelty,  
 and other crimes, which are justly and  
 highly *offensive* to the *wise* and *virtuous*.  
 We are therefore expressly told, that  
 while he *looked round about* on the *Pha-* Mark iii.  
*risees* with *anger*, he was GRIEVED for<sup>5</sup>  
*the hardness of their hearts*: His Soul  
 was at the same time open to *kind* impres-  
 sions, and he generously *pitied* their un-  
 happy depravity. “ So that our blessed  
 “ Saviour’s *benevolence* was as incapable  
 “ of being obscured by *violent* and *disor-*  
 “ *dered passions* ; as it was of being les-  
 “ sened by *injuries*, or discouraged by the  
 “ *fear of death*.”

AND as this excellent virtue was in the  
 illustrious character of Christ *calm*, *mild*,  
 and *forgiving* ; it was also *humble* and  
 and *condescending*. Though he was *the*  
*beginning of the Creation of God*, and be- Rev. iii.  
 fore<sup>5</sup>.

SERM. fore his incarnation possessed of incon-  
 VIII. ceivable glory and dignity, yet he freely  
 consented to that most *stupendous abase-*  
*ment* of assuming the human Nature, to  
 lead a life of *poverty, affliction, and dis-*  
*grace*; and closed the scene of his *humili-*  
*ation* by a *violent and ignominious* death.  
 The *everlasting good* of mankind was the  
 ultimate end he had in view: “ And this  
 “ he thought an end so truly grand and  
 “ noble, as that it was becoming him,  
 “ though superior in *state and honour* to  
 “ all the *angelical* powers, to be *himself* a  
 “ *man, and converse familiarly with men,*  
 “ in order to promote it.” — This in-  
 indeed is an instance of *condescension*, that  
 admits of no *parallel* amongst all the  
 creatures of God. Before it, the most  
*heroic* acts of *human* generosity are in a  
 manner lost, and stripped of all their lu-  
 stre. It is justly described, in the New  
 Testament, as *astonishing* even to *superior*  
 Spirits; the subject of their humble *con-*  
*templation*, and joyful *praises*. And to  
 Christians of every *degree and character*,  
 it speaks this language. *Look not every*  
 one *on your own things, but every man*  
 also

*also on the things of others; let this mind* SERM.  
*be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.* VIII.

Let the example of his divine condescension (if you have merely a regard to *decency* of character) *shame* you out of your pride and haughtiness; and teach you to know your *nature*, and your *duty*, better, than to think it any disparagement to your brightest accomplishments, or the highest worldly honours, to practise the necessary *humilities* of true goodness; to consult and labour, and sacrifice *popularity, grandeur, nay life* itself, for the prosperity and welfare of your fellow-creatures. For the *inflexible* temper of pride, and a *disdainful* treatment of your inferior brethren, are not more unsuitable to human nature, and the reason of things, than they are a direct contradiction to the spirit of christianity, and to the conduct of its Author; who himself says, *Take my* Matt. xi.  
*yoke upon you, and learn of me: For I*<sup>27</sup>  
*am meek and lowly in heart.*

DURING the whole time of his public ministry, he was peculiarly remarkable, for a frank and obliging *humanity* of behaviour, to all who had the honour

SERM. to converse with him. He lived both  
 VIII. with his friends, and carried himself to-  
 wards strangers, with an open generous  
*familiarity*; was easy of *access*; and ready to communicate instruction and relief to every *fit* and *worthy* object. He was of a *modest unambitious* temper, and industriously shunned *grandeur* and *ostentation*; avoiding company, and chusing solitude, when the people, infatuated by their carnal notions of the temporal reign of the Messiah, would have taken him by force to make him *a king*. And from this humble disposition, sprang that *contentment* and entire *tranquillity* of mind, which he always expressed in low and despised circumstances: As his being placed in such circumstances suggests another very important *reason* (besides the force of his *example*) for the practice of these virtues, by giving us an undeniable demonstration, that contempt and poverty are no marks of the *anger* and *displeasure* of heaven, since they were the lot of him who was perfectly innocent, and the beloved Son of God.



To all these excellent and useful virtues SERM. was added, in the life and example of VIII. Christ, an unstained and inviolable *integrity*; not *rash*, and *incautious*, and courting dangers unnecessarily; but guided by *a just discretion*, and yet steady and inflexible. In his doctrine, he *so far* consulted the *prejudices* of his hearers, as to open and enlarge their minds by *degrees*. He avoided the persecutions of his enemies, and the effects of their implacable malice, when he could do it with *honour* and *a good conscience*. But he never used any *arts* to deceive them into *wrong meanings*; never, by *studied ambiguities* of speech, flattered and confirmed them in their *errors*. He opposed *corruption* and *vice*, however universal and fashionable, however distinguished and dignified; and at last bravely died in maintenance of his own integrity, and for the cause of truth and virtue, which are the cause of God and Man.

I HAVE attempted nothing more than some of the *great lines*, but intended not, in all particulars, a *complete* illustration of the *shining excellencies*, of our Saviour's  
VOL. III. P example;

SERM. example; because the nature of such com-  
 VIII. positions as these would not, without be-  
 ing thought *tedious*, admit of such prolix  
 discourse. — I shall, therefore, only add,  
 that our profession and character, as *Christians*,  
 oblige us to make this example as far as it  
 has now been exhibited (and in all the other  
 branches of it, in which it is capable of being  
 imitated) the model of our  
 1 John ii. own lives: Or, in the language of St. *John*,  
 6. that every one *that abideth in Christ*, whether  
 more or less enlightened, *ought himself also so to walk, even as HE walked.*





## S E R M O N IX.



### Of INCREDULITY, and the MORALITY of FAITH.

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JOHN XX. 29.

*Blessed are they, that have not seen,  
and yet have believed.*



**O**BSERVATIONS of this SERM.  
kind, are liable to be grossly IX.  
abused by two sorts of per-  
sons; by the *enemies* of the  
Christian revelation, and by its *weak* and  
*injudicious* friends. The design of the  
former is to subvert its authority, and ex-  
pose it to reproach, as an absurd and irra-  
tional

SERM. tional institution. The latter, tho' they  
 IX. *mean well*, and think of it with no other  
 sentiments, but those of *respect* and *honour*, help to *undermine* it by their unjust representations of its peculiar doctrines; and give its adversaries frequent advantages and occasions for triumph, which they are always ready to improve. So that tho' the *end*, which they have in view, be different, their *work* is in a great measure the same; and the *unskilful* defender hurts the cause of Christianity very little less, than the subtle and determined opposer of its truth and excellence. And it generally happens, that the *abuse*, committed by these contrary parties, is of the same precise nature too; the *mistakes* and *perversions* of Scripture are the same; the doctrines, which are allowed by the one, as *naturally deduced* from particular passages, are acknowledged, likewise, to be *fair inferences* by the other: But the friend receives them with *veneration*, the enemy rejects them with *scorn*. We need not go far to find instances of this, nor indeed to enquire for any other, than what the unnatural and overstrained interpretations, which

which have been put upon the Text it-SFRM.self, plainly afford. For the *unbeliever* IX. supposes, that our blessed Saviour meant to encourage such a *blind* and *rash credulity*, such *confidence* and *strength* of *persuasion*, without light or evidence, as he directly *terms* enthusiasm, and wisely explodes under that character. So that *he* only errs, tho' from great inattention and prejudice, with respect to the *true sense* of the passage; but if it be granted, that he has explained it *right*, his objections are pertinent and unanswerable. The *Christian*, on the other hand, imagines the same *thing* to be intended; only he gives it a more specious and reputable *name*; styling that, which, in reality, is *enthusiasm*, divine illumination, and the humble subjection of reason to faith. He therefore is erroneous, both as to the *true meaning* of the Text itself, and the *judgment*, which he passes upon what he *apprehends* to be the meaning of it. And one of my principal views in choosing it, for the subject of this discourse, is to vindicate the great Author of our religion, from every imputation of this kind; by which

SERM. his wisdom and divine authority are ble-  
 IX. mished and reduced.

LET it only be premised, before I enter directly upon what I propose, that the reasons, why *general maxims* and *observations* are so often *misinterpreted*, are these.—The not considering, that in such observations there is some *one point* principally intended, and that they have almost always a particular reference to *certain cases*, which the Author had in his view.—The not considering, that they can frequently be stiled *general observations* only *thus far*, as they extend to *every instance* of *the case*, to which they more immediately relate, and to *all others*, that are exactly *parallel*.—And, of consequence, that to apply them, by straining every expression to its utmost latitude, either to cases, that are quite *contrary*, or intirely *different*, or which differ in any *material* circumstance, is very injurious to the writer, and ridiculous in itself. — Let us then, to avoid this confusion, briefly state that part of the evangelical history, with which the Text stands connected.

AFTER our Lord's resurrection, he shewed himself to be alive, by infallible proofs, to many of his disciples. Besides his appearance to *Mary Magdalen* (of which *St. John* gives an account in this chapter) he was, according to *St. Paul*, seen of *Cephas*, or *Peter*; then of the twelve, who conversed with him, several times, during the space of forty days. He was likewise seen of above five hundred brethren at once; that a sufficient number of Witnesses might not be wanting to attest this great and marvellous event, upon which the truth of Christianity depends: Who merely on account of their number, joined with the frequency of his appearance, cannot be charged, but by a suspicion, that will stick at nothing, with being imposed upon by fancy or melancholy. — On account of the little expectation they had of his resurrection, they cannot be fairly accused of being misguided by their presumptions. — And because they all undauntedly suffered death, against every dictate of reason, if their testimony was false, and against the strongest passions of human nature, and all hope of

P 4 *interest*

SERM. *interest* present or future ; they can, with  
 IX. as little colour of probability, be suspect-  
 ed of wilful *fraud*. But this being only  
 an *incidental*, tho' otherwise a very im-  
 portant reflection, I return to the history.  
 — When our Lord had discovered him-  
 self to his disciples, who were assembled  
 together on the day of his resurrection, to  
 perform, as is most likely, their religious  
 exercises, and, to remove all their *doubts*,  
 had *talked* with them, and shewed them  
 his *hands* and his *feet* ; St. *John* informs  
 us, that they related this wonderful scene  
 to *Thomas*, one of the twelve, who was  
 not with them, at *that* time, when *Jesus*  
 came. Upon which this Apostle, without  
 weighing the matter deliberately, made a  
*rash* resolution, that except he should *see the*  
*print of the nails*, and *put his finger into*  
*the print of the nails*, and thrust *his hand*  
*into his master's side*, (where he had been  
 wounded with a spear) he would *not be-*  
*lieve*. And, at our Saviour's next appea-  
 rance (when *he* was present) this favour  
 was allowed him ; but with this rebuke  
 to him for his *obstinacy* in insisting on hav-  
 ing his *curiosity* gratified, and determin-  
 ing



ing not to be *convinced* but in his own way, *Be not faithless, but believing.* He was not here censured for *requiring evidence*; but for being *swayed by humour*, and an *unyielding stubborn* temper: Which is altogether as criminal, and hurtful in its consequences, as an *over-hasty* and *implicite* faith. However, tho' he had a disposition too *stiff* and *incredulous*, he was still so *honest*, as to submit to the conviction, which he had now received, and expressed it, as we are told it in the 28th verse, with a becoming mixture of surprize and reverence. And this naturally drew that answer from Christ, of which the Text is a part: *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: Blessed are they, that have not seen, and yet have believed.* The method, that I think most proper to explain this subject fully, is this.

FIRST, To make some brief remarks on the particular *case*, which was the *ground* of this assertion of our blessed Saviour. And then to shew,

SECOND-

SERM.

IX. SECONDLY, what *inferences* may be fairly deduced from it.


I begin, as the natural train and order of our reflections, and the course of the whole argument, require, with making some brief remarks on the particular *case*, which was the ground of our Saviour's observation in the text.

AND, FIRST, tho' the conduct of *Thomas* plainly exempts him from the charge of an *eager* and *precipitate credulity*, with respect to the *fact* of our Lord's resurrection; nay, tho' it may seem to argue a wise *caution* not to be imposed upon in points of high importance; and would, perhaps, have been *applauded*, and *cited* as an *example*, by men of a *sceptical* turn in all ages (if he had not afterwards destroyed all his *merit* by *believing*) yet it might, in reality, proceed from nothing else, but the strength of his *prejudice*. Had he only said to the other disciples, who related that, of which they themselves were *eye-witnesses*, that tho', as he had long known their *character*,

and

and believed them to be persons void of SERM.  
*art and criminal purpose*, he was ready to IX.  
pay all *due regard* to their testimony, yet  
as their information related to an *extra-*  
*ordinary and supernatural* event, he was  
inclined not to be *hasty* in determining,  
but should be glad of *stronger* and more  
*convincing* proofs; this would have had  
the appearance of *calmness* and *moderation*,  
as well as of *ingenuity* and true *discretion*.  
But the declaration, which he made, that  
he would *not believe*, unless he was favour-  
ed with a *particular kind* of conviction,  
that mere *caprice*, and not *reason*, led him  
to desire; this was evidently the language  
of passion, which *prejudice* always in-  
spires. *Reason* could never dictate such  
a resolution as his was; which amount-  
ed, in effect, to this (if it was founded  
on any principle at all) that he would *be-*  
*lieve nothing*, for which he had not the evi-  
dence of *sense*; and the evidence of sense,  
in *that way too*, which suited his *fancy*  
best. To what then can it be ascribed?  
To nothing, most certainly, but to some  
*bad cause* or other, that ought not to have  
had such a prevailing influence; and no-  
thing


SERM. thing is so likely to have been that bad  
 IX. cause as *prejudice*. By this supposition it  
 will be intirely accounted for ; and there  
 are several things, related in the gospel  
 history, that direct and lead us to it, and  
 to nothing else so clearly. For that the  
*Jews* universally, and the apostles equally  
 with the rest of their country-men, were  
 prepossessed with the notion of a *temporal*  
*glorious* reign of the *Messiah* ; that they  
 were extremely *fond* of it ; nay, that they  
 were quite *infatuated* and *enslaved* by it ;  
 is undeniable. Let us then only imagine,  
 that *Thomas* still retained a considerable  
 share of this old *national* tincture ; and it  
 will sufficiently account for his *unguarded*  
 resolution ; which can, by no means, be  
 reconciled with *sobriety* of thought and  
*cool* reflection. And if it really sprung  
 from *prejudice*, as seems most probable,  
 the words of the text, accommodated to  
 the case of *Thomas* considered in *this* light,  
 must be understood thus : “ *Blessed*, i. e.  
 “ *more blessed* (for the expression, in the  
 “ design of it, is manifestly *comparative*)  
 “ *more blessed* are they, they are of a *better*  
 “ disposition, more *praise-worthy* and  
 “ emi-

“ eminently *rewardable*, whom, because SERM.  
“ they are of *fair* and *honest* minds, and IX.  
“ free from *conceit* and *obstinacy*, *proper*   
“ *evidence* will always *perswade*; than  
“ those, who, merely on account of their  
“ *prejudices*, are not convinced by ar-  
“ guments of *weight*, which are, in them-  
“ selves, *fitted* to work conviction, but  
“ want the testimony and demonstration  
“ of *sense* to conquer their prepossessions,  
“ and in a manner *constrain* their assent.”

These last, it must be allowed, are in some degree *happy*, if they are brought, at last, to acknowledge principles, which are of great moment and use, upon their own terms; but still, upon a comparison, there is something, in what is asserted in the text, indisputable and obvious to the reason of every man, *viz.* that they are happy in a *peculiar*, and much *higher*, sense, “ who are more *ingenuous* and  
“ *tractable*; or, in other words, *who have*  
“ *not seen, and yet have believed.*”

AGAIN, it may be farther observed, upon the particular case of *Thomas*, to which the text refers, that his prejudice, and rashness, and the extravagance of the  
resolution

SERM. resolution, which he formed, appear un-

IX.  deniably from hence — That he might have had *sufficient* proofs of the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, in several other ways besides that he fixed upon, and was determined to adhere to, as the *only means* capable of yielding him satisfaction. Of this no Christian can possibly doubt; all of us, in these latter times, being in the number of those, *who have not seen, and yet have believed*. And we, surely, think, that we have *solid grounds* and *reasons* for our belief, tho' we want the evidence of *sense*. But besides this general reflection, let us imagine the case of the Apostle, of whom we are now speaking, to have been *different*, in most material circumstances, from what it actually was: let us suppose, that he had never been favoured with the *sight* of our Lord, after his rising from the dead: Yet if he had received repeated *attestations* of it from the mouth of *eye-witnesses*, and, withal, had been *commissioned*, as indeed he was, to preach to the *Gen- tiles*, *Jesus and the resurrection*; and *enabled* to confirm this important doctrine by numerous and incontestable *miracles*; could

could he have wanted any *necessary means* SERM.  
of conviction? If these were sufficient to IX.

*convert* the *Heathen* world to a belief of it, were they not also sufficient to establish *his own faith*? Or, to put the matter in another light, let us imagine, that he had been permitted to *see* and *converse* with Christ, but not indulged in what he laid such a particular *stress* upon, *viz.* *putting his fingers into the print of the nails, and thrusting his hand into his side*: Could the want of this alone have *justified*, or even *excused*, his being an infidel? It is impossible, and absurd to common sense; because if the senses were not to be *trusted* in one case, they must be equally *fallacious* in another. As therefore, without this, *Thomas* might have had *clear* and *full* evidence of the great truth, about which he hesitated; evidence, upon which he might have assented to it without *rashness* or *enthusiasm*; nay evidence, upon which he *ought* to have assented to it; he acted like a man, who wanted more to have his *humour* gratified than his *reason* convinced. And should every one insist upon demonstrations of *sense*, either from

SERM. prejudice or scrupulosity, in other *similar*

IX. cases, it would be attended with innumerable ill consequences; because the whole world must remain *Sceptics* and *infidels* for ever, with respect to *facts* and *principles* of the highest moment and use. I now proceed, in the

SECOND place, to shew what inferences may be fairly drawn from this proposition, as it has been before explained.—*Blessed are they, that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

AND the FIRST thing we learn from it, is, that *faith*, as well as what are distinguished by the name of works of righteousness, may be *virtuous* and *rewardable*. For when our Saviour says, *Blessed are they, that have not seen, and yet have believed*, he plainly declares, that there is something *peculiarly* worthy and excellent in such a character; that demands eminent *praise* from men, and intitles it to a signal *reward* from God. And it must be mere trifling to attempt to prove, that that, which is capable of *degrees* of goodness, may be, in itself, *good*; and that whatever can recommend to a *greater* reward,



must be, in itself, *rewardable*. This SERM. therefore is a necessary conclusion from the IX. text, and, of consequence, a part of the Christian doctrine.

BUT what if *reason* should oppose it? I answer, that this is impossible, as the Christian revelation is really divine. For truth, whether discoverable by the light of nature, or made known in a more *extraordinary* way, must always be *consistent*. Still it will be said, that this is only arguing with *Christians* upon their own principles; but can have no *weight*, where these principles are not received and acknowledged. I allow it, and am therefore willing to examine the *infidel's* plea. And what is the *substance* of it? — Why, that faith has no virtue or true *merit* in it, because we cannot *avoid* assenting to particular truths, when the *proofs* are clearly discerned, and appear to be strong and convincing; and must, in all cases, *believe*, or *disbelieve*, just as the evidence *appears* to our understandings.—But this, in my opinion, is talking very loosely and superficially. For if it depends, in a great measure, upon *ourselves*, that things ap-

SERM. appear to our understandings in *just* or in  
 IX. *false* lights ; if this be owing (as it is almost  
 ~~~~~~  
 universally) on the one hand, to *diligence*
 and *mature reflection*, and, on the other,
 to *intire negligence*, or *partial inquiry*, to
criminal prejudice, or the strength of *cor-*
rupt passions ; it follows of course, that in
 all such cases, where our right belief springs
 from *integrity* and the *due* exercise and
 improvement of our rational powers, and
 our infidelity from a *vicious indolence* and
depravity of temper, the one may fitly be
rewarded, and the other righteously *pu-*
nished ; as fitly, indeed, as any instance
 of *moral rectitude*, or of *corruption* and
iniquity, that can be mentioned.—A man
 might assert with equal propriety, that
murder itself is not criminal, when it is
 committed in a mad fit of drunkenness and
 transporting passion, as that *infidelity* is
 not, when it proceeds from the bad causes,
 which have been specified, or from any
 others of a like nature ; because things may
appear to the mind of the murderer, when
 he is blinded by intemperance, or distracted
 by passion ; things, I say, may *appear*, to
 the mind of the murderer, as strangely *per-*
verted

verted and altered from their true nature, while he is in this condition, as they can ever do to the understanding of the infidel, when he is persuaded to reject the most important and useful truths.—And the one can no more help being guided and determined by appearances than the other. SERM.
IX.

SECONDLY, by what has been said, we are naturally led to adore the wisdom of Providence, in ordering and disposing things, in such a manner, in this probationary state, that the evidences of religion should not be overpowering and constraining, so as to render the conviction necessary, but only adapted to persuade. For, by this means, faith may be an exercise, and improvement, and a clear proof of our integrity, as well as what are called moral dispositions, and the practice of moral duties.

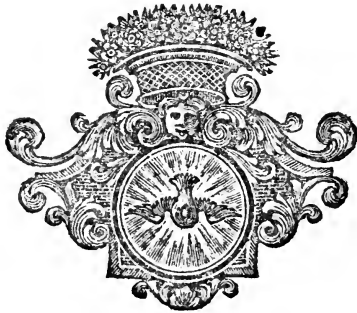
In the THIRD place, it is a plain and natural inference from the text, that a faith built on such evidence only, as is strong enough, where there is attention and honesty to convince the judgment, but does not force an assent, has more excellence and worthiness in it, and justly in-

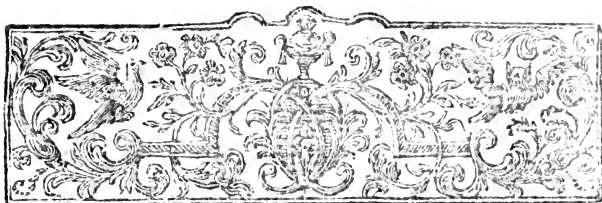
SERM. title to a *higher* reward, than a persuasion, IX. that could not be *avoided*, because the evidence was *irresistible*. I have called this an inference, as it is not *in terms* asserted, but it is, to speak more properly, the direct *intent* of our Saviour's words; *bleſſed are they, that have not ſeen, and yet have believed*. And the reaſons, which ſupport the truth of this obſervation, are theſe, which follow.—That ſuch a faith, as is built only on proper and ſufficient evidence, muſt require a greater ſhare of *reflection* and *deliberate inquiry*, than where the proofs are ſuch, as render conviction and belief neceſſary: That it argues greater *ingenuity* and *probity* of mind: That it has more *difficulties* to ſurmout, and ſtronger *prejudices* to conquer: That it is in a great meaſure *voluntary*, and depends upon our own *care* and *application*: All which circumſtances contribute conſiderably to render any action *morally* good; and the want of them proportionably diminifhes, or quite deſtroys, the *virtue* of it. *Faith*, in this notion of it, is conſidered as a *moral virtue*, and eſtimated as *all other* moral virtues are: So that the principle,

which I am now illustrating, is not an SERM. arbitrary constitution and rule settled by IX. *Christianity*; but an *eternal* dictate and law of *reason*.

THE general use to be made of this discourse is, to learn from thence, how to preserve the due *medium* between the two extremes of *credulity* and *scepticism*; of *presumption* and *obstinacy* of *believing*, where there are no *solid grounds* of faith, and *doubting*, where there are no *reasons* for doubt. And the only way to avoid these errors, of which it is hard to decide, which is the most dangerous, is *not to believe at any time* without *sufficient evidence*; but *always* to acquiesce in *that*, of whatsoever *kind* it be, without insisting on any particular *sort* of proof, which is not necessary, but which may prove a dangerous snare to us, by engaging us to defend a headless forward resolution, at the expence of truth and honesty.—And let all, who now think it their privilege, and their honour, that they *believe*, and have liberty to *profess* the Christian religion, be encouraged to persevere in this excellent faith, which has such strong reasons to

SERM. support it, by this consideration; that
IX. tho' they have not the evidence of *sense*,
for the *extraordinary facts* recorded in the
gospel, they have something of no small
moment to *compensate* for the *want* of
this superior evidence. Because, *Blessed*
are they, that have not seen, and yet have
believed.





S E R M O N X.



The Nature of HEAVENLY CON-
VERSATION explained.

PHILIPP. iii. 20.

For our conversation is in heaven.--



THE Apostle *Paul*, who was SERM.
one of the greatest and most X.
excellent characters in all
antiquity, proposed to the
Philippians, in the 17th
verse, his own example for their imita-
tion. *Brethren*, says he, *be followers to-*
gether of me, and mark them, who walk so,
as ye have us for an ensample. In the two

SERM. following verses he laments, in a most
 X. *benevolent* and *pathetic* strain, the too
 common degeneracy of Christians, who
 led a dissolute and sensual life; and there-
 by brought shame and misery upon them-
 selves, as well as a reproach and scandal
 on Christianity: *Many walk, of whom I*
have told you often, and now tell you even
weeping, that they are the enemies of the
cross of Christ; whose end is destruction,
whose God is their belly, and whose glory is
in their shame, who mind earthly things.
 Then in the Text, (which must be con-
 nected with the 17th verse, and what
 comes between be considered as a paren-
 thesis) he gives the *reason*, why he recom-
 mended his own life, as a *fit* pattern for
 Christians to copy after — *For our con-*
versation is in heaven. As the general
 sense of this passage is very obvious to
 every reader, I shall not spend any of
 your time in amusing criticisms upon words,
 but proceed directly to consider the thing
 itself, which will afford both more *solid*
 and *useful* reflections. And all that is ne-
 cessary for the clearing this subject, and
 setting

setting it in a true light, will fall in na- SERM.
turally under these heads. X.

FIRST, The *nature* of a heavenly conversation. And,

SECONDLY, The great *advantages* and absolute *necessity* of it; and the *particular obligations*, that Christians are under, to have their *conversation in heaven*.

In the FIRST place, I am to explain the *nature* of a heavenly conversation. And there are certain general rules necessary to be observed, to prevent obscurity and confusion in our reasonings about it; which I shall therefore premise, before I come directly to the point itself.

And, FIRST, to avoid the imputation of *enthusiasm*, with which the enemies of religion are too apt to load *all* the branches of it; to avoid, I say, the imputation of *enthusiasm*, and make it a *rational* and *practicable* scheme, we must take care to form such an idea of an heavenly conversation, as is consistent with the *frame* of our nature, with the *necessary concerns* of
human

SERM. human life, and the *duties* and *offices* of

X. the particular characters and relations in
 it. “ The infinite wisdom of God can
 “ never place his creatures in any *post*,
 “ that does not deserve their *attention* :”
 — and therefore to be ever thinking of
heaven, and neglect *this world* altogether,
 must be very unfuitable to the design of
 providence in the present constitution of
 things. For tho’ heaven be our ultimate
 happiness, and deserves our highest and
 strongest affections; yet *this earth*, as long
 as we continue on it, is the proper *sphere*
 of our activity, the *scene* of our duty and
 service. There are many things in it,
 that are necessary to be *observed* and *pur-*
sued by us, to secure our own happiness,
 and promote the good of our fellow-crea-
 tures; and other things, a regard to
 which must be the *justest application* of
 our rational faculties, as they tend to give
 us a more distinct and enlarged sense of
 the absolute perfection of the universal
 creator. Besides, while we are com-
 pounded of body and spirit, to endeavour
 to be quite disengaged from *sensible* ob-
 jects, and constantly employed in *refined*
 and

and *spiritual* exercifes, is not only aiming SERM.
at something *above* our *character*, nay, at X.
a thing *impossible*; but fupposes, more-
over, that “ *one part* of our nature, e-
“ *qually* the *workmanship* of an all-wife
“ *Being* with the more sublime and noble
“ *part*, is entirely *ufeless*.” To which I
may add, that a heavenly conversation
must, in the nature of the thing, im-
ply in it, that we employ much of our
thoughts and care about the *way*, that leads
to heaven. — Now this way lies through
the *present world*. — And therefore if we
are *unconcerned* and *indifferent* about the
state and conduct of affairs in *this* life, we
can never, according to the intention of
God’s providence, prepare for the *future*.

I WOULD observe further, that the
great God, even in this lower constitu-
tion and scene of things, however *im-*
perfect, designed to give us most engag-
ing marks of his wisdom and goodness;
and therefore hath provided for us many
delightful *accommodations*, and *innocent*
pleasures of various kinds, particularly
fitted to our frame, as beings indued
with *animal* passions. “ So that if we
“ *despise*

SERM. “ *despise* these things, and *devote* our-
 X. “ *felves entirely* to contemplation and re-
 ~~~~~ “ *tirement*, we not only injure ourselves,  
 “ by making this world a more *disagree-*  
 “ *able situation*, than the Author of all  
 “ Good intended it should be; but, in  
 “ effect, affront his *munificence* and *libe-*  
 “ *rality.*” And, consequently, we can-  
 not suppose, without making Christianity,  
 and the dispensations of God’s providence,  
*clash* and *interfere* with each other, nor,  
 indeed, without *reproaching* our Saviour’s  
 own conduct, that such *unnatural* seve-  
 rity and contempt of the world is any  
 part of that heavenly conversation, which  
 the Text recommends.


MUCH less can it imply in it such eager  
 and impatient desires of the heavenly hap-  
 piness, as make us in *ill humour* under our  
 present circumstances, and *careless* of life.  
 For this is inconsistent with that calm and  
 thorough submission to providence, which,  
 for most valuable purposes, has fixed us  
 for a while in this probationary scene,  
 which the *imperfection* of our *knowledge*,  
 and the *dependent state* of our *nature*, ne-  
 cessarily oblige us to. Nor can it, on  
 any

any principles of reason, be imagined, SFRM.  
that our gracious Creator has made it our X.  
*duty*, to pass our time here below in fret-  
fulness and discontent. The contrary is  
most evident, from that strong principle  
of *self-preservation*, which is planted in  
*all* mankind. And that it is our duty to  
*cultivate* this principle, and, consequent-  
ly, to render life as *agreeable* as we can,  
within the bounds of *decency* and *innocence*,  
appears undeniable from this single  
consideration; that, otherwise, not hav-  
ing a sufficient *motive* to it, “ but rather  
“ strong *inclinations* to the contrary,  
“ we shall not take that due care to  
“ *maintain* and *support* life, as the  
“ *improvement* of our own minds, the  
“ *particular cases* of those, who may de-  
“ pend upon us, and the *general interests*  
“ of society, require.”

FINALLY, the great *use* of a heavenly con-  
versation must be this, to *quicken* us to a  
faithful and diligent discharge of the duties,  
which we are *now* called to perform. — If  
therefore we *neglect* any important branch  
of *social* virtue; if we affect the *recluse*, when  
we are called forth to *active* service, and  
spend

SERM. spend that time in secret meditations, and  
 X. fervent aspirings after *heaven*, which  
 ought to be devoted to the *public* good ;  
 we are so far from discharging, aright,  
 the *duty*, which St. *Paul* exhorts to, or  
 imitating his example, that our conduct  
 is repugnant to *reason*, dishonourable to  
*Christianity*, and frustrates the great end  
 of our *present being*. Thus much for  
 the *first* rule, *viz.* That to form a *just idea*  
 of a heavenly conversation, we must make  
 it consistent with the *present frame* of our  
 nature, and the *necessary concerns* and *du-*  
*ties* of human life.

SECONDLY, As the duty recommend-  
 ed in the Text is of *universal* obligation,  
 it ought to be explained *so*, as will suit  
 the *condition* of *all* Christians, their *va-*  
*rious* capacities, and circumstances in the  
 world ; and nothing should be taken into  
 the *general idea*, or *description*, of it,  
 that depends on a *peculiar* constitution,  
*warmth* of passions, *strength* of under-  
 standing, or *special* opportunities and ad-  
 vantages for improvement. For instance,  
 it must not be made *necessary*, to a man's  
 having

having *his conversation in heaven*, “ that SERM.  
“ his meditations about heaven be to such X.  
“ a degree of *intenseness*, or attended with   
“ *rapture and transport*; that *precisely*  
“ so much *time* be spent in thoughts  
“ and reflections of this kind; or that *a*  
“ *particular high degree* of knowledge,  
“ and of abstractedness from the world,  
“ be acquired.” Those, who have capa-  
city, and opportunity, for thus *enlarging*  
and *exalting* their conceptions, enjoy a  
peculiar and most *desireable* privilege.  
But to insist on this, as absolutely *essential*  
to a heavenly conversation, with respect  
*to all* Christians, is making *no allowance*  
for their *different* characters, and circum-  
stances in life: It is describing that as an  
*universal* duty, which can be expected only  
from a *few*; and the performance of  
which depends upon *accidents*, that are  
quite out of *our power*.

LET me add, in the THIRD place,  
that it will be particularly useful to us, in  
understanding the true nature of a *hea-  
venly conversation*, to endeavour to frame  
a just general idea of *the heavenly happi-  
ness*. False notions of it will naturally

SERM. lead us into *enthusiasm* : but if, by proper  
 X. care and application, our judgment be  
 rightly informed in this grand and funda-  
 mental point, it will so conduct and assist  
 our reasonings, that we shall be secured  
 from gross and dangerous errors. For if  
 we conceive of the future happiness, as  
*intellectual* and *moral*, consisting in the  
*rectitude* of our rational powers, and an  
 exact *conformity* to the *moral excellencies*  
 of the Supreme Being ; as a state of refin-  
 ed *knowledge*, and exalted *virtue* ; this  
 will *convince* us, that none can be *truly*  
 said to have their *conversation in heaven*,  
 but those, who resemble God in *purity*,  
*righteousness*, and *beneficence*. In like  
 manner, if we consider it under the no-  
 tion of *a reward*, bestowed by the great  
 Governor of mankind, not *arbitrarily*, but  
 for the support and encouragement of true  
 piety, integrity, and goodness ; we can  
 never *imagine*, that a contempt of *present*  
 pleasures, and thinking of the blessedness  
 of the future world (though with the  
 most *ardent longings*, and an extraordi-  
 nary *liveliness* and *vigour of affection*) will  
 be of *any avail*, as long as we are *careless*  
 about



about governing our *passions*, or live in the *omission* of *relative* and *social* duties. SERM. X.

THESE general rules being premised, I now proceed to consider, more directly, what is *implied* in having our *conversation in heaven*. And the whole will be comprehended under these three heads: FIRST, *Frequent meditation* on the heavenly happiness, and, in consequence thereof, an *habitual conviction* of its *supreme* worth and excellence. SECONDLY, That having made the attainment of it our *ultimate* end, we keep up a *steady* regard to this end, in the whole of our conduct, and pursue every thing else in *subordination* to it. And, THIRDLY, cultivate that *temper* of mind, and constantly maintain that *course* of life, which are particularly *adapted* to the heavenly state.

IN the FIRST place, the having our *conversation in heaven* implies, in it, *frequent meditation* on the heavenly happiness, and, in consequence of that, an *habitual conviction* of its supreme worth and excellence. It is evident, at first sight, that the *character*, which St. Paul has

SERM. given of himself in the Text, can no way  
 X. belong to those, who never think of heaven, or employ their thoughts but *very seldom*, about the joys and glories of the blessed world above. Such persons, instead of expecting their highest happiness there, and making it the ultimate scope of their wishes, can only be said to take, *now and then*, an *occasional* and *transient* view of it, as of a country, in which they imagine they have but little *concern*. Nor are such *slight* reflections likely to have any considerable influence. For it is not the *importance* of the thing in itself, it is not the *exceeding greatness* of the future reward (though far transcending all our *ideas*, and the utmost stretch of our *imaginations*) that will affect our hearts and influence our practice, if it be not perceived in a *clear* and *strong* light; which can *only* be the *effect* of frequent and serious meditation. And this is the more necessary, because the joys of heaven are future and invisible; upon which account they have generally the *less* weight, and make a *feebler* impression upon the mind.

I AM obliged, therefore, to engage SERM.  
*often* in such reflections as these: —“ That X.

“ *I am a stranger, and a sojourner here*  
 “ *upon earth, as all my fathers were:*  
 “ *that the present scene is preparatory to*  
 “ *an immortal existence, in which alone*  
 “ *I can hope for perfect felicity, worthy*  
 “ *the noblest faculties of my nature, and*  
 “ *adapted to its largest desires: that, in*  
 “ *this future state, my understanding*  
 “ *will be enlarged, my affections regu-*  
 “ *lated, my mind refined and purified:*  
 “ *that its joys are unmixed, without the*  
 “ *least alloy of vice or misery; solid and*  
 “ *everlasting, and, in short, of such an*  
 “ *exalted kind, that, in comparison of*  
 “ *them, the most splendid and magnifi-*  
 “ *cent images of worldly happiness are*  
 “ *low and despicable. Thus, remem-*  
 “ *bring, that I have here no abiding place,*  
 “ *am I to look for a city, which hath foun-*  
 “ *dations; whose builder and maker is*  
 “ *God.”* And a frequent contemplation  
 of the heavenly glory will open so *bright*,  
 so *delightful* a scene, will so *warm* and  
*captivate* the mind, that it will, of course,  
 look down with *indifference* on the trifl-

SERM. ing advantages and pleasures of this life.

X. But then these impressions must be so strong, and deeply *fixed*, as to be an *habitual* and *governing* principle; otherwise, their effects can neither be *certain*, nor *lasting*. They may be the foundation of *short-lived* resolutions, and *occasional* acts of goodness; they may *check*, in *some* degree, the forwardness and heat of licentious passions; but are not likely to produce a *thorough* reformation, nor a *uniform* and *steady* course of virtue. This is the FIRST branch of a heavenly conversation, and the *basis* of all the rest, that we *frequently meditate* on the happiness of the heavenly state, and get an *habitual persuasion* of its infinite importance and value. And, as a necessary consequence of this,

SECONDLY, We should make the attainment of it our *ultimate* end; keep up a *constant* regard to this end, in the whole of our conduct; and pursue every thing else in *subordination* to it — Cultivating our *rational* faculties; neglecting *no duty*, that our circumstances and character, in  
the

the world, require from us; losing SERM. *no opportunity* of doing good; acting, X. in *all* cases, with a *strict* regard to the divine authority, and an *inflexible* integrity: and, if we are, at any time, tempted by worldly *honours*, and the bewitching allurements of irregular *pleasure*, controuling *sensual appetite*; giving up the most *flattering prospects*; and submitting to the *greatest difficulties*—for the joy, that is set before us. Being intent on obtaining the heavenly felicity, we should do nothing, that may *damp* our hopes, or render our title to it *perplexed* and *dubious*; but be *circumspect* in our behaviour, *diligent* in all the offices of life, which we are called to perform, *strict* in self-government, and *using this world* with moderation, and so as not to *abuse* it to intemperance and excess, because *the fashion* of it *passeth away*.

WE are not indeed obliged, as was hinted before, to *converse* so much with *heaven*, as to deny ourselves the *innocent gratifications*, which *this world* affords. But, surely, if we have ever meditated on

SERM. the consummate, most glorious, and everlasting happiness of the future state, with becoming attention and sericousness, we cannot but have a strong conviction, and a lively affecting sense, of the *comparative vanity* of all inferior enjoyments. The glittering pomp of human greatness will not *dazzle* our understandings; nor the pleasures of sense *enslave* us. We shall willingly exchange the *tinsel* of worldly glory, for the *substantial honour*, that results from God's approbation, and from being owned and regarded as his favourites; and give up *brutal* indulgencies, for the joys of *Angels*, of exalted *knowledge*, sublime *purity*, and *love*, and the *influences* of *his* goodness, who is the only fountain of blessedness. And nothing can be a more melancholy instance of the most extreme corruption and depravation of *reasonable* beings, than to be so *over fond* of a state, in which the pleasures are *few* in number, *mean* in their qualities, *uncertain* with respect to their duration, and the vexations and inquietudes *many* and *great*, as, for the  
 fake

fake of it, to forfeit a claim to an eter- SERM.  
*nal* existence, in the highest *honour* and X.  
*perfection*, that human nature is capable }  
of. There is an irresistible force, that  
must immediately strike the mind with a  
strong sense of the amazing extrava-  
gance of such a conduct, in these ques-  
tions of our Blessed Saviour. — *What* Matt.  
*is a man profited, if he shall gain the* xvi. 26.  
*whole world, and lose his own soul? or,*  
*what shall a man give in exchange for his*  
*soul?* But the chief and most essential  
part of a heavenly conversation is,

IN the THIRD place, cultivating that  
*temper* of mind, and constantly maintain-  
ing that *course* of life, which are particu-  
larly *adapted* to the heavenly state. Is it  
then an *inheritance undefiled*, that admits  
of nothing sinful or impure? The natural  
reflection, which this suggests, is, that we  
must *subdue* all corrupt appetites, *rectify*  
all evil dispositions, and habits, and *perfect*  
*holiness in the fear of God*, if ever we ex-  
pect to be partakers of this *inheritance of*  
*the saints in light*. Is it a state, where *chari-*  
*ty never faileth*, of most *lively, generous,*

SERM.

X.

and *Godlike* benevolence? —As a necessary qualification for it, we must mortify *pride*, and rash *anger*, *malice* and *revenge*, and all such like *turbulent* and *injurious* principles; and train our selves up to the *habitual* exercise of *charity*, and *mercy*, to a *delight* in doing good. Is it a state, wherein we shall be made *like unto the Angels of God*, who do his commandments, *hearkening unto the voice of his word*? — Let it be our care to cultivate always, in our minds, a supreme *reverence* and *love* of the Deity, and by a frequent, devout, contemplation of his excellencies, and other acts of piety, maintain such a *serious* regard to his authority, and firm belief of the wisdom, equity, and goodness of his providence, as will excite us to yeild an *universal* and *cheerful* obedience to his commands. And, finally, is it a state, wherein thou wilt be *divested* of the *animal* nature, and of all *sensitive* affections and appetites, and where thy pleasures will be *intellectual* and *divine*? — *Emure* thy self then to exercises of *reason* and *virtue*; *refine* thy views; *raise* thy notions of happiness; and *restrain* carnal desires;



desires; that thou mayest gain an *admittance* into that superior world, into which *flesh and blood cannot enter*, and be able to *relish* its sublime employments and delights.—“ This is the only *infallible* mark  
“ of a heavenly conversation, when it  
“ brings us to a *similitude* of dispositions  
“ and manners, with those of the blessed  
“ inhabitants above.” Where this is wanting, *all other* marks are precarious and deceitful. “ Our *meditations* on heaven  
“ are like a man’s amusing himself with  
“ the thoughts of a *beautiful country*, at  
“ a *vast distance* from him; its *fruitful*  
“ soil, the *healthy* temperature of its air  
“ and climate, the *clemency* and good  
“ order of its government, the *wisdom*  
“ and *wholesomeness* of its laws; and other  
“ *advantages*, which he is *never* likely  
“ to enjoy.” Nay, we may wish, with *Balaam*, to *die the death*, and enjoy the future reward of *the righteous*, and receive not the *least* advantage by it: For this singular privilege is not to be obtained by indulging to *pleasing dreams* of happiness, or by *lazy inactive* wishes; but only by improving in *habits* of piety and  
goodness,

SERM. goodness, and leading a *virtuous* and a  
 X. *useful* life. And now, having largely ex-  
 plained the *nature* of a heavenly conver-  
 sation, I proceed,

SECONDLY, to shew the great *advan-  
 tages*, and absolute *necessity*, of it; and  
 the *particular obligations*, that Christians  
 are under, to have their *conversation in  
 heaven*. The advantages of it are various,  
 as well as eminent.—It will *prevent* our  
 giving way to those *sensual excesses*, that  
 debase our nature, extinguish the light of  
 reason, and are the source of confusion  
 and misery: For we shall have but a  
 mean opinion of such *superficial, groveling,  
 short-lived* pleasures, in comparison of the  
*glorious blessings*, which we hope hereafter  
 to enjoy, in the everlasting kingdom of  
 God.—Again, a heavenly conversation  
 will *refine* our temper, and give a noble  
*sublimity* of thought, above all low and  
 base pursuits; and a *firmness* and *constancy*,  
 that will be proof against the strongest  
 temptations.—The *prospect* of it fills the  
 good man with the most exalted delight;  
 it composes the mind; calms every un-  
 easy and boisterous passion; heightens  
 the

the true enjoyments of life, and alleviates SERM. the evils of it. For what can be a more X. effectual support to the mind under affliction, than the firm belief, and joyful expectation, of an eternity of perfect happiness, when the troubles and miseries of this life are at an end? Were it not for this *future* blessed state, human life, in its present *weak* and *disordered* condition, would, in many instances, be scarce *tolerable*; *the spirit of a man* would *sink* under *its infirmities*, had he no prospect of any *brighter* scene to counterbalance his miseries. But it reconciles to *all* events, and naturally inspires *resolution* and *fortitude*, when we look forward to that desirable world, where *there shall be no more sorrow, nor pain, nor death*; but *God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes*. These are some of the advantages of a heavenly conversation in this life.

BUT we are to consider farther, that it is not only *useful*, but *necessary*. — It is absolutely necessary, in the nature of the thing itself, in order to our *relishing* the heavenly felicity. For, without a *virtuous* disposition and turn of mind, there

SERM. there can no more be *a taste* of *divine*  
 X. and *moral* pleasures, than there can be of  
 ~~~~~ *animal* gratifications without the *senses*.  
 —It is *necessary*, likewise, from the wisdom and justice of God, as the governor of rational and moral agents: For, to bestow this transcendent happiness on impenitent sinners, who have despised his *authority*, and trampled upon the *law* of their nature, would be the ready way to bring the eternal rules of righteousness and virtue into *contempt*; it would be giving a *licence* to vice, and allowing *full scope* to corrupt inclinations. Which neither the absolute perfection of the Deity, nor his concern for the rectitude and happiness of the intelligent creation, can possibly *admit* of.—Finally, a life *suited* to the heavenly state is expressly declared, in the new testament, to be indispensably necessary to our enjoying the rewards of it; and this, we have already seen, is not a capricious and arbitrary constitution, but founded on eternal principles of *wisdom* and *equity*. *He* alone, says our blessed Saviour, *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, who doth the will of my father,*
 who

who is in heaven. The author of the SERM. epistle to the *Hebrews* informs us, that, X.
without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. Hebr.

And, not to multiply passages in so plain xii. 14.
a case: *Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor effeminate, nor drunkards, nor extortioners, (nor any other notorious and habitual offenders against the laws of reason and Christianity) shall inherit the kingdom of* i Cor. vi. 9. 10.
God.

If, therefore, it be the wisdom and interest of all, who believe a future reward for virtue, to be diligent and constant in the universal practice of it; what a *peculiar* obligation are Christians under, to whom the heavenly blessedness is so *fully* revealed, and with such a variety of *affecting* circumstances! Besides the *clear discovery* of a future reward in general, about which *philosophy* was uncertain and dubious; we are *assured* of the resurrection of the body, an active, vigorous, incorruptible principle, suited to the enlarged faculties of the perfect spirit, (that the whole!

SERM. whole human nature may appear in complete dignity) and of an *immortality* of blessedness, in the presence and enjoyment of *God*: Concerning both which great points the decisions of reason were *dark* and *confused*.

SEEING then, we look for these things, these great things, *which eye hath not seen, neither can it enter into the heart of man fully to conceive* — *what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness! Patterns of integrity, peace, and love, of contentment, and resignation to Providence, and of a bright and exalted piety.* Thus, by acting *consistently* with our character, and high expectations, shall we *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.* And then, to use the words of *St. Paul*, immediately following the text, we may, with a serene and joyful confidence, look for the Saviour, *the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*



S E R M O N X I.



The different CHARACTERS of
TRUE RELIGION, and EN-
THUSIASM.

JOHN iii. 8.


*The wind bloweth where it listeth,
and thou hearest the sound there-
of, but canst not tell whence it
cometh, and whither it goeth:
So is every one, that is born of
the Spirit.*



THESE words are part of a SERM.
discourse, which our blessed XI.
Saviour had with *Nicodemus*,
a man of distinguished rank
and figure among the *Jews*. This person
was

SERM. was *convinced* by the miracles, which

XI. *Jesus* wrought at *Jerusalem*, that he was really a divine prophet; and, therefore, tho' he was restrained, by the known bigotry and malice of his countrymen, from *publishing* the high opinion he had entertained of this sacred instructor, he went privately to him *by night*, to confer with him, upon subjects of *religion*. And he began with this *judicious* and *argumentative* introduction, *Rabbi, we know, that thou art a teacher come from God: For no man can do these miracles, which thou doest, except God be with him.* In answer to which, our Lord, that he might not imagine, that a mere *belief*, and *acknowledgement* of the truth, was *sufficient*, to intitle him to the privileges and rewards of Christianity, fairly represented to him the *one necessary* and *indispensible* qualification for obtaining the favour of God, and eternal life, in the third verse of this chapter: *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* This was strange doctrine, and appeared, indeed, *extravagant* to *Nicodemus*; who, by an unaccountable mistake, overlooked

the *figure*, and understood the words of SERM.
natural birth. And upon this foot, it was XI.
reasonable for him, and highly pertinent, 

to urge the *incredibility* of the thing, in it self, and desire a more *explicit* and *distinct* account of this *wonderful* doctrine.

He therefore put this question, *How can a man be born, when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* To this our Saviour replied,

that the thing would not appear to be altogether so *mysterious*, when *rightly* apprehended, as his *prejudices* induced him to think it was; but might, as to


the *possibility* of it, be illustrated by a *well-known*, and very *familiar* instance. *Marvel not*, says he, *that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth*

where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one, that is born of the Spirit.—Which words, have

been thus, very judiciously *paraphrased*. — “ That, even in the natural world, “ there are many things, in themselves, “ so subtle, that we cannot at all discern

“ them with our eyes, which yet are
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SERM. “ very manifest, and very great in their
 XI. “ effects. The *wind* is a thing altoget-
 “ ther invisible, and no man can behold
 “ its motion, even when it bloweth with
 “ the greatest violence ; yet, that there
 “ *is such a thing*, is evident enough,
 “ and the *effects* of it are sufficiently
 “ known. Thus, therefore, that *re-*
 “ *generation*, or renovation of the heart,
 “ and manners, which is worked in a
 “ man, by the efficacy of true religion,
 “ and the operation of the Spirit of God,
 “ tho’, in itself, it be invisible, and not
 “ at all discernable by *sense*, yet, in its
 “ *effects*, it is a very great and plain thing ;
 “ and, really, as manifest and consider-
 “ able a change, to all the purposes of
 “ *eternal* life, and happiness, as the *birth*
 “ of man is, in respect of this *mortal*
 “ life.” I shall only add, that as Christ
 rather directed us to judge of our divine
 and spiritual *regeneration*, by the *effects* ;
 if this be a *right* rule of judgment, the
 effects intended must be of such a *kind*,
 as will probably, at least, indicate their
cause. And what can these *possibly* be,
 but the exercise of all *religious* and *moral*
 virtues

virtues; or what St. Paul directly files SERM.
the *fruit of the Spirit*; viz. *goodness, XI.*
righteousness, and truth? From these 
words, I shall take occasion,

In the FIRST place, to explain the *nature* of regeneration, or the new birth, and endeavour to rectify some great *errors*, that this *figurative* way of speaking has introduced. And,

SECONDLY, as what arises naturally from the subject, I shall point out some of the most material *differences* between *true religion* and *enthusiasm*.

I am, FIRST, according to the method proposed, to explain the *nature* of regeneration, and endeavour to rectify some great *mistakes*, that this *figurative* way of speaking has introduced. And, in general, it must be evident to the first apprehensions of all mankind, that the phrase can, here, be used only in a *moral* sense. *Nicodemus's* interpretation of it, as denoting a fresh communication of *animal* life, argued, as to this single point, at least, a very *confused* and *contracted* understanding. For, what had that to do with *re-*
ligion,

SERM. *ligion*, or with the *dignity* and *purity* of
 XI. a doctrine, brought by a *teacher* sent from
 ~~~~~ God? But, besides that the reason of the  
 thing strongly remonstrates against all such  
*gross* meanings as these; we are directly  
 informed from the mouth of Christ him-  
 self, that his expressions were *metapho-  
 rical*: If, says he to his disciples, *I have  
 told you earthly things* (things illustrated  
 by *comparisons*, drawn from *sensible* ob-  
 jects) *and ye believe not; how shall ye be-  
 lieve, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

And what now is the *moral* significa-  
 tion of being *born again*; what else *can*  
 it be but this; “ That a man has fin-  
 “ cerely and intirely renounced all the *cor-  
 “ rupt sentiments* he had before main-  
 “ tained, the *irregular passions* he had  
 “ indulged, and the *wicked practices* he  
 “ had been guilty of, and was entered  
 “ upon a *quite different* kind of *life*; so  
 “ that the *constitution* of the *mind*, which  
 “ is the spring and source of all external  
 “ actions, was in a manner *created* and  
 “ *formed anew?*” In this view, it is an *apt*,  
*easy*, and *elegant* figure, and conveys a  
 most important and useful meaning; and  
 if

if rooted and warm prepositions, in favour of *scholastic* schemes of divinity, had not embarrassed and depressed our *natural* judgment of things, I make no doubt, but it would have been universally allowed to be the *only rational* meaning, that the expression is fairly capable of.

WE may, indeed, stretch a metaphor to the utter confusion of all reason and morality, and till we are lost in a labyrinth of our own contriving. And this has been, too frequently, the unhappy fate of *scripture-metaphors*; which, instead of deriving light from those plain passages, that were intended to be the standard, has obscured all their light, and the most certain maxims of natural religion likewise. For who, almost, could have thought, that because renovation of heart and life is compared to a new birth, it should from thence be concluded, “ that  
“ mankind are purely passive in their re-  
“ formation from vice to virtue; that it  
“ is in the spiritual birth, as in the na-  
“ tural; that the conversion of finners is  
“ wholly owing to a superior and irre-  
“ sistible agency; and that we have no  
“ power

SERM. " power at all to do any thing in it of  
 XI. " our selves, or with a divine *incitation*  
 " and *impulse*—that men, upon the *single*  
 " authority of a *metaphor*, should be thus  
 " reduced to *mere machines*, void of *in-*  
 " *telligence* and *free volition* within them-  
 " selves, and *wholly directed* by the un-  
 " derstanding and will of another,"—in  
 opposition to *universal* experience, which  
 loudly testifies, that they are *able* to *dis-*  
*tinguish* the difference of good and evil,  
 and are *proper* subjects of *moral* govern-  
 ment.

AND, the holy scriptures plainly ac-  
 knowledge this, not only to have been  
 the *original frame*, but to be the *actual*  
 " *condition* of human nature; since they  
 abound with *commands* and *exhortations*,  
 directed to men in their *own persons*, to  
*wash* and *make themselves clean*; to *cease* to  
*do evil*, and *learn to do well*; to *circumcise*  
*their hearts*, and *be no more stiff-necked*;  
 to *put off the old man*, and *be renewed in*  
*the spirit of their minds*: All which ex-  
 hortations, if they have any *energy*, any *pro-*  
*priety* or *sense*, at all, in them, must im-  
 ply *thus much*; that we are capable of

considering seriously the nature and consequences of our actions, and of determining our own behaviour; and that we have a power constantly residing in ourselves, and under our own command, as long as we retain the *due use* of reason; that we have, I say, a power, the exercise of which does not depend on arbitrary and precarious impulses from other beings, to renounce all past miscarriages, and turn our feet to the divine testimonies.—For was there ever a wise and righteous lawgiver, who enjoined impossibilities? Is not an exhortation to things known to be beyond our strength, ludicrous and trifling? Is it not upbraiding us, in a most ungenerous and cruel way, with the impotence of our nature? And can it, notwithstanding, be the conduct of the God of truth, of immutable justice and mercy, to his frail and miserable creatures; who must, upon this scheme, deserve to be pitied and not insulted?

AND, as the commands and exhortations of the Gospel, urging to repentance and amendment of life, necessarily suppose, that there is in mankind a power to rectify the

SERM. error of their ways, and *turn unto the*

XI. LORD; the same may be said of its *promises* to the obedient, and the *threatnings*, which it denounces against the impenitent, and incorrigible offenders. For to what end are these *promises* and *threatnings* promulged, unless it be, to excite to the assiduous and inflexible pursuit of *virtue*, by the *hope* of a *reward*; and to deter from vice and impurity, by the *fear* of *punishment*? Would any wise and experienced *man* offer a reward to a piece of *clock-work*, to *move itself*? Or can it, upon the same foundation of reason, be proper to attempt to influence men, either by promises or threatnings, to *fly in in the air*, to *become invisible*, or to do any thing else, that is beyond the *extent* of their *natural* powers? The thing itself bespeaks both *absurdity* and *cruelty*.

AGAIN, if men were intirely *passive* in the affair of *regeneration*, if they were able to do nothing, themselves, towards producing this great effect, but *all* must be expected from the *influence* and *energy* of God; it would then be *impossible*, that any man should be *regenerated sooner* than



than he is; and, consequently, all his SERM.  
*former* deviations, from the rule of right, XI.  
would be *unavoidable* and *innocent*. —

And, yet, how often is God, in the holy scriptures, represented as expostulating with sinners, upon their *obstinate continuance* in immoral courses, and *deferring* their repentance: — How long *will ye refuse to keep my commandments?* How long *will this people provoke me?* How long, *ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?* O Jerusalem, *wash thyself from wickedness, that thou mayest be clean; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* And, again, O Jerusalem, *wilt thou not be made clean; when shall it once be?*

THERE are various other considerations, which tend to confirm this truth; but I shall, at present, content myself with adding, that the scriptures of truth, strictly corresponding both with reason and experience, never attribute vice and impiety to *an incapacity*, in the human nature, to reform itself; but always to *free choice* and *wilful* determination.

Thus

SERM. Thus our Saviour speaks concerning the  
 XI. incorrigible Jews in his time, that they  
 would not *come to him, that they might have life; that they were of their father the devil, and would do his works; and, of Jerufalem, how often would I have gathered thee, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.* And the same divine Author of our religion declares, in more general terms, that *this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

To these arguments, drawn from scripture, let me add a brief *deduction*, of the same general truth, from the certain *nature* of things; and examine, how the case stands on *rational principles*, abstract from all schemes and prepossessions, with respect both to the *moral strength*, and *weakness*, of human nature.

IN the FIRST place, then, I think it can with no plausibility, or colour of reason, be denied, that mankind, however depraved and disabled by the fall, are *capable of discerning* what their *duty* is, and wherein

wherein their *true happiness* consists. They extend their enquiries very *far* into other concerns; they search *deep* into the recesses of nature, by study and careful enquiry, joined with experience; they are able to *explain* many *abstruse* parts of the system of the universe, and to *illustrate* the wise laws and wonderful dispositions of providence — And can it be imagined, that their own *proper duty, as men*, is beyond the *reach* and *comprehension* of their understandings? Can it be conceived, that their *own happiness* is so *perplexed* and *inscrutable* a subject, that they can form no clear and settled *judgment* concerning it? “*Deplorable* and *horrid*, then, is the *de-*”  
“*stiny* of men; and very *ungracious*,

“*seems to be, the care and providence of*”  
“*their Creator.*”

AND as to the doctrines and duties of *revelation*, they must be *capable* of arriving at the *true sense* of these too, unless it be a revelation *unrevealed*. For to suppose, that a *farther* supernatural and inward *illumination* is necessary to give a right and just idea of *scripture* doctrines, is, in effect, to assert, that the scriptures

SERM. are of *no use* at all; and that “the in-

XI. “*ternal teaching* is the *only* revelation  
 “ of the mind of God to mankind.” But  
 here again a considerable difficulty occurs;  
 and that is, how we can *possibly* know,  
 that this inward teaching is really *divine*,  
 but from its *correspondence* with the *exter-*  
*nal revelation*, and with the light and  
 dictates of *reason*; and, consequently,  
 without admitting, “that the external  
 “ revelation may be *understood* without  
 “ it, and that reason is the eternal *stan-*  
 “ *dard* of truth.”

SECONDLY, As it is unquestionably confirmed, that mankind, in the *present* state of their faculties, however impaired and disordered, are *qualified* for understanding what their *duty* is, and by what methods to pursue their *chief happiness*; so it can, with as little reason, be disputed, that they are *capable* of *acquiring*, a deep and lively *impression* of religious and moral truths: For this intirely depends on their being *represented* to the mind with proper *force*, and frequently *inculcated* by

unprejudiced and serious *consideration*. — SERM.

And is it absolutely out of *the power* of man, XI.

to *consider seriously*? Is it beyond his *natural abilities* to *reflect, often*, on affairs of the utmost consequence? Can he have a just *theory* of the Christian Religion; and is it, at the same time, *impossible* for him to be *convinced* of its *intrinsic excellence*, and *infinite importance* to his present peace and everlasting felicity? Such an insinuation as this must, I apprehend, redound as little to the credit of *Christianity*, as to the honour of *human nature*.

SHOULD it be said, that by the *original bias* of his nature to *evil*, and its *aversion* to what is *good*, man is necessarily *disinclined* to, and *indisposed* for, reflecting on such subjects as these; I answer, FIRST, that “the *strongest disinclination* does, by no means, infer an *utter* “*impossibility*.” Nay, the contrary is most evident: For let the indisposition be *equal* to what is suggested in this objection, man must *still* be a *free agent*, and have it in *his power*, to be either virtuous, or vicious; or else he is absolutely *incapable* both of *religion*, and *moral government*.

SERM. *ment.* — And, *Secondly*, we find by ex-

XI. perience, that “ there are *no other* aver-  
 “ fions, *no other* difficulties, *no other*  
 “ confirmed and most inveterate habits,  
 “ but what may be *altered, corrected,*  
 “ and *subdued* by the ardour and spirit of  
 “ *human resolution.* And can we think,  
 “ that our nature is so *odd*, and so *defec-*  
 “ *tive*, a composition, that it can conquer  
 “ *every disinclination*, surmount *every dif-*  
 “ *ficulty*, and reform *every wrong habit*,  
 “ but what is of a *religious* nature ?” It  
 is an *incredible* supposition, and most in-  
 jurious to the wisdom and goodness of the  
 Deity. So that it appears, upon the  
 whole, that mankind are, in their *present*  
 circumstances, capable of *religion* and a  
 life of *moral rectitude* ; because they can  
*understand* their duty, and *impress*, upon  
 their consciences, a strong *sense* and *con-*  
*vicition* of its fitness, and infinite impor-  
 tance, by close and frequent meditation ;  
 and there is *no cause* in *nature*, that can  
*necessarily prevent* their *acting*, according  
 to their inward *judgment* of things ; “ and  
 “ because the *same resolution*, with which,  
 “ we see, that they often break through  
 “ other

“ other *stubborn* habits, and sustain sur-  
 “ *prising*, and almost *incredible*, con-  
 “ *flicts*, must, according to the *course* of  
 “ nature, gain them the *victory* over any  
 “ habits whatsoever, and raise them to a  
 “ pitch of *illustrious* and *exalted* good-  
 “ *ness*.”— Thus much for the *power* of  
 human nature, and to advance the *glory*  
 of the almighty and gracious Author of  
 it.

THE *true* argument with respect to its  
*weakness* (neither aggravated by a spirit  
 of pride and self-sufficiency, nor dimi-  
 nished by spleen and prejudice) will be  
 comprehended in the following particu-  
 lars. — That its *animal passions* are *strong*  
 and *turbulent*, and apt to *oppose*, and, up-  
 on a little indulgence, to *controul* and *over-*  
*rule*, the dictates of *reason* — that an *un-*  
*happy constitution* of *body*, and the various  
*disorders*, to which it is subject, are a  
 heavy clog upon the *mind*, and cloud and  
 interrupt the *freedom* and *liveliness* of its  
 operations — that *objects* of *sense* make  
*powerful* impressions on human nature,  
 and it is, every where, surrounded with  
 with numberless *temptations* to vice and  
 irre-

SERM.  
 XI.  


SERM. irregularity— that *evil examples* often times

XI. corrupt it *early*, *indolence* enervates it faculties, *partial views* of things betray it into dangerous errors, and the *avocations* and *cares* of civil life, and commerce, have too direct a tendency to divert its attention from the *ultimate concern* of its being, and the momentous interests of an *eternal futurity*; and, finally, that *popularity* is apt to enslave it, *corrupt customs* to entice it to a *habit of vanity*, and *licentious company* to instil into it degenerate principles, and banish the *remorse*, which it would otherwise feel, upon the commission of evil actions. — We may, therefore, from the whole, infer, that tho' human nature *is not*, with respect to the practice of piety and virtue, in a state of *utter impotence*; nay, tho' it be possessed of very *considerable abilities*, to discharge the duty indispensibly incumbent on it, and calm and regulate tumultuous passion; yet there is a sufficient *foundation*, in reason, to admit the doctrine of *divine assistances*, especially in the case of *evil habits* long contracted, and deeply rooted in the mind, or in *special seasons* of danger and distress.



distress. And, viewing it in this light, SERM. the doctrine of the *New Testament* will XI. appear most admirably to harmonize with *nature*, when, as was observed before, it strenuously urges it as the sinner's *duty* to *repent* and *amend* his manners, and, in the *strongest phrases* ever made use of with relation to this subject, to *create* in himself *a new heart*, and to *awake* and *rise from the dead*, that *Christ* may give him *light*; and, at the same time, to en-Eph. v. courage him to exert himself with the grea-14. ter zeal and activity, directs him to implore the *help* of *God*, who will *give his holy spirit* to them that *ask* him.

THERE has been another inference, *extorted* from the *metaphor* made use of in the text, which I think it proper briefly to animadvert upon, *viz.* that the *new-birth* is not *gradual*, but *instantaneous* like the *natural*.—I would in candour suppose that the meaning here is, that the *first principle* of spiritual life is communicated *all at once*: Otherwise, the *metaphor* itself fails, and, of consequence, all the *deductions* made from it must be en-

SERM. tirely impertinent and inconclusive. Tak-

XI. ing this, therefore, to be the thing really intended, the doctrine grounded upon it is, that the conversion of sinners is not effected by *degrees*; but reducible to some determinate *point* of time, and wrought altogether by the efficacious and irresistible energy of the spirit of God.

THIS, perhaps, might not be of importance enough to deserve our notice, were it not that, in conjunction with some *other* principles, it has a very malignant and fatal tendency. — For let a man, a notorious sinner (as he will *unavoidably* if he adheres to this scheme) fix on that as the *precise time* of his conversion, when he is most strongly *convicted* of his guilt and misery, with convulsions of *terror*, and agonies of *despair*, and let him also believe, that the *once* regenerate is of the *election* of grace, by the *unfrustrable* decree of the Almighty, and can never *finally perish*, however his regeneration may be *dishonoured* and *obscured*, and all the *marks* of it suppressed, by enormous and capital vices; that he may  
not-

notwithstanding, with St. Paul (whom SERM. he supposes to represent *his own* real cha- XI. racter) be *carnal and sold under sin, and brought into CAPTIVITY to the law of sin, which is in his members*: Let him, I say, confound and jumble all these errors together in a kind of *connection* of religious principles — and *conversion* may be without *purity, religion without godliness, christianity without virtue*. Neither the thunder of the law, nor the grace of the gospel, may be capable of making any *effectual* impression upon his mind; but he may be ruined for ever, *confidently assured* of his own salvation.

I CHOOSE not to insist on this topic, that the subduing evil habits, and the acquiring and fixing contrary dispositions (which are of the *essence* of true conversion) must, in the necessary nature of things, be both a work of *time*, and of *gradual, constant, solicitous* effort; because this is an experienced and self-evident truth. It is sufficient for me to have shewn, that the before-mentioned notion of regeneration, built on *figures* of speech,

SERM. in contempt of plain and universal *reason*,  
 XI. opens a door for all manner of *presump-*  
 ~~~~~  
tuous and *unbridled* immorality.

AND now from the premises laid down, and the train of reasoning pursued, in the preceding part of this discourse, I am naturally led to consider, SECONDLY, the *difference* that there is between *true religion* and *enthusiasm*; which is a *smooth* and *specious* error, and very apt to *insinuate* itself, where there is a low understanding, a heated fancy, or strong passions. — “ *En-*
 “ *thusiasm*, generally, prevails as the
 “ *counterfeit* of true religion, and by af-
 “ *fecting* to raise it to an *unusual* pitch of
 “ *ardour* and elevation. And the *proper*
 “ *season* to introduce it is, when the *ra-*
 “ *tional offices* of *piety* are *neglected* or
 “ *treated* with *irreverence*; and, in con-
 “ *sequence* of this, *violations* are, like-
 “ *wise*, made on *other* indispensable
 “ *branches* of *moral duty*.” No wonder
 then, if some *appearances* of it should be
 found among *ourselves*, when *vanity* and
soft effeminate entertainments engross so
 much of our time, as to leave scarce any

room for *serious reflections*; and the man of *pretended* elegance has neither inclination, nor leisure from his more *important* affairs of *indolence* and *gaiety*, to *think of* the God of his life, the Author of that reason which he *debases*, and of those passions which he so unnaturally *perverts*; nor, even from a regard to *decency* (which one would imagine should have *some* weight, if more worthy and sublime motives had lost *all* their influence) to join in those *public honours*, which are paid to the common Parent of mankind by the consent of the most *civilized* nations, as necessary to prevent the *inroads* of *universal barbarism*, and hold together the *frame* of civil societies, in *better order*, and more *firmly compacted*.

IN such a *rank* and *corrupt* soil, *enthusiasm* will spring up and flourish; unless the idea of the Deity could be totally *effaced*, which nature itself forbids. The *weakest* among the *vulgar* have discernment enough to see, that *this state* of things is *very bad*, and wants to be *amended*; tho', not having maturely fixed the

SERM. *just measures* of reformation, they run
 XI. from the *extreme* of *licentious negligence* to
 another *extreme*. So that how apt soever
 the *indevout* and *free livers* of the age
 may be to exclaim against *enthusiasm*, “it
 “ is a certain truth, that *irreligion* breeds
 “ it, and nourishes it.” And, generally
 speaking, the *passive* subjects of it are
 much more *innocent* through their *igno-*
rance, than they who administer the *occa-*
sions of such delusion by scandalous instances
 of *misconduct*, for which there can be no
 colourable *excuse*.

BUT then, on the other hand, “as
 “ enthusiasm frequently takes its *rise* from
 “ irreligion, it serves also, in its turn, to
 “ *propagate* irreligion.” By being con-
 founded with *true piety*, (as if the idea
 to both the terms were the *same*) piety
 itself is by many trifling pretenders to wit,
 and very minute reasoners, represented as
 a thing *wild* and *despicable*. “A con-
 “ clusion more *weak*, than many degrees
 “ even of *enthusiasm* are:” For it
 comes to this, upon the whole, that the
 Creator and Governor of the world, a
 Being

Being of all possible excellence and perfection, can have *no claim* to be adored and served, because he has been, sometimes, *irrationally* and *absurdly* served. And at the same rate of inferring, if *friendship* has, at any time, been *improperly* expressed, such an error must cancel *all ties* of friendship; respect, *unfitly* shown to a *parent*, must utterly *annul* filial duty; and whenever *injudicious* and *ill-concerted* schemes are proposed and pursued for the service of our country; *public spiritedness*, and *the love of our country*, must *instantly* become ridiculous.

BUT tho' such arguments as these are a reproach to common sense, and justly expose *those*, who make use of them, to all the contempt, with which they endeavour to load *religion*; yet still religion *suffers*. *Superficial thinkers* are *actually* prejudiced, and set up for *libertines*; and others of the same *intellectual incapacity*, or *wrong biases* (together with the *viciously* disposed) greedily *imbibe* the infection. And as all this *dishonour* to the infinite Deity, to the eternal laws of reason, and to human na-

SERM. XI. ture, is occasioned by *enthusiasm*; it is proper that it should be briefly delineated, and its mischievous consequences distinctly described. To this, therefore, I now proceed; not intending to raise an odium against any particular *person*, or *sect* (which is unbecoming the *place* in which I stand, and inconsistent with that *humanity* and *meekness*, which the gospel inspires) but singly the illustration and advancement of truth, and to prevent mistakes, which may be attended with great mischiefs to *society*.

“ *Enthusiasm*, in the general notion of it, is an ungrounded and wrong pretence to a *divine illumination* and *influence*: Which, every one must see, may lead to *various degrees* of error, according to the *nature*, and in proportion to the *languidness*, or *force*, of the inward *impression* which is supposed to proceed from God.” And as no man can be *certain*, when it has once *taken root*, tho’ in *smaller instances*, that it will not *expand* itself, and rise to the utmost pitch of *indiscretion* and *irregularity*;

ty; this is another reason, why its discriminating properties should be particularly *noted*, that we may guard against every thing, that has a *tendency* to introduce it. SERM. XI.

IN the FIRST place, there is *no enthusiasm at all* in believing, that God, who must sincerely desire the *moral rectitude*, if he intends the *happiness*, of his intelligent creation, there is, I say, *no enthusiasm at all* in believing, that this all-powerful, wise, and most gracious Being, maintains a *communication* with the *human mind*; and, in a way of *calm illumination*, suited to its original faculties, *assists* it in the reformation of evil habits, *supports* it under critical emergencies, and, *co-operating* with its own endeavours, *establishes* good resolutions, and *facilitates* its progress in virtue. This is not only *consistent with*, but highly *probable from*, the universal principles of reason, and the most *worthy* and *sublime* ideas we can form of God. And while we admit, and act under the firm persuasion of, this *general influence* (which the light of nature itself plainly

SERM. plainly intimates) we have all the *encou-*

XI. *agement* to diligence and activity, and to persevere in the faithful discharge of our duty, that can justly be desired; and are in no danger of being misled, by heat of *fancy* and forward *presumption*, into any dangerous errors, either in sentiment, or practice.

“ But when *particular* thoughts, impulses, and inward impressions, are *directly* ascribed to *a divine inspiration* and *energy*, then enthusiasm commences: Which pretends to *trace*, minutely, the *operations* of God upon the *mind*; and to *distinguish* them not only from the *exertions* of its own *rational* powers, but from all *natural sensations*.” Religion only teaches, that God is ready to afford us *all necessary* and *proper* aids, without laying down any *certain* rule, by which it can be known, *when*, in what *manner*, or in what *proportion*, these *aids* are vouchsafed to us. “ But the *enthusiast* is wrought up to a strong imagination, that, at certain times, he *actually* *feels* God within him;” and, by this *delusion*,

delusion, he is oftentimes hurried on to SERM.
very false and dangerous methods of con- XI.
duct. Being *confident* that, at particular
seasons, he is under a divine influence, he
has nothing more to do than to follow
the *direction* of it *implicitly*; *reflection* and
cool examination are absolutely precluded;
and being by this means rendered, for
the present, incapable of *conviction*, he
must, of course, be *irreclaimable* in his
follies.

AGAIN, enthusiasm *varies* with the
constitution, and temper, and the strength
and bias of animal passions. Thus it is
sprightly or *austere*; *presumptuous*, or *de-*
sponding; elevated to *fantastick raptures*,
or dispirited and depressed by *dark* and
gloomy ideas. But rational religion in-
spires, in the main, one *uniform temper*,
and always dictates *the same invariable*
conduct.

FURTHER, the enthusiast acts from
sudden impulses, from thoughts *unaccount-*
ably suggested to the mind, which he con-
ceits to be *divine infusions*. The *soberly*
reli-

SERM. *religious man acts sedately and cautiously;*

XI. and from a deliberate judgment. The one therefore, is liable to infinite *inequalities*, the other *steady and consistent*.

OTHER *distinguishing* properties there are, which I can but slightly mention. — Enthusiasm is generally *arrogant and censorious*, confining superiour knowledge, and eminence in piety, to itself alone; uncorrupted religion is always *modest and tractable, candid and generous*. — Enthusiasm can never *explain* itself; its *inward feelings* are, to reason, *incomprehensible*; and therefore it *decries* and *vilifies* reason, which genuine religion *exalts* and *cherishes* as its *principal* and most *friendly* support. — Enthusiasm can *subsist*, where *morality* is wanting; in religion, *strict* and *good* morals are the most *essential* and *sublime* part. — Finally, there is no setting *bounds* to enthusiasm, nor is it possible to guess, with any good degree of probability, what *effects* it may happen to produce; but the *effects* of true religion are *ascertained* by *stated laws*, which are of
eternal

eternal and immutable authority. Religion is therefore to be *depended upon*, for the regulation and exact order of human life ; but enthusiasm can be reduced to *no scheme*, but, like *fancy* and *passion*, is wild and uncontroled.

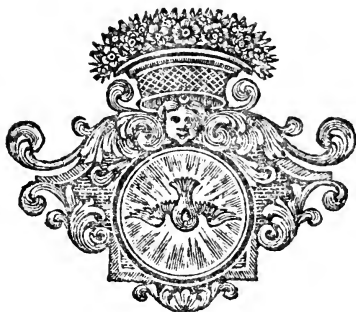
THAT there is a great deal in religion (as it appears in the *publick profession* and *practice* of mankind) which is purely *mechanical*, we may all plainly see. And it is the genuine character of this religion of the *body* and *animal spirits*, to make *sensible* and *warm* impressions, tho' they are *uncertain* and *fluctuating*. Whenever, therefore, an inward *feeling* is *fervent*, *sudden*, *transporting*, it is natural to ascribe it to an extraordinary and divine influence ; natural, I mean, not in *reason*, but be a *superstitious* and *deluded* imagination. But that all this is, to the last degree, *fallacious*, appears undeniably from hence, “ that we know not the
“ *variety*, or *force*, of *natural* impres-
“ sions that may be excited within us,
“ nor understand the *extent* of mere *me-*
“ *chanical*

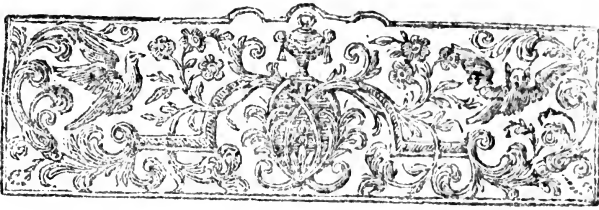
SERM. “*chanical* powers ; and, therefore,
 XI. “ should not be forward to call that *di-*
 “ *vine*, which may be entirely *animal*.”

And, besides, from hence, innumerable confusions have actually sprung, dishonourable to *private characters*, injurious to *families*, and to the peace of *nations* : None of which mischiefs would ever have been introduced, if men had judged of religion not by *sense*, but from its *agreement* to the dictates of the *understanding*, and its *moral* effects. — Such lively and ardent sensations may indeed *exhilarate* the spirits, and so far they might be thought *agreeable*, and to carry a powerful *recommendation* along with them : But let it be remembered, that this will, always, be as much the case when *superstition*, as when *true religion*, influences. Nay, they are likely to be most *vehement* in the infatuations and excesses of superstition ; because *reason* is kept out of sight, and there is no other principle *left* to *suppress* or *correct* such disorders. — Let us then, my brethren, be determined,

I ed,

ed, upon what has been said, by all *wise* SERM.
and *calm* methods to oppose the *growth* XI.
of *enthusiasm* — And by this means we
shall also, in a great measure, *disarm* in-
fidelity.





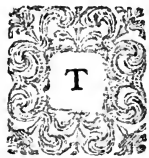
S E R M O N X I I .



Of THEFT, FRAUD, and EX- TORTION.

EXOD. XX. 15.

Thou shalt not Steal.



HIS command takes a much SERM. wider scope than is, perhaps, XII. generally apprehended, and may be applied to a variety of cases in the mutual *commerce* of mankind: Which either pass by *softer* names, where some degree of *injustice* there is allowed to be; or are thought of too little moment, to *interrupt* the fordid worlding in

SERM. his eager pursuit of gain, when *custom*,
 XII. and the *number* of transgressors, so divides
 and spreads the dishonour and infamy of
 the practice, that it does not fix itself on any
 individual, as his *peculiar* reproach. The
guilt, indeed, of *each* particular offender
 is in itself the same, as if he stood quite
 single, and had no associates, no partners
 in his iniquity; and his *REAL infamy* is
 also the same; but he *feels* neither of
 these, if he is not marked out as a *conspicuous*
 and *distinguished* character of injustice:
 Which plainly demonstrates how little,
 in all such cases, religious motives
 influence, how little generosity and a
 sense of right, and that the chief, almost
 the *sole*, view is to popular estimation,
 and outward advantage.

How extremely *loose* and *indigested* the
 apprehensions (for I cannot call them *reasonings*)
 of men frequently are with respect to
 subjects of morality, and how *hasty*
 and *indeliberate* their decisions upon
 matters of right and wrong, their conduct
 in the instance now refer'd to, and in
 several others equally notorious, too
 fully and sadly testifies. They seem
 scarce

scarce to allow themselves *any time at all* SERM. XII. for reflections of this kind, tho' of the highest importance to reasonable beings, in every possible *period* and *scene* of their existence. They have seldom any *fixed, distinct, and uniform* scheme, which they hold themselves bound to observe *inviolably*, in the *entire* course and management of their *commercial* affairs. They are contented with framing *general excuses*, for methods of *traffick* which they cannot justify, instead of *settling* what is *right*, and having the honest resolution of mind to *adhere* to it, that their actions may need *no excuse*: Which shows but a scanty measure of *ingenuity*, of *native justice* and *the love of virtue*; and looks as if they made light of the *sin*, so they could avoid the *remorse*, and were not so much afraid of incurring *guilt*, as of the *uneasiness* and *ignominy* consequent upon it. Let me add, in order to cut off effectually all such lame and frivolous *pleas*, as can only serve to abuse the judgment and stupify the conscience of the transgressor, and prepare the way for a *train* and *progression* of iniquities — “ that no solid or

SERM. “ available excuse can be made for any

XII. “ *kind or degree of injustice, but absolute ignorance of the crime itself.*”

This, tho’ it can seldom happen with respect to the general principles of right, yet may, perhaps, in some *minute* cases; where there is a seeming *speciousness* and *colour* of reason even on the *wrong* side of the question, or where the circumstances are *perplexed* and *intricate*. But, even here, the *ignorance* must not be *affected*; it must not spring from *negligence, partiality, precipitance* of temper, or the want of that *proportion* of faithful inquiry, which is suited to our capacities and advantages; “ it must not be the ignorance of a mind *sunk* beneath itself, “ *contracted* in its views and *blinded* by “ *covetousness*, and *wishing* to find “ *gainful methods* of fraud, and injuring “ his neighbour in his property, *innocent* :” For this last sort, especially, argues such a *mercenary* disposition, such a *base prostitution* of all the moral powers, as stands fully prepared within itself, to sacrifice social virtue, and the unquestionable rights of mankind, to selfishness and
a mean .

a mean private advantage. And in all the instances above specified, the ignorance, not proceeding from *accidental* and *involuntary* causes, but being merely the effect of *vice*, must of necessity be, itself, vicious and blame-worthy. SERM.
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WHAT judgment then must we form of those, who, allowing the practice to be *unfair* and *iniquitous*, urge the force of *custom*, and the *necessity* they are under for fear of an abridgment or diminution of their *profits*, against the *unalterable rules* of justice, and the *eternal laws* of Almighty God? Why, let us judge with truth, and with all the moderation and candour too, that are consistent with truth, and we shall not be able to avoid coming to this, as the last definitive sentence; that if they are really grave and serious in their plea, their way of thinking is as *absurd*, as their way of acting is *irregular* — that they set up the prevalent follies and extravagancies of mankind, as the *ultimate standard*, and *supersede* the authority of every other law, *evacuate* the force of every other rule of action — that they urge the *increase* of iniquity as a

SERM. *reason* for its farther increase — that they
 XII. represent *justice* only as an *occasional* and
 mutable tie, that must yield and give way
 to the *corruption* of the times; and lay a
 sure foundation for multiplying mischiefs
 and injuries *without end*. “For if *one*
 “degree of injustice may be defended,
 “*all others* may; since it is the *intrinsic*
 “*evil* of it, and not the *degree* of evil,
 “that, absolutely considered, constitutes
 “the offence. And if it was in itself *inno-*
 “*cent* in *any* degree, even the very *lowest*,
 “it could not *merely* as injustice, but on the
 “account of other *distinct* circumstances
 “from whence the *whole guilt* would be
 “derived, be criminal, when carried to
 “its *utmost height*.” And as every step
 in this reasoning is most obvious, and, in
 a manner self-evident, those who make
 use of the wretched excuses above-men-
 tioned, in support of unrighteous depreda-
 tions and incroachments upon another's
 property, must be utterly indefensible; as
 manifestly as their practice, built on such
 gross fallacies, tends to *overthrow* all mor-
 tal distinctions, and to the *inevitable con-*
fusion of societies.

I NOW proceed to mention some of the principal heads of the crime prohibited in the text; beginning with the *grosser* cases, and from thence descending to the a distinct specification of some of those *less infamous* thefts, to which what has been already said, was intended to be more particularly applied; and which can never be allowed a place in the intercourse and business of the world, without giving up *one part* of the human species as a prey to the other, or *the whole* to prey upon itself.

AND the FIRST thing, that will immediately offer itself to our thoughts, is that to which the name of *theft* is more peculiarly appropriated; whether it be *clandestine stealing*, where no alarm is given, or *robbery* committed by violence, to the terror or personal hurt of the party injured. These miserable offenders, while their *crimes* deserve *detestation*, are *themselves* proper objects of our *pity* and *compassion*. For their infelicity is oftentimes beyond expression, beyond even the conception of an *honest* and *upright* mind; and greater than they themselves, with

SERM. all their *stupefaction* and *insensibility*, their
 XII. audacious *defiance* of divine and human
 justice, and the help of *artificial incentives* to a resolute and intrepid execution of their wicked and mischievous designs, can, with any tolerable share of quietude and composure, bear up under. A brief enumeration of particulars will be sufficient to set their deplorable condition in a true light; to inspire sentiments of horror at the most distant apprehension, the bare possibility, of being ourselves involved in the same labyrinth of *guilt* and *intricate distress*; and, of consequence, a strong aversion to all such *beginnings* of vice, all such *introductory acts* of injustice, as may lead in the end to so abandoned, so fatal, an extreme.

THE criminals, of whom we are now speaking, have renounced their *humanity*, and all the *rights* and *privileges* that naturally belong to it. They have *broken* the *tie* by which they stood *related*, both in point of common affection and interest, to the rest of mankind. They have engaged themselves in an independent faction, a pernicious confederacy against *universal*

versal right and publick order; and distinguished and marked themselves out as foes to the whole species; and are, therefore, most justly *outcasts* from human society, and treated, from the great law of *self-preservation*, and in necessary defence of property, like other *wild* and *ungovernable* creatures, to a level with whom they have voluntarily degraded themselves — and whose instinct of nature it is to *hurt* and to *destroy*.

AND besides their being, upon this account, declared infamous by the laws of civil government, and exposed to the unsufferable vengeance of God, the universal and righteous judge, whose soul *hateth the wicked, and him that loveth violence*; they are liable to continual anxieties, and most dreadful agonies of guilty remorse, and have no relief from *within*, nor security from *without*, while *danger* and *terror* surround them on every side. Their only *intervals* of what looks like self-enjoyment are, properly speaking, scenes of *madness*, in which their spirits are *unnaturally* inflamed, and lewdness and riot, obliterate and extinguish *thought*; and

which

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SERM. which therefore, tho' chosen as mitigations of *present pain*, are upon the whole an increase of their *guilt* and *mifery*. But when nature is recovered from this *violence*, and has, in some measure, shaken off the *load* that was thrown upon it to *suppress* its kind and wise admonitions; when reason is *unfettered*, and begins again to *exert* itself; the former distractions and inquietudes are *renewed*, and perhaps with redoubled force, for their having been check'd not by *proper lenitives*, but by *criminal debauches*. The offender is forced to retire, from the society and converse of mankind, for fear of being discovered, and made an *open* and *ignominious* example of publick justice. He veils himself under the *shades* of *night*, and steals from one *obscure* and *base* retreat to another; is alarmed upon the least *commotion*; knows that even the persons, with whom he intrusts his life, can have *no confidence* safely reposed in them; and runs the hazard of being, every moment, betrayed by his companions in *rapine* and *dishonest spoil*.

THIS, which has been already represented,

is a scene of misery, to which none of the *natural* and *unavoidable* calamities of life, however *grievous*, nor the *pangs* of death itself, in the track of virtue and honour, however *violent*, can bear any proportion. But imagine the criminal to be *detected*, and *secured* within the reach of justice, and fresh *infelicities* (not included in the former frightful catalogue of evils, resulting from theft and robbery) arise, and present themselves to our view. His *agony* springing from *guilt* must, at least, be the same, and his *fears*, it may be supposed, will crowd more thick and close upon him; and in this *depression* of spirit and amidst the *conflict* of such *confused* and *tumultuous* passions, how is it possible for him to endure the ghastly and distorted looks of his fellow-criminals *anticipating* their fate, the rattling of *chains*, the horrid aspect of a solitary and rueful *dungeon*, the hourly expectation of *death*, the *gloomy formalities* that *precede* it, the *violent, infamous, publick* execution; with but little hope, in general, of the *mercy* of God, and too just apprehensions of a future, more dreadful *condemnation*. For

SERM. 'tis scarce possible, for such heinous transgressors as these, to have any good degree of assurance of the *sincerity* of their *repentance*, without which the everlasting mercies of God are not to be secured; since their sorrow and contrition did not *commence*, till Hell and destruction were imagined to be *near*, and lay, in a manner, *open* and *naked* before them; and therefore may be suspected to be rather a *mechanical passion*, a kind of *instinct* occasioned by the melancholly situation to which they have reduced themselves, than the effect of *conviction* and *ingenuity*, and a real inward disposition of mind *alienated* from their former vices. But supposing their spirits not to be *sunk* and *darkened* by the least tincture of despair; but rather *presumptuous* and *elate*, and absolutely *fearless* with respect to futurity; yet if they are impenitent (of which there is the utmost danger) this *unconcern*, this *confident* and *relentless* temper, is the circumstance, in the whole train of their misfortunes, that ought to be most ardently deprecated; because, being blinded by so fatal an error, their future destruction


struction must be unavoidable. They SERM. enjoy, indeed, a few moments of ease XII. and pleasing fond *delusion*; which will soon vanish, and aggravate their *succeeding* miseries.

WHETHER *any*, who now hear me, are interested in this part of my discourse, and have, consequently, *particular* reasons to excite them to avoid the tremendous effects of *capital injustice*, I know not: I hope, and would presume, the contrary. But allow me to say with respect to *this vice*, as I have already intimated in the case of *Murder*, that tho' we have, hitherto, been innocent, " we " may have the lurking pregnant *seeds* of " it in *other* irregularities which we *ac-* " *tually* indulge." — In *luxury*, for instance, the affectation of *prebeminence* and *distinction* in outward appearance, and an effeminate unbridled pursuit of *pleasure*; and in the *expence* of publick entertainments, which from the example of the *great* (who may, perhaps, think it more for their honour to trifle away the *superfluities* of their wealth *luxuriously*, than to lay them out in acts of *solid beneficence*)

is

SERM. is become much too general. These

XII. things are not only shameful and unnatural, but must in many instances, entangle our affairs, and reduce us to the *meanest shifts* to support such exorbitancies. And when all *safe* expedients fail, there will remain a strong *temptation* (and but *little force* of virtue to *counterbalance* it) to a commission even of the *highest degree*, of the crime prohibited in the text. But if there was nothing at all, in this, more than an over-cautious and groundless suspicion, the subject on which I am now discoursing, and this particular branch of it too, would still be of *universal* use, because *every one*, almost, has it in his power to *prevent* several of the *remote causes* of theft and robbery; between which, tho' there may be many *intermediate steps* of corruption, yet the *connection* is so plain, that they cannot be denied to be an undoubted, and the general, *source* of this iniquity. Among these I shall intimate two of the most considerable, and which particularly deserve our notice.

IN the FIRST, I am to address myself SERM.
to the *needy* and *indigent* part of man- XII.
kind; who being the *creatures* of God, 
and designed for *immortality*, as much as
those who are placed in the most exalted
and affluent condition, must in the cha-
racter in which I now appear, as an ad-
vocate for virtue an *universal tie*, and for
the *common salvation* of all human, rea-
sonable creatures, be set on the foot of an
absolute equality. To these my advice is,
that they take care of the *education*
of their children, as far as their station
will allow, and instill into them, early,
principles of religion, and maxims of
justice, from which their abject and nar-
row circumstances may suggest dangerous
temptations to *deviate*, and that they train
them up to *honest labour*, and an *habit* of
industry, and in an aversion to *idleness*,
the parent of the most *extravagant* vices.
For if they are thrown into the world *wild*
and wholly *undisciplined*, regardless of the
supreme authority and government of
God, and *unimpressed* by any sense of the
essential and immutable difference of good
and evil; if they are, in their tender years
(when

SERM. (when *all habits* are more easily *tempered*
 XII. with the *soft* and *pliant* constitution of
 the mind, and take the *deepest root*) *per-*
verted by the malignant influence of bad
 examples, and *enured* to vice; 'tis no
 wonder if they proceed, *gradually*, to all
 imaginable degrees of *injustice* and *vio-*
lence. Endeavour, therefore, to prevent
 their future shame, and *untimely* fate, by
 using the proper and wise cautions above
 recommended, which not only religion,
 but *natural affection*, demands; and con-
 sider, that *honesty* will procure even
 to poverty itself some degree of *respect*,
 and can alone inspire *content* and *cheer-*
fulness of mind, under the *difficulties* and
inconveniencies that attend it.

AND let such as are in more *splendid*
 and *elevated* life not suffer their *pride*,
 and *wanton insolence* of spirit, so far to
 usurp authority over their *reason*, as to *ri-*
dicule poverty, and treat it as a thing
 which is *in itself despicable*; because the
external distinctions between mankind, in
 this world, were never intended to dis-
 criminate *merit*, but are, in a great mea-
 sure, *accidental*: And if the poor are as

ill-used for what is only their *misfortune*, as they would in many cases be on account of their *wickedness*, they are robbed of that *innate shame*, which is one of the most powerful and efficacious preservatives from *licentious* practice, and disposed to consent, with much less inward reluctances to any suggestions and proposal of *dishonesty*.

I NOW proceed to the SECOND thing proposed, *viz.* to point out some iniquities in *commerce*, which tho' not universally and publickly stigmatized by the names of *theft* and *robbery*, yet, upon the abstract *reason* and *foundation* in *nature* of the precept contained in the text, are justly supposed to be forbidden by it. — But against this part of my design, it is probable an objection may arise, and that is, “ that there are secrets in *trade*, and “ in the *methods* of transacting business, “ which recluse moralists, and men addicted to speculation, cannot *penetrate* ; “ who must therefore be very *unqualified* “ to determine about the *right* or *wrong*, “ the *just* or *unjust*, conduct, in affairs

SERM. “ with which they are in a great measure

XII. “ unacquainted,” To which it is sufficient for me to answer, that with *secret* things whatever they are, of which I have no distinct knowledge, I shall not presume to meddle; nor does my design, or the *general* nature of such a discourse as this, at all require it. The cases which I shall put shall be clearly stated, and *intelligible* to every capacity: So that the point now before us is really not at all — whether we *understand* the several branches of *commerce*; but only this — whether we are *judges* of *equity*. And what should hinder but we *must* be so, when the *rule* of right is invariably the *same*, apply it to what instances you please; and the *application* no more *difficult* in one instance than in another, if they are both proposed with the same *distinctness* and *perspicuity*. Most surely the *indifferent* and *disinterested* inquirer is, in general, better qualified to form a nice and strict estimate, to pass an upright *unexceptionable* sentence, than they who are in the very scene of corruption, and, perhaps, *personally* involved in the guilt of it. The former of these, instead

stead of being chargeable with presumption, and *assuming* a right and power of decision, where he is not authorized and has not the proper abilities to *decide*, is in truth the very judge, laying open the *facts* themselves with all their *circumstances*, to whom they are most *aptly* and *naturally* referred. And it may be urged with equal reason and justice, that *particular branches* of commerce ought never to censure the conduct of *other* branches, even tho' it should affect themselves, and prove detrimental to their own rights; because if trade in general has *secrets*, without the knowledge of which, *justice* and *injustice* cannot in *select* cases be fixed and ascertained, particular tribes and associations may, and must, be supposed to have *their* secrets likewise — to preclude all stated unalterable *rules* and *determinations* of *equity*. The consequences of which will be — “ that the behaviour
“ of mankind has no *certain limits* pre-
“ scribed and marked out for it — that it
“ is not subject to any *uniform law* — that
“ no one, among its various classes, knows
“ what to *expect* or *claim* from another —

SERM.
XII.
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SERM. “ and, therefore, that they are quite a-  
 XII. “ *liens*, and impossible to be reduced to a  
 “ state of *regular dependance* upon each  
 “ other, even when they are united to-  
 “ gether in *societies.*” The whole of  
 which is a plain renunciation of com-  
 mon sense, as well as of the *simple, steady,*  
*unbending, uncorrupted* principles of eter-  
 nal justice. I shall add no more than  
 this, that, perhaps, the whole of this  
*prejudice* has arisen from the neglect of  
 making one *reasonable*, and, as I think,  
*evident* distinction, and that is, that *stand-*  
*ing rules* of justice may be allowed in  
*every* case ; but it may not be so indispu-  
 table, that *particular instances* are *included*  
 within these stated rules. It may therefore  
 be admitted by the *trader*, that the deter-  
 mination, with respect to *kinds* or *general*  
*heads* of iniquity, is upon the whole  
*right*; and it may be admitted by the *mo-*  
*ralist*, that whether particular *actions* fall  
*within* this determination, he cannot so  
 rightly judge, without the help of those  
 who are better informed of the *nature* of  
 the transaction, and of all its *concomitant*  
*circumstances.* This will subserve all the  
 ends

ends of justice, and entirely answer the purpose of my discourse, in which I shall only propose *general* cases; and should be glad, too, if they were altogether *fictitious*, rather calculated to *prevent* errors, than *necessary* for the correction of abuses *already* committed. They are all, I believe, reducible to the following heads of — *fraud* — *extortion* — *oppression* — *corruption*, or the *perverting* of *justice*. Of each of these briefly, and as they stand in order.

AND first of *fraud*, which is a species of injustice the direct *opposite* to open violence, and seeks to *shelter* itself under some smooth and specious disguise, that its base designs may be carried on, and executed, without being known, or mentioned, or even *suspected*; by which means, the contriver and author of the fraud would be, in a great measure, cut off from the *confidence* and *friendship* of mankind. Such an offender as this, therefore, may for *a long time* maintain a *fair* and *reputable* character; and insinuate himself so far, by an affectation of *simplicity* and *scrupulous justice*, and a

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SERM. seemingly *tender* and *conscientious* nicety

XII. in trifles, into the esteem of the *unwary*,  
 the *generous*, the *open-hearted*, as may  
 reduce them more within his *power*, and  
 within the *reach* of his *grand* scheme of  
 deceit; and give him greater opportuni-  
 ties to practice all the little *arts*, which  
 are *preparatory* and *subservient* to it. And  
 there are a great *variety* of methods, in which  
 the crime of fraud may be committed,  
 and a continued *course* of it maintained.  
 The principal of which are *forgery*; the  
*alienation* of property from its right owner  
 by *secret*, *gradual*, and for a considerable  
 time (especially where the capital sum is  
*large*, and consists of *many articles*) *im-*  
*perceptible* breaches of trust; by using  
*false weights* and *measures*, which, as a  
 manifest *infringement* of justice, is ex-  
 pressly declared to be *an abomination to the*  
*Lord*: And in instances *less heeded*, and  
 therefore found by experience to be more  
*general*, by *false* protestations about the  
 original *price*, the *scarcity*, the *goodness* of  
 the respective wares and merchandizes of-  
 fered to sale; by vending damaged goods,  
 knowing them to be *such*, without a pro-  
 portionable

portionable *deduction* for the *loss* that must SERM.  
 unavoidably be sustained by the buyer; XII.  
 by abusing his *ignorance*, and imposing  
 on his too easy *credulity*; and which is a  
 most heinous *aggravation* of the fraud, by  
 over-reaching our neighbour when he *pro-*  
*esses* his own *unskilfulness*, and refers  
 himself entirely to our ingenuity and sense  
 of honour. These are most certain and  
 undeniable cases of *injustice*, as they have  
 now been distinctly, tho' *generally*, stated.  
 We as plainly *invade* the *property* of ano-  
 ther, of which he has the sole right of  
*disposal*, convert to *our own* use what, in  
 equity, belongs only to *him*, and *spoil*  
 him of a part of his possessions without  
 his *consent*; as if we attacked and plun-  
 dered him by *open* and *violent robbery*.  
 There is not one of the *essential ingredi-*  
*ents* of *theft* wanting in the instances  
 above enumerated; which this single con-  
 sideration will evince beyond all reason-  
 able contradiction, that whatever share of  
 our neighbour's *property* we seize, and a-  
 lienate, and get into our own power, with-  
 out having first acquired *a right* to it, and  
 without his having *transferred* to us, *vo-*  
*luntarily*, his own right, must be *stolen*, if

SERM. the word has any idea at all affixed to it ;  
 XII. and no more mild and favourable construction of such injurious conduct can possibly be made.


To which let me add, that, by a continued *series of little frauds*, greater *mischief* may, upon the whole, be done to the innocent sufferer, than by many of the *professed and declared* enemies to justice and private right ; that by some *single* frauds, his loss may rise much *higher*, and the injury be more *irreparable*, and in its consequences more *extensive* ; and that as this particular crime is not only stealing under *covert*, but under a *profession and mask* of honesty, the guilt must upon that account be highly increased ; as no impieties are more *detestable*, than those which are committed under the outward pretence and *cloak* of religion, which is hereby prostituted to the most degenerate and ignominious purpose of *undermining and destroying* itself.

EQUALLY a violation of the command in the text with *fraud*, and an equal contempt and defiance of the original rules of justice, is *extortion* : The principal



cipal branch of which, that requires to be particularly mentioned, is the scandalous practice of *usury*, or lending money upon *exorbitant* interest. I do not pretend, in what I now advance, to be a judge in all *particular* cases, but the general *standard* and *measure* of right is, I think, indisputably clear and certain; and that is, “ that  
 “ when the *interest demanded* is such, as  
 “ necessarily tends to *ruin* the borrower,  
 “ and reduce *him* and *his family* to distress  
 “ and poverty, it is a gross and flagrant  
 “ immorality, which no arts or evasions  
 “ can in the least degree justify.” Should it be said, that the *hazard*, in the instance now referred to, is very considerable on the side of the *lender*, upon which account a greater *security*, than would otherwise be defensible upon the strict principles of justice, is become absolutely necessary: I answer, “ that *no such hazards* ought ever to be run; because all  
 “ methods of dealing, from whence the  
 “ *distress* and *ruin* of a fellow-creature  
 “ will inevitably follow, are in themselves, and eternally, *iniquitous*.” If this serves as a wretched shift to *defer* his  
 his

SERM. his misery for a little space, it will fall, at

XII.  last, the *heavier* upon him; and in the mean time he is enabled, by such base *usurious* contracts, to support a shatter'd declining *credit*, to *encumber* himself with new *debts*, and bring in more persons as sufferers, and sharers in his approaching calamity. So that there is this *peculiar* circumstance of guilt attending the extortion now complained of, that it *depresses* and *preys* upon the *unfortunate*; or supplies the *fraudulent* with the means of continuing their frauds; and, in short, is carried on at the expence both of justice and humanity, and subsists by the *spoil* of mankind.

As for *oppression* in all the different branches of it — in government, by *excessive* and *unnecessary* taxes — among the great, by *rigorous* exactions from their vassals and dependents — among the proprietors of land, by *burdening* their tenants, and not suffering them to enjoy the *small profits* of their hard and penurious industry — among all conditions of men, by unreasonably *abridging*, or *detaining*, the wages of the poor labourer: These, I say, are

are instances of injustice, which, tho' SERM. they are too often practis'd, are freely and XII. universally exclaim'd against, and the } *cries* of the *helpless injured*, who seldom have it in their power to redress their wrongs, the scripture directly informs us, reach the *ears of the Lord of Hosts*; who will punish the unnatural authors of such barbarities, in which *cruelty* seems to vie with *injustice* and *robbery* which shall gain the ascendant, and give the particular *denomination* to the conduct.

To which let me add, that we are righteously chargeable, and that in a great degree, with breaking this sacred law of God, *thou shalt not steal*, if we are any way concerned in the *corruption*, or *perversion* of justice with relation to matters of *property*; or make use of any advantages, which we may claim by *law*, to the destruction of *natural right*; or if we ourselves are not immediately concerned as *actors* in either of the ways above-mentioned, *advise*, however, and *instigate* to designs and schemes of injustice, and share in the unlawful (as to *religion*, and the primitive rule of *nature*, unlawful and infamous)

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SERM. famous) *profits* resulting from thence :

XII. And, finally, if we are not disposed, whenever it is in our *power*, to make *ample* restitution to those whom we have injured in their property ; and such restitution too, as may reasonably be deemed a valuable compensation, for all the *accidental loss* and *inconvenience* occasioned by the wrong committed. Our Blessed Saviour, therefore, imputes to *Zacheus*, as the surest token of the *sincerity* of his repentance, his frank and voluntary declaration, that *if he had wronged any person*, he would *restore it fourfold*. And indeed such *restitution* is one of the first dictates of *natural justice* ; and without it, all our professions of *sorrow* are shameful hypocrisy, since, by not *repairing* the injury, we live, as it were, *daily* and *habitually* in the commission of iniquity, and must die, and appear before God, not only *impenitent*, but with an additional weight of *corruption* and *guilt* upon our souls. I shall only subjoin, for the conclusion of this discourse, the following hints.

*First*, That as the instances, which have been already specified, may be properly distinguished

distinguished by the name of *iniquitous* thefts, SERM. XII.  
 or thefts proceeding from a direct principle of *injustice*, there is another sort, that  
 may not be unfitly denominated the *theft*  
 of *uncharitableness*; and that is the with-  
 holding from the poor that succour and  
 kind assistance, which it is *in the power of*  
*our hands* to communicate, and which  
 may justly be *expected* from our plentiful  
 and affluent circumstances. This, in-  
 deed, is not a debt that may be *demand-  
 ed* by any particular poor; but is as strictly  
*owing* to the indigent in general, and  
 ought to be as exactly *discharged*, as  
 any the most *precise* and *determinate* right  
 of claim — as appears from the *universal*  
*implanted impulse* to humanity and com-  
 passion, and the order, and *mutual rela-  
 tion* of all human creatures to one another,  
 establish'd by the God of nature. — The  
 SECOND and last observation that I would  
 briefly mention is, that a *divine* prohibi-  
 tion of *theft*, and all other particular  
*frauds* and *invasions* of our neighbour's  
 property, must, of necessity, imply in it  
 a command to avoid all *leadings, incen-  
 tives,*

318 *Of Theft, Fraud, and Extortion.*

SERM. *tives*, and distant *tendencies* to so enormous a crime; and, as the surest preservative from it, to cultivate an inviolable habit of justice in every even the minutest article of our *commerce*.





# S E R M O N XIII.




The DOCTRINE of a PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE considered.

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REV. xix. 6.

*Alleluiah: For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

 HE doctrine of a supreme and universal providence is not only the immediate support of all *religion*, but also the most *elevated* and *delightful* object of contemplation, that can possibly present itself to a sober and uncorrupted mind. Upon the truth or falshood of this most impor-

SERM. XIII.

SERM. important principle, necessarily depends  
 XIII. the just idea of the *universe*, and of our  
 own *situation* and *character*, our *design*,  
 our *business*, and all our *expectations* in it.  
 As this grand question is decided, the  
 whole system of nature must appear with  
 a quite *different* face. If the notion of  
 a providence cannot be maintained, the  
 world, to the eye of *reason*, must seem  
 like a *forlorn* and *desolate* wilderness; and  
 we know not to what infinite *irregulari-*  
*ties*, to what unavoidable *confusions* and  
*miseries* it may be exposed, — *horrible*  
 even in the *bare imagination*. It has lost  
 its vital animating spirit; the hope of the  
*afflicted*, and the main support and con-  
 solation of the *virtuous*, are taken away  
 from them; and the happiness of *all ra-*  
*tional beings* is rendered absolutely uncer-  
 tain and precarious. But if the govern-  
 ment of an all-perfect mind be once firm-  
 ly established; if he conducts the course  
 of nature, and regulates the affairs of the  
 universe with *invariable* wisdom and rec-  
 titude, with *impartial* equity, with *pa-*  
*ternal* goodness; from hence must natu-  
 rally spring tranquility, and a *sedate sub-*  
*lime*



lime satisfaction: There can be no im-  
proper or unnecessary *evil* upon the  
whole; nor the want of any fit and ne-  
cessary *good*.

And yet, notwithstanding this, wicked men, being irreconcilably *averse* to the notion of a providence (because they justly apprehend that it involves in it the idea of *moral* government, the *eternal terror* of vice and wilful depravity) and men of bold and presumptuous speculations, who are bewildered in the intricacies and mazes of blind *metaphysics*; both of these, I say, the one from the corruption of their hearts, and the other from the pride of false wisdom, have endeavoured to banish *God* out of the universe, whose *presence*, and *supreme influence* in it, is the only source of substantial comfort and joy to the intelligent part of the creation.

AND *what is it*, that they have substituted in the place of God; in the place of an all-wise and omnipotent director and disposer of events, and a common father? Nothing, in effect, but the utmost *anarchy* and wild *disorder*; nothing, in reality, but *unintelligible jargon*, and

SERM. words without *a meaning*. For it is to  
 XIII. *fate*, or *chance*, that we are referred for  
 the *origin* of the universe, the *support* of  
 its stupendous frame, the *beauty* and *har-*  
*mony* of the several parts of it, and for  
 the *exquisite contrivance*, the *exact* and  
*regular disposition* of all things in it.

BUT let us not, my brethren, suffer  
 ourselves to be lost in darkness; let us not  
 give up *first principles*, for the sake of  
*sounds* that we do not understand. Let  
 us ask ourselves seriously — what is that  
*fate*, which is supposed to have such a  
 surprizing kind of operation, and to pro-  
 duce so many curious and wonderful ef-  
 fects. — “ Is it *a real principle*? — Is it  
 “ *a proper efficient cause*? — So far from  
 it that we shall find it, upon close exami-  
 nation, to be in the present argument just  
*nothing* at all; *i. e.* “ to be *no reason* of  
 “ the existence of *any thing*, nor capable  
 “ of affording a solid and satisfactory *ac-*  
 “ *count*, of the most *minute* and *trivial*  
 “ event in nature.”

FOR when it is said that all things  
 exist, and that the fabric of the world is  
 upheld and maintained, by *fate*, these

propositions can be interpreted in no other SERM.  
sense than this, that the universe *exists ne-* XIII.  
*cessarily*; and “ that it is absolutely im-  
“ *possible* that *we ourselves*, or any other  
“ the most *inconsiderable* part of it, should  
“ *not* have existed; and that whatever *is*  
“ could not *but* happen in *all* respects as  
“ it does; and that, not from considera-  
“ tions of *wisdom* and the *greater good*  
“ upon the whole, but from some prin-  
“ ciples *essential* to it, and *inherent*  
“ in its very nature.” But is there  
the least *colour* of reason for this ab-  
surd and extravagant paradox? Do not  
all our ideas, do not our very first re-  
flections, assure us of the contrary? Is it  
a contradiction (*absolutely* and *abstractly*  
considered) to assert, that this *earth*, for  
example, might never have *existed*, or  
that it might have been *placed* in a *diffe-*  
*rent* part of space, or that it may be en-  
tirely *annihilated*? Nay, is it a contra-  
diction to suppose, that the *meanest insect*  
in it might either *not* have been, or may  
*cease* to be? What principle of reason *is*  
*it*, that this may be said to *contradict*?  
What certain notion *have we*, to which

SERM. it is *impossible* to be reconciled? We all  
 XIII. know that there is *none* at all; and even  
 the *fatalist* himself must be convinced of  
 this, if he would consult and examine his  
 own *ideas*. And can that exist by an in-  
 trinsic and immutable *necessity* in nature,  
 which, considered *in itself*, might, upon  
 all our principles of judging and rea-  
 soning, either *never* have been *brought*  
 into existence, or have been *confined* or  
*limited*, as to the *period* of its existence?  
 If a thing exists necessarily, must not some  
*precise mode* of its existence be also neces-  
 sary? If we assert the contrary, is not this  
 the same in effect with saying, “ That  
 “ *it is not* necessary it should exist in *any*  
 “ way, and yet that *it is* necessary it  
 “ should exist in *some way*?” Or, if  
 some *particular mode* of being be absolutely  
 and essentially necessary, as it must surely  
 be where the *existence itself* is necessary,  
 how shall we *account* for what we constantly  
 see and experience — That most parts of  
 the universe, which are exposed to our  
 observation, are in a continual *flux*? How  
 shall we *account* for the innumerable  
*changes* and *variations* to which the con-  
 stitution



stitution of nature is subject? These are indeed inexplicable *mysteries*, glaring contradictions even to common sense: From whence it appears, that the scheme of the *fatalist* is a blind and bewildered scheme, and utterly insufficient to explain both the *original*, and the *general laws* and *course* of nature.

WHAT then is *chance*? — Why it is not only *no cause*, but, in the strict notion of it, directly *repugnant* to the very *idea* of *casualties*. For if there be any *adequate cause*, of the existence and order of the world, subsisting, we are able from hence to give a *certain* and *determinate reason* of its existence and order; and, of consequence, it could not be formed by *chance*, nor can the affairs and concerns of it be directed and regulated by *chance*. But, on the contrary, if all this be entirely *fortuitous*, it as undeniably follows, that the universe can be nothing else but a series of *effects* without a *cause*, “ or  
“ without any *proportionate power*, exist-  
“ ting in nature, to *produce* these effects.” Besides, — can chance give *uniform* laws to nature? Can chance always operate

SERM. with a *steady* and *unvaried* regularity?  
 XIII. Can chance, unintelligent roving chance,  
 act with all the *exactness* of the most consummate and unerring Wisdom? Can it be owing to *this*, that such an infinite number of *different* effects *conspire* in their design and use? Is it to be imputed to *mere chance*, that but very *rarely* any *irregular* and *monstrous* productions appear in the universe; that we are entertained with the prospect of *general beauty* and *harmony*; that such a scene of wonders, of incomparable *art* and *skill*, is exhibited and displayed before us, as exceeds, I will not say the *imitation*, but even the *comprehension* of all mankind, if it could be collected together and united in *one intellect*? And, to sum up all, must it be ascribed to *mere chance* that we see in the whole system of creation, *nothing else* but marks of the most *accurate* and *stupendous* workmanship, and not the *least* resemblance of an *accidental* and *fortuitous* production? Whoever can so far impose upon his understanding, as to admit these absurd conclusions, is qualified for being an *infidel* in every thing; and the strongest

est

est *improbabilities* are not sufficient to SERM.  
*shock* his *incredulity*. And yet by such XIII.  
*stupidities* as these, grossly affronting to the  
Creator and sovereign Lord of universal na-  
ture, and insolently contemptuous to the  
universal reason of mankind; by these, I  
say, we are to be persuaded to renounce  
our *belief* of a Deity, and the *pleasures*  
and eminent *advantages* resulting from his  
being and providence, for the *dull*, the  
*gloomy*, the *comfortless* scheme of atheism.  
Whereas, in truth, the just inference to be  
drawn from such extravagant pretensions  
is evidently this, that since neither *fate*  
nor *chance* could *make* or *govern* the  
world, there must of necessity be a *self-*  
*existent*, *intelligent*, and *active* principle,  
the *first cause* of all things, and the *di-*  
*rector* and *disposer* of events.

BUT as it was not my original design  
to insist on the *general proofs* of a provi-  
dence, in my remarks on which I have  
already too much enlarged (tho' I hope  
they will not be without their use) I shall  
here put a stop to these reflections; and  
proceed to consider the principal point in-  
tended, *viz. how far* the providence of

SERM. God may be supposed to *extend*, or, in  
 XIII. other words, “*whether, and in what cases,*  
 “ it is reasonable for us to acknowledge  
 “ *a particular providence:*” Which is a  
 point of high importance in forming our  
 sentiments of *religion*, and fixing the true  
 idea of the state of *the universe* in gene-  
 ral, and of *human life*. — Now in order  
 to avoid confusion, and set this argument  
 in a proper light, it is only necessary that  
 I do these two things. FIRST of all shew  
 briefly, what is *meant* by a *particular*  
*providence*: And, SECONDLY, lay before  
 you the strong *probabilities*, that may be  
 urged in *support* of this doctrine.

THE FIRST thing to be done is, to  
 enquire briefly what is meant by a *parti-*  
*cular* providence. And in order to this,  
 it is proper to shew what is intended by  
 God’s *general* providence; which is  
 thought, by many, fully to answer all the  
 purposes both of *natural* and *moral* go-  
 vernment, and, of consequence, to ex-  
 clude a particular interposition. It is sta-  
 ted thus — “ that the infinite and all-wise  
 “ Creator of the universe formed the con-  
 “ stitution of nature so *perfect* at *first*, as  
 “ to



“ to stand in need of no successive regu- SERM.  
“ lation ; that he established *certain laws* XIII.  
“ in the material world, which *uniform-* }  
“ *ly* and *invariably* take place in it ; that  
“ he endowed it with *intrinsic* powers  
“ to *produce* all the ordinary and regular  
“ effects which he ever intended it *should*  
“ produce : Just as when an Artificer  
“ frames a *machine* for *certain* purposes,  
“ and to endure to a *limited* duration ; in  
“ all which period, the effects, which  
“ result from it, spring not from the *im-*  
“ *mediate* direction and influence of the  
“ artist himself, but from the *force* of  
“ its own *original* composition.” This  
is the substance of their scheme who are  
entirely, and *exclusively*, for a general  
providence : Upon which the following  
remarks, that are preparatory to the main  
argument, naturally present themselves.—  
*First*, that it is impossible to prove from any  
principles of *reason*, that this is the *actual*  
state of things. For how can we know  
that the most common events spring from  
properties and powers *fixed* and *inherent*  
in the constitution itself, without being  
acquainted with its *internal frame*, and  
with

SERM. with the *proper* and *necessary* effects of *all*  
 XIII. natural causes. — But, *Secondly*, it is im-  
 possible for us to prove (if we admit that this is the general state of the case) that it is the *whole* of the case; unless we are sure, that the supreme governor of the world can have *no wise ends* and purposes to serve, but what are perfectly provided for in the *original* disposition and frame of nature. — From whence it follows, in the *third* place, that no conclusive *objection* can be raised, from the *reason* of things, against a *particular* providence; that all the *presumptions* and *probabilities*, which are found to be on the *side* of a *particular* providence, must remain in their full force, being counter-balanced, or even diminished, by *none at all* on the *other* side: And this must render every probability, that can be urged for the doctrine which I am now recommending, so much the more strong and considerable.

BUT it may still be asked, what is that *particular providence*, which you intend to vindicate? To which I answer, that it consists in this; “ that the supreme  
 “ Being, upon special occasions, *directs*  
 “ and

“ and *over-rules* the course of *events*, both SERM.  
“ in the natural and moral world, by an XIII.  
“ *immediate* influence, to answer the  
“ great designs of his universal govern-  
“ ment.”—And what reasons there are, to induce us to believe and acknowledge *this*, is the *second* point, that now comes in order to be considered.

IN the *first* place then, *no* supposition is, in general, so *honourable* to the perfect wisdom and rectitude of the Deity as this, that upon all occasions, which *require* it, he conducts and guides the *course* of *nature* in such a manner, as to make it subservient to the most *beneficial* purposes. — Nor will this introduce any *appearance* of *confusion* in the universe, because we can easily imagine that the all-perfect Author of it can *suspend*, *moderate*, or *mix* the influence of natural causes, without making any *visible* alteration in the order of nature, or its general established laws. What are the *first springs* of the most *common* events we *know not* ; in numberless cases, at least, they are absolutely *imperceptible* by us : And therefore we can never discover, when they are  
*touched*

SERM. touched and managed by the supreme disposing mind ; it is out of our power, on such occasions as these, to perceive any thing *irregular*, or any thing *uncommon*.

LET me add to confirm this doctrine, in the *second* place, that it may be *questioned*, whether any such laws *could* be *originally* fixed in the universe, as without an *immediate* direction and interposition of the Deity upon some special occasions, can *possibly* answer all the ends of government with respect to *mankind* in *this life* ; considered both as *moral* and *accountable* beings in a state of *trial*, and as united together in *societies* : “ For  
 “ how a *certain* and *necessary* course of  
 “ things can be compleatly and minutely  
 “ adapted to the infinitely *various* and *un-*  
 “ *certain* passions, designs, and pursuits of  
 “ *free agents* is extremely hard to be con-  
 “ ceived.” Must there then be *no* providence, *no* supreme regulation with respect to *such events* as these ? This, surely, is a very unreasonable and obstinate conclusion.

BUT

BUT, farther, *thirdly*, we find that the Creator of the world has put it even in the power of *men*, by a proper *application* and *conjunction* of *several* natural causes, to produce very *surprising*, very *beneficial* effects, “ which would *not* have been “ produced, if these causes had remained “ *distinct*, as they lie in the *original* “ *constitution*, without the interposition “ of human art and industry.” Is it not, then a most absurd *limitation* of the wisdom and omnipotence of the Deity, (which can bring about infinitely more important events, by a *suitable combination* of various causes, in every part and district of nature ; is it not, I say, a most absurd limitation of God’s wisdom and omnipotence, to dispute against *such interpositions* as these (which are all actings of a *particular providence*) when we ourselves can easily conceive, “ that the government of the world may, upon *this* “ supposition, be more *wisely* conducted, “ and answer many more *valuable* purposes than it can *otherwise* do.” — A

concur-

SERM. *concurrency of causes united by a skilful*  
 XIII. *direction, but for which union there is*

perhaps, in innumerable instances, *no provision made in nature; such a concurrence of causes, I say, adapted to particular circumstances may be the means of effecting unexpected and great revolutions for the good of society, and of mankind in general. And as these revolutions, and the benefits resulting from them, would in all probability not have taken place, were it not for the exercise of a particular providence; this demonstrates not only how reasonable it is for us to admit it here; but to presume the same in many other cases, where it may be equally necessary, tho' that necessity lies more remote from our dark and limited conceptions.*

I SHALL only add at present, that the Holy Scriptures assert, in the strongest terms, the *universal extent of God's providence, and his disposal of all events, throughout the whole scope of created being. — That the LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all* — that the highest orders

ders of intelligent spirits have the honour SERM.  
to act as *his ministers*, to execute his wise XIII.  
and gracious councils--with respect to this  
globe, that his providence is in a parti-  
cular manner concerned about *mankind*,  
strictly regarding *the evil and the good*;  
but that it is not confined to *them*, but  
reaches to *every part* even of the *sensitive*  
and *inanimate* creation: For he *openeth*  
his hand, and *satisfieth the desire of every*  
*living thing*; not a sparrow falls to the Psal. cxlv.  
ground without your father; and the very 16.  
hairs of your head are all numbered — and Matt. x.  
that with respect to the supreme mind, 29, 30.  
who comprehends at one view the *whole*  
*course* of things, and perfectly understands  
the *force* and *efficacy* of all *natural*  
*causes*, nothing can be *fortuitous* and *ac-*  
*cidental*; but what are commonly stiled  
*accidental* effects must be as intirely sub-  
ject to his *direction* and *controul*, as the  
most *obvious* effects of the *plainest* neces-  
sary causes: For even when *the lot is cast* Prov. xvi.  
*into the lap*, *the whole disposing thereof* is 33.  
*of the LORD.*

THIS is the doctrine of *revclation*; in  
which it only confirms, and renders more  
autho-

SERM. authoritative, the sense and voice of na-  
 XIII. *ture.* For as, on the one hand, the go-  
 ~~~~~  
 vernment of the universe cannot be a
 task too *difficult* for infinite wisdom and
 omnipotence to manage; so, on the o-
 ther, we have the utmost reason to con-
 clude, that nothing will be thought *be-*
neath the *notice* and *care* of the Deity,
 that tends to illustrate the glory of his
moral excellencies, and especially the ami-
 able glory of his *goodness*, which is the
 chief perfection even of a supremely in-
 telligent and infinite nature. — But the
 more particular discussion of this subject
 must be reserved to my next discourse.





S E R M O N XIV.



The DOCTRINE of a PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE considered.

REV. xix. 6.

Alleluiah: For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.



HE providence of God being SERM. the *support* of the frame and XIV. order of the world, and as it were the *life* of universal nature, the devout and joyful *adoration* of it is represented in the text, with the highest propriety, as one part of the *employ-*
ment,


SERM. *ment*, one principal and essential part of
 XIV. the *happiness* of the blessed inhabitants of
 ~~~~~ *heaven*; not only of *mankind* in this fu-  
 ture state of their exaltation and glory,  
 when they shall have their faculties ex-  
 tended, their conceptions more clear,  
 strong, and adequate, and be purged from  
 moral impurities; but also of the most  
*exalted orders* of intelligent spirits. This  
 describes to us the *best* and *noblest* part of  
 the Creation in its true beauty and recti-  
 tude; joining, in one uninterrupted and  
 harmonious consort, to celebrate the *uni-*  
*versal dominion* of the Almighty, and his  
*stupendous acts* of government.

EVEN in *this life*, indeed, we have  
 light enough afforded us to discern in ge-  
 neral, that there *is*, and *must be*, a su-  
 preme disposal and regulation of events;  
 and that we have the utmost reason to  
*acquiesce* in the operations of an omni-  
 potent power, when a wisdom that is infinite,  
 and a goodness that is equal, impartial, un-  
 confined, and immutable, always *direct*  
 and *measure* the exertions of it. But  
 with respect to the *scheme* of providence  
 itself,

itself, which is so *vast* and *comprehensive*; SERM. with respect to the *immediate causes*, and XIV. *various uses*, of innumerable effects which we see produced; with respect to the *amplitude* and *order* of the whole design, and the *subordination* and admirable *connection* of its various parts, how many ways *each* may tend to the advancement of it, and frequently, perhaps, by such *obscure* and *far-distant* consequences, as are impossible to be *traced* by a finite understanding: And, to add no more, with respect to the *exact proportions* of nature, and the *due temperament* of different causes, by which means they will be brought, in the end, to *terminate* in one grand point, and be *united* in their influence. — Here, I say, our apprehensions must of necessity be indistinct and confused.

AND yet, tho' this be an undeniable truth, and cannot *possibly* be otherwise from the very *nature* of things, it appears to have but little weight in regulating the conduct of mankind. The incomprehensibleness of a subject is no check to their *presumption*; their *cavils* are not easily silenced,

SERM. silenced, even in cases where they have  
 XIV. *no principles* of reasoning; they censure  
 because they are *ignorant*; they grow profane and sceptical in proportion as they are *peevish* and *impatient*, in proportion as for want of *ideas*, and thro' a mere blind and childish *resentment*, they are displeas'd with the *general constitution* of the universe, or dissatisfied with their own *rank* and *circumstances* in it. Whereas, on the contrary, the more perfectly any being is enabled to *pursue* the *track* of providence; the more this wonderful scene is *enlarged* and *opened* to his view; the more *clearly* he *perceives* the *absurd consequences* that follow from the *Atheistic* scheme, which attributes the formation and government of the world to *fate* or *chance*; the more *distinctly* he can *enumerate* the *vast advantages* resulting from the inspection and care of an universal over-ruling mind, and point out the *mischiefs* and *confusions*, that would inevitably spring from a state of *entire anarchy*, with respect to the *moral* world, and the *immense system* of nature: He must, of course, feel himself inspired with  
 more

more exalted and transporting sentiments SERM.  
of *delight* and *praise*. — A mind thus *en-* XIV.  
*lightned*, a heart *thus affected*, would nat-   
urally express its surprize, its joy, and  
lowly reverent adoration in the language  
of the text: *Alleluiah: For the Lord  
God omnipotent reigneth.*

BUT it is scarce of more importance  
to us to believe that there *is* a providence,  
than to enquire how far it may reasonably  
be supposed to *extend*: I therefore, in  
my last discourse, laid before you several  
strong probabilities for the doctrine of a  
*particular providence*. But there is one  
topic that, I think, deserves to be distinctly  
and fully illustrated; and that is the *parti-*  
*cular interposition* of the supreme Being,  
as it may directly and immediately respect  
*moral agents*: Which tho' it be a point  
of great weight in the present argument,  
and of the utmost consequence to virtue  
and religion, those who have opposed a  
particular providence have been too apt to  
*overlook*. — So that they have either not  
rightly *understood*, or the least we can say  
is, that they have not fairly *stated* and

SERM. *examined*, the doctrine, which they would  
 XIV. be thought to have disproved. For if  
 the *single* principle, which is intended  
 for the subject of the following discourse,  
 can be established on good probabilities,  
 all their reasonings, so far as they are de-  
 signed *absolutely* to discard the notion of a  
*particular providence*, must be weak and  
 inconclusive. Let us then enquire,

IN the FIRST place, how far in ge-  
*neral*, and in what *particular* instances,  
 God may influence the *minds* of men, in  
 order to serve the wise and gracious pur-  
 poses of his providential government; and  
 what *reasons* there are to induce us to be-  
 lieve, that there is *actually* such an influ-  
 ence: After which it will be proper to  
 shew,


IN the SECOND place, that *this alone*,  
*exclusive* of all immediate influence on ne-  
 cessary causes, and the laws established in  
 the material world, will constitute a *par-*  
*ticular providence* of vast *extent*, and of  
 great *effect* with relation both to private  
 and public happiness.

THE FIRST thing proposed was to enquire, how far in *general*, and in what *particular* instances, God may influence the *minds* of men, in order to serve the wise purposes of his providential government; and what *reasons* there are to induce us to believe, that there is *actually* such an influence. — That the supreme and infinite Being *may* have an immediate and easy *access* to the human mind, whenever he pleases, is beyond all reasonable contradiction. As he originally formed it, he must be thoroughly acquainted with its *internal frame*; with the *strength* and *extent* of its faculties in *each individual*; with all the *different ways* in which it is capable of being *impressed*; and with what *variety*, and *degree* of *force*, impressions may be excited and fixed in it, consistently with the *natural* and *regular exercise* of its moral powers, and its *design* and *use* in the Creation. And whatever his infinite wisdom knows to be *possible*, whatever it sees in any supposable circumstance to be *fit* and *expedient*, his boundless and un-

SERM. controllable power must enable him to  
 XIV. *effect*. There is not therefore the least  
 difficulty in admitting, that the first cause  
 of all things *can* influence the minds of  
 men ; but whether he ever *will*, whether  
 he ever *does*, act in this manner, *these* are  
 the only questions. Now I think there  
 are several clear *probabilities*, to one that  
 considers the matter impartially, on the  
 side of *allowing* this influence, which  
 cannot be so much as pretended to by  
 those who *oppose* it : And, of consequence,  
 it must appear much more *credible* on  
 the common principles of *reason*, without  
 the additional light and evidence of *reve-*  
*lation*, than the contrary scheme.

AND, in the *first* place, that many *wise*  
 purposes may be served by such an *infl-*  
*uence*, is in general easy to be conceived,  
 even by our shallow and limited under-  
 standings. “ For the *mind* being the  
 “ *spring* of all human actions, whatever  
 “ *influences* its judgments, counsels, and  
 “ determinations, must *proportionably* in-  
 “ fluence the *state* of human affairs ; and  
 “ may, in some instances, direct and re-  
 “ *gulate*



“gulate the *greatest* and most *important* SERM.  
“events.” By God’s interposing, in par- XIV.  
ticular cases, to moderate, and govern the   
*views, dispositions, and passions* of man-  
kind, the *course* of the world may in  
many respects be vastly *different*, from  
what it would *otherwise* have been :  
“Great *evils* may be prevented — exten-  
“sive and lasting *benefits* procured — a  
“*variety* of *useful ends* may be answered  
“with respect to particular moral agents,  
“and public communities” — ends,  
which *without* such a direction of provi-  
dence would in all probability *never* have  
been attained, or have been served but  
very *imperfectly*; if not entirely *defeated*  
by ill-concerted projects, and the preva-  
lence of unruly passions. And this alone  
must afford a just and fair presumption,  
that there *actually is* such a divine over-  
ruling influence as I am now disputing  
for ; unless there be some other principles  
of *reason* of *superior*, or at least of *equal*  
weight, to induce us to believe the con-  
trary ; which, I hope, it will appear,  
from

SERM. from the whole of this discourse, that  
 XIV. there *are not*, and perhaps *cannot be*.

NOTHING can be a more certain and uncontestable truth than this, “ that if  
 “ God governs the *moral* world *at all*, he  
 “ must do it in the most *perfect* manner ;  
 “ *i.e.* by such methods, as are most worthy  
 “ his infinite *wisdom* and *goodness*.” If  
 therefore we have ground to suppose, that  
*wise* purposes may be served by directing  
 and influencing the *minds* of men, which  
 in all probability could *not* have been exe-  
 cuted, by leaving them entirely to the  
 course of their own *schemes* and *reflec-*  
*tions* ; and for which it does not appear  
 (considering the *indeterminable variety* of  
 circumstances, that attend *free agents*)  
 how any *certain provision* could be made,  
 in the original laws and standing course  
 of *nature* : We must have equal ground  
 to believe, that this direction and influ-  
 ence is *one branch* of God’s *moral* provi-  
 dence ; because this belief gives us a more  
*exalted* and *honourable* idea of the *govern-*  
*ment* of the all-perfect Being, than the  
 opposite opinion can possibly do ; “ and  
 “ every

“ every *wise end*, that may, ‘upon the SERM.  
“ whole, be promoted by such a *parti-* XIV.  
“ *cular providence*, must in the necessary  
“ nature of things be *a reason*, why it  
“ should *actually* take place.”


AGAIN, it will, I make no doubt, be easily admitted, that “ the government of God is properly suited to the *natures* of those beings who are the subjects of it, and adapted to their peculiar *exigencies*.” Otherwise the matter will amount to much the same, as if they were entirely *neglected*, and left without *any government* at all. But it is certain in general, that the affairs of *mankind*, in which there are, and it is highly probable ever will be, infinite *variations* and *inequalities* that cannot be imagined, without destroying their *free agency*, to be absolutely *fixed*; the affairs of *mankind*, I say, cannot, for this reason, be regulated by the *same kind* of established laws as obtain in the *material* world: And consequently with respect to *these*, an *immediate interposition* seems to be extremely natural, if not upon some occasions *necessary*

SERM. to be supposed. And if we consider farther, that man in innumerable instances is *blind* and *helpless* in himself, ignorant of his true *present* happiness or misery, and of the proper means to secure the one, and avoid the other; that what *appears* to him most *worthy* to be *chosen* may frequently be attended with deplorable and pernicious *consequences*, and *terminate* in the absolute frustration of his best and most honourable designs; and that the *effects* of his conduct, tho' utterly *unsuspected* by himself, may involve *himself*, his *family*, his *friends*, the *society* to which he belongs, in such calamities, as may not *end* even *here*, but be transmitted down to *late posterity* — Can we imagine, that the *happiness* or *misery* of the world is thus left to be *determined* by *private* follies and indiscretions, or even by a mistake in *public* councils, without any *superior* care and regulation? Is it not more agreeable to our best and most perfect notions of the Deity to suppose, that he sometimes, by a *secret* and *invisible* influence, is the means of preventing  
that

that confusion that would be introduced by wild schemes and passions, and inspires wisdom and resolution to bring about great events, that tend to the happiness of mankind?

ADD to all this, that a very considerable part of the good and evil, that happens in the world, is evidently caused by the determinations and actions of *men*. And as this good and evil is the result of *free agency*, we can have no conception, how it is possible for the *proportions* of both to be *regulated* and *rightly balanced*, without introducing, upon *some* occasions, the exercise of a *special* and *immediate* influence; how it is possible that they should be *balanced* in *such* a manner, not only as the *good* of *societies*, but as even a *proper* state of *moral discipline* may require. And as the *chief end* of the divine administration can justly be imagined to be nothing else, but the *rectitude* and *happiness* of the moral world, this strongly confirms all the other reasonings, that have been before made use of, for a *particular*  
direction

SERM. direction and regulation of their principles, dispositions, and pursuits.


 BUT then it must be allowed, that there are certain *limitations* with which this matter must be understood. *No such* influence should be admitted, as destroys the *moral character* of man; *no such continual* influence, in all *common* cases, as is unnecessary, and renders his *rational faculties* useless; not a *mechanical* and *necessitating* influence, but such alone as is *intellectual* and *persuasive*; and, finally, *no such influence* with respect to *evil* actions, as makes the Deity the *efficient cause* and *author* of them, or the *tempter* and *exciter* to vice and immorality, and, consequently, stains and dishonours the essential and spotless *purity* of his nature. With these *restraints* carefully attended to, and kept always in view, the doctrine of a divine interposition and influence, with respect to the *minds* of men, is agreeable to all the dictates of pure and uncorrupted *reason*. And nothing can be *so suitable* to the character of God, as a Being absolutely perfect, the *Creator*, *governor*,

vernor, father, and friend of mankind, nothing so exactly agrees with his concern for the happiness of his creatures, and peculiar delight and complacency in virtue, as that scheme; which supposes him, by a gentle and gracious communication with the mind, to assist penitent sinners in reforming their evil habits; to strengthen the resolution of the good and virtuous, and render their duty easy and delightful; to supply inward strength for extraordinary trials, and inward support and comfort in special exigencies; to lay restraints on intemperate passion, and divert from hurtful purposes. “ And all this may be done by suggesting proper thoughts to the mind in a clear and strong light, and with only that degree and force of impression, which is naturally adapted to counterbalance contrary prejudices, and excite and fix the attention.” — A clear view of advantage, or of great inconvenience and misery, of the amiableness and honour of one course, and of the shame and infamy of another, of the improbability of success, the irreparable mischiefs

SERM. of a *disappointment* ; these things, I say, and  
 XIV. such other *general* principles by which  
 the minds of men are *influenced*, will  
 check the *passions*, animate or divert a *pre-*  
*sent* resolution, inspire *new* purposes, alter  
 our *opinion* of particular methods of ac-  
 tion which we were before intent upon :  
 “ And consequently this is the *main part*,  
 “ if not the *whole*, of that *internal influ-*  
 “ *ence*, which is necessary to be admitted  
 “ in the general course of God’s *moral*  
 “ *providence.*”

FROM whence it follows, that it may  
 be carried on in a way perfectly agreeable  
 to the *make* and *constitution* of the hu-  
 man mind, and consistent with the *due*  
 and *regular* exercise of its *inherent facul-*  
*ties.* “ Nay, it is entirely *analogous* to  
 “ what we know to be the *common course*  
 “ of things, in the *visible constitution* of  
 “ nature ; in which it was *originally in-*  
 “ *tended* and *provided*, that mankind  
 “ should mutually offer *arguments*, sug-  
 “ gest powerful and determining *motives*,  
 “ *inform*, *convince*, and *persuade* each  
 “ other ; nay, in which it was *originally*  
 “ *pro-*



“ *provided*, that such occurrences should  
“ frequently happen, as will, notwith-  
“ standing our utmost *reluctance* and a-  
“ *version* to it, *engage* our *attention*, and  
“ almost *constrain* and *force* us to *reflect*.”

SERM.  
XIV.

And the *influence* of *God* upon the mind, in the way in which it has been above explained, is of the *same kind*; persuasive, strong, and awakening; and whatever *difference* there may be supposed to be in the *propriety* of the methods of conviction, and the *degree* of light and evidence, yet we find, by experience, that it is scarce ever to be *distinguished* from the suggestions and operations of our *own reason*, and that we are still left to our own *choice* and *determination*, and consequently to the *perfect* exercise of our *natural* liberty. So that it does not appear to be in the least inconsistent with the established *laws* of nature, but may *itself*, for all that we are capable of advancing to the contrary, be *one* of its established *secret* laws; and no valid objection can be made to it, from any of the *fixed* rules of


SERM. divine government, nor from any *certain*  
 XIV. principles of reason. I now proceed, (having said enough on the FIRST head, *viz.* how *far* a divine influence on the minds of men may be allowed in *general*, and to what *particular* cases extended) to shew,

IN the SECOND place, that *this alone*, exclusive of all *immediate* influences on *necessary* causes, and the laws established in the *material* world, will constitute a *particular providence* of vast *extent*, and of great *effect* with relation both to private and public happiness. — It may not only *affect*, in its *consequences*, many considerable instances of happiness *here*; but extend its beneficial influence to the *future* world, and remain, in the pleasures and advantages resulting from it, to *all eternity*. — It may have a great share in *fixing* the *state* of our fellow-creatures; the *temper* of whose minds, the forming of their *manners*, their *success*, *prosperity*, and *honour*, may very much depend on our *resolutions* and *course of action*: For the happiness of men is not wholly determined by *their own* dispositions and behaviour;

behaviour ; but springs in a great measure from their *situation*, and from the qualities and pursuits of *those* to whom they are most strictly *united*, and with whom they are called to *converse*. And an *influence* that is at first entirely *personal*, and where the subject of it, too, is of an *obscure* character, may not only expand and dilate itself to *great multitudes* ; but settle, at last, after several *intermediate* events impossible to be traced, in flagrant and grand *events*, that are of the highest concern and importance to *whole societies*.---- Add to all this, that impressions made on *several* different minds, at *one* juncture, may produce *effects* neither *intended* nor *foreseen* by either of the immediate agents ; but, at the same time, effects that are *critical*, and, in the utmost degree, *momentous* and *useful*. And all may be owing to their being introduced at *proper seasons*, and *uniting* their *influence* ; and if the interposition had failed but in *one* of these instances, the *whole design* might have been render'd abortive. A proper and seasonable address to the minds of *princes*, especially,

SERMON. and such as have the *conduct* of *public af-*  
 XIV. *fairs*, may decide the *fate* of nations, and  
 establish *liberty* or *slavery*. Such an in-  
 fluence, and at a certain *period* too, may  
 promote a secure and lasting *tranquility* ;  
 and the *want* of it introduce the desola-  
 tions and horrors of *war* : which may be  
 succeeded by a *gradual declension*, and at  
 length by the *utter destruction* of the most  
*flourishing* states and empires.—And all  
 these things put together, (which may be  
 occasioned by the communication of God  
 with the *mind* of man, *exclusive* of all in-  
 fluence on the mere *material* world) must  
 constitute a particular providence of very  
*wide* and *diffusive* concern ; since (as was at  
 first proposed to be shewn) it may reach to  
 the *principal affairs* of the *present* life, as  
 well as extend itself to an *eternal* duration.

To conclude : The doctrine of the text,  
 as it has been particularly and largely il-  
 lustrated in this and the foregoing dis-  
 course, is an undeniable reason for the  
 most solemn and constant *reverence* of the  
 Supreme Being, on whom we absolutely  
 depend. It teaches us, likewise, that our  
 only *security* lies in his protection, and in  
 being

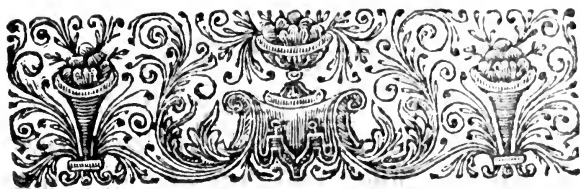
being the objects of his gracious regard : SERM.  
for, otherwise, by innumerable *casualties*, XIV.  
against which we cannot *defend* ourselves,   
he can frustrate all our *schemes*, and blast  
all our *pleasures*. We learn, that *the pre-*  
*paration of the heart in man, and the an-*  
*swer of the tongue, is of the LORD* ; that  
even *the king's heart is in the hand of the*  
*LORD*, and as *the rivers of water he turneth*  
*it, which way soever he pleaseth* ; that *the*  
*LORD increaseth the nations, and destroyeth*  
*them, he enlargeth the nations, and strait-*  
*neth them again* ; that *he doth according to*  
*his will in heaven, and in the earth, in the*  
*seas, and in all deep places ; in whose hand*  
*our breath is, and whose are all our ways.*  
— So that in *all* circumstances, whether  
prosperous or adverse, we should acknow-  
ledge the *wise appointment* of the great  
*invisible* disposer of events ; and, conse-  
quently, be thankful to him for every  
instance of prosperity, and patient and  
humble under afflictive visitations. If we  
thus discharge the proper duties of every  
state and condition of life, and are dili-  
gently employed in the practice of uni-  
versal virtue, we may not only *rejoice* in

SERM. the *general notion* of God's over-ruling

XIV. providence, but in the comfortable prospect of its special *direction* and *favour*; and may each of us say, in the sublime and triumphant language of the prophet

Habakk. *Habakkuk—Although the fig-tree shall not*  
 ii. 17, 18. *blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, [i. e. tho' there be the utmost distress, confusion, and desolation in nature] yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

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## S E R M O N XV.



Of the UNITY of GOD; and the  
JEWISH THEOCRACY.

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Exodus xx. 1, 2, 3.

*And God spake all these words,  
saying: I am the LORD thy  
God, who have brought thee out  
of the Land of Egypt, out of the  
house of Bondage---Thou shalt  
have no other Gods before Me.*



THE collection of sacred laws, SERM.  
filed the *Decalogue*, was im- XV.  
mediately and directly given  
*only* to the *Israelitish* or *He-*  
*brew* nation. From whence it unavoid-  
ably follows, that the precepts therein  
con-

SERM. contained oblige *all mankind* no farther,

XV. than as they belong to the *primitive universal* religion and duty of *men*; not merely as they were *divine* statutes, (for such likewise were many *ceremonial* institutions among the *Jews*, *mutable* in their *nature*, and *impossible* to be extended beyond their own constitution of government) but as they can be shewn to be such *precise* statutes and ordinances of the Deity, as bind *invariably* in all circumstances: And that even with respect to *Christians* also, expressly acknowledging their divine original, they can retain *no* authority or force at present, but either as they are demonstrated in the same light of being *inviolable branches* of the *general law* of human nature and human society, or are particularly inculcated and *re-inforced* by the gospel.

BUT as there can be no just ground to doubt that this is really the case with respect to *all* these laws, (that single one excepted which enjoins the sanctification of the *seventh-day sabbath*) as, I say, there can be no just ground to doubt, but that all the rest are essential parts of *natural*



and *Christian* morality; they may justly SERM. be considered in a more extended light, XV. than that of their being *interwoven* with a *particular constitution* adapted to confined and lower purposes, and as the *everlasting laws* of the king of heaven. They were proclaimed indeed from mount *Sinai*, with such circumstances of *pomp* and *terror*, as are rather a natural means to extort a *political* obedience, than to raise and improve a *religious* and *moral* temper; but are addressed to us in a way of more *free* and *calm persuasion*. And the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews* has expressly mentioned it, as a mark of *superior excellence* in the gospel-dispensation; that we *are not come unto the mount—that burned* Hebr. xii. 18, 19, 21. *with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of the trumpet of thunder, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard, intreated that the word should not [with that stupendous majesty, and convulsion of nature] be spoken to them any more.—And so terrible was the sight, that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.*

SERM. THE first branch of the text is the  
 XV. *historian's* superscription to the whole ten  
 commandments : *God spake all these  
 words---*that incomprehensibly glorious  
 being, who is *truly* and *only* God ; not an  
*imaginary*, but a *self-existent* and *im-*  
*mutable*, not a *nominal* or *topical*, but the  
*sovereign* and *universal* Deity ; whose per-  
 fection is absolute, and his dominion as  
 extensive as the creation itself ; nay, which  
 reaches, beyond the utmost verge of na-  
 ture, through the *immensities* of *space*, and  
 over *all* not only the *actual existences*, but  
 the *possibilities* of things.—*God spake all  
 these words*, whose *authority* none can  
 controul ; and from whom there is no  
*appeal* to a superior tribunal. The *in-*  
*trinsic* and *natural excellence* of the doc-  
 trine proved it to be *worthy* of God ; and  
 the miraculous *cloud of glory* indicating  
 some invisible and majestic *presence*, to-  
 gether with the *extraordinary commotion*  
 and *perturbation* in the course of nature,  
 manifestly discovered his *immediate inter-*  
*position*. For if such wise and useful pre-  
 cepts, adapted solely for the advancement  
 of virtue and happiness, might be so glo-

riously and solemnly attested by *delusive* or *capricious* spirits, taking the advantage of their being *invisible*, and superior in *sagacity* and *power* to mankind; it will be impossible for the sovereign commander and disposer of nature himself, whatever *exigencies* may occur, to *reveal* his will in a preternatural way, (and with *unexceptionable* credentials) to his reasonable creatures. Which is a supposition quite unworthy his infinite foresight, and wise regulation of all the affairs of the world, and his concern for the universal good.

BUT it is here to be observed, that *Moses* has only informed us in general, that *God spake all these words*; but has given us no account by what *instruments* the precepts of the decalogue were so awfully published to the whole congregation of *Israel*. This defect must therefore be supplied from the writings of the New Testament; in which the law of the ten commandments is stiled *the word spoken by angels*. The *angels* could in no possible sense be said to *speak* it, if God himself *immediately* declared this law; but *God* by a very usual figure, well known in all languages, might

be

SERM.  
XV.

SERM. be denominated and considered as the

XV. *speaker*, if these angels spoke only in *his*  
*name*, and by a *commission* and *authority*  
 derived from *him*. This therefore must  
 be admitted as the *true* interpretation ;  
 since it is the *only one*, that can be thought  
 of, to reconcile these seeming contradic-  
 tions. But amongst *the angels*, by whose  
 administration the law was given at mount  
*Sinai*, it is evident to a demonstration  
 that *Christ* is not to be included ; because  
 the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*  
 insists upon this, to prove that the *Gospel*  
 is a more excellent institution than the

Heb. ii. 3. law — that it was *spoken by the Lord* :  
 Which would not bear the least face of  
 reason, but be a manifest confutation of  
 itself, “ if the *law* was *also* spoken by the  
 “ *same Lord*.” As therefore, upon the  
 principles espoused by all *Christians*, it  
 must be some *created angel* by whom  
 these words were utter’d, *I am Jehovah*  
*thy God* ; and as it would be extremely  
 absurd to suppose *that angel*, merely on  
 the account of his pronouncing these  
 words in the *name* of the great and self-  
 existent *Jehovah*, to be *Jehovah himself* ;  
 it

it necessarily follows, that the same *con-* SERM.  
*struction*, and the same kind of *reasoning*, XV.  
 must in every *other* controversy be *weak*  
 and *inconclusive*.

IMMEDIATELY after the *historian's* introduction, follows the declaration of *God himself*, thus expressed by the *angel* as an intermediate instrument: *I am the LORD* [which word signifies the same as the *eternal God*, who has the ground or reason of his *existence* wholly *in himself*; and who, in consequence of his existing by an *absolute necessity* of nature, must be *independent, unchangeable, and supreme*] *thy God*, i. e. thy *protector* and sovereign ruler. From this phrase, we may collect the meaning of the word *God* in the holy scriptures, and that it is vastly *different* from the idea which modern times have affixed to it. In our language, it signifies *the one self-existent being of all possible perfection*; but in the writings of the Old and New Testament, it is a term merely *relative*. Thus we read of *the God of Abraham*, the *God of Israel*, the *God of Gods*, and the like. And thus angels and magistrates are justly stiled *Gods*, upon the  
 account

SERM. account of *dominion* communicated from  
 XV. the most high ; but could never be *so* de-  
 nominated according to our use of the  
 word, as denoting an *eternal* and *infinite*  
*essence*. From whence it follows, that we  
 cannot, upon the principles of revealed  
 religion, argue for the *supreme divinity*  
 of *any* person, merely as he has the cha-  
 racter or appellation of a *God* ascribed to  
 him ; without admitting *angels* (accord-  
 ing to the practice of *modern Rome*) and  
*kings* and *heroes* (after the manner of *Pa-*  
*gan Rome*) into the list of our *first* and *co-*  
*equal* Deities.

I SHALL only add, that this preface,  
*I am the LORD thy God, who have brought*  
*thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the*  
*house of bondage* — is thought, by most  
 expositors, to contain the *general reasons* of  
 obedience to the divine law ; which are,  
 the *self-existence*, *unchangeable majesty*, and  
*supreme dominion* of the Deity, and his  
*gracious care* and *providence* over mankind :  
 I say, over *mankind*, because tho' the par-  
 ticular circumstances mentioned in the text,  
 related *only* to the *Jewish* nation, yet there  
 are *parallel* instances of grace and conde-  
 scension,

scension, tho' not in all respects so *extra-* SERM.  
*ordinary*, expressed to the *whole race* of men. XV.

But notwithstanding that I have taken notice of this common interpretation, out of deference to the opinion of many great and learned writers, my own judgment is, that these prefatory words were only intended as a *motive of obedience* to the *first* commandment immediately subjoined. For in this view they appear to have their *full force*, and in the sense of the connection stand thus---*I am the LORD* [the *supreme, self-existent, independent* God, and] *thy God*; *thou shalt, therefore, have no other Gods before me.*

I NOW proceed, having said enough on the introductory parts, to explain the precept itself; to shew what it is that it *forbids*, and assign, distinctly, the *reasons* of the several branches of the prohibition.

SOME who, I think, carry their notion of the *Mosaic* œconomy as a *political* scheme much too far, have imagined this law to be here inserted for *reasons* derived from the particular constitution of *government* among the *Jews*, and therefore *peculiar* to them

SERM. them alone. This form of government,  
 XV. they say, was a *Theocracy* ; or, in other  
 words, *God* was their *king* ; not as he is the  
 king of *nations*, and ruleth absolutely and  
 uncontrollably over *all empires* and *public*  
*communities*, but as he had taken upon him  
 the *express character*, and discharged all the  
*functions* of their supreme *civil* ruler. This,  
 they say, appears from his being the *founder*  
 of their *polity*, and the *compiler* of their *laws*.  
 He *resided* among them with *visible marks*  
 of *royal majesty*. He *fought* their battles ;  
*subdued* their enemies ; in all matters of  
 doubt, where *inferior counsels* were per-  
 plexed, might be appealed to for *advice* ;  
 and when *subordinate courts* or *judges* of  
 equity were embarrassed in their resolutions,  
 for a *final decision* of controversies. He  
*punished* national corruption and degener-  
 acy, and *rewarded* national virtue and  
 obedience ; the one with *temporal* disgrace  
 and calamity, and the other with prosper-  
 ity and honour : So that they had no  
 other *sovereign head* of their *political* state,  
 to whom they were obliged absolutely to  
 submit, and from whom there was no  
 appeal.



appeal. It is therefore supposed, that the *precept* mentioned in the text is to be considered in the same light, as if an *edict* or *law* was published, in other countries, prohibiting *high treason* against the person and sacred majesty of the king; and which, by setting up an *opposite* power, and acknowledging a *foreign* jurisdiction, must of consequence *disgrace*, and tend to *subvert* the established frame of government.

SERM.

XV.

HENCE it is, that when the adversaries of revealed religion exclaim against the injustice of punishing *idolatry* with *death* by the law of *Moses*, (as it is merely a speculative error, and does not interfere with the security and order of civil societies) when this difficulty, I say, is urged, the advocates for revelation have almost universally had recourse to a *theocratical* form of government settled in the antient *Jewish* nation, for the rational solution of it. And they might think themselves, perhaps, to proceed upon *surer* principles, if they had any (not merely a *religious*, but a) *judicial* and *civil* law, forbidding the crime condemned; which, upon the general persuasion of a *Theocracy*, would naturally lead


SERM. them to interpret the *first commandment*, in  
 XV. the manner that I have above described.

~ BUT this interpretation is by no means natural ; because there is nothing either in the *precept* itself, or in the *reason* assigned for it, that restrains it to this limited and partial meaning. And where rules of practice are not confined by the *terms* in which they are expressed, nor by the *reason* of the thing, nor by any *concomitant* circumstances, they ought, according to all rules of right and fair construction, to be taken in the most *extensive* and *universal* sense.—We may proceed one step farther, and, I think, safely venture to assert, that to understand this precept, only as a *political* law given to the *Jews*, is contrary to all appearances of probability, and to the foundation on which it is *declared* to stand, in the words immediately preceding—*Thou shalt have no other Gods before me ; “ because I am “ thy civil governor, and it would there- “ fore be treason against my person, and “ the dignity and rights of my political do- “ minion :”* This, I say, is intirely different in the *general scope* of the reasoning, and with respect to *all the ideas* contained  
 in

in it, from --- “ *I am the LORD, the eter-* SERM.  
 “ *nal self-existent LORD, and thy God ;*” XV.  
*Thou shalt, therefore, have no other Gods be-*  
*fore me.* For the latter, which is the true  
 state of the case, plainly represents it as a  
 rule of *universal* equity and obligation, and  
 not as a *national* and *peculiar* law ; “ it was  
 “ plainly intended not barely to describe  
 “ the supreme Deity as *actually* their God  
 “ and king, by virtue of his having as-  
 “ sumed a *temporary* rule, to serve parti-  
 “ cular purposes ; but as one who had a  
 “ *natural* authority, and was invested with  
 “ the sovereign command, in consequence  
 “ of his *original independent existence*, and  
 “ *immutable* dominion over all *mankind*,  
 “ and the whole *rational creation*.”

How far the notion of a *Theocracy*, or  
 of God's being the *civil head* of the *Jews*,  
 is discoverable from the history given of  
 that people, and of their constitution and  
 laws, I shall not now take upon me to de-  
 termine : and to inquire minutely into it,  
 would be too long a digression. The sum  
 of the argument, if any are inclined to  
 consider it thoroughly, may be reduced to  
 these two plain questions — Whether

SERM. the true and self-existent God's having  
 XV. settled the order of their government, given  
 them a wise body of laws, protected and  
 saved them from their enemies, and miraculously conducted their affairs, “ *ne-*  
 “ *cessarily* constitutes any such *particular*  
 “ *relation, and bond of union, as is here*  
 “ *supposed?*” — Or whether he may  
 not, notwithstanding, be justly represented  
 in this light only, *viz.* “ *as the universal*  
 “ *governor of mankind, exercising a par-*  
 “ *ticular providence over this selected and*  
 “ *highly-favoured nation?*” That he was  
 their *ruler*, is undeniable; but whether he  
 was so in a way that *ought* to be, and *must*  
 be distinguished from his supreme and un-  
 bounded rule over *all* ( “ *in which particu-*  
 “ *lar providences of every kind, however*  
 “ *majestic and extraordinary, and whether*  
 “ *they relate to the affairs of civil societies,*  
 “ *or of particular persons, may be fairly in-*  
 “ *cluded,*”) this is the grand question to be  
 decided. For if all these things may fall  
 within the idea of God's *universal govern-*  
*ment, as parts of it, which his infinite all-*  
*comprehending mind saw to be necessary for*  
 the

the regular and wise administration of the SERM.  
*whole*; and if such parts are *ultimately* de- XV.  
 signed to promote, not an *abstracted*, but   
 the *general* good, which is too plain to be  
 denied or disputed; the *proofs* of the *Theo-*  
*cracy* in the antient *Hebrew* nation must  
 appear obscure at least, if not to be in a  
 great measure invalidated.

My design, in this argument, was to set  
 the first *sacred* and most *important* precept  
 of the decalogue in its true light; and to  
 give it its just latitude, as an *universal law*  
 of true religion and morality. And if I  
 continue the reflexions a little longer, it is  
 only for the sake of putting things on their  
 right foundation, that revealed religion may  
 be defended not on dark and imaginary,  
 but on clear and solid principles. I there-  
 fore add, that supposing the *theocratical*  
 form of government among the *Jews* to  
 be a point incontestable, it seems scarce ca-  
 pable of affording a full and satisfactory an-  
 swer to the objection, raised against the  
*Hebrew* law, for devoting *idolaters* to death.  
 For when the people of *Israel*, fond of no-  
 velty, and of imitating the customs of other  
 nations, were stubbornly and inflexibly  
 B b 3 resolved,

SERM. resolved, notwithstanding all the remon-  
 strances of the prophet *Samuel* to the con-  
 trary, to have a visible and mortal King;   
 God upon this occasion declared, that  
 they had *rejected* him, *that he should not*  
 reign over them. And as his former *poli-*  
 tical reign is founded on a supposed *com-*  
*paët* between the almighty sovereign and  
 his people, that *original compaët* being now  
 solemnly *renounced* on the part of *the people*,  
 “there must of course be a *dissolution*, or  
 “*end*, of the *Theocracy*.” And yet *ido-*  
*latry* was still deem’d a *capital* offence, and  
*punished* as such; and the punishment it-  
 self was, without doubt, design’d to be  
 continued, as long as the *mosaic* constitu-  
 tion and body of laws continued *authori-*  
*tative* and in *force*.

WE must therefore, I think, seek for  
 some *other* principle, by the help of which  
 to explain and resolve this difficulty. A  
*political* principle I allow it must be, since  
*mere conscience* and *religious error* are not  
 the proper subjects of *civil* laws. And I  
 know of no other that can be substituted  
 in the room of that which I have now re-  
 jected, as too uncertain and weakly sup-  
 ported,

ported, but this, “ that *idolatry* was pu-  
 “ nished as *high-treason* against the *state*,  
 “ and not against the person and majesty  
 “ of the *king* of the *Jews*.” I shall en-  
 deavour, in a few words, to explain my  
 meaning more distinctly. Whatever de-  
 feats, so far as it prevails, the *ultimate end*,  
 and directly subverts the *fundamental prin-*  
*ciples* of any *particular form* of govern-  
 ment, must be, in the nature of things (if  
 the end be *good*, and the government  
*rightly constituted*) a *capital offence*. Such  
 kind of *offences*, therefore, differ in their  
 nature, according to the *variety* of the *ci-*  
*vil constitutions*, received and established  
 in different nations. What is *treason* un-  
 der a *kingly* government is *not so* in a *com-*  
*monwealth*; that being treasonable practice  
*only* in each of these particular societies,  
 which undermines the *basis* on which they  
 stand, and interferes with their *essential*  
*frame*.—As, therefore, the *end* for which  
 the *civil constitution* of the *Jews* was  
 formed, *viz.* to prevent their being over-  
 run with *idolatry* (which, as it prevailed  
 among the neighbouring nations, *corrupted*  
 their internal sense of the difference of

SERM. good and evil, and banished *humanity* and  
 XV. *decency*, and many the most considerable  
 and important of the *social virtues* ; by  
 introducing shameful *impurities*, and *human sacrifices* quite detestable to nature) as  
 the end, I say, for which the *civil constitution* of the *Jews* was form'd, appears  
 when thus explain'd, and abstracted from  
 all considerations *merely religious*, to be  
 most *wise* and *gracious* in itself ; and as  
 the *judicial laws*, in that scheme of go-  
 vernment, were admirably adapted to *sub-  
 serve* and *advance* this wise and gracious  
 end ; it necessarily follows, that *idolatry*,  
 which would have *frustrated* the whole  
 design of the constitution, and have entire-  
 ly *dissolved* and *destroyed* it, must upon the  
*same* reasons, that are allowed to be *just*  
 in all other *polity*, have deserved *capital*  
 punishment. And this, I think, will ef-  
 fectually vindicate its being treated with  
 such severity in the *Jewish* state ; but not  
 excuse the like rigour exercised against it  
 in *any other*, where it is merely an error  
 of *speculation* ; and the offender, by not  
 disturbing the *external peace* of society,  
 renders himself *accountable* to God alone.

I now



I now proceed, having obviated a mistake SERM. which would represent the first command- XV. ment, in the manner in which it was deliver'd to the *Jews*, as a *political*, and not in the light of a *moral*, law (the *reasons* of which, as propos'd by their own law-giver, extend to *all nations*) to specify, particularly, what are the crimes which it directly forbids: And under this head I shall have no need to enlarge much, because that the things enumerated are really forbidden, and the reasons of the prohibition likewise, will be easily perceived. And,


IN the FIRST place, it is most certainly forbidden by this eternal law of reason and natural religion, solemnly declared to the *Israelites* from mount *Sinai*, to acknowledge any other *supreme* and self *existent* God besides *Jehovah*; so as to *confront* his authority, and set up a *competitor*, or *rival* Deity, to *contest* with him the sovereignty over the universe.

THE ground of this prohibition is—*I am the LORD*—who have the *reason* of my existence wholly within myself, and  
am

SERM. am indebted for it to no *external* or *superior*

XV. *rior* principle. It should seem therefore, as the *self-existence* of the Deity is the chief foundation of the first commandment, that his *unity* might be necessarily inferred from the *idea* of *self-existence* : And accordingly this has been attempted by a great and most celebrated writer \*. But as the argument is too *abstruse* for common apprehensions, however *weighty* and *conclusive* in itself, I shall endeavour to establish this fundamental principle of all religion, in a clearer and more intelligible method.—I only beg leave to premise, that the point now to be proved is not, “ *that there is one God,*” which in truth is proving no more, “ than “ *that there is a God ;*” but another very different proposition, *viz.* “ *that there is “ but one,* or *that there is no more than “ one ;*” for which, as it is a *negative* proposition, it is not reasonable to expect *demonstration*: Of the *existence* of *one* God we are *certain* ; and it lies entirely upon those, who are not satisfied with this, to

\* Dr. S. Clark, in his demonstration of the being and attributes of God.

offer some *direct* and *positive* arguments to SERM. convince us that *there is*, and *must be*, a XV. *plurality* of Gods. If, in the present case,  we are not able to *demonstrate*, there may be no want of the *greatest* evidence that the *nature* of the thing will admit of; but only an *impossibility* of our attaining to *a particular kind* of evidence, which is not at all *necessary*. For there may be heights of *probability*, or degrees of what is called *moral certainty*, equally *persuasive*, so as to remove all rational ground of *doubt*, and justly of *equal influence* in regulating the schemes and conduct of human life, as the *strictest demonstrations* of truth. And this, I apprehend, will fully appear from the particular instance now before us, when the following things are briefly stated and considered.

FIRST, that *one* cause, *equal* to the production and maintenance of the present frame of things, is *as much*, in general, as is *necessary* to be supposed, and therefore *as much* as *ought* to be supposed: So that it is perverseness, and a ridiculous *excess* of *scepticism*, to *perplex* itself, and be *impertinently*

SERM. *tinently curious* about any thing beyond  
 XV. this:



SECONDLY, as there are *evidences* of one Deity, which uncontestably prove his existence, we may reasonably infer from hence, that if there was *another*, there would be convincing *proofs* of his *being* likewise ; if *more than two*, further *evidence* of this additional *plurality*. We might justly expect, as the knowledge of *all* would be *equally* useful with the knowledge of *any single one*, “ that there should “ be express and undeniable *traces* of a “ *multiplicity* of Gods, if such there actually *were* ; and such too as would point “ out the *precise number* of these first efficient Deities — *as clearly*, as the existence of a God is *in general* demonstrated.” — Otherwise, the world could scarce be supposed to be the production of *wise* artificers ; because it must be grossly defective in one grand *design* of wisdom, the directing reasonable creatures to the *origin* of things, to the *true causes* and *authors* of their being.—But nothing *like this* appears in the *whole visible* constitution of  
 2 nature ;

nature ; and therefore the *mere supposition* of a *plurality* of Gods must be quite *wild* and *extravagant*. But further,

SERM.  
XV.  


THIRDLY, if there be *more* first causes than *one*, they are either *equal* in perfections of nature, or *unequal*. If *unequal*, there must be some *superior* in wisdom and power to *the rest* ; which would supersede the *necessity* and all the *uses* of *their* existence. Or if, notwithstanding, they are *all* allowed to have *acted*, there must be a *visible disparity*, with respect to justness of *design* and curiosity and skill of *workmanship*, in the several parts of the wonderful fabrick of the universe. But of this there is not the least discovery ; the *whole* being compleatly *exquisite*, and *marvellous* both in its contrivance and composition. And, on the other hand, if the first effecting causes be imagined to be *absolutely equal*, the scheme of *polytheism* will be altogether as absurd and irrational ; “ because the supposition of *one* “ Deity is fully sufficient to account for “ *all* the appearances of *nature*, and the “ *whole* administration of *providence*.”

FOR

SERM. FOR *one* being necessarily existing, of  
 XV. immutable excellence, and possessed of  
 infinite wisdom, power, and goodness  
 (which is the universal idea of the supreme Deity) is as capable of making the *present* and all *possible* worlds, and of governing the world to the utmost perfection of *natural* or *moral* government, as *two*, *three*, or *a thousand* such beings can be supposed to be. *Infinite* wisdom and power, which are supposed to reside in the *one* creator and monarch of the universe, cannot be *increased*; nor, consequently, can the *effects* of them be rendered in the *least* degree more compleat and admirable: And this demonstrates to us, beyond all contradiction, that  
 “ there can be *no possible ground* on  
 “ which to imagine, that there is *more*  
 “ than one;” And whatever there is *no ground* in *reason* to suppose, nor any *medium* in *nature* to prove (if it ought not to be ranked among things *absolutely impossible*) it must however be *madness* to *assert*. For how can any man contend for, or even introduce that as a point of

con-

controversy, “ which he neither *has*, nor SERM.  
 “ *can have*, any foundation for espou- XV.  
 “ *sing*, nor the least *plausible colour* of  
 “ *reason to support?* ” — *All nature* is a-  
*gainst* him, as well as the *abstract reason*  
 of the thing itself; because there is no-  
 thing to be seen, in the external world,  
 but *unity of design* and *harmony of opera-*  
*tion*. So that this precept of the deca-  
 logue, *thou shalt have no other supreme*  
*and self-existent Gods before me*, must of  
 necessity rest upon a steady and immu-  
 table basis; “ because all the appearances  
 “ of nature are *for* it, and there is no  
 “ *possibility* of forming a rational objecti-  
 “ *on against* it.”

SUFFER me, however, before I dismiss  
 this topic, to make a short remark or two  
 upon the *Manichean* opinion, — that there  
 are two *infinite, eternal, independent* prin-  
 ciples, the one absolutely *good*, the other a  
*malicious* and *evil* principle; who are the  
 distinct and opposite Authors of the good  
 and evil that appear in the universe. —  
 As to this I would observe, in the *first*  
 place, that it may be rightly estimated as  
 a scheme

SERM. a scheme of *Atheism*; because if there be

XV. not a *single invariable* plan and order maintained, in the disposition and government especially of the *moral* world, it must amount to the same upon the whole, in its religious and practical consequences, as the *utter non-existence* of Deity.—*Secondly*, that if the origin of evil can be reasonably and clearly accounted for, upon admitting but *one first* principle of being supremely good, the *Manichee* can have no possible foundation, in the nature of things, for setting up his *evil* Deity; because, upon this state of the case, it is altogether unnecessary, and of course a meer *romantic* and *arbitrary* fancy.----  
 And, *thirdly*, that the consequence of admitting two *repugnant* principles, *equal* in skill and operation, must be this unavoidably, that *no single existence*, that *neither good* nor *evil* could be produced but by *mutual consent*, because the force *opposing* every such effect would be always adequate to the *producing* power; and must therefore of necessity *frustrate* the event.

And



And *no* agreement could doubtless be framed between beings of such *contrary* dispositions, and so irreconcilably *averse* to each other, but upon this single preliminary ground, that the *proportions* of good and evil, throughout the whole universe, should be for ever and exactly *equal*. But there is *no mark* of such an absolute equality, so far as the world is subject to our observation ; on the contrary, every where, either the *good* or the *evil* visibly *preponderates*.—I shall only add, ‘ that *equal mixtures* and *degrees* of  
‘ good and evil are, upon the whole,  
‘ *neither good nor evil* ; and therefore it  
‘ is scarce conceivable how, upon *this* basis  
‘ (which is yet the only one) *two* beings  
‘ strongly concerned for the superior pre-  
‘ valency of *one* of these above the *other*  
‘ should ever *agree*.’ We have the utmost reason therefore, notwithstanding all the objections that have hitherto appeared, to acquiesce, without any hesitation, in this important article of the *Jewish*, the *Christian*, and indeed of *natural* religion, that *the LORD our God is one Lord*. But,

SERM.

XV.



SECONDLY, the text forbids not only our acknowledging the existence of a *nature co-ordinate* to that of the self-existent *Jehovah*, the only original cause and absolute ruler of the universe; but also the allowing the character of an *inferior God* to any being, without an express *warrant* and *authority* from him. An *inferior God*, however differing from our present forms of speech, is *scripture* language; and this expression must be introduced, when we are explaining not modern creeds, but *scripture* principles. *Angels* are stiled *Gods* in the old testament, and therefore, I presume, *justly* so denominated; and yet we must all admit, that they were only *subordinate* Gods. But as the supreme Deity alone knows to what created *spirit* that title properly belongs; and as we cannot be certain that any *inferior* or *mediatory* Deity, will, in his intercession for us, be acceptable to him, without a particular and determinate revelation; every such mediatorial Deity must of consequence be an idol, a creature of *fancy* and *superstition*, that has *no existence* in the *established scheme* and *constitution*

stitution of the moral world, if he be not so denominated and directly characteris'd by the *God of Gods*.

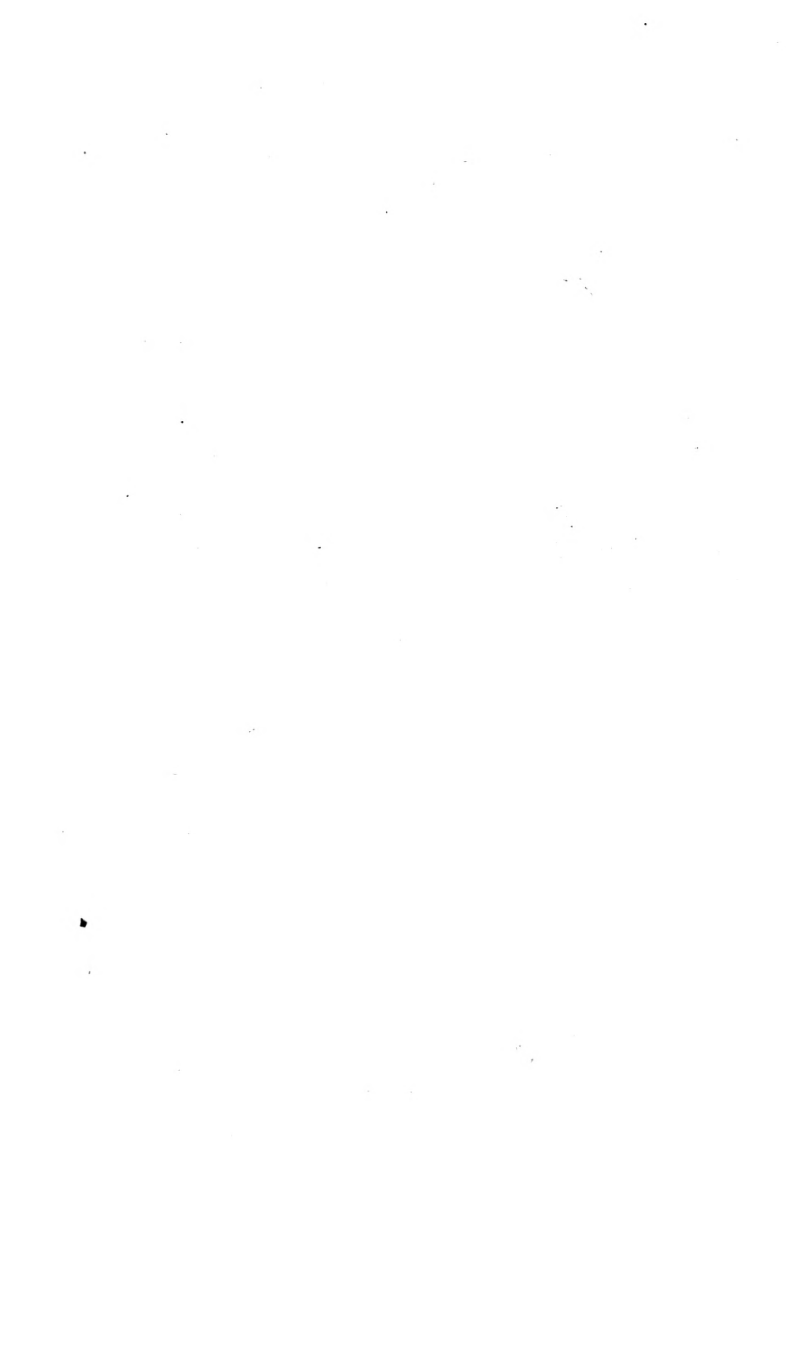
SERM.  
XV.

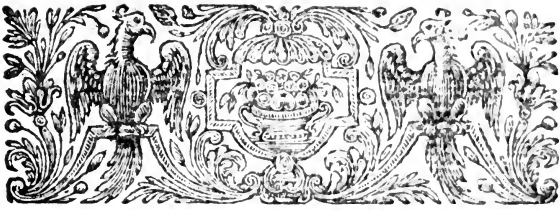
BUT it will perhaps be asked, if other beings, besides the eternal and immutable Deity, may be justly distinguished by the appellation of *Gods*, how it can be consistently made a principle of revealed religion that there is but *one God*? To which I answer, "that the phrases *the one*, or *the only*, *God* have exactly the same precise meaning in scripture, as *the chief*, or *supreme*, *God*." This may be illustrated, beyond all reasonable exception, by other parallel passages. For as when it is said, that *God only is holy*, tho' *Angels* also are denominated *holy*, the sense must be, that *he alone is absolutely*, and *unchangeably holy*; as it is affirmed, that *God is the only potentate*, because he is the *original*, *independent*, and *supreme potentate*; that he is the *only Saviour*, tho' that title is attributed to *others* likewise, because they are but *subordinate Saviours*; and that *there is none good but one*, *that is God*, tho' we read both of *good men*, and *good spirits*, of an higher

SERM. order : In exactly the same way and idiom  
 XV. of speech is he declared to be the *only*  
 ~~~~~ God, because *he alone* is the *most high* and  
necessarily existent God, and *all others* are
subject to him, and *depend* upon him,
 both for their *being* and *authority*.

IN the LAST place, the command in the text forbids our ascribing *supreme* divine honours to any but the one true God of the Universe, or *inferior* religious honours to a *mediatory* being, without his *express* direction and command. And this also is evident from the *reason* of the thing. For as with respect to *invisible spirits*, we can never be certain, where we have no extraordinary revelation to direct us, either that they are *acquainted* with our *petitions*; or that their *intercession* will be *available*; or that God will *approve* of our *imploring* it; all such *pretended* offices of devotion (which are multiplied to an extravagant degree in the *Romish* church) must be *absurd* and *superstitious*. But to pay *these honours* to a mediator, whom the sovereign deity hath *appointed* to receive them, cannot be in the least *irrational*; because they ultimately

mately terminate in the acknowledgment SERM.
of his own *supremacy*. And this can be XV.
no *diminution* of that praise and glory
which essentially belong to him *alone*;
because it would be *blasphemy* and *insult*
to the majesty of heaven and earth, to of-
fer *him* the homage that is due to a *medi-*
ator commissioned and authorized by him-
self, or indeed *any* homage, but what is
fit to be received by the mediator's *God*,
and the *independent* lord of the whole
creation.





S E R M O N XVI.



On the SEVENTH COMMAND-
MENT.

Exodus xx. 14.

Thou shalt not commit Adultery.



EXT to the definitive sen-
tence and express command
of God, issued forth with ter-
rible pomp and circumstances
of majesty, against *murder*,
most naturally and aptly follows the se-
vere prohibition of another crime, which,
with respect to its own intrinsick malig-
nity, approaches the nearest to it ; as an
outrage committed against *society*, a dis-
solution of the *tenderest* and most *endear-*

SERM.
XVI.



SERM. *ing ties*, and a violation of *common right*;

XVI. which, in its consequences, may prove equally *fatal*; and is, sometimes, much more *strongly* and *deeply resented* by the injured person himself, and *an incurable wound* given to his *peace* of mind, as well as to the honour of families.

IT were indeed greatly to be wished, that there was no occasion for ever mentioning such most degenerate crimes, as those of *murder* and *adultery*, which are utterly unbecoming that strict profession of inward *goodness*, and untainted *purity* of thought and affection, which we make as *Christians*; and fix indelible characters of reproach and shame upon us, consider'd merely as *men*. And it is somewhat astonishing, and out of the plain prescribed course and order of *rational* nature, it is a reflection calculated to inspire both grief and horror; "that there are *words* in all
 "languages to *express* such vile enormi-
 "ties." If this was not the case, and they were in *practice* unknown, it might perhaps be expedient to give no *intimation* concerning them; and there might be danger, in pointing out to the evil-
 minded

mind and licentiously-disposed, in what SERM.
new instances of excess and dissolute living XVI.
they might corrupt themselves, and gratify insatiate passion. But alas! the scene of guilt is too notorious and widely extended, to admit of our ever deliberating on such *reserved* and *cautious* measures as these. There is no possibility, by our silence, to *veil* many scandalous and fatal perversions of human nature, which a wise and good man would chuse, if it depended on him, should lie buried in eternal darkness. “For men descending
“ from their *rank* in the creation, disgracing their *reason*, giving up the
“ reins to *appetite*, and allowing themselves an unbounded scope in *sensuality*,
“ make their disorders and impurities publicly *known*; while *honour*, *virtue*, and *piety* mourn, and look on
“ with concern; and *ingenuous modesty* blushes, thro’ its confusion.” And even in nations professing *Christianity*, the most spiritual and sublime institution of religion that ever the world was acquainted with, the vice, of which I am now more particularly treating, does not seem

SERM. seem to be *less*, I rather fear it is *much*
 XVI. *more*, frequent than in many *Heathen*
 countries; in this respect at least, unjustly
 stiled *barbarous*, or their accusers *polite*;
 who too often abuse their greater *light*,
 and pretended *improvements* in know-
 ledge, to undermine the most important
 truths, and confound all *moral* differen-
 ces.

AND, now, when such an extreme
 corruption in the moral conduct of man-
 kind appears, not as something before
 unheard of, and in a manner *monstrous*,
 in one single example, but in various in-
 stances; which render the general idea
 and speculation of this vice more *fami-
 liar*, and less *horrible*, and naturally lead
 us to apprehend, that the contagion may
 spread, and become more general: In
 this case, our silence will be highly cri-
 minal. It is deserting our post as the
 friends and loyal subjects of *God*, confe-
 derates with *nature*, and professed advo-
 cates for the cause of *virtue*; and tamely
 submitting to the *incroachments* of the u-
 niversal enemy. And I will take the li-
 berty to add, that one reason, why *adul-
 tery*,

tery, and murder too, have been so frequent among us, may possibly be (should I say probably is, there would be no presumption in it) that they have been so seldom made the *subjects* of particular discourses.—Vices, less common, should not, without doubt, be a *general* topick of discourse; but they ought, most certainly, to be sometimes introduced; and that not only cursorily (which, we find by experience, has seldom a good effect) but as *distinct* arguments of themselves. For who knows how many things may be suggested suited to a particular case, how many things framed, and as it were adapted on purpose, to strike the mind of the hearer, which never occurred to his own thoughts? Who knows not, that the bulk of mankind conceive and judge, abhor and approve, reject and choose, upon *general* ideas, and instincts of nature, without being able to assign particularly several very weighty reasons, which, if known, might strongly influence their conduct? I beg leave therefore to extend the remark, and declare my opinion more generally, that one principal

SERM.
XVI.

SERM. principal reason why preaching is so unsuccessful in convincing and reforming sinners (which was our blessed Saviour's chief aim, and, as he himself says, the ultimate design of his mission; who *came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance*) one chief reason of this is, that our discourses are most commonly directed, not to *particular* offenders, but to *all* the vicious *indiscriminately*. So that the *adulterer* finds nothing in them that touches *his own* condition more than it does that of the *slanderer*, a criminal of quite another denomination and character; and therefore applies the *whole* to *those*, whom, by an arbitrary inward sentence, he has pronounced to be guilty, and not to *himself*, whom he has been long labouring to excuse, and represent as innocent.—I shall now proceed to offer, briefly, some arguments, which will demonstrate the *peculiar* iniquity and villainy of the crime forbidden in the text; after which, I shall consider what must be included within the just and natural *scope* of it, either by *likeness* and *correspondency* of reasoning, or by just and undeniable

deniable *inference*. Mankind are generally agreed in assigning to the *adulterer* a large share of guilt; in expressing that resentment against him, and loading him with that disgrace and infamy, which belong to the most corrupt and profligate characters: Upon which account, I need not enter so minutely into this part of the argument, as if my present business was to convince the *understanding*; but only to suggest such hints, as will be sufficient to keep alive and improve an inward horror *already* excited, to revive *reflexion*, which bad habits may have, in a great measure, suppressed, and fortify the *resolution* of the innocent.

To begin with the malignity of the crime itself, which is expressly prohibited in the text, and by the whole tenour of revelation; “which was a *capital* offence
“ under the *mosaic* œconomy; and has
“ been adjudged worthy of *death*, by the
“ laws of many other nations.”

IT is, in the FIRST place, a violation of the most sacred and important *bond* in all society; upon which the happiness of mankind, their most *refined* and *elegant* plea-

SERM. pleasures, and their surest *relief* from care
 XVI. and anxiety (all confined within the
 bounds of *innocence* and *strict honour*)
 more immediately and necessarily depend,
 than on any other *publick* and *social* obligation — without which, the *rational* and *moral* human species could be retained within no rules of *order* becoming their *nature*, no *decency*; but must range *wild* and uncontroul'd like inferior creatures, whom they were born, not to imitate in *unregulated instinct*, but, to *excell* and *command* — without which, a variable, unstable, roving appetite would soon gain the *transcendency* above reason, and introduce *confusion* every where — and which was, therefore, rendered *holy* and *honourable* by a *particular* sanction of the universal creator, who foresaw all the *probabilities* of things; as it had been, *originally*, declared *inviolable* in the constitution of nature itself; and has been proclaimed since, and transmitted down from age to age, as an *immutable* law, by the constant and wonderful *equality* maintained in the number of the different *sexes*, allowing only for probable *decreases*,

to which one of them is particularly *sub-* SERM.
ject, in the course of human affairs. XVI.

AGAIN, the same crime that thus op-
poses the *first dictate* of nature, defies the
first institution of almighty God, and the
established rules of all wise societies, is
also an injury to our neighbour in *those*
rights, of which he is most *jealous*, and
in one of the most *valuable* branches of
his property; frequently more dear to
him, and more tenderly cherish'd, than
ease, plenty, honour, and even life itself.

“ The *adulterer*, therefore, may be the
“ instrument of much more *exquisite* and
“ *lasting* misery to the person whom he
“ injures, than it is possible, in many
“ instances, even for the *murderer* to oc-
“ casion.” Where the affection on the side
of the party injured, has been sincere and
ardent, he infixes *a wound* that preys up-
on the *inward constitution* of the mind,
and renders it *habitually* dejected and in-
consolable, by alienating the love and ten-
derness of the *violated* object from the per-
son that *deserves*, and has the *only claim* to
it, and places the chief part of his present
and temporary felicity in it; who not only
smarts,

SERM. smarts, and is deeply afflicted, thro' a
 XVI. sense of his own sufferings, but for the
 { *prostitution* and *infamy* of perverted innocence, the *softener* of all his inquietudes. So that the vice, which I am now arguing against, disclaims, and utterly renounces, *all humanity* as well as *justice*; it cares not with what keen and inexpressible anxieties it *racks* the *heart* of one who never *offended* him; and therefore must be ranked amongst the most detestable excesses of inordinate desire, and worse than *brutish* intemperance.

BUT the hurt of *adultery*, tho' exceedingly great in the view already given of it, is not to be circumscribed and confined within such *narrow* bounds as these. For it renders the *legitimacy* of children *suspected*, and hinders their regular and just *education*; it sows the seeds of implacable animosity and dissention between *families*; and scarce from any crime have resulted more direful and tragical effects, to *societies in general*, as well as to *individuals*.

AND now, upon the whole, we may justly conclude, that a sin of such un-
 common

common turpitude, where the *iniquity*, SERM. the *treachery*, the *violence* are mark'd out XVI. in such *glaring* colours, and the *pernicious effects* of which are so *easy* to be discerned, can hardly be unknown to any man, who has the internal faculties of a *man*, and makes the least use of *his reason*. *Ignorance*, therefore, can no more *excuse* it than it can *murder*, *oppression*, *rapine*, or any other the most foul and atrocious crimes; nor can *art varnish over* and *disguise* its deformity. And from hence it follows, that every *resolved* offender of this kind must be *presumptuously wicked*, and the *complexion* of his mind thoroughly *depraved*. His *concern* for the *universal rights* of mankind is quite absorb'd, and swallow'd up, by his *self-complacency*, and immoderate pursuit of *private gratification*; his *social affections* are wantonly sacrificed to *animal desire*: And therefore, if he still retains any idea of *religion*, any conviction (tho' derived from the light of nature only) of a *supreme authority* and *moral rule* over the creation, he may be equally sure, that his irregular dispositions and disorderly

VOL. III. D d conduct


SERM. conduct are highly *displeasing* to God, as
 XVI. that *God himself exists*; and that, *persist-*
 ~~~~~ *ing* in his transgression, he must be con-  
 demned with *ignominy*, and doomed to  
 undergo some *terrible* and *exemplary* pu-  
 nishment, as infallibly, as there is ground  
 to expect a *future judgment* of mankind.  
 To *spare* such a criminal as this would  
 be directly *thwarting* justice, and *encou-*  
*raging* the triumphs of vice.— Which is  
 a consideration of such vast moment, that,  
 if it was effectually impressed upon the  
 mind, it would either *wholly* restrain us  
 from the practice of so palpable an im-  
 morality; or put us immediately upon  
 collecting our utmost strength, to *break*  
 the *guilty snare* into which we are un-  
 happily fallen; least, otherwise, we find  
 ourselves more and more, and in the end  
*inextricably*, intangled by it, to the ever-  
 lasting *ruin* of all our prospects and hopes  
 of happiness.—

To all which let me add, that the  
 same righteous sentence which reason,  
 the first, the eternal, law of God to man,  
 pronounces against *adultery*, *Christianity*  
 expressly confirms. By its fixed and un-  
 alterable

alterable constitution, it devotes the of-  
 fender to the miseries of the life to come, SERM. XVI.  
 and to *eternal death*. Thus we are as-  
 sured, that — *Whoremongers and Adulterers* God will judge; and that *the*  
*works of the flesh are manifest, which*  
*are adultery, &c.* — *which they that*  
*do shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*  
Hebr. xiii. 4. Gal. v. 19, 21.  
 So that for a *Christian* to be an *adulterer*  
 must be, upon his own principles, (even  
 tho' he has learned from the *weak*, the  
*interested*, or the *sensual prophane*, to vi-  
 lify the inflexible dictates and decrees of  
 nature) it must be, I say, upon his own  
 principles, as irrecoverably to miss of  
 salvation, as if he was a *robber*, or a *mur-  
 derer*: And if *he* has any just ground to  
 hope for the eternal favour of God, ac-  
 cording to the stated terms of the Gospel,  
*no sinner* can possibly be excluded from it.  
 How such persons therefore, with all  
 their *prejudices*, can be free from conti-  
 nual *terror*, and bear up under their un-  
 avoidable reflections and consciousness of  
*guilt*, is extremely surprizing; and plain-  
 ly demonstrates to us, what utter *stupidity*,  
 and *inattention* even to its own true in-  
 terest,

SERM. *terest, vice* is capable of introducing and  
 XVI. establishing in the mind.—Every one who  
 has considered the nature of *this* subject, will soon perceive that I have been cramped and limited in my *reasonings* upon it; and that the arguments proposed might have been more *minutely* urged, and others *produced*, if this *extreme* in the conduct of mankind did not require to be treated with peculiar *delicacy*. I know, that, in what I have already offered, I have been unexceptionably decent; and so much as this was absolutely necessary to be said, to prevent *young* persons, especially, from being hurried on, by a blind impetuous appetite, to so scandalous a pitch of injustice and impurity. And I only hope for *their own* sakes, being myself entirely *disinterested*, that it will have such an effect upon the conduct of their *future* life, as the *importance* of the argument deserves.

IT is necessary for me to observe farther, that our blessed Saviour has extended the precept of the text *beyond* the commission of *actual* adultery; and that upon most clear and unexceptionable principles  
 of

of reason. For an *adulterous habit* of SERM. mind, an *inclination* cherished, an *inten-* XVI.  *tion* deliberately form'd, to commit this crime, can, in a *moral* estimate, fall but little, if any thing at all short, of the real *perpetration* of it. In all immoralities whatsoever, the principal *guilt* does not lie in the *act* itself, but in the *temper* and *disposition* of the mind. “ The *fact* “ may possibly be innocent, where *the* “ *resolving upon it* never can.” If a man had *determined* within himself to *steal*, but was disappointed by some unforeseen *accident*, his *designs* of injustice still subsisting; 'tis impossible for him, in *reason* and *equity*, to acquit himself of the *guilt* of theft. And in the present case, the rational and just determination is, and must be, the *same*. Nay, a *scheme* of adultery *cooly weigh'd* and *approved of*, tho' not *executed*, may be more criminal, and argue a more inveterate and dangerous state of *depravity*, with respect to the wicked *projector*, than the *offence* itself (absolutely inexcusable as it is in *all* circumstances) when not *premeditated*, but occasioned by sudden and unexpected

SERM. temptations. Which shews us undeni-  
 XVI. ably the eminent *wisdom*, and the vast  
 importance, of this part of *Christ's* doctrine, especially when it is applied to all *parallel* cases; that *whosoever* looketh on a *woman*, to lust after her, hath committed *adultery with her already in his heart*.

Mat. v.  
28.

THIS rule of *chastity* is grounded upon the general reason, “that where *any* offences are forbidden, the *immediate* causes, from whence such offences spring, must also be by *implication* forbidden.”—I shall therefore briefly mention some other *irregularities*, from which the particular crime, now under consideration, may be supposed to take *its rise*, or by which at least it is *countenanced* and *encouraged*, as what are evidently *comprehended* within the due *extent* and *latitude* of the seventh commandment.

THE *first* is, that in our *publick entertainments*, *scenes of adultery* are so often exhibited, without any *appearance* of their giving *offence*. The adulterer, tho' in all respects of abandoned principles and licentious morals, is frequently a character of greatest *distinction*; and the person,  
 most

most grievously injured, painted as an ob-  
 ject of *contempt* and *ridicule*. The vile  
 offender, who is not fit to be *tolerated* in  
 any *human* society, triumphs and is ap-  
 plauded; and the innocent is exposed to  
*scorn* and *insult*. And what can this tend  
 to, “ unless it be to *extirpate* our sense of  
 “ good and evil, to *authorise* ungovern’d  
 “ lawless lust, and destroy *humanity*? ”  
 I will not pretend to say, that *fictitious*  
*scenes* can, under *no* regulation, be of ser-  
 vice to mankind, by being converted into  
 instructive and moving lectures of *social*  
*virtue*; but this I will assert, that while  
 they are *thus* offensive to *modesty*, and  
 take off from the *horror* of the most  
 shocking vices, they ought, for the *pub-*  
*lick good*, to be *absolutely* suppress’d; that  
*no* friend to *virtue* ought to encourage  
 such scandalous representations, which  
 have a most manifest tendency to taint  
 and viciate the *morals* of the age; “ and  
 “ that while *adultery*, in particular, is  
 “ allowed to be *exhibited* without *repro-*  
 “ *ach*, it is no wonder, if it be *practised* with-  
 “ out *remorse*.”— That *destructive glare*  
 of *wit*, that aims at describing so mon-

SERM. strous a vice in a *pleasing form*, or, in-  
 XVI. deed, in any other form than is *directly*  
 adapted to excite *aversion* and *detestation*,  
 “ ought always to be *received* and *treat-*  
 “ *ed* with those *marks* of *resentment*,  
 “ which are *due* to what is naturally a  
 “ *foe* to the honour and happiness of  
 “ mankind.”

AGAIN, as another *source* of this im-  
 morality, so offensive to God and preju-  
 dicial to mankind, every thing that has a  
*natural tendency* to *inflame* the passions,  
 ought to be carefully avoided; and all  
*luxury*, which *dissipates* sober thought, *re-*  
*laxes* the force of virtuous resolution, and,  
 of consequence, prepares the way for the  
 most extravagant and unbridled *sensuality*.  
 “ —When men take a pleasure in being  
 “ *emasculate*, in *disguising* the *human ani-*  
 “ *mal* form by odd singularities of dress,  
 “ and by an uninterrupted of imperti-  
 “ nence, and inconsiderate follies, *de-*  
 “ *facing* entirely the *human rational*;  
 “ what should restrain them, destitute as  
 “ they are of *reflexion* and *manly* virtue,  
 “ from any gratifications of irregular de-  
 “ sire? The *gross pleasures* of the *epi-*  
 “ cure,



“*cure*, whose ultimate delight is termi- SERM.  
 “nated in *sense*, and who seems entirely XVI.  
 “to have forgotten of *what temper* his  
 “*mind* is formed, will naturally lead to  
 “the *violence* of the *adulterer*.” And  
 he, to whom grave and serious thinking  
 is such an intolerable *fatigue*, that he  
 cannot compose himself to *decency* even in  
 the publick worship of God, and when  
 points of *morality* are enquired into, the  
 conscientious observance of which must  
 finally decide *the fate of human nature*,  
 either for happiness or misery; what *pro-*  
*ficiency* in *virtue* can be expected from  
 him? what *progressive stages* of *intempe-*  
*rance*, upon too solid a ground of pro-  
 bability, may not be feared!—Especially  
 if he gives himself a *despicable* and *insipid*  
 air of gaiety, when such an important  
 subject as *the present* is discussed, he can  
 scarce be supposed to have remaining  
 within him any *moral restraint*, but must  
 be addicted wholly to *vanity*.



















