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John Newton

JAMES SONNET, JR.

NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY...

1850

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REVIEWS

SEVERAL SUBJECTS

JAMES MURPHY, M.A.

1872

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S E R M O N S



ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

BY

JAMES MUSCUT, M.A.

L A T E

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AND FORMERLY

FELLOW of *Corpus-Christi College, Oxford.*

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THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY
IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. I.

BOSTON: PUBLISHED BY
J. B. ALLEN, 1856.

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY
IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. I.

THE
EDITOR to the READER.

THE following Sermons are offered to the publick, not from a presumption of any peculiar merit or excellency in the composition, but merely to raise some small supply for a numerous Family; which the Author himself, from his circumstances and situation in life, was unable to provide for.

They are plain discourses, most of them drawn up for the use and improvement of a private congregation, and with no view of being published: So that nothing but the exigencies of his Children, could justify the liberty which is now taken.

It was the design of the Editor to have printed a list of the Subscribers Names; but finding that many could not be got at, and that many others

were desirous of being concealed; It was upon the whole thought more expedient to lay aside this design, and to beg they would in this way accept of those thanks which are due to the great encouragement that has been given to this work.

Nothing farther need be added, but to inform the Subscribers, that some part of the Family have, by means of the money already received, been placed in a decent and reputable way of getting their livelihood, and that the whole arising from this Subscription, will be carefully employed in favour of those, for whose sake it was undertaken.

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S E R M O N I.

On the RESURRECTION.

ACTS ii. 32.

*This Jesus hath God raised up; whereof
we all are Witnesses.*

THE infinite importance of the truth of this point of our Faith, has on all hands been constantly acknowledg'd; and the absolute necessity of a full satisfaction of the certainty of it, been the occasion of its exercising the pens of the most strenuous defenders of our Religion. For indeed, it being foretold in the Old Testament, that the Messiah was to die and rise again; it was entirely expedient to shew beyond all possibility of contradiction, that *Jesus*, whom we assert to be that Messiah, did really and truly rise from the dead. Otherwise, all the proofs we could bring

of his being that excellent Person from the description of him given by the Prophets, tho' most exactly corresponding with the life and actions of *Jesus Christ*, would lose their effect, and fall to the ground: would only serve to expose an affected imposture, establish the ignominy and justice of his death, and utterly destroy the hopes and expectations of his followers.

OUR Saviour himself had frequently in the most public manner declar'd, that he would rise from the dead; that, tho' the malice and envy of the chief priests and people should be so far successful, as to put him to death, yet they should not be able to confine him to the grave; but that he would on the third day invincibly prove the truth of his doctrine, by breaking the bands of Death, and triumphing over all the powers of darkness. And as the ignominy of his death, (so contrary to all the expectations of his followers,) might utterly defeat their hopes in him; he lays the whole stress of his veracity upon this issue, the
2 certainty

certainty of his speedy Resurrection: as being, by the nature of the action, sufficient to obviate all objections against a crucified Saviour, and to establish on the firmest foundations, the truth of whatever he had taught and promis'd.

As therefore the Apostles neither did, nor could deny, that Christ died; and the Pharisees judg'd it a sufficient proof of his being an Impostor, that he who styl'd himself Saviour of the world, could not save himself from Death: they obviated, and entirely overthrew this conclusion, by shewing unanswerably, that Christ was actually risen again; that this event was as great, if not a much greater proof of his Divinity, than that which they requir'd, namely, that if he was the Son of God, he should come down from the Cross, and they would believe on him: it being infinitely an act of greater power to deliver himself from death, when actually dead, than to have prevented that death while he was yet alive. And further, his uniting his Soul again to his

A 2

Body,

Body, prov'd to a demonstration, that he was absolute Lord of the whole Creation, and exercis'd an unlimited power over the animal and material world.

THO' we, at this time, can entertain no manner of doubt concerning this Article; yet the refreshing our memories with some of its most obvious arguments, as it will serve to shew the unreasonableness of rejecting the doctrine of the Christian Religion, supported by so convincing a testimony, so may properly enough establish us in the firmest hopes of the completion of the promise Christ made to us when upon Earth, of raising us up to Life eternal.

IN the pursuit therefore of this discourse, I shall consider the argument mention'd in the text by St. *Peter*, namely, the validity of the Apostle's testimony, and then subjoin some other evidence which the scripture accounts give of this memorable transaction.

AND in the second place, make such observations and inferences from it, as may by just conclusions be insisted on.

I. FOR the more clear handling of the first point, I shall examine,

1st, WHAT testimony the Apostles gave of this matter.

2dly, I shall consider how far this testimony may be relied on.

AND first: We find the Author of the Acts delivering himself in this manner, in the very beginning of his history. *To whom also He (meaning Christ) shew'd himself alive after his Passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them (i.e. the Disciples) forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.*

AND St. Peter in his sermon at the feast of Pentecost, soon after his Ascension, proving in the first place, that *David* prophetically spoke of such a Person who should be rais'd up, determines that this was that Person *whom God hath raised up, having loos'd the pains of death, because that it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* And again in the words of the text — *This Jesus &c.* Further, we find the very same words

repeated in another sermon of his, at cursing the impotent man in the Temple. In the 4th chapter, to the Rulers who had put him to death, he boldly asserts the very same truth, maintaining it in these words: *Be it known unto you all, and all the people of Israel; that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him, doth this Man stand here before you whole.*

FROM his testimony proceed we to St. Paul's; who, in the 15th chap. of 1 Cor. tells us, that Christ rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures; that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; that after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain'd alive at the time of his writing that epistle; after that, he was seen of James; then of all the Apostles; and last of all, he was seen by St. Paul himself also.

HERE is a complicated evidence, and to some frequently repeated. To these we may add the evidence of the four Evangelists;

lifts; which, as far as concerns the testimony of the Apostles about it, is the whole of the account which the Scripture furnishes us with. Here being therefore testimony sufficient; no want of evidence, either as to number or plainness; we shall next consider, how far this testimony is to be relied on.

Now, the validity of any testimony concerning a matter of fact, must be tried by these two methods; by examining into the reality of the thing related, that the witnesses were not impos'd upon, or deceiv'd themselves; and further, by the integrity of the witnesses themselves, that they would not impose upon, or deceive others. For, if the witnesses were impos'd upon in the thing itself, we may be presented with a fictitious scene, instead of a real matter of fact: and if, on the other hand, the integrity of the witnesses be not establish'd, tho' their judgements and capacities were ever so acute, we should never be secure of the certainty of the matter of fact related by
A 4 them.

them. From all which it will follow undeniably, that a matter of fact, related by persons, whose judgements in that case were unquestionable, and their integrity free from any suspicion whatever, comes recommended with the highest evidence; and cannot, with any shew of reason, be rejected. For, if the witnesses were capable of judging in the affair, what fear is there of their being impos'd upon? And if their integrity be unquestionable, what danger are we in of their deceiving us?

Now, I shall shew that the testimony of the Apostles will stand both these trials; and that the most minute enquiry in both these particulars will be for the advantage of this point; and therefore our Lord's Resurrection stands upon the best evidence that can be procur'd.

FOR, as to the first part of it, the competency of the Apostles judgements, and the certainty that they were not deceiv'd themselves; every circumstance of the history will shew it to be morally impossible.

For,

For, not to insist, that it is no easy matter to persuade any one of another's rising from the dead, a thing so highly improbable in it self, and so hardly reconcileable with the incredulity natural to mankind ; there are certain points to be consider'd in it, which are utterly inconsistent with the notion of any imposition.

THEY took not the story of our Lord's Resurrection lightly, or upon hear-say ; but themselves, *Peter* and *John* especially, examin'd the affair with an uncommon nicety and curiosity. Had they entertain'd it absolutely upon the first rumour, they certainly had not so narrowly inspected the sepulchre. Their very conduct in this Case shews, that they were backward in confiding in report, especially in a report of such consequence. And tho' they passionately desir'd to find it true, (as indeed good reason they had to wish so) yet they did not acquiesce in it until they had well canvass'd the matter. A behaviour, contrary to the common practice of mankind ; we being

3 generally

generally ready enough to believe reports which will make for our advantage : a behaviour therefore, which evinc'd an extraordinary prudence, highly befitting the matter in hand.

AND indeed, the Apostles were of all men least liable to the charge of credulity ; the contrary fault being frequently reprov'd in them by our Lord : and therefore, it was hardly probable that they, who scarcely believ'd in him, though they daily beheld the miracles he wrought among them when alive, should on a sudden become over confident in his power, whom they certainly knew was dead.

AGAIN, as the crime of over-hasty credulity could not be charg'd upon the Apostles, so were they not impos'd upon by any fictitious appearances, which might mislead their senses, or work upon their fancies. Our Lord not only appear'd to them, but convers'd with them, and sensibly perform'd the functions of a truly organiz'd body. He convers'd freely with
them,

them, shew'd them his hands and his side, and took the nourishment proper for nature : and when one of his Apostles who was absent, doubted of the truth of these relations, he intreated him to come near, and examine in the most curious manner, the reality of his appearance : and as the consequence was, that upon so good conviction, he let drop his doubts, and freely acknowledg'd his Lord, and his God, so must such proceedings as these utterly clear this transaction of any imputation of fraud or collusion : such deceits never admitting so close an enquiry, and so free an examination, but prudently shunning the narrow inspection and dangerous curiosity of those who are concern'd in it.

AGAIN, the time and frequency of our Lord's appearance undeniably prove, that the Apostles were not, nor could be impos'd on. For suppose them ever so weak, ever so credulous, and that the very first appearance fully persuaded them of the truth of what was in reality only a Phantom, or the creature

creature of their own brain ; yet this prepossession would hardly have lasted forty days. Had they been ever so easily surpriz'd into it at first ; yet here was time to deliberate after the first impressiion was over, and their cooler thoughts might reject what their surprize had betray'd them into : a thing not in the least uncommon with us. But their imagination must be strong indeed, to fancy a thing for forty days together, and to believe it as firmly as if it had really been : or to behold, for forty days together, a Scene of the utmost importance to, them, and never look any further into the truth of it. Such a proceeding as this must reflect upon them in the grossest manner, and is plainly irreconcilable with their having either their senses or understandings.

AND further, they must not only have been deluded with an imaginary scene of his Person ; but they must have fancy'd they heard him talking and discoursing of many things. For the same authority, upon which

we now proceed for the truth of his appearance, relates the substance of some of his discourses, and hints that he made a great many others; all which must be equally the effect of the same delusion. Now this is carrying the matter to a pitch indeed of uncommon artifice, and exquisite contrivance, in the manager of this scene, or to a degree of the most senseless stupidity and extravagant enthusiasm in the Persons concern'd.

AGAIN, the number of the persons who profess'd themselves witnesses of this transaction, renders it utterly impossible, that there was any fraud in the case. For, granting that one or two might be persons of strong fancies to delude themselves, or of weakness to suffer others to impose upon them: yet, it is hardly conceivable, how above five hundred should be pick'd out, of just the same pregnant fancy and easy credulity. That not one of this large number should have discernment enough to find it out, or have sober reason enough to correct

rect the fallies of a wandering imagination, in a matter of such excessive moment to them, is indeed a wonderful and unparallel'd example : is such an instance of the power of fancy, or the art of deceivers, as would (if admitted in the present case) be an insurmountable obstacle to our belief of any thing whatever, though ever so plainly represented to our senses, or fairly submitted to our judgements and understandings. And if, after such evident marks of truth and reality, the Apostles were at length impos'd upon ; then may we with good reason distrust the testimonies of our senses, and calmly sit down under the melancholy necessity of being for ever deceiv'd.

LASTLY: I shall observe with respect to the Apostles testimony in this point, that there is no reason to think they would have embrac'd such an opinion, unless it had all the proofs necessary to evince its certainty. For, lightly to espouse the cause of one, condemn'd in a publick manner, as an enemy to the Church and State, would have
been

been the extreameſt madneſs and folly. For they were ſure to incur the diſpleaſure of the Government, by aſſerting a tranſaction which condemn'd his judges, and laid them under the higheſt odium. And therefore their bold and open publication of it, we can aſcribe to nothing, but the higheſt ſatiſfaction of its truth, founded on the moſt rational conviction.

HAVING thus far eſtabliſhed one part of the Apoſtles testimony, with regard to our Lord's Reſurrection, namely, the impoſſibility of their being impos'd upon themſelves; I proceed,

SECONDLY; To eſtabliſh the other part of it, namely, the integrity of the witneſſes, and the little reaſon we have to think that they would impoſe upon us.

THE contrivers of an impoſture muſt ſet about it for one or other of theſe reaſons; either to advance their own reputation, or to promote ſome conſiderable intereſt: it being abſolutely ridiculous, to ſuppoſe any perſons would ſet themſelves induſtriouſly

to propagate lies, unless it were to serve or carry on some such private views. If therefore they, by publishing our Lord's Resurrection, which was false, could propose to themselves either of these advantages, then will I seek for some better evidence than their testimony for the truth of it. But if, on the contrary, I found, the publishing of it most directly tended to the ruin of their reputation and interest; I can attribute their persisting in it to no one reason in the world, but the force of truth, and their firm belief of it themselves.

THAT the Apostles could propose any reputation to themselves, by averring a falsehood of that nature, is, I think, morally impossible; if any one considers the terms upon which they stood with the Jewish nation. Their joining our Saviour in his lifetime had expos'd them sufficiently to the scorn and contempt of the Pharisees and Elders. Their being the followers of one whom the Pharisees look'd upon as an innovator in religion, and adversary to their
Law,

Law, and a zealous opposer of their authority and teaching; had render'd them obnoxious in the highest degree to their hatred and displeasure. They resent'd further the presumption of men, bred in so contemptible a country as they held Galilee, in setting up to reform abuses, in preaching a doctrine wholly new, and in endeavouring to alter the laws and customs of their ancestors.

OF this humour the Apostles no doubt had felt the effects, while their Master was alive; and had a severe lesson taught them in their treatment of his person, what measure they might expect from them. He had been vilely traduc'd, as a friend of publicans and sinners, contemptibly styl'd a Samaritan, and impiously charg'd with having a Devil. They had reflected upon him for the meanness of his birth, often observing that he was the carpenter's son; and, notwithstanding all the miracles he work'd, we find he advanc'd but little in their esteem or regard for him.

THIS being the case, which way could the Apostles think to raise any reputation to themselves if they walk'd in his steps? How should they think of increasing their fame, by expressing a profound veneration for him, whom the Pharisees and Rulers hated and despis'd? The raising therefore a story, so much to his honour, as that he was risen again, they must needs think would not advance them much in the favour and esteem of his inveterate enemies.

BUT however, if they were weak enough to think so, they were pretty soon undeceived: their error was pretty soon corrected, and that in a manner which they could not possibly mistake. How happen'd it then, that finding themselves balk'd of their expectations, they still persisted in it? How came it, they did not wisely draw back and retrieve their character, by retracting in good time? Cunning deceivers know how to manage their affairs with singular dexterity, and to weigh diligently their likelihood of success; and always fearing the worst, have
constantly

constantly in reserve a good after-game to come off with : that which way soever the matter goes, they may side with it with equal prudence and safety to their characters. How different was the behaviour of the Apostles ! how much more open and ingenuous ! They declar'd, that Christ was risen from the dead. When it was on all hands oppos'd, they persisted constantly and immoveably in the same declaration, without any regard to what the world might say, to the reproaches they might be loaded with, or the sufferings it might bring on them. For, when call'd before the Rulers, and requir'd strictly no more to preach in the name of *Jesus* risen again ; they rejected their injunctions : and when chastiz'd severely for their refusal ; they were no sooner dismiss'd, but they publickly taught the same : and, though frequently corrected, as often continued to do so. And when those lighter punishments would do little good upon them, they soon learn'd, by the cruel treatment of some of their brethren and

Fellow-Disciples, that there would be no mercy shew'd them.

Now, that a number of Men so inconsiderable, should agree together to frame a lye, which must infallibly exasperate men, who were already their enemies, is not consistent with common prudence. But that, when ill treated, abus'd, stript, and beaten, and imprison'd for it, thy should never falter in their story, nor differ in their relation of it, nor discover the least irresolution or fear; is an inexplicable difficulty, and absolutely impossible to be accounted for. For though some have maintain'd a falsehood before now with exemplary constancy; yet has there been some visible reason for it: a prospect of advantage, or certain reward, which has serv'd to buoy up their spirits during such lamentable oppressions. But nothing of this kind can take place here. There was no body of consideration concern'd enough in this to bribe them to it: nothing before their eyes but a series of sufferings. And, that not one of them should
fail

fail and confess the cheat; not one of those very men, who before, at the bare appearance of danger, had forsaken their master (and one in particular to screen himself had denied him) that none, I say, of these, should shrink at fetters and prisons; can be attributed to nothing but the goodness of their cause. For, from whence had those men who a few days before, betray'd the greatest fear and cowardice, the confidence to affirm their master was risen again; but because they knew it to be certainly and infallibly so? and how came they by so much resolution and boldness, to aver it to the face of the rulers with such constancy, to their eternal confusion who condemn'd him; but because the force of truth was superior to all considerations of safety, and subdu'd all the apprehensions and motions of Nature?

LASTLY: I shall observe, as a further proof of the Apostles integrity; that, as they could propose no temporal advantage by transmitting a lye to us, so any such imposture would absolutely and notoriously

expose them to the greatest derision and contempt ; and would justly charge them with the absurdest contradiction to themselves and their doctrine. For they taught a doctrine, which utterly disclaims all manner of falsehood whatever ; a doctrine which insists upon the greatest simplicity and sincerity in our dealings with mankind ; condemns in the fullest manner all deceit and fraud : and finally cuts off the hopes of hypocrites and impostors. Can we therefore suppose men so senseless as to propagate a religion by falsehood, which denounces a heavy judgment against deceivers ? or that they would establish a religion, by a lye of that consequence, when that religion thunders out damnation against lyars ?

WHAT expectation they had from the world we have already consider'd ; what they might have of a life after this, we are now weighing.— And that indeed is small enough, if we consider the affront it is to God Almighty, to forge credentials from him ; to style our selves his ministers, when
in

in reality we are not ; and to affirm, that he set his seal in the most eminent degree to a notorious lye. Surely, when they preach'd God Almighty, a God of truth ; they would not have dar'd to declare that he raised up *Jesus*, whom he raised not up. And surely, they had a better sense of their condition in this world, than so extravagantly to lavish away their hopes in the next ; with no manner of inducement prompting them, with no fear compelling them, nor any interest whatever, in this world or the other, which could in the least influence or encourage them ; but on the contrary, effectually ruining their interest by it ; sacrificing all that was near and dear to them in pursuing it ; and willfully subjecting themselves to the most exquisite pains, and to the extreamest circumstances of horror, in maintaining it.

ARE these the practices of impostors ? Are these the schemes of deceivers ? Surely, such a disinterested conduct manifests, that this transaction stands upon the firmest

foundation of truth and certainty ; and on a testimony every way unsuspected and unquestionable.

HAVING thus impartially examin'd the testimony of the Apostles concerning our Lord's Resurrection ; and fully shewn, that it neither can, nor ought, to be excepted against, as carrying all the marks of truth along with it ; I shall at present wave any other proof of it, and proceed to,

II. OBSERVATIONS upon so important a doctrine.

AND first : I observe, that our Lord's Resurrection, so fully prov'd, at once evinces the truth and divinity of the person thus risen again. For, as to the truth of his mission ; had not our Lord risen again, we had receiv'd no certain assurance of the truth of what he so frequently asserted, that he was the Saviour of the world. He knew that the doctrine he taught was likely enough to stir up the malice of a corrupted council, and a bigotted multitude. And therefore, tho' he truly prophesy'd of his death, that would
not

not have satisfied his followers : had he continu'd in the grave, whatever specious pretences he might make to the character of a Saviour, they would have had no influence over his followers. But his rising again awaken'd the hopes of those who had been utterly confounded at his crucifixion : and shew'd, in the most convincing manner, that he was no impostor, but the expected Saviour ; that God wonderfully interpos'd in vindicating him to the world, and requir'd their firm belief in and their full and open acknowledgement of so authentick a testimony of his truth.

AGAIN : The truth of our Lord's Resurrection in the firmest manner establishes the truth of our own ; places our hopes on the strongest foundation ; and is a signal encouragement to constancy and fidelity. *In that he raised up himself, he is able also to raise up us* : and as he declar'd that he would do both the one and the other ; as the one is unquestionably come to pass ; so most surely will the other also. For the Apostle testifies,

fies, that as we have been baptiz'd into his sufferings and death, so shall we also into his Resurrection : that is, as many among us as have made profession of the belief of a crucified Saviour, and, following his steps, have crucified the world with the affections and lusts, shall share of that power which Christ had by his resurrection obtain'd, and, being rais'd up as he was, shall be partakers of his glory.

LASTLY : We must remember, that this promise is conditional : that though all of us shall most surely be rais'd up, yet that not all of us shall have a joyful Resurrection ; but as many only as shall set themselves to do their Lord's will : that, though Christ has power to raise us all up, yet he will raise those only to life, who have been his faithful soldiers and servants ; who have perform'd the conditions of the Gospel-Covenant, and liv'd soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world : that to such indeed he will shew himself at the last day a merciful deliverer and Saviour ; mighty to
save :

save: but those who have rejected the words of his Gospel, or wickedly neglected their duty, he will deliver them, both in body and soul, into the hands of cruel and evil Spirits, to receive from them the just reward of their wickedness. It therefore exceedingly becomes us, to consider the meaning and importance of our Resurrection; which is the uniting our bodies and souls, in order to their eternal welfare or misery: and earnestly to set ourselves, so to live in this world, that we may be partakers of the Resurrection of the Just, which is to life everlasting.

S E R M O N II.

On the RESURRECTION.

I COR. xv. 12.

Now, if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no Resurrection ?

NO doctrine of the Christian Religion, met with a more difficult reception than that of the Resurrection of the dead. As this was a stumbling-block to the *Jews*, (the Sadducees denying that there was any Resurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit) so was it foolishness, or idle tales to the *Greeks*. Yet St. *Paul* scrupled not to enter the lists against the strongest opposers of it; and with amazing resolution and weight of reasoning, attack'd the obstinate incredulity of the *Jew*, and the misgrounded philosophy

phy of the *Greek*. Trusting to the strength of the evidence, and relying on the power which had given a divine sanction to its truth, in the inspiration of its preachers ; he fear'd neither the prejudices of the one, nor the self-sufficiency of the other. He therefore pass'd by their scoffs when they styl'd him a Babblers, and a setter forth of strange Gods. So infatuated indeed were the Philosophers of their two principal sects *, so misled by their attachment to the doctrine of many Gods ; that when he preach'd to them *Jesus* and the Resurrection, they look'd upon *Jesus* as some new God, and the Resurrection as a Goddess. And altho' they gave great attention to his discourses ; yet as soon as he began to deliver his sentiments upon this subject, their attention ceas'd, and they abruptly broke off the conference ; some mocking, and others saying, we will hear thee again of this matter.

WE find further by this epistle, that not the *Athenians* only, but they of *Corinth* also,

* *Epicureans* and *Stoics*.

seem'd to doubt of the truth of this point; to rectify which, he reasons upon it largely in this Chapter, proving the Resurrection of the dead as consequent upon the Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*.—*If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no Resurrection?*

Now, it is certain, that the Apostle's argument here for the general Resurrection is founded on the truth and certainty of that of our Lord: and as to the evidence of that transaction, he himself declares it to be the ground-work on which the whole fabrick of our Redemption depends; and that in the plainest words.—*If Christ be not risen, then is your faith vain, — and our preaching is vain, — the consequences of which he immediately subjoins to be, our remaining under condemnation, in an unredeemed and unregenerate state: Ye are (says he) yet in your sins.*

IT is evident therefore, that the Apostle before us firmly believ'd it himself, since he ventur'd to put the whole truth of the doctrine

trine he preach'd, and his own credit and salvation, as well as that of the whole world, upon it. And the fact itself came originally so well attested ; and when disputed, has been always so well clear'd ; that perhaps there is not any fact in history better supported, than that *Jesus* did truly and really rise from the dead. Upon which, I shall proceed to shew the general doctrine ; namely, that in Christ all shall be made alive.

1st. THEN I shall prove, that there is to be a Resurrection of the dead :

2dly. THE benefits thereof :

3dly, WHO they are, who shall partake of these benefits.

THE first point, viz. that there shall be a *Resurrection*, has little need of being prov'd to those who have so frequently and solemnly profess'd the belief of it, by admitting this article in the publick creeds of the Church ; and as it is inseparably connected with the belief of our Lord's Resurrection, which we now commemorate,

I shall therefore only observe, that to the credibility of any thing, it is sufficient, that it is *possible*, and, that it has been *perform'd*; both which, I shall briefly shew, belong to the doctrine of the *Resurrection* of the dead: and if to these we add ourselves, what we have receiv'd from testimony and scripture about it, we have all the satisfaction we can desire.

Ist, then: THE Resurrection of the *dead* is possible.

THE misfortune is, that most men think that impossible which they cannot account for: and yet, such a sentiment is very far from being reasonable. We all of us, every day, are witnesses of too many things which we cannot account for: the possibility of which, nevertheless should we deny, we should contradict our very senses, and the reality of much the greater half of what actually passes in the world. — St. *Paul* met with some of this stamp in the point before us; and accordingly form'd his plan of defending the

Refurrection to them upon their own reasoning. He knew they denied the possibility of a Refurrection upon natural principles : he therefore sets himself to prove it from their own words. —The argument, which no doubt, was popular at that time, was that which he has given us,---*But some will say, how are the dead raised, and with what body do they come ?*

IT may justly be imagin'd, that the last part of the question was a prophane sneer of the self-sufficient Deist : since it extorted from this great defender of Revelation, a contemptuous reproof. The question however plainly calling upon the assertors of the Refurrection, to prove it's possibility upon natural principles, viz. it's connection with, and conformity to natural causes and effects ; the Apostle first requires, that the objector should give him an account in a natural way, of the production of a subject which he had to propound, the truth of which they could not possibly deny. He instances in the restauration of those parts of
grain,

grain, which being dead and corrupted in the earth, acquire power from the very principles of vegetation to revive, or to be raised; and are cloath'd with so new and altogether different a body from that which was put into the ground. *Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, perchance of wheat, or of some other grain;--* in which there is at present nothing of root or stalk, of blade or ear: but God giveth it a body proper for it's particular species, and to every seed it's own peculiar proper body (*το ιδιον σωμα*) not that of another kind of grain. Shew me now, how this is effected by the operation of natural causes and effects, viz. by their own power: and then, the Apostle thought, it would be time enough for him to give an account, in a natural way, of the Resurrection. But he was very sure they could not account for the most common production in nature, without having recourse to somewhat else than merely natural causes:

nor was it ever his intention to prove the Resurrection by such a sort of argument. The question therefore being foreign to the purpose, the Apostle rejects it; and at the same time shews the folly of it, by retorting it with redoubled force on the infidel objector: and by that management, throws a just reproach on all who reason on an unfair bottom, namely, those who require such evidence for the proof of a point which does not belong to the question, and without which it might be certainly true.

THE Apostle had a right to require their admitting the Resurrection of the dead, as *possible*: since they every day assented to the reality, and therefore certainly to the *possibility*, of things *which* they could no more account for by natural powers than he could for the Resurrection.

BY this way of reasoning, the Apostle evinc'd, that the nature of the Resurrection implied no impossibility; and that if it did, upon the same principles many other things would be prov'd impossible; the truth of which,

which, we however see every day in real matters of fact: and therefore, as that objection would prove far too much, if it prov'd any thing, even to the contradiction of the clearest light; therefore in fact it prov'd nothing at all; and therefore, nothing against the Resurrection.

THE Resurrection of the dead may be possible then, for any thing yet alledg'd, drawn from natural operations: we being in the dark as much about the one as about the other.

AND, as in the Apostle's question, we must have recourse to that almighty principle which gives life to all things, to account for their process and perfection; so must we rest the possibility of this act upon the same great foundation.

IT is the same *God*, who, the Apostle affirms, gives a body to the grain buried, and seemingly dissolv'd in the earth, who shall raise up our bodies after their dissolution in the grave, and call them to a new and everlasting life.

AND surely, no one will dispute *his* power in the renovation of our bodies from the dust, who first form'd them out of it; or that he cannot collect together their scatter'd parts, who first by his will put them together. — Nor is it any argument of want of proof, that we call in the only possible Agent, the power of God: for it is matter of pure revelation; and it is sufficient, that we have the plain and positive word of Scripture for it.

THE second Circumstance which contributes to the credibility of any thing, is the knowledge that it has been perform'd.

THE Resurrection of the dead is credible, because it has been actually perform'd: and no one can doubt the truth of this, who believes the authority of holy writ.

FOR we read of *Elijah's* raising the widow's son in the *Book of Kings*, and of *St. Peter's* working the same effect upon the devout *Tabitha* at *Joppa*: not to speak of
our

our Lord's doing the same, in the case of the ruler's daughter, and of *Lazarus*. No one, I say, who credits these accounts, can doubt of the possibility of the Resurrection of the dead, unless he will, at the same time, reject the authority of Scripture. And if we admit the truth of these instances, we can have no doubt about the Resurrection of the dead: for it is so frequently mention'd, so much insisted upon, and such great strefs laid upon it; that Christianity must stand or fall, by the truth of it.

FOR the Apostle directly says, *If there be no Resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen*: (and then mark how he includes the very being of our Religion in the consequence) *and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your Faith (i. e. in Christ) is also vain*.

HERE nothing can be plainer, than that he argues for the truth of our Religion, from the Resurrection of Jesus, as without which all falls to the ground; and also for

our Resurrection, as a necessary consequence from admitting the Resurrection of Christ: — and further, he owns himself guilty of a direct imposture, if the Resurrection of Jesus be not true; nay, he charges the blood of those who died in the faith to his own, as answerable for it. Ver. 15. *Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not: for if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then, they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished.*

HERE then the Resurrection of the dead is built upon this argument, that it has already been perform'd:—and as to the Resurrection of our bodies, it is expressly inferr'd from that of Jesus Christ: and therefore all that remains here, is to say something more upon that head, as a further illustration of the certainty of our Resurrection,

Now

Now our Lord's Resurrection rests upon the best footing that any matter of fact is capable of, being sufficiently witness'd by Angels and men; — by Angels, whom the Evangelist affirms to have utter'd this truth to the women who went to seek him at the sepulchre, *Why seek ye the living among the dead? he is not here, he is risen;* — by Men in the Apostles, in five hundred brethren, to whom he appear'd at once in a continuance of his stay upon earth for forty days, performing the office and function of a living man, in the same body in which he suffer'd upon the cross; — in the sufficiency of the witnesses, to judge of the reality of it; — in the moral impossibility, that they should endeavour to impose on the world, who preach'd God, a God of truth, and the avow'd enemy of liars and impostors; — in the power of miracles, work'd by them, as an evidence from God of this grand truth; — and in laying down their lives in attestation of it. Here is a cloud of Witnesses, in circumstances, reasonings, miraculous works,
Men

Men and Angels : and all these, the more irrefragably they witness the Resurrection, strengthen the assurance and certainty of our own.

2dly, LET us then enquire what are the benefits of it.

OF which there is no difficulty in being inform'd, as the Scripture in very plain terms tells us, that it consists in a reunion of the soul and body, to the purpose of living again together, never hereafter to be separated : but, if this were all, though indeed it flatters the love of life, so natural to man, yet it would fall far short of our hopes. It is therefore attended with this additional circumstance, that they shall live together in a state of bliss and happiness, of uninterrupted joy, and felicity unspeakable.

THESE were the glad tidings which the Gospel promulg'd to the enquiring world,—tidings of joy indeed ; which fix'd the labours of the virtuous ; which determin'd their hopes ; which set before them a prize worthy

worthy their attaining; a reward suitable to the unbounded benevolence of a gracious Creator, and a merciful Redeemer; which took away the loathsome sting of death, and enabled every true servant of God, to look on the King of terrors, with complacency and satisfaction. These benefits being, in numberless passages, and in variety of expression and pleasing images, set forth in the New Testament, let us proceed to the last subject here propos'd, viz.

3dly, WHO are capable of the benefits of the Resurrection from the dead.

AN interesting concern indeed! for who would not wish to be partaker of a joyful Resurrection?—of a joyful one: for to rise from the dead, it is to be fear'd, will not bring happiness to all! There may be many, to whom the sound of the last trumpet shall convey most dreadful forebodings of future condemnation. 'Tis true, some have thoughts otherwise, and contend, that as *Christ* died for all, the Resurrection shall be equally, and in the end, advantageous to all; and
place

place all in a state of blifs and glory. But this flattering view, this unworthy notion, contradicts reason, all notices of natural religion, and all revelation : which concur in this question, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?* — Shall he not put a difference between him that serveth him, and him that serveth him not ?

How must we then construe such denunciations of Scripture ? *And many of them which sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake ; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever. For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble ; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Host : — but unto them that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings. And in the New Testament, in much more express terms, and these, the wicked, into ever-*
lasting

lasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.

THE Apostle mentions, after death, the judgement. ---To what purpose, if all men are to be treated alike, and if there is to be one event to all ? To what purpose, the separating the sheep from the goats at the judgement of the great day ? or the Apostle's argument, that knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men ? — or finally, his assertion, that God will render unto every one, according to that which he has done in the body ?

WHEREFORE, leaving those to their blind incredulity, who can sit down with this notion, against plain reason and scripture, that the Resurrection will be alike beneficial to all ; — let us be satisfied *that there remaineth a rest to the people of God : let us (I say) therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of coming into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*

LET

LET us secure to ourselves, a part in a joyful Resurrection, by observing those rules which according to reason and scripture, must provide it for us ; chusing the unerring direction of God's word, rather than the groundless fancies of men, in a matter of such importance. Nothing can serve so well to the regulating our lives here, as the due reflection, that our body shall rise hereafter ; shall be recalled from the sleep of death, into motion, sense, and life ; — shall be accountable for those actions, which in it's former state of union with the soul, it has committed, — to the intent, that as it has been partaker with it of pleasure and pain, good and evil, so shall it partake of it's final condition.

NOTHING can give a man greater satisfaction than the certain knowledge of this future event. For what are disappointments, losses, diseases, or misfortunes to him, who can look forward to that blessed morning of the general assembly of the world,—look forward, I mean, with inward satisfaction
and

and holy hope, upon that grand scene, which shall then display the beginnings of his joy and blessedness and glory; which shall justify him in the assembly of the faints, and crown him with everlasting happiness?

NOTHING can be plainer than the methods reveal'd in Scripture to attain this inestimable benefit. Follow after holiness, meekness, and charity. — Preserve in your hearts a lively faith in the mercies of *Christ*; — a thankful remembrance of all that he did and suffer'd for us. — Endeavour seriously, and sincerely, to live up to the precepts of the Gospel, by repentance, by amendment, by perseverance; — trusting in God, through *Jesus Christ*, for the pardon of the imperfect performances of a weak and frail nature. These plain steps, steadily pursu'd, and firmly adher'd to, will not fail to raise, in this world, that solid satisfaction of mind, in a sincere and pious Christian, which is but a foretaste of that unspeakable happiness which shall be

be disclos'd to him at the last day: when he shall be caught up in the air to meet the Lord of life and glory; and sing eternal Hallelujahs to him, who redeem'd him by his own blood, that he might reign with him in glory.

S E R M O N III.

On the RESURRECTION.

COL. iii. 1.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ is set down at the right hand of God.

AS no part of our faith is more comfortable to reflect upon than the Resurrection of *Jesus Christ* from the dead ; so there is none more directly persuasive to the practice of an holy life. For this reason, we see the Apostle joining together the Resurrection of our Lord, and the necessity of our improvement in Christian graces ; inferring the latter from the certainty of the former : insomuch, that we find him continually inculcating to his converts, that the belief of this article should

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produce

produce in them a proportionable measure of obedience.

AND though in many places we find exhortations to the same purpose, yet no where has he more closely pursu'd the argument, than in the words before us, *If ye then be, &c.* The meaning of which words seems to be this: — If ye truly believe the Resurrection of *Christ*, and the advantages redounding to you by it; pursue earnestly after those attainments which will secure them to you: and, if ye be risen with *Christ*, that is, truly become Christians, in a holy and religious sense, after his example (as they who have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts, are said to be baptized into his death) then seek those things which are above; — study to practise that divine and celestial life, as *Christ* himself now lives, who is set down on the right hand of God being placed next in glory to his Father in heaven.

IN the further pursuit of which subject, *St. Paul*, after enforcing this general advice, proceeds

proceeds to insist upon particulars: *Set your affections*, says he, *on things above, not on things on the earth*; recommending heavenly mindedness, and the contemplation of heavenly things, as the properest object of a Christian's care and concern. *For*, proceeds he, *ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*. That is, by faith in *Christ Jesus*, and baptism in his name, ye have disclaim'd and vow'd to put off your old or former life: and the life which remains for you to live, is a life of purity here, after *Christ's* example, that ye may attain a life of glory hereafter with him; for he lives now in heaven: which the Apostle immediately expresses in the next verse: *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory*.

BUT what conclusion does *St. Paul* draw from that declaration? Why, that all, who profess such an expectation, should live accordingly. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and*

covetousness which is idolatry : and with very great reason ; for what connection can such sins have with the Christian obligation to purity and holiness ? or how can they be consider'd, as any ways preparatory to a life of glory in heaven ? The Apostle therefore not only excludes the admission of all these, and the like sinful passions, but goes further, with respect likewise to all evil affections : *But now, you also put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, out of your mouth.*

AND after all, even when recommending particular duties, to be positively and actually perform'd, he still keeps in view the same great pattern : arguing for universal benevolence, that great distinguishing character of our Religion, the loving of all men, whether *Jew* or *Greek* ; for bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearances, and forgiveness, upon the same pressing and powerful motive ; — *as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* And the principle, on which he enforces the obser-

vance

vance of these duties, is still the same, wherever we follow him, in his exhortations:—
to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;— to let the peace of God rule in our hearts;— to put on charity (or love) which is the bond of perfectness;— to let the word of God dwell in us richly in all wisdom;— knowing that our conversation (or right of abiding) is in heaven.

IN conformity to the Apostle's reasoning, to the end that it may make the greater impression upon us, let us at present consider,

I. THE *advantages* we receive from the conviction we are under of our Lord's Resurrection.

II. THE proper fruits and effects it ought to produce in us.

I. THE knowledge of our Lord's Resurrection leads us to consider, what a Person he must be with respect to God. The meanness of his appearance, the low condition of his life, humanly and outwardly consider'd, might, and we know did, create fears

and apprehensions in many, and even in some of his followers, whether he could be the Saviour of mankind, the Lord of all things, the Judge of the world; characters which he claim'd, and took upon himself. Could it be wonder'd at then, that all these were increased, by the discouraging circumstances of his sufferings and death?

IT could not well be otherwise with them who did not attend to those clear attestations to his Person and character, so plainly express'd in the sacred Scripture; but consider'd every thing in that light only, which human reason, and human understanding suggest-ed: and we know that this was the case even with the *Jews*, to whom our Saviour express'd himself, *That they err'd, not knowing the scriptures and the power of God,*

BUT the case is not so with us: all these difficulties are vanish'd away; all these fears are remov'd; and all these discouragements are taken off. By his recovering life, the favour and power of God attending him, were most clearly prov'd and made known.

This

This Jesus hath God raised up, saith St. Peter; bringing this as a proof of his acceptance and approbation with God: and St. Paul even argues from this very transaction, not only for the truth of his mission, as a teacher sent from God, but for his being really and truly the Son of God; speaking “concerning Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made “of the seed of David according to the flesh, “and declared to be the Son of God with “power according to the spirit of holiness “by the Resurrection from the dead. Rom. “i. 3, 4.”

IN the knowledge of this therefore we receive an advantage which many others did not; — we attain certainties, to which they could not attain; we clearly build our hopes on a foundation, which they could not so certainly admit. They had hopes indeed, as the Disciples, in their walk to *Emmaus* with their risen master, whom they knew not, express'd themselves, — *who trusted, that it had been he which should have redeem'd Israel.* But in whatever sense they understood that

redemption, his sufferings and death had put an end to their hopes and expectations about it.

THESE disciples were not singular in their conclusions; many others had the same sentiments; and any further conceptions of a new and restor'd life, so little prevailed, that we find the testimony of many witnesses had no effect upon one Apostle in particular, who declar'd, he would not believe it without very sensible demonstration. But let us not follow his incredulity, which happen'd for the more confirmation of our faith, and forget the acknowledgement he made on his conviction; but in the same confession of his divine power in his Resurrection, address him, as *St. Thomas* did, with the style of, *our Lord and our God*.

But further: — As the clearing up this truth left us under no difficulty with respect to God, as to our Saviour's character, so did his Resurrection fix and determine the merit of his sufferings with respect to us. He declar'd, that he was, in his own
Person,

Person, to satisfy God for our sins, by his sufferings and death; — that we should be receiv'd into grace and favour in consideration of his merits; — that, in proof of this, of *all* and every *part* of it, he should be raised from the dead the third day. His Resurrection therefore, is to us an undeniable evidence of our own acceptance on the terms which he propounded, viz. faith and repentance: by the latter of which is meant, actual obedience, as far as human infirmity will admit of.

To all therefore who believe in *Jesus Christ*, and obey his precepts, the tidings of his Resurrection are tidings of great joy: as they carry along with them the infallible testimony, that as *Christ* was raised from the dead, so shall we also be made like unto him, in being *partakers of his Resurrection*; — *that in Christ all shall be made alive*. For nothing can be more suitable to the subject; than the inference which *St. Paul* makes from this transaction: — *If we believe that Jesus died and rose again; even so, them also*
which

which sleep through Jesus will God bring with him. 1 Thes. iv. 14. By which St. Paul infers, that God will put true believers into a state conformable to that of their Redeemer; who is both in body and soul in the mansions of eternal glory, being set down for ever at the right hand of God.

FROM the consideration of these advantages which we reap from the knowledge of our Lord's Resurrection, let us proceed,

II. To the fruits it ought to produce in us.

First: IT is to us the strongest foundation for a confidence in God, and his promises. After such an undeniable proof of his accepting us, for the sake of his son, why should we at all despair of his mercy? By raising his Son to life after death, he hath demonstrated his Almighty power; — by doing it in confirmation of his assum'd character of being our redeemer, he hath shew'd his purpose and design of making good to us all that he promis'd us by him. Why therefore should we not at all times call
this

this consideration to our aid? why should we be in any doubt, but that he hath prepared for all his faithful servants, a place of rest and tranquillity, of eminence and glory, of joy and happiness, to all eternity? Thus ought we to conduct ourselves, in respect to our future condition after this life.

But further: IT ought to have suitable effects upon us with respect to the life *that now is*. For does it not teach us to bear with this life, and all the hardships of it, with patience and resignation? Does it not lead us to a calm suffering of injuries, to a Christian meekness under contempt and ill usage? Shall we be very violently concern'd at what befalls us in this our earthly tabernacle, when we know we are to have another, eternal in the heavens? — What a consolation is it, that we can look up to the Captain of our Salvation, with a lively faith and a well-grounded hope! — that we can see ourselves following his pattern, who was made perfect through suffering; and anticipate

cipate in some measure our future reward, by our knowledge of his present exalted, glorified state and condition, through the evidence of his Resurrection!

ANOTHER effect moreover this knowledge ought to have upon us (which indeed contains the ways and means of our attaining all we wish for, and all that is worth our pursuit) namely, that of engaging us in a constant course of holiness, and filial obedience to the commands of God. This is the way to gain the most absolute completion of our hopes: This is the gate that leadeth to everlasting life. *Christ* hath both died and risen again in vain for the wicked and impenitent: the belief in him as our Redeemer, and the firmest conviction of his Resurrection in proof of it, will be too little for the purpose of our Salvation, without obedience. Our blessed Saviour has guarded against so dangerous a presumption; — a presumption, he knew the weakness of human nature was too liable to rest upon; — a presumption, he foresaw confidence and enthusiasm

thufiasm might adopt. But the vain feeker, the conceited petitioner, the obftinate fanatick, the oftentatious worfhipper, are all equally rejected by that denunciation of our Lord; *Not every one that faith unto me, Lord, Lord, fhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* As are likewise all wicked and immoral livers, by that awful declaration, *That no whoremonger, or adulterer, or drunkard, or extortioner, or covetous man which is an idolater, fhall inherit the kingdom of God, and of Chrift.*

S E R M O N I V.

The state of religious knowledge in
the Gentile world, and under the
Jewish dispensation, compared with
the Gospel Light.

A VISITATION SERMON.

3 JOHN 10 48.

I am come a Light into the World, that
whosoever believeth on me should not
abide in Darkness.

As the gracious and holy Spirit of the
Gospel dispensation was to deliver
mankind from the bond and curse of the
law, and the punishment consequent thereon;
so did our Saviour make it his business
through the whole course of his ministry to
lay before them the necessity thereof, as
aiming to this end. Accordingly we find him
in the Gospel continually employed in shew-
ing down the principal rules required to be
observed.

S E R M O N IV.

The state of religious knowledge in the Gentile world, and under the Jewish dispensation, compared with the Gospel Light.

A VISITATION SERMON.

S. JOHN xii. 46.

I am come a Light into the World, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in Darkness.

AS the gracious end and design of the Gospel dispensation was to deliver mankind from the bond and slavery of sin, and the punishment consequent thereupon; so did our Saviour make it his business, through the whole course of his ministry, to lay before them the necessary means of attaining to this end. Accordingly we find him in the Gospel continually employ'd in laying down the principal rules required both in
faith

faith and practice, instructing his disciples in the nature of his Mission, and using all arguments and discourses, which might dispel those clouds of ignorance, which hung over them, and obscur'd their understandings.

THE tenor of the Gospel from whence I have taken my text has a more particular reference to this part of his ministry with regard to divine truths. The whole circle of saving knowledge includes that information which is necessary for the conduct of our lives with regard to practice, and conveys to us those sublime notions of the *Deity* which are most suitable to the dignity and perfection of his Nature. When therefore the rest of the Evangelists had chiefly made it their business to record our Saviour's nativity according to the *Flesh*, to relate the miracles which he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine, the parables which he spake, and the practical precepts of Christianity; St. *John* settles his *Divine original*, and contenting himself with a miracle or two, makes his discourses the main
subject

subject of his Gospel, in which Christ delivered those sublime and mysterious truths which were necessary to Salvation, but from any other instructor had been wholly unintelligible. For such confessedly is the weakness of human reason, and such the nature of those truths, that without the assistance of that *Holy Spirit* with which he taught, the world had still wander'd in endless darkness, and been still dead to all saving knowledge. Of this was God truly sensible, and therefore according to the unbounded measure of his goodness, he *sent his Son who came a Light into the world that whosoever believeth on him should not abide in darkness, i. e.* that he might deliver us from a state of ignorance and sin, and instruct us in that wisdom which is unto Salvation.

THIS Spirit of knowledge, this Light which is from above, our Saviour promised to his disciples when he should be taken away from them, as knowing it absolutely necessary in the great work of reforming an ignorant and wicked generation. *I* (says he)

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will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: But ye know him for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you *. The necessities of mankind required such supernatural assistance, for being plunged in the grossest ignorance, the natural consequence was a load of impiety: and the light of nature was as unable to recover itself from error, as on the other hand the corrupt inclinations of men rendered them unwilling to quit their darling vices and admit of a reformation of manners. Such indeed was the state of the world that through the superstition and idolatry of the greatest part of it, through the absurd and contradictory notions of the ignorant, the perverseness and obstinacy of the more knowing, the very appearance of religion and truth was vanished, when the Son of God came a

* *John xiv. 16, 17.*

Light into the world that whosoever believed on him should not abide in darkness. In discoursing upon which words I shall,

I. TAKE a view of the state of religion both in the Gentile world and under the Jewish dispensation.

II. I SHALL shew in what respects the Son of God may be said to have *come a Light into the world.*

III. I SHALL close the whole with such observations as shall seem properly suggested to us by the subject.

And first: I am to take a view of the state of religion both in the Gentile world and under the Jewish dispensation.

I SHALL begin with the Gentiles, and enquire how far they proceeded in divine knowledge, and how reasonable their system of religion was.

RELIGION, when not taken for any particular mode or manner of worship, signifies in general the homage due to God as our Creator and Preserver; natural religion then is the obligation a Creature lies under

to his Creator, admits a providence, future rewards and punishments, and enjoins the performance of all moral duties. This was the rule the Gentiles had to go by, and to this, had they used proper endeavours, and guarded against needless corruptions, they might possibly have attained. But that they did not, is apparent both from their history and writings, which will inform us that they were remarkably defective both in principles and practice, inasmuch as they neither understood nor acted up to such obligations. For, as to the existence of a Deity, instead of one primary efficient Cause of all things, the Sovereign of the Universe, they held a plurality of Gods differing in power, will, and inclination; agitated by lust, hatred, and revenge, given to vices for which the worst of men are justly abhorred, and subject to all the passions of a wicked and debauched mind. Such were the objects of their worship, and their rites and ceremonies were framed accordingly; their service in their temples was ridiculous, and

and extravagant, their mysteries lewd and obscene, their sacrifices barbarous and inhuman. If any one should object that these were vulgar notions and practices, and though for the most part yet not universally believed and embraced, let us have recourse to the schools of the philosophers, and learn the most which the brightest geniuses of the Gentile world can teach us. — It must be acknowledged that now and then there started up men who refused to give into such unreasonable sentiments : yet their opinions were but of short duration and little understood, and for the most part of so trifling a nature that they by no means answered the pains of those who examined them.

THE *Epicureans* allowed indeed the existence of one God, but denied his Providence ; deeming it altogether unworthy the dignity of his nature, to concern himself with human affairs. Upon this weak and false foundation, they built their absurd notion of the creation of the world ; further asserting, that it was governed by blind

chance, without any intervention of the Deity, whose happiness according to them consisted in a state of perfect indolence, in a vain and idle contemplation of his own perfections.

THE *Platonists* held notions more refined and nearer approaching to, though still wide of the truth. And as to what their Master affirmed of the Deity which bears any conformity to his nature, that has been sufficiently proved by learned men to be borrowed from the books of *Moses*, and stolen from the Hebrew system of theology, upon which account *Clemens Alexandrinus* styles him the Hebrew philosopher. Nevertheless, in his doctrine of the *Universe* he has sufficiently discovered the weakness of human reason. For he asserts the world to be an intelligent being consisting of body and soul, the creation to be a mix'd production, and other absurdities; which evidently displayed a great Genius preplexed and bewildered in a maze of error.

FROM

FROM him the *Peripateticks* borrowed their system of philosophy with little or no improvements sufficient to give any satisfaction to an enquirer.

Lastly: WHOEVER consults that great philosopher *Tully*, will see an infinite variety of opinions about the nature of God; no one agreeing with another but in this, that they were all equally far from truth. One while we see Divinity attributed to the world in general: another while to a part of it: sometimes to the sun, and even to the earth we inhabit. And after all it is observable, that though the philosopher has ingeniously enough overthrown these fancies; yet that he has established no truth in opposition to them, but contenting himself with the certainty of their being false, has not concerned himself to enquire what may be true; being beyond all dispute convinced, that to determine an enquiry of that nature was above the abilities of the most acute philosopher, and beyond the power and extent of human learning.

So small a portion of divine knowledge had the most comprehensive Geniuses of the Gentile world: and if we consider how few there were who could have received any benefit from their enquiries had they been more successful, it will appear that it was infinitely more than ballanced by the gross ignorance of the greatest part of mankind, whose delusions were so strong that they made animals and vegetables the objects of their devotion; who fell down before stocks and stones, and offered sacrifices to the work of men's hands; *which have mouths but speak not, eyes have they, yet they see not, they have ears but hear not, noses have they but smell not, hands, but handle not, feet but walk not, neither speak they through their throat*: they that make them are justly and elegantly term'd like unto them; and so are all they that put their trust in them.

NOR were they more successful in their enquiries after a future state, and the distribution of rewards and punishments: Their notion of the *grand tribunal* was foolish and trifling,

trifling, their description of the *Elysian fields* empty and absurd, rather the product of the poets luxuriant fancy, than the determination of a sound and reasonable judgement. The end and design of a future account must be that of giving every one his due according to what he has done in the body; but this was entirely overthrown by their doctrine of *Fate* and *Necessity*, which absolutely took away man's free agency and liberty of will, without which no one can be called to give an account of his actions with the least Appearance of justice. Add to this their opinion of the nature of the torments of the damned, of the transmigration of souls into other bodies after a set term of years; all which monstrous errors shew the miserable state of religion among the heathens when the *Son of God* came a *Light into the world that whosoever believed on him should not walk in darkness.*

THEIR System of morality was likewise exceedingly defective, and they were as much mistaken in their notions of virtue as of another

other life. For that the best philosophers allowed the practice of some vices as virtues is evident from their own and other authors writings. Humility by some of them is depreciated as a mean and despicable qualification ; and forgiveness of injuries so far from being at all understood by them, that the contrary practice of revenge was judged absolutely necessary in the composition and character of a noble and exalted spirit.

IT might be remarked here, that the love of their country celebrated as so exalted a virtue, gave rise to most of the disturbances in the world ; cherishing ambition with so little moderation that it became a plain and manifest oppression of the natural rights and liberties of all those who were weaker than themselves ; inclining them to look upon all as enemies who did not belong to them, and thereby opening infinite scenes of cruelty and blood in defiance of all the dictates of nature and reason. Which naturally leads me to observe the great mistake of a late ingenious writer in making this

objection to the Christian revelation, *viz.* that it no where recommends private friendship and the love of one's country*. For it is obvious that by not recommending it in the manner it was understood by the heathens, OUR LORD has guarded against numberless inconveniencies which it produced, and made a tender provision for the peace and tranquility of the world. But further, it is evident that HE has enlarged these virtues, HE has taught us to look upon every one as friends, and all the world as our country, and by the precept of universal justice and charity, has required that the same treatment be exercised towards all mankind, which the heathen philosophy confined to a very few.

THE natural consequence of this prevailing ignorance in the Gentile world was a load of impiety, an universal degeneracy and depravity of manners. Vice and ignorance are generally companions; for the weaker

* Shaftsb. Charact.

the power of reason is, so much the stronger of course must be that of the passions. Every man's principles must necessarily influence his practice, and his share of knowledge be the measure of his conduct. When therefore the heathens entertained such weak and false conceptions of the Deity, what wonder was it that their actions should be proportionably contradictory to right reason? When they were so much mistaken in the object of their worship, it had been subject of admiration had they stumbled on the way to please God. But indeed the contrary was notoriously evident, for so far were they plunged in debauchery and profaneness that they were become an abomination to him; insomuch that HE was provoked to cut them off from the face of the earth, and with respect to some of them, HE made it an article of obedience with the *Jews* to root them out of the land of the living. And how much soever the world was improved in the age in which our LORD appeared, it is certain by what has been said, that

that it was miserably over-run with superstition and idolatry, having no proper notions of the *Supreme Being* or of Religion.

HAVING thus far considered the state of religion among the heathens, I proceed to observe in what condition it was among the *Jews*.

AND here it might be expected, that they who were blessed with frequent and plain informations of the divine will, who had a law prescribed to them by GOD himself, and enjoy'd a continual intercourse and correspondence with Heaven, that they should be perfect in every good work, and a compleat pattern of obedience. But alas, how far otherwise was it? Notwithstanding the large share of divine knowledge vouchsafed unto them, notwithstanding each part of their duty was with all exactness particularized, and inspired persons from time to time employed by Almighty God to keep them within their obedience, such was their perverseness, such their blindness and obstinacy, that they forgot their duty, and notwithstanding

withstanding all this light, mistook the very nature and end of their institution. The all-wise Lawgiver of the Universe, who well knew their stubborn and ungovernable humour, and saw that the sense of his mercies *only* would never be sufficient to restrain them from giving into the abominations of the people among whom they lived, tied them up strictly to Legal observances, and loaded them with variety of rites and ceremonies. Upon which they relying on the Mosaical institution as a perfect pattern of obedience, and looking no further than the appearances of things, adhered strictly to those external ordinances, and neglected those inward qualifications and graces of which these were but the figures and typical representations.

UPON this account therefore we find the Prophets in the Old Testament employed not to remind them of the neglect of their ceremonial observances, but of their transgression of the moral law. For the *Jews* preserving a nice and conscientious regard
for

for their legal institutions, and sharply punishing those who ventured to violate *them*, at the same time abandoned themselves to all the abominable lusts of the heathens.

UPON the same account we find our Lord reproaching them in the words of *Isaiab*, that they *honoured GOD with their lips, but their heart was far from him* *, and upbraiding them with their gross error in their scrupulous exactness in the *paying tithe of mint, anise, and cummin*, and neglecting the *weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith* †. And further, what is more to be wondered at, their teachers, the scribes and pharisees, most remarkably err'd in their explanation of the law; contending for the observation of a set of precepts nowhere to be found in the books of *Moses*, but which had been (as was pretended) handed down to them from age to age from his time. These they preferred to the written law; upon these they grounded those

* *Isaiab* xxix. 13.

† *St. Matth.* xxiii. 23.

falsities,

falsities, which had deluded the people and perverted them from their duty. And so gross were the propositions they advanced, so contradictory to right reason and the positive institution of GOD, that our SAVIOUR denounces a heavy judgment against those false teachers, whose pride made them vain in their imaginations, and turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. It may not be improper to give a particular instance or two, in which they had manifestly mistook and corrupted the word of God;

THE Jews were commanded, *Deut. vi. 8.* to bind those words *for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates**. Which surely are but figurative expressions of what was enjoined them in the 7th verse of the same chapter, *Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and*

* *Exodus xiii. 16.*

thou liest down and when thou risest up. But this carnal people, who were apt to turn all inward piety into outward form and matter of ostentation, understood this commandment literally, and prepared rolls of parchment with multitudes of needless and vain ceremonies, and having wrote on them those and other select passages of Scripture, fitted them to their foreheads and wrote them on their wrists; and these they called *Phylacteries*, as serving to keep the law in their memory; and the Pharisees, who would needs go beyond all others in legal performances, not only fell into this error but improved upon it, and being willing to distinguish themselves for a superior measure of obedience, wore them of an uncommon breadth, and that not out of any superior regard or reverence to Religion, but as our SAVIOUR testifies of them, *to be seen and taken notice of by men.*

AGAIN; *Honour thy father and mother* was one of the duties of the Decalogue*; in

* *Exod. xx. 12.*

which precept is included a positive command to relieve their parents in their necessities. But to deliver children from this *natural* and *rational* obligation, the Pharisees invented an expedient by this ingenious evasive explanation: *Whosoever shall say to his father or mother it is a GIFT by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father or mother he shall be free* †. By which is meant either that he had bound himself by an oath not to relieve them, which oath the Pharisees held lawful and obligatory; or otherwise, that he had consecrated his substance to the service of the temple, and therefore could not convert it to any other use without sacrilege. In either of which cases the Pharisees held, that he had said enough to free himself from any obligation to assist them, however pressing their wants might be, however urgent their necessities. A plain instance, that they corrupted the word of GOD, and made no scruple to maintain their

† St. *Matth.* xv. 5.

own traditions, though by it they set aside their obligation to GOD's express commands.

OTHER instances might be given of their unpardonable errors, of their intolerable impiety, their frequent lapses into idolatry, and their senseless hypocrisy, which so provoked the majesty of Heaven, that he professes an utter detestation of their publick worship. But I shall only subjoin to all this, that the *Jews* in general had but faint and weak notions of a life to come; that some of them openly denied the resurrection and the separate existence of souls departed *; that they were miserably mistaken in their vain and ambitious opinion of the expected MESSIAH and the nature of his kingdom. By all which perverse and wretched conduct they lost the inexpressible benefit of his coming, and by shutting their eyes and ears and hearts from entertaining any motion to-

* *Acts* xxiii. 8.

wards a reformation, drew down the fulness of the Divine vengeance upon them : So that from enjoying the glorious advantage of being GOD's peculiar people, they are become the scorn and contempt of all the world, and a *by-word among all nations.*

I come now,

SECONDLY; To shew in what respects the Son of GOD may be said to have *come a light into the world.*

Ist. THE Son of God may be said to have *come a light into the world,* in the knowledge he has conveyed to us of the Deity. For though the *light of nature* might have informed us that there is one primary efficient Cause of the Universe, self-existent from all eternity, yet by the glorious light of the Gospel alone we are taught to worship GOD the Father, to believe in GOD the Son, and to pray for those gifts and graces which are conferred upon us by GOD the Holy Ghost. The doctrine of the Son's eternal generation, of the creation of the world by him, the mystery of the adorable Trinity, are
saying

ſaving truths above the reach of human reaſon, and beyond the narrow compaſs of man's underſtanding. As are likewise the Son's incarnation, the union of the human and divine nature in him, the ſtupendous inſtance of his love in dying for us. Theſe, and all other Divine truths of our moſt holy religion, are the gift of GOD by the revelation he has made known to us by his Son.

2dly. LIGHT in the ſacred writings is ſet to expreſs the moſt immaculate and perfect purity, ſuitably to which the Son of GOD may be ſaid to have *come a light into the world*, in that by his preaching and example he hath moſt ſtrongly recommended to us the practice of virtue and piety; and inſtructed us in all thoſe duties which are the ornament and perfection of a human ſoul. The moral precepts of Chriſtianity have in them a beauty and energy ſo peculiar to themſelves, ſo much ſuperior in the frame and excellency of their compoſition to any inſtitution whatever, that they juſtly challenge

from every person acquainted with the Gospel, the highest veneration and regard ; our *Lord* himself by his unexceptionable conduct, his piety and goodness, his meekness and charity, set forth the comeliness of virtue in its brightest and most advantageous colours, and by the tenor of his life and actions manifested to all beholders the purity of his thoughts and holiness of his heart. Whatever his example recommended, HE by his discourses enjoin'd his followers, requiring of them a holy and unblameable conversation, a steady and uniform obedience to the will of GOD.

3dly. As the Son of God may be said to have *come a light into the world* in conveying to us the means of Salvation, and instructing us in the true nature of God ; so likewise in the certainty his coming afforded us of a future state. We have seen how much in the dark the Gentiles were in so important a point, and that the *Jews* flattered themselves with the hopes of a temporal redeemer cloath'd with majesty and honour,

who should make their form of government and worship observed throughout the world. But we rely upon no such vain and ridiculous expectations, nor wait for any crown but that of *Eternal Life*. The glorious light of the Gospel has convinced every sober and well-minded man of the certainty of a future state, of rewards and punishments, and fully informed us what are the proper means of justifying ourselves through the merits of *Christ* at the last day.

I COME now in the last place to close the whole with such observations as shall seem properly suggested to us by the subject.

1st. THE substance of what has been delivered under the first head of this discourse, naturally leads us to consider the benefit accruing to mankind under these deplorable circumstances, from a divine revelation. For, if to have the understanding darkened, and the mind immersed in error be (as surely it justly may) esteemed the greatest of misfortunes, then is the information which delivers us out of that ignorance to be looked

upon as a proportionable blessing and advantage. It will follow then, that the dispensation which furnished us with this light is to be received with the highest honour and veneration. How unreasonable therefore is that treatment which Christianity has met with from some of its apostate professors ! Some of whom have endeavoured to sap its foundations by overthrowing its evidence, others by contending, that it contains no more information than the light of nature furnished us with before ; of which last (as bearing an immediate reference to the present subject) it may properly enough be asked, how comes it then that *we* have so much more divine knowledge than the greatest Heathens ? Their capacities, it must be confessed, were as exalted, as extensive, and as acute as ours ; and yet it is as certain that we eminently exceed them in divine knowledge, having a clearer insight into the nature of God and his attributes, into the manner of his dealing with men and the dispensations of his providence. Whence
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have we all this but from the Gospel? And therefore the Gospel has furnished us with such information as no one by the light of nature *only*, had or could acquire.

2dly. THE Gospel-information being so excellent, it may be concluded, that it is not rejected by infidels for any weakness in its evidence, but for another reason, *the nature of its doctrine*; which lays upon their conduct an intolerable restraint, imposes the denying and subduing every inordinate appetite, and affords no entertaining prospect to any, but those who fulfil the precepts of it. This is the spring from whence have arose so many doubts and scruples proposed to overthrow the evidence of the Gospel. For men unwilling to quit their darling passions, *then* begin to start difficulties about their religion, *when* their sensual appetites have got the mastery of their reason; *when* the whole frame of man, heated and distempered by lust, by vice and wickedness, rejects the sober evidence of cool and deliberate reasoning, and attempts at all hazards

to cast off that yoke which will oblige him to a thorough change of life, or irrecoverably plunge him into misery and despair. A wretched delusion ! which first leads a man into danger, and then instead of shewing a way to escape, sinks him deeper into sure destruction.

3dly. THE view we have taken of the thick darkness which overspread the whole world, sets before us in the strongest light the greatness of our obligation to GOD for this glorious manifestation of his will ; whereby he hath redeemed us from the maze of error in which we wandered, and from the dominion and power of Satan, that he might of the children of wrath make us the children of grace. And it highly becomes us to express our gratitude by bringing forth the fruits of this Divine seed sown in our hearts, and as we have seen the *light, walk as children of the light.* Not in the *lust of concupiscence, as the Gentiles, which knew not GOD :* For GOD hath not called us, *i. e.* hath not manifested his will towards us, and redeemed

us from darknefs unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. *Those times of ignorance* GOD *winked at*, but we shall be inexcusable, if we walk not according to the rules he has prescribed us; for to him that *knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.*

LASTLY: It should be remembered that these considerations enforce upon *us* our duty in the strongest manner; for *we* have superior talents imparted to *us*, and therefore from *us* will be expected a superior improvement.—These things are made known unto *us* and not unto the world, *we* being by our education, leisure, and profession better qualified to search out the mystery and benefit of our redemption, it is but reason, therefore, that *we* should endeavour to outshine men of meaner abilities and fewer advantages. For to whom much is given, of him will much be required. That by our steadiness we may fix the wavering, by our Prudence direct the unwary, by our knowledge recal those who are misled, and finally by our upright and unblameable
conduct

conduct silence the enemies of our holy religion. These happy precautions, and commendable resolutions, shall not fail to bless us with a chearful passage through all the unspeakable ills of this calamitous world; knowing that they lead us to that everlasting rest, which shall assuredly be the portion of every good and faithful servant of GOD.

S E R M O N V.

On our SAVIOUR'S PASSION.

PHIL. ii. 8.

*And being found in fashion as a Man,
he humbled himself, and became obe-
dient unto death, even the death of
the Cross.*

WHEN, by the rebellion of our first parents, and the continued corruption of our nature ever since, the condition of mankind was so deplorable, as to threaten nothing less than entire destruction to the bodies and souls of men; when this was the desperate case of us all, then did God Almighty, out of his infinite mercy, look upon us with an eye of pity, so as graciously to design a redemption for us out of so miserable a state. For no sooner did he

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he foresee that by our own folly we should lose ourselves, than by his immense favour he did conclude to restore us.

BUT which way was the justice of God to be satisfied, his honour maintain'd, and his authority vindicated? The sentence of death peremptorily pass'd on all sinners, could not, consistently with his *truth*, be revers'd: the punishment due to the offences of men could not, without a fresh affront to his justice, be mitigated or taken off: neither could the sins and guilt of mankind lie buried in oblivion, unless some satisfaction was made for them. But it is plain, that no creature upon earth could do this: for no man, how pure and innocent soever, could so perform his duty, as to do more than merit and satisfy for himself. Neither indeed could the Angels themselves: for they are but fellow-servants, and have obligations of their own to discharge; being bound, as well as we, in bonds of gratitude, to the service of their great Creator.

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WHEREFORE it is plain, that no creature could aspire to the honour of redeeming from infinite guilt and misery the noblest part of the visible Creation. It being the prerogative of God himself, according to the truth of that frequently repeated proclamation, *I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour.*

BUT although it must be the work of God, yet was it necessary that *Man* should also concur in it. For, as the work of Redemption was a new Covenant, ratify'd with us, therefore human will and consent must be interpos'd: — and as Man had, by willful transgression; so highly offended God, so was it proper that he should, by willing obedience, greatly glorify him.

THEREFORE did the eternal Son of God, taking upon him our nature, undertake our Redemption: subjecting himself to all the frailties of our nature, and the infirmities of our condition. *Who being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

IN which words, to consider the manner of that holy passion we now commemorate, it is proper to discourse on the following points ;

I. ITS being in appearance criminal :

II. ITS being most bitter and painful :

III. ITS being most shameful and ignominious :

IV. ITS peculiar advantagefulness to our Lord's design in suffering :

V. The influence it ought to have on our lives and conversations.

I. WE may consider our Lord's suffering as being in appearance criminal : for in appearance it was an execution of justice upon him : he being, as the Prophet foretold, *numbered among the transgressors*. God, says St. Paul, *made him sin for us who knew no sin* : for he was impeach'd of the highest crimes, as a violator of the divine laws in many instances. So his persecutors avow'd of him to Pilate : *Had he not been a malefactor, we would not have deliver'd him up unto thee*. As such he was represented and arraign'd : and

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as such, tho' wrongfully, he was condemned, and executed. Which circumstance gives a lively image of our Lord's love to mankind. For nothing is more abominable to man's nature than such a death; God having planted in our constitution a quick sense of disgrace: and above all, that which proceeds from an imputation of crimes is most severely felt. Of which we find an instance in our Saviour's question, *Are ye come out against me as against a thief, with swords and staves?* It is more tolerable to an honest mind to languish under a tedious disease, than to be reputed and handled as a villain, and find a quick and easy death.

AGAIN, death being inflicted on him as a malefactor, was most suitable to the nature of his undertaking: for we are all guilty in so high a degree, and in so notorious a manner, as to deserve an open condemnation, and a public punishment. Wherefore he, undertaking in our stead, to bear all, and fully to satisfy for us, was pleas'd to undergo the like judgement and

usage as should have pass'd upon us. *All we, like sheep, have gone astray: we have turn'd every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.*

FURTHER: Seeing that our Lord was, by the determinate counsel of God, to die for us, not in a natural but a violent manner; it was fit it should be transacted in that way wherein it should be most apparent, that God did exact and inflict the punishment, and that our Lord did freely submit to it upon those very accounts. It was therefore a signal act of submission in our Lord, to undergo such a punishment; whereby he receiv'd the stroke of justice from God's hands, represented by his instruments. Wherefore he replied to Pilate, *Thou hadst no power over me (or against me) except it were given thee from above:* intimating that it was in regard to the originally supreme Authority of God his Father, and to his particular appointment upon that occasion, that our Saviour did then submit to those inferior powers, as to the
 proper

proper ministers of divine justice. For had he suffered in any other way, by the private malice or passion of men; God's special providence in that case had been less visible, and our Lord's obedience not so remarkable.

THESE were the Reasons why our Lord should suffer as a criminal.

II. WE are next to observe the pain and bitterness of his suffering; in which manner of his death we may find a fresh instance of our Lord's constancy and love for us. For he did not pass gently out of this world: he did not, by an easy change, put off his fleshly part, but with extremest torment, and most horrid misery; by the piercing his hands and his feet, parts exquisitely sensible, with sharp nails; by hanging the whole weight of his body upon the cross; and this for no small space of time, but for six hours; sustaining each moment of them beyond the pangs of an ordinary death.

III. To this painful circumstance may be added another, that of the shame and ignominy of the punishment: it being of all other the most reproachful, and hardly ever inflicted but on the basest and worst of men. For crucifixion was never inflicted on any person higher than the condition of slaves; who were, in the opinion of the world at that time, little better than brutes, by no means put upon a footing with the rest of mankind. Nothing can be esteem'd more irksome, than to be expos'd as a gazing stock, to the contempt and derision of the inconsiderate and rude vulgar. Accordingly this was one calamitous article of our Lord's suffering. For we read, that they mock'd and revil'd him; verifying that prediction, *I am a reproach of men, and despised of the people; they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lips and shake the head, saying, He trusted in God that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*

THOSE very persons who had been witnesses of his glorious works, who had admir'd his divine discourses, who had follow'd and favour'd him so earnestly, now join'd in venting scornful reproaches; adding to the torment of his present condition, by insulting language.—Thus our Lord *endured the cross, despising the shame*, that is, little regarding it, meekly submitting to it, to accomplish the work of our Redemption.

NOR is it improper to add, that our Lord felt all these evils, in a manner and degree which no man ever did, or could do; suffering beyond the ordinary rate, every evil impress'd upon him: so that no man was so affected with grief from them, as he was. For in respect to present evils, he is said to be weigh'd down with them, to be *sorrowful even unto death*; to be in great anguish and anxiety; and in regard to mischiefs which he saw coming, to be sore amaz'd or dismayed at them. In order to account for which deep agonies, it is to be remember'd, that the near view of God's great indignation

tion, flaming out against sin, terrify'd and oppress'd him.

WE indeed are not so tenderly affected with the apprehensions of God's wrath, or our own danger, because we have very faint conceptions of those matters, they do not in so clear and lively a manner strike upon our fancies: or because we but slightly consider them, being in religious concerns neither so wise, so sober, so diligent, nor so good as we should be. But with our Lord how different was the case! He had the best and quickest sense of God's abhorrence of sin, he discern'd clearly the wrath of God against it, and saw most fully the tendency of it to the utter ruin of the world. And as he was of a nature most kind and compassionate; it is no wonder that he was so extremely affected, that he did suffer in a manner, and to a degree inconceivable. We come now to consider,

IV. THAT this way of suffering had some peculiar advantages in it.

1. As it was public, the truth of it was liable to less exceptions. No body could dispute a matter of fact so well known. There would therefore have been less confirmation of our faith, neither had our Lord's patience, and meekness, and charity, so conspicuously shone forth, as they did through the whole course of his suffering. And as he certainly lived very publicly, suitably to that testimony of himself, *I spake freely to the world, and in secret have I said nothing*; so he died most publicly and visibly: the world being witness of his death, and thereby prepar'd to believe his resurrection, and entertain his doctrine.

2. ANOTHER advantage of this kind of suffering was, that of evidencing to all beholders the true nature of his kingdom; that it was not, as carnal men conceiv'd, a dominion over the bodies and properties of men; not promoted by worldly policy, and maintain'd by human power; but a kingdom 'purely spiritual; reforming the soul, and disposing it, by acts and habits of vir-

tue, to imbibe God's grace; and preparing it by these acquisitions, for the sure enjoyment of eternal happiness.

3. A farther advantage accrued to the Gospel from this kind of suffering in the author of it; that it prov'd the divine concurrence in it's propagation. For how otherwise could it be suppos'd to gain this extraordinary footing; since the preacher and publisher of it was a person of so mean an appearance, so little recommended by his condition to the esteem and admiration of the world; and in the end so shamefully insulted, persecuted, and destroy'd, by the power and malice of his enemies?

HEREIN therefore the excellency of divine wisdom was glorified; accomplishing by so improbable and unlikely means so great effects, subduing the world by the patient submission of an oppress'd person, restoring mankind to happiness by the sorrowful death of a crucified Saviour.

THESE being the advantages of our Saviour's suffering in this manner:

V. THE effect it ought to have on our lives and conversations is,

I. THAT of enflaming our hearts with gratitude to God, for this inestimable benefit. That God should design such a Redemption for us, *not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us (for even when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son)* that God should love us, *sending his Son to be a propitiation for our sins*; How stupendous is that goodness! How vast an obligation doth it lay upon us to reciprocal affection! How greatly should our love flame out to the Son of God, who endur'd these things, who underwent pain and sorrow, shame and ignominy for us! For if love be naturally productive of love, if friendship justly meriteth a return of good will; what effect should the consideration of so ineffable a love, of so unparallel'd a friendship, have upon us?

2. THE consideration of this should enliven our hopes. For what surer foundation can there be to us of faith in God,

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than is suggested by this circumstance? For if God strongly held his resolution, in delivering to death his dearly beloved Son; how can we ever suspect his fidelity, or distrust the completion of any divine promise? If God spared not his own Son; how can we any ways be diffident of his bounty, or despair of his mercy? *How* (as the Apostle argues) *shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* If therefore the greatness of our sins discourage us from entertaining comfortable hopes of mercy; we should cheer our hearts with reflecting, that so great a punishment hath already been inflicted for them; that such a sacrifice hath been offer'd, which God hath avow'd to be most available and acceptable to himself. For, whatever the wounds of our conscience may be, the blood of the *cross*, in conjunction with hearty repentance and a lively faith, is of virtue sufficient to cure them.

FURTHER: This consideration is most useful to render us humble, and sensible of our own weakness and wretchedness. For
 how

how low was that fall, from which we could not be rais'd but by the depreffion of God's only Son! How great was that impotency, which did need fuch a fuccour to relieve it! How abominable that iniquity, which might not be expiated without fo precious a facri-
fice! Wherefore we may conclude, that our guilt was extreme, and our mifery inconceivable; elfe the divine wifdom had undoubtedly chofen an eafier remedy for us. We therefore certainly fhould entertain no pride and conceit of ourfelves, who were fo near the brink of ruin; who were cover'd with the foulnefs of our iniquities, and obliged to fo inestimable a ransom for our redemption. Nothing can be a more palpable confutation of human vanity, than that crofs, wherein, as in a glafs, our deformity and meannefs, our own infirmity and weaknefs, were fo fully represented.

4. THIS event fhould infpire us with a hearty deteftation of our fins. For we, with great reason, hold in abomination all thofe who were instruments of our Lord's death.

But

But how much more reason is there, that we should detest our sins, which were the true and principal actors in that sad tragedy! And what, in reason, can work more powerfully toward penitential-sorrow and remorse, than to reflect upon the horrid effects proceeding from our sins: since they were, in reality, the betrayers and persecutors of our blessed Master?

5. AGAIN: The consideration of this event should dispose us to the practice of charity towards our neighbour. For what heart can be so hard, that the consideration of the cross cannot melt into a compassionate tenderness for his fellow-creatures? How can we forbear to love those, for whom Christ bore such tortures and indignities? We certainly cannot, by any excuse whatever, be releas'd from the obligation of parting with a little of our worldly goods, for their support, for whose sake our blessed Lord parted with his glory, and laid down his life. *This is my command, saith our Lord, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you,*

you. Beloved, if God so loved us, then ought we also to love one another. Hereby we perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. Wherefore we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. All which precepts dispose us to comply with them, for the sake of our crucified Saviour, whose whole life was nothing but one continued enforcement and recommendation of this duty: but his death was most especially obliging and incentive thereto.

6. NOTHING can dispose us so properly to a resignation to the will of God, as the contemplation of our Saviour's passion. For no greater example can possibly be afforded, of a cheerful submission, and unlimited obedience, than our Lord has set before us: who in the midst of the greatest torments, and the most unjust treatment, conducted himself with inimitable patience and resignation; from whom, the severest agonies, and most piercing sorrows, could extort nothing contrary to the will of his Father: *Thy will, and not mine, be done,* was the utmost

most which could be press'd from him, by all the suggestions of the powers of darkness, and the heaviest miseries. — Though we find him in the height of his tortures and afflictions, passionately exclaiming, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* yet he resign'd his breath with this holy and pious ejaculation, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* — A lesson of incomparable use, for patience under all the severe trials of this world, for resignation to the divine will, and for a firm reliance on God's faithfulness and truth.

THESE are some of the uses to be made of the holy Passion which we now commemorate; and which ought to engage our attention more especially at this season: as the likeliest means of exciting in us that humility, which becomes us when joining in so solemn an act of repentance; and those grateful and pious affections, which will recommend us to God, and render our Saviour's sufferings available to our salvation.

S E R M O N VI.

Upon the Duty of WATCHFULNESS.

S. MARK xiii. 37.

— *And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.*

THIS chapter, in general, contains a prophecy of the calamities shortly to be inflicted upon the *Jews*: our Lord taking occasion to recount them, from a question put to him by his disciples. For, at his going out of the Temple, they request him to observe the admirable and costly structure of it, the unusual largeness, as well as the magnificent disposition, of the stones used in the buildings. His reply, that *there shall not be left one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down*, was, no doubt, a sensible check to the pleasure with which they viewed them. Whereupon we find that, after he was seated upon the mount of Olives,

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over-against the temple, their mind was so taken up with the catastrophe threatened, that they resume the fact, and require our Lord to give them the time in which it shall happen, and some tokens of it's approach: surmising, that so remarkable and astonishing a destruction would be introduced by some eminent changes, which would be the warnings and forerunners of its accomplishment.

By what follows it appears, that our Lord did but in part answer their question, giving them indeed some tokens to judge of it's approach, but not hinting in the least to them the appointed time. He acquaints them that many should pretend to deliver their nation, who should gain many followers, though in fact they were but vain deceivers: that national dissensions should be a sign, and the fatal consequences of civil wars, such as tumults, famine, and universal commotions: nevertheless, these are but the beginning of sorrows. Another sign here mentioned to them, are those troubles

troubles which should immediately affect them upon account of the Gospel, the persecutions which they should meet with, and the uncertainty of their safety, since religious zeal should cancel the ties of the nearest relation. To add to all these, as a pregnant foreboding of this destruction, they should see the army of the Gentiles closely besieging *Jerusalem*, expressed by the *abomination of desolation standing where it ought not*.

AFTER these hints, our Lord proceeds so far to fix the time, as to say, that it should happen in that present age; so that many then alive should be witnesses to it, and to the truth of his words. But he entirely waves the determining the day and hour of it's final completion; affirming that it was not revealed to the Prophets, nor to the Angels, "nor was it any part of his commission, as Son of Man, to declare it*." To preclude therefore any further curiosity about that, our Lord inculcates from these impending dangers, the necessity

* *Hamm.* in loc.

of courage in their profession; and from the uncertainty of their coming, (styled his coming,) the obligation of being perpetually watchful. *Take heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is.* To enforce which duty he makes use of a familiar allusion; comparing this his coming, to the uncertainty when the master of the house will return, who is gone a great journey, and the necessity incumbent upon them to discharge their respective portions of business imposed, with all diligence, that they may be sure to have finished before his return; *lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping,* i. e. in a posture incapable of receiving him, or a disposition utterly unfit to partake of the benefit of his presence.

WITH good reason did our Lord lay upon them this injunction; knowing the unquiet situation of the *Jewish* affairs, the civil distractions which tore up and destroyed the very shadow of peace, and the additional calamity of a foreign invasion. During which commotions, the fury of blind and

untempered zealots, and the artful and plausible pretences of cunning impostors, were so many snares, to catch the unwary, and to delude the innocent, to shake the steadiness of the one, or to taint the purity of the other.

So far the words of the text and duty of watchfulness seem applicable to them only, and not to us; as being founded on circumstances of times and things, in which we are not concerned: For an incident which has come to pass so long ago as that of the *Jewish* dispersion, might seem to take off from us, at this distance of time, any obligation to attend to the precept before us. But they who judge so consider neither the words themselves, nor the significative importance of that judgment. For the words themselves extend the duty to others, as well as those first disciples. *What I say unto you, I say unto ALL:* by which comprehensive term we are all included, *i. e.* to every one who professes himself a follower and disciple of Christ, this precept of watchfulness

is recommended. Neither can any one presume to say, that by the *all* there mentioned, all those were intended who were alive at that time, whether they were at the hearing of this discourse or not; and so judge themselves at present not concerned in it: For then, no doubt, our Lord would have added, “What I say unto you here present, “I say to all who are alive at this time.” But as he has made no such limitation himself, but thought fit to put it absolutely; we have no right to make any such comment, or to understand it otherwise than he has expressed it.

By the words therefore it is evident, that the precept of watchfulness is extended to us. Which will farther be confirmed, by observing the significative importance of the destruction threatened in this chapter. For, although what is related of the Son of Man's coming be literally and immediately referred to his visitation of the *Jews*, which is the peculiar subject of this discourse; yet has it been always looked upon as an emblematical

blematical representation of something more. And if so, the duty of watchfulness inculcated from it, must be admitted to have an equal share in this more remote transaction.

THE coming of the Son of Man is understood in three different respects:—in his human nature, as in the flesh;—in his coming to visit, and avenging himself on his enemies, as in the present case;—and lastly, his coming finally to judgment †. Of which the last is typified or represented by the second: as appears by the same subject treated on by *St. Matthew*, at the conclusion of which (interrupted only by the parable of the virgins) our Lord discourses of his coming in judgment. And it is evident that the analogy is kept up, by parity of circumstances: For, in the judgments upon the *Jews*, there are some who are promised to be preserved and rescued from those dreadful calamities: as in the general judgment there are rewards assigned to faithful

† *Hamm.* in loc.

fervants. The conclusion of the age, which is shut up by the ruin of the *Jewish* œconomy and government, points out the end of the world by the consummation of all things. The duty of watchfulness therefore being enforced upon the consideration of the uncertainty and severity of these national transactions; and these transactions evidently referring to the more distant and final change which should affect all men at the general judgment; it must be referred and continued to the same period. Upon the account therefore of the general judgment, and the consequences of it, we are bound to be watchful: because this last coming shall be attended with as great uncertainty as to the time, and with as great, nay, with much more importance, as to the Event.

HAVING thus given you the extent of the precept, and evidently proved our concern in it, I proceed,

I. To the nature and properties of this duty.

II. To

II. To the wisdom of attending to it.

I. *1st*. THE nature of this duty consists in being upon our guard, that no temptation to sin shall overpower or mislead us: for, as it is the care and duty of a vigilant guard, to admit nothing which may be hurtful; so is it the property of this religious vigilance, to exclude all things that tend to the corruption, and consequently the destruction of the soul: Every thought which taints it's purity, which indulges it's proneness to vice, is to be looked upon as it's enemy, and to be shut out from thence upon the first advances. How can we otherwise be said to be watchful, if we inadvertently let those inclinations take place in it which assuredly debauch it? If we suffer them to remain so long, that by an habitual entertainment, they are too firmly rooted to be easily forced out; it is hardly consistent with this duty, to admit the near approach of any moral evil, but rather it's property to discern it at a great distance, and either to repel it's force, or in time get out of it's way.

2dly. IT is the nature of this duty, to search carefully for expedients to advance in virtue: every such additional acquisition being a farther security. Thus, diligent warriors (and our trial in this world is styled a Warfare) are deeply engaged, not barely in defending themselves, but in annoying the enemy, in breaking his power, and disarming him for the prevention of future mischief. The same methods are conducive to our safety: and therefore, were we duly watchful, as we ought to be, we should break the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil, by endeavouring to establish in our souls a habit of virtue. For how much the more we are inured to the one, by so much the more shall we be enabled to resist the other.

BUT more particularly, a man who is duly watchful over himself will not suffer himself to be surprized into any thing, which he knows will offend God. He will therefore (the better to secure himself) diligently seek his will, and acquaint himself with his commandments. His mind will
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be so steadily fixed on the performance of his several duties, that he will easily discern the least tendency in himself to deviate from it, and stop it's further progress. This perpetual exercise of himself will so clearly instruct him in obedience, that no false gloss or deceitful appearance will be able to mislead him: his whole practice will be conformable to what *David* affirms of the godly, that he will *exercise himself in the law of the Lord day and night.*

3. *Lastly.* THE man who is duly watchful, will bend his attention chiefly to the observance and correction of those failings to which he is more immediately subject. Therefore, if he finds himself subject to passion, he will more studiously consider the ill effects of causeless anger; if lust be his failing, he will carefully avoid those opportunities which afford him occasion of indulging it: if drunkenness be too apt to ensnare him, he will be the more upon his guard when the temptation is set before him: and so, in all other cases, he will not fail

fail to fortify his good resolves, in those articles wherein lies his principal weakness.

HAVING thus discoursed of the nature and properties of the duty of watchfulness; I proceed,

II. To observe to you the wisdom of attending to it: which will appear from the consideration of those dangers, to which we are daily subject.

1st. THE proneness of our nature to vice sets before us the wisdom of being watchful. For the present corruption and degeneracy of our souls are daily tempting us to satisfy our lusts; are hourly solliciting us to indulge every appetite. Under many specious pretences, *vice* insinuates itself into our affections, endeavouring to justify it's reception by pleading an excusable necessity of complying with it. This is what makes us easy in wickedness, and lulls us into a fatal security, by stifling the motions of our conscience, and puts us upon finding excuses for the irregularity of our
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conduct: Thus, from one evil compliance we proceed to another; being equally ready to justify ourselves in the last as in the first transgression. Such a danger as this we are involved in by the corruptness of our own will, and the depravity of our own appetite; which blind our judgments, in order the more firmly to bind us the *servants of iniquity, unto iniquity*. Which, being a danger all men may fall into, explains at once the wisdom as well as necessity of watchfulness.

2dly. THE general practice of the world is so great a countenance to vice, that we have need of being watchful, lest this circumstance betray us. Surely, if wickedness was of so bad a nature, so many would not give into it. Surely, if its consequences were so fatal, more people would avoid it. How plausible a defence is this for vice! how successful a plea for wicked compliances! How many are driven on with the torrent of a multitude, to measure right and wrong, not by themselves, but the force of numbers: the prevalence of ex-
ample

ample defeating the means of better instruction, and bearing down before it the opposition of reason and religion! This is the cruel rock on which so many have been dashed to pieces: and the fearful abyfs in which they have been irrecoverably swallowed up, and lost for ever. By the number of their partners, men strengthen themselves in their wickedness: they encourage themselves in mischief, as if numbers availed against God, or the example of their neighbours would justify in them their transgressions. Weak as this defence is, many have presumed upon it, and made the lives of other men the rule of their own practice: which being so fallible and precarious a reliance; the duty of watchfulness comes in to our assistance seasonably to prevent our ruin by so dangerous an invasion.

3dly. NOT only the examples and practices, but the reasonings and discourses of other men oblige us to be watchful. For, we see, they are not content with being wicked,

wicked, unless they can make others so. They think they cannot do enough for the cause of vice, unless they acquire the concurrence of others likewise. Hence it is, that men bend all their endeavours, and rack their invention, to varnish over vice by specious apologies, and display their eloquence in extenuating the guilt and danger of sinning. Hence we see so many snares spread for the innocent, by the artful discourses of old offenders. These are they, who are to be avoided as a noisome pestilence: whose contagious breath is a deadly and incurable poison; *whose mouth uttereth falsehood, and bringeth forth deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips.* Can we acknowledge the truth of these things, which daily experience confirms, and not think it our duty to be watchful? Can we judge this precept does not relate to us, when we are set in the midst of so many and great dangers; possessed of a degenerate nature; encompassed with a corrupt world; who not only by their example, but by their arguments,

ments, endeavour to enfnare our fouls, whose attempts are promoted by the vigilance of that declared enemy to God and Man, the Devil? For,

4thly. HE imperceptibly works and labours for our ruin: he joins all these in their meafures, and fuggests more: he weakens our good refolves, and ftrengthens our vicious inclinations: he throws continually ftumbling-blocks of offence in our way; propofing at one time worldly advantages, at another temporal honours, alluring us with every tempting bait, and encouraging us to go on with the hopes of impunity.

5. Laftly. WE may obferve the wifdom of being watchful, from the uncertainty of that important period, the coming of Chrift to judgment.

FOR it is an instance of prudence, to provide for the worft, and to guard againft a furprize. As therefore we know neither the day, nor the hour, in which our Lord cometh; we fhould be always ready and ever prepared. What can we call it but extreme

treme folly to be otherwise: to busy ourselves about things of no moment, in comparison of this consideration, which is of such consequence?

THE fate of the five foolish virgins, who slept when the bridegroom came, and had provided themselves with nothing proper for his reception*, was a fit emblem of the utter confusion of those who live in this world without preparing for another; of that utter confusion which they must be in when God calls them before his tribunal. Accordingly, a judgment proportionate to such a folly is threatened to be inflicted upon them. All which is represented, by the similitude of the master of the house; who, if he had known *at what hour the thief would come*, would, according to all human prudence, have provided for his own security. From this familiar instance it is inferred, that it is a rational part to act thus in an article of so great concern: and the destruction which shall unavoidably overwhelm

* *Matt. xxv.*

those who act unfuitably to this warning, is described by the sudden punishment of that wicked servant, who shall presume, in the absence of his master, to abuse his fellow-creatures, and to indulge himself in all manner of riot. *For the Lord of that servant shall come, in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour which he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him a portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

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S E R M O N VII.

A Funeral Sermon.

ISAIAH lvii. 1.

The Righteous perisheth, and no one layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away. — None considering that the Righteous are taken away from the Evil to come.

THE words before us are by some Commentators imagined to refer to the death of *Josiah* or *Hezekiah*, two very righteous and religious kings of *Judah*; and to contain a reflection of the Prophet's, upon the unconcerned conduct of his Countrymen at this event. If indeed we confine it to the history of *Josiah*, it furnishes us with matter of astonishment at this beha-

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viour of the *Jews*. For the happiness of the nation was closely connected with his life, and received it's final period with his death, which was to be the immediate prelude to dreadful calamities, by the introduction of a cruel and foreign yoke. The promise made to him, that he should not see the captivity of his people, was well known in *Jerusalem*. And therefore, his being *taken away*, or (as the words import) his being *gathered to his grave*, ought, in reason, to have raised some apprehensions in them, that these judgments were just coming upon their heads. And if it did not alarm them, the Prophet might very justly expostulate with them, for so unaccountable a proceeding.

BUT, if we consider the words in a greater latitude, as containing matter of more general instruction; if we compare them with the too common indifference of the world at the loss of good and righteous persons; we shall find abundant reason to join with the Prophet, in his general charge

against the world, that *the Righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart, that merciful men are taken away, while no man considers that the Righteous is taken away from the evil to come.*

Now the death of righteous persons cannot be in itself a matter of indifference to the world; because of the advantages which the world does and must receive by their continuance in it. Considered in this light, the subject will afford matter of serious reflection to those who survive. — Neither can we help giving attention likewise to the circumstance of the latter part of the text; namely, that *the Righteous are taken away from the evil to come*: as it leads us naturally to consider the consequences of such being removed out of this world, with *respect to themselves.*

I shall therefore bestow a few reflections upon each of these articles: presuming that, as they are of general concern, so they will not appear wholly foreign to the occasion of our present meeting.

I. I. THE first advantage which I shall mention, which the world receives by the continuance of righteous people in it, is the support and countenance which they give to the cause of virtue and religion. For the usefulness of such examples is very obvious, as greatly contributing towards the repressing the violent progress of licentious sinners, and the confirming and establishing the well-disposed and serious part of mankind.

THERE is indeed such a deference paid to these characters, that vice generally hides it's head from their observation: generally, I choose to say, because some spirits are so utterly abandoned and void of shame, that they are subject to no controul from any thing. But however, for the most part, and more particularly in the presence of good people, the appearance of decency will be preserved: there being a secret and irresistible authority in goodness, which will put the yoke of restraint upon the neck of it's avowed adversaries. And though this be
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all which it can do with such wretches; yet even this open check and chastisement of sin is accompanied with many advantages; by putting some stop and hindrance (though perhaps but for a season) to the more flagrant commission of sin.

BUT with the well-disposed, the example of good people carries a more weighty influence: it works with stronger efficacy; and, meeting with a good soil, successfully improves and enriches it. Young minds and tender natures, will be ready and desirous to shelter themselves under their protection; and cheerfully press forward, to walk in the steps of good men, whose characters and examples fortify them in their good resolves, and enable them to frustrate the open attacks, or delusive snares, that vice, or the patrons of vice may offer as impediments to piety.

2dly, THE continuance of good men is a benefit to the world; as by their conduct and prayers, they often stand between it and the punishment of sin. The serious

and religious part of the world cannot but frequently look upon it in this view: since this notion has certainly the warrant of Scripture; as it furnishes us with many examples, of God's accepting the intercession of the Righteous, in behalf of the wicked and offending.

WHAT, otherwise, was the interposition of *Abraham* with respect to *Sodom*? which would have succeeded, could there, amongst the miserable inhabitants of this abandoned city have been found so few as but ten persons, who could answer the conditions upon which the request was made and granted.

AND more than once was the disobedience of the *Israelites* threatened with utter destruction: which had been executed, had not *Moses* (to use the words of the Psalmist) *stood before them in the gap*. Nor can we confine this opinion to the peculiar government of God over the *Jews*: since *St. James* exhorts us to *pray one for another*, adding as a motive and encouragement, that *the*
effectual

effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

THERE is nothing then so peculiar in this notion, as to oblige us to reject it. And it serves to raise in us a proper concern for the loss of religious people: acquainting us at the same time with the force and energy of true righteousness; which, in this respect, has been, and may be still, the instrument of publick good, and a safeguard and security, as well as an honour, to the world.

NOT that this opinion is to be carried so far, as to say, that it will absolutely prevent the punishment of sin: but that the prayers and conduct of righteous men may suspend the wrath of God for a while, and thereby gain time for a seasonable repentance.

3dly, THE well-being of the world is promoted by the generosity and charity of good people. As in the former particulars, the conduct of good people has been observed to operate chiefly in the remedy of moral evils; so will it be found to be

not less effectual in redressing the natural evils of this world.

WHOEVER considers the large scene which is opened here to tender and benevolent natures—the wide and various prospect afforded us of hunger and nakedness, sickness, and want; must be lost to all sentiments of humanity, if he forbears to bless the hand of the charitable Christian, busily employed in amending and contracting so sad a scene. Nor less ungrateful must he be to God, the author of all our blessings, who forgets to thank and praise him, for raising up such instruments of compassion to helpless distress.

How mean a figure does the rich and affluent man make, who converts all his substance, from a selfish and greedy assiduity, to the aggrandizing his own person, and the gratification of his pampered appetites? like a bottomless gulph, which buries in it's insatiable bowels, whatsoever is bestowed upon it, for ever lost and secreted from sight and use.

How

How much more becoming God's best and last workmanship is that Character, which freely distributes, out of it's abundance, to the wants and necessities of the unfortunate: like the sun, which disperses it's wholesome rays, imparting light and warmth to the whole system around it? Were indeed ability and benevolence more frequently united, the state of this world would put on another face, and be greatly altered from what at present it is seen and known to be. But, by benevolence I mean, not the speculative virtue of the heathen moralist; but the actual practice of the grace of charity, upon the Christian foundation, the love of God and of man. To which, if persons in exalted stations gave more attention; they would neither put so false a value upon, nor make so wrong an use as they do of uncertain riches.

AND here, my subject naturally obliges me to apply this part of my discourse, to the well-known example of her, whose remains are before us.

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THERE is a kind of harmony and connection between some duties, and especially the relative ones, which call forth (on a suitable attention to the first and principal) the practice of the rest in their order. Thus, a good husband or wife generally makes a good parent, a good governor of a family, a good neighbour, and a good member of community. All these relations open a large field of action; and if duly executed, an equal one of admiration and esteem. Yet this picture of human nature, graceful and amiable as it is, is no more than what was presented to us; no more than what was held up to your view, by the person whose loss you must so justly lament.

NOR was she less adorned with that truly Christian grace, humility; a qualification which was the characteristick of the blessed author of our religion: a grace, so frequently recommended in Scripture, distinguished by so high an encomium, as that — of being *in the sight of God of great price.*

AND it must be confessed, that, setting
aside

aside religious motives, the practice of this grace bestows a present reward on all who possess it.—For, though the distance and reserve which (through the false taste and fashion of the world) persons of great fortunes or abilities, are too apt to keep with the rest of mankind, procure them indeed the outward form of ceremonious respect; yet they constantly fail of that inward veneration and silent esteem, which are sure to be paid to a conduct more open, more condescending, and freer of access. In how large a degree, the person before us possessed this happy ornament, through the whole tenor of her life; and the little she valued herself on the account of her superior circumstances; there are a cloud of witnesses here present to attest.

AND perhaps, a much greater might be brought, to acknowledge her diffusive charity to the poor objects about her. For this acceptable sacrifice was freely offered to God, by her being ever ready to give, and glad to distribute.

AFTER

AFTER what has been delivered, in general, of the advantages of the continuance of righteous people in the world, and the particular instance before us — Can *the Righteous perish, and no man lay it to heart?* Can these events come to pass, and we that survive be wholly unconcerned? Reflection, reason, and religion, dictate otherwise. Our own interest, and the interest of our fellow-creatures, forbid us to be indifferent.

II. LET us pass on then to the next consideration, the consequences of the removal of such characters out of the world, with *respect to themselves.*

I. THE first consequence to them, is that of an immediate deliverance from the miseries of this world. And whoever considers the small satisfaction which the best condition of this life affords, will grant that the happiness of righteous people commences only at their death. If we reckon up the tedious hours of vexation, the cares and disappointments, the many periods spent
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in trifling pursuits, all foreign to the expectations, and irksome to the spirits of those, whose hopes are placed on better things; we cannot but look upon their deliverance from these, as an act of God's favour to them. Nor of less importance is the consideration of their being relieved from those painful reflections, which they must feel, concerned as they must be for the honour of God: which must oppress them with grief, for the folly and danger of their fellow-creatures.

BUT we may proceed further, to take into the account the many painful diseases and infirmities, incident to our bodies. But, however we accustom ourselves to think death a deliverance to any man in such unhappy circumstances; it is, properly speaking, only so to the Righteous: who, upon a separation from this mortal life, have nothing further to fear; who, having paid the common debt of nature, rest in peace.

To such indeed, the approach of a sharp and virulent distemper is the prophetick minister

minister of approaching happiness: and every alteration of the blood and juices, tending to the destruction of the outward man, the forerunner and signal of his approaching tranquillity. Considering therefore the pains and insufferable torments of languishing diseases, the portion of most men, and common to all; the happiness of the Righteous is evident, who is past the stroke, and above the reach of such misfortunes.

2. THE second consequence of the removal of good people out of this world, is their deliverance from the temptations of it.

FOR what comfort can even the fairer side of life administer, with all its constant attendance of pride and vanity? These too often clothe vice in its most specious colours, and introduce unreasonable liberties, and an abandoned use of pleasures. By these, the mind is gradually corrupted, and insensibly drawn away from an application to the necessary and important precepts of virtue. The sense of duty becomes

im-

impaired; and the passions thereby being let loose and unrestrained, are often indulged, to the irretrievable loss of innocence. This is too frequently the prospect which a fair and unprejudiced view of life affords us; either of wearing us out by disappointments and misery, or of ruining us in our better hopes by the deceitful allurements of a dangerous prosperity.

THIS reflection then, may be justly made on the removal of the Righteous: that, being exempt from the calamities of this world (a circumstance extremely desirable) and secured from the corruptions of it, (a point of the utmost importance) they are truly and happily removed from *the evil to come*.

3. THE last circumstance attending the removal of the Righteous out of this world with *respect to themselves*, is — their being received into a state of happiness and glory.

AND the knowledge of this, is *the gift of God, through Jesus Christ, who shall change*
our

our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body.

THESE were the glad tidings which were promulged by the Gospel: tidings of joy indeed; which have fixed the labours of the good and virtuous; which have determined their hopes, and set before them a prize worthy of their attaining; a reward suitable to the unbounded benevolence of a gracious Creator and merciful Redeemer: which have taken away the loathsome sting of death, and enabled every true servant of God to look on the king of terrors with complacency and satisfaction.

NOTHING can give a man more solid comfort, than the knowledge and certainty of the reward of the Righteous. For what are losses, disappointments, diseases, and death, to him, who can look forward to that blessed morning of the general assembly of the world! Look forward, I mean, with inward satisfaction and holy hope, upon that grand scene, which shall then display the beginnings of his joy and blessedness,
and

and glory; which shall justify him in the assembly of the saints, and conduct him to everlasting happiness and peace.

LET us then secure to ourselves a part in this reward; by observing those rules, which, according to reason and scripture, must provide it for us. Nothing can serve so well to the regulating our lives here, as the reflection, that our bodies shall be recalled from the sleep of death, into motion, sense, and life; shall be accountable for those actions which, in it's former union with the soul, it has committed.

LET us follow after holiness, meekness, and charity. Let us preserve in our hearts, a lively faith in the mercies of Christ: and seriously endeavour to live up to the precepts of the gospel,— by repentance, — by amendment, — by perseverance. These happy steps steadily pursued, will not fail to raise in this world, that solid satisfaction, which is to the good Christian but a foretaste of that happiness, which he shall

experience at the last day: when he shall be caught up in the air, to meet the Lord of life and glory, and sit down in the mansions of everlasting bliss.

SER-

S E R M O N VIII.

Upon PUBLICK WORSHIP.

ECCLES. v. 1.

Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God; and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

PART I.

SOLOMON having in the former chapters, suitably to his design, expos'd the vanity and weakness of all worldly pursuits, whether they relate to a private or publick state; enters in this, upon a fresh and more important subject of complaint. For, though the general error of mankind, in eagerly setting their hearts, and placing their affections, on this world, so little worthy of regard, furnished the Preacher

with sufficient matter to declaim against their folly; yet further proofs of it occurred to him, when he turned his thoughts to the proper remedy for these evils, a true sense of Religion. For that is the only effectual cure of the unspeakable ills which this world produces, the only healing balm for the sore afflictions of our mortal state.

WHEREVER therefore Religion is neglected and thrown aside, or becomes so corrupted as to seduce the understanding into error, and to misguide the will and affections; that which should be the support and comfort of men, is utterly taken away: a misfortune infinitely worse than any affliction under the sun: as far indeed exceeding it, as the concerns of another life are incomparably greater than those of the present. The knowledge of this, joined to what he had before spoken of, from which indeed it is the proper inference, inclined him, in the words of the text, to excite men to a due observance of Religion, hinting at the common abuses of it, and

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prescribing a form of a more suitable practice.

Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God; and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

IN which words, the Preacher reprehends the common inadvertence of men in their publick addresses to God Almighty: exhorting them to consider the propriety of a decent behaviour when they approach their Maker, which is expressed by *keeping* or observing *the feet*; that is, the pulling off the shoes or sandals; an expression in those eastern countries, of reverence and respect. And this particular custom is, by a proper figure, here introduced, to comprehend and set forth the reverence which is due to the house of God, the regard which men ought to pay to the occasion of their coming thither, and the necessity then of a pious disposition both of body and soul.

THE latter part of the text contains another admonition no less useful: For as, in the first, *Solomon* prescribes a reverential regard to the publick instituted worship; so, in the second place, he warns men not to place the whole of Religion in such observances. For, as it is a great sin, either to neglect the publick worship of God, or to perform it in a negligent and careless manner; so, on the other hand, is it a great folly, to trust wholly in such performances (however regular and exact) or to think that in doing this they discharge all their duty. *Be more ready to hear, that is, to obey God's precepts of justice and goodness, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.*

THERE cannot be a greater abuse of Religion, or a greater affront to the majesty of Heaven, than the officious zeal of wicked men to comply with the outward forms of Religion, and at the same time to live in neglect of the rest of God's commands. For they consider not that their sacrifices
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and offerings are an abomination to him, who requires truth and purity in the inward parts: and therefore, instead of wiping away their offences, by numerous and costly sacrifices, such men aggravate their guilt, and add to their sin. Upon which consideration, says the preacher, *Be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools*: apply yourselves chiefly to the main of Religion, to fulfil the duties of the valuable part of it, namely, the tribute of the heart and affections, the humble submission of the will to the commands of God. For this is a safer practice, and more pleasing to God, than the most costly and frequent sacrifices of the wicked.

THE words thus explained, contain two certain truths.

I. THE necessity of frequenting the Church of God, and of a proper behaviour there.

II. AN equal necessity of attending to the design of such performances; namely,

that of improving ourselves in all Christian virtues.

OF each of these we shall discourse in their proper places.

I. IN discoursing of the first part I shall undertake these two things:—

First, TO shew that we are under an obligation to frequent the publick worship of God.

Secondly, TO consider in what consists a proper and reverent behaviour there.

I. NOW it is to be remarked, that my discourse is directed to such who believe that there is a God: and therefore I am not now to prove it, but, taking it for granted, am to shew that it naturally and necessarily follows from it, that he is to be worshipped.

WHICH will appear, from the relation in which we stand to him, the perfections which are in him, and the influences which we receive from him.

NOW if we consider God in the relation in which we stand to him, we consider him as our Creator, and ourselves as his crea-
tures :

tures: we look on him as the Author of our being, and on ourselves as immediately the work of his hands.

HERE then is the first reason for our worship of him. For the blessing of life imparted to us, demands our tribute of praise and thanksgiving. This was the reason St. *Paul* gave the *Athenians* for the worship of the true God: *in him we live, and move, and have our being.* And this has been the sense of the world, both before and since: all nations and ages, all sects and religions, agreeing in this sentiment; that if there is a God, it follows immediately, that he is to be worshipped.

BUT if we consider the perfections which are in him, we still farther see our obligation to worship him. For, whether we consider his infinite *truth, goodness, or power;* they are all so many ties upon us, to adore that excellent Being, who is possessed of these attributes. Hereupon therefore, we find, in the darkeſt ages of heatheniſm, their variety of idolatry little more than the wor-
ship

ship which they paid to the different perfections, which they apprehended to reside in the supreme Being. For, wherever even the most mistaken of men conceived these perfections to subsist; there they of course acknowledged that worship and homage ought to be paid. These deluded men therefore in their state of darkness and idolatry, will rise up in judgment against the wicked men of these more enlightened times, who professing to believe in God, yet live in a neglect of worshipping him, and attempt even to argue in defence of such a conduct.

AGAIN: The influences which we receive from God, are an unanswerable argument for the worship of him. For, do we not receive every good thing from his gracious hand? Is it not he who governs the seasons, and by a continued miracle, produces all those things of which we stand in need? How then can we stand excused from worshipping so gracious, so good a Being? by whose bounty we are nourished, by whose
power

power we are protected, by whose preserving hand *we are holden up ever since we were born.* Does it not naturally follow from the enjoyment of such blessings, that we are to praise and honour him, that we are to look up to him for our aid and support, that we are to beg of him the continuance of that *mercy* which is *over all his works?*

THUS it seems, that the worship of God flows naturally from the relation we stand in to him, from the nature of his perfections and attributes, and from the influences which we receive from him.

WHICH last argument may still carry us further: when we reflect on our own infirmities, on the weak and helpless condition of our nature. For we are liable to numberless accidents and misfortunes; we are set in the midst of many dangers, and utterly unprovided, by any power in ourselves, to guard against these evils; and equally unable to procure ourselves any good. Now in all these cases, some or other of which really affect all mankind, our only

remedy is addressing ourselves to the Supreme *Power*, for the removal of any afflictions, or the attainment of any good. So that the worship of God Almighty seems necessarily joined to our condition; the most desirable circumstance in life; the necessary defence against, and the properest application to (otherwise) insupportable calamities. And therefore from God Almighty we receive the blessings of life: so from him is our safeguard: under *the shadow of his wings* only can we be secure: in the wisdom and tenderness of his providence only, we are protected from those unspeakable ills, which would unavoidably intail upon us a miserable being.

WHETHER we look on the fairer or less pleasing side of life, it will appear, that we owe all our happiness to God Almighty: and therefore, our obligation to worship him, every way appears as an undeniable truth.

IT being certain then, that God is to be worshipped; we will consider how far the
argu-

argument will hold for worshipping him in publick.

Now, if we reflect, that the benefits which God bestows are either general, as they relate to collective bodies of men and communities; or particular, as they relate to individuals; it will appear, that the obligation will arise in respect to both these characters.

FOR, as every one acknowledges God's general providence or care over cities and states; so must he allow that he is in that light to be worshipped by them, as such: which can be no otherwise, than in a publick manner. As therefore every individual man is, as has been already proved, under an obligation to the worship of God upon his private account, so will it follow that kingdoms and states are under an obligation, to acknowledge their dependence upon God, in their publick capacity. And this is the rise of an instituted national Religion: that a whole nation may, as such, in some certain method, join in the worship

ship of God. Accordingly, as all people (which has been already observed) acknowledge the necessity of worshipping God; so did all nations institute some form of Religion, to be observed by all, as the distinguishing mark, by which they might all be known to comply with this natural duty: so that, at length, it is become in some degree the test whether men have any Religion or no: and their publick conformity or refusal, the proof of their private sentiments. I would not have it thought, that I intend, by this reasoning, to argue those out of all Religion who do not conform: but it may raise a question, how far they shut themselves out of the benefits of a publick body, by dissenting from the national Church.

BUT further: If God is to be worshipped at all, it will follow, that we ought to worship him in publick. For, is not every testimony of our respect the more so, the more publick it is? Does it not assert the honour of God more conspicuously, that

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we honour him in publick? Why then, if we honour him, should we not honour him in the most publick manner we can? in that manner, which will more powerfully shew the sense of his mercies; which will excite others to the worship of him, to the increase of his glory, and the honour of his great name? For, surely, we can never too sensibly testify our gratitude to him, or our dependence on him. Nay, we cannot, without sin, omit any opportunities of advancing his glory, and of setting forth his praise.

IT appears therefore, that the obligation to worship God in publick, is of equal force with that of worshipping him at all. Which argument, if any would evade the force of, yet how shall he get clear of another; namely, that wherever God Almighty has made a revelation of himself, there he has expressly commanded a publick worship of him? For, among the *Jews*, he required a tabernacle, for all the congregation to resort to for this purpose: and afterwards,
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when the kingdom was erected, expressly commanded a temple to be built for his worship, and obliged all the nation to come thither three times a year.

UNDER the Christian dispensation, as men enjoy many signal advantages above the *Jews*, in being eased of the burden of the ceremonial observances; so do they in this particular. For, though the worship of God in publick subsists under the law of Christ, yet it admits of such alterations in the purer part of the Christian world, as make this duty both easy and pleasant to them.

AND the expediency of publick places of worship set apart for this very thing, shews itself at one view to any considerate man. For who will not acknowledge, that, in point of decency, it is a great advantage, to have such places, wherein they may address themselves to their Maker? Where neither interruptions from the world may break in upon their devotion, nor any commerce with one another withdraw their mind
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from that due attention which they owe to the occasion of their coming?—where, in fine, the solemnity of the place, and the importance of the business there, contribute to inspire into holy minds that pious ardour, not so easily acquired in their closets?

AND lastly: We have a powerful inducement to the due observance of this: namely, that of a blessing expressly annexed to it. For, says our Lord, *Wheresoever two or three of you are gathered together, there am I in the midst of you*: There will I afford you my gracious presence, and grant you your requests. A high honour conferred upon us; a prevailing motive with all good men to attend that worship, to which is promised so glorious a success.

THUS have I shewn the necessity, the expediency, and the advantage, of worshipping God in publick, suitably to the first part of the design of this discourse; which was to shew the obligation we are under to the performance of this duty. We will pro-

ceed, in the further pursuit of it, to make some reflections on what has been already delivered.

FROM what has been delivered on this subject then, we learn the great sin of neglecting to frequent the church of God. For by it we do, in effect, deny our acknowledgment of our dependence upon him; we disown him for our Creator; and declare that we expect nothing from his hands: than which, there cannot be a higher affront given to the majesty of God. For, by such a conduct, we declare, that we put our trust in ourselves, and not in him: that our sufficiency is of ourselves, and not of God. For it is to be presumed, that, if people believed that there was a God, and that they received every thing from him: they would address themselves to him, to intreat his protection, and to thank him for his mercies. And by parity of reason it may be concluded, that they who do not worship him do deny all this: so that, in effect, refusing to worship him, is deny-

ing his being, and running back into downright atheism. For, what better can be concluded from such a conduct: or what trust is to be put in their words, that they acknowledge him, if by their works they deny him? To neglect therefore to worship God, is one of the highest sins that can be committed: inasmuch as it tends to the worst of crimes, the very disbelief of his being at all.

AND let no one say, that, though I do not come to church, yet I worship God at home. For if that be sufficient, why was any publick worship at all commanded? Or if it be necessary for any, why not for you as well as for others? And how comes the omission of that in you to be no crime, which to perform, is a duty incumbent on every body else?

NOR let any one say, I am far from disbelieving in God, for I worship him in private. For who knows the truth of this? Does not such a man do all that is in his power, to make the world believe the con-

trary? God has commanded the worship of himself, both in publick and private. A man neglects the publick worship of him, and alledges in his defence, that he does his duty in private: But how are the world to come at the knowledge of this? They see one command without scruple violated. They must judge by appearances. They will therefore conclude thereupon, that he has as little scruples about the other. Now every good man knows, that he is to *abstain from all appearance of evil*. He is carefully to avoid giving occasion for any representations to his disadvantage: much more the leading his neighbours into uncharitable censures, built upon mistakes.— Therefore he cannot answer such a conduct: he cannot justify throwing a stumbling-block in the way of others: and therefore, if he believes as others do, he ought publickly to give proof of it; and if he does not, he must charge their conclusions upon himself.

NOR will it be sufficient to take refuge in this plea: God knows my heart, and the truth of this, whatever the world say upon it. For will God justify that which is wrong? Will he accept disobedience? Granting that he worships him in private, what then? Has not God commanded him to join in the publick worship of him? And will the doing the one only, acquit him of the obligation to perform the other? It is certain, that it will not: that, according to the Christian pattern of obedience, it cannot. And therefore, all such appeals to God Almighty are vain in themselves, and dangerous in their consequences: vain in themselves, because, at the instant, they who make them must know that they cannot justify their conduct, and dangerous in their consequences, because they call upon God Almighty, to be a witness of their refusal to comply with what he has commanded.

S E R M O N IX.

On BROTHERLY LOVE.

S. JOHN xiii. 34.

*A new commandment give I unto you,
that ye love one another.*

THE Apostle in this, and the succeeding chapters, relates the actions and discourses of our Saviour, immediately preceding his passion. Among which none surely deserve greater attention, than those pathetic injunctions of his concerning Christian charity. The time in which he delivered them, *being now before the feast of the passover*;— the manner with which the Apostle introduces them; *having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end*;— and above all, the significant example he was going to give them of Christian humility, and charity to the souls

and bodies of Men ; — impress altogether a strong and forcible image upon the minds of all his followers, of the necessity, the excellency, and mighty importance of this duty. For being just departing out of this world, he leaves this duty as the distinguishing mark of his disciples : *by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.* Being to deliver to us his precept of love, the Apostle introduces it with a remark, that he loved us unto the end. Being just ready to give the greatest instance of love that could possibly be given ; he reasons with his disciples about the nature and necessity of their practising it likewise. In discoursing therefore upon these words, I shall enquire,

I. UPON what accounts our Saviour might call the Commandment of loving one another, a *new commandment.*

II. SHEW some instances in which the practice of Christian charity peculiarly consists ; implied in the precept of loving one another.

I. 1. THE commandment of loving one another was a *new* Commandment with respect to the object and extent of it.

THE *Jews* certainly understood the precept of charity, as delivered in their law, to extend no farther than to those of their own religion and nation. For, as all relations and alliances with the neighbouring Gentiles were strictly forbidden, and so all manner of intercourse and correspondence entirely cut off between them; they by degrees, from not conversing with them, grew to hate and abhor them; and indeed, abstained from shewing them the common offices of humanity. To obviate which unreasonable proceeding, we find our Saviour in *St. Luke*, answering the question, *who is my neighbour?* by the parable of the man who fell among thieves. And at the conclusion, bids the lawyer *go and do likewise*. As if he had said, “do thou learn from this, “that any man in distress, though he be to “thee as a *Jew* to a *Samaritan*, upon terms “of open and avowed enmity, yet is he, “and ought to be, looked upon by thee as
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“ a proper object of thy compassion and
 “ mercy.” From which passage, compared
 with the text, I understand, that the pre-
 cept of loving one another, is not confined
 to the body of Christians, but extends to
 the whole race of mankind. And to this
 sense was our Saviour’s practice conform-
 able; whom, this Apostle in the fourth
 chapter introduces, conversing freely with
 a *Samaritan* woman.

AND suitable to this is the Apostle St.
Paul’s exhortation; *Brethren, let us do good
 unto all men, but especially unto those who are
 of the household of Faith.* Where, as the
 household of Faith is set to express the
 whole body of Christians, to whom prima-
 rily we are to exercise our love and charity;
 the other part of the exhortation, either
 signifies those who are not Christians, or
 else it signifies nothing more than what the
 Apostle had already said.

OUR Saviour might therefore, upon this
 account, properly style it a *new command-
 ment*, considering, that in regard to the la-
 titude

titude of it, it's general and universal influence, it was no longer that old commandment under the law. For, being divested of those national and personal restrictions, the practice of it was no longer to be confined to the narrow bounds of the land of *Judah*, nor circumscribed within the small extent of it's religion and government.

2. As in the object and extent of it, the commandment of loving one another, was properly styled a *new commandment*; so likewise the nature of it, and of the duties comprehended under it, may justly entitle it to that distinction. For, as all moral duties in general were greatly advanced in their excellency, by the addition made to them in the Gospel; so this of love in particular received a very eminent alteration. For neither the best of the Gentiles, who had a great insight into the law of nature or reason, nor the *Jews*, upon the most scrupulous and nice enquiry into their law in this respect, understood the precept of loving one another in that exalted pitch, to
which

which our Saviour has raised it. To instance in but one branch of it, the forgiving of injuries and loving our enemies. The *Jewish* institution was very exact and rigorous in the punishment of injuries and violence, by requiring the same to be inflicted upon the offender, in which he had offended. Thus, *an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*, was the retaliation appointed by the law. And again, whereas the duty of loving one another was restrained; *it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy*: Christ's injunction is, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that despitefully use you and persecute you.*—As this was not included in their precept of love, and consequently, a virtue entirely new to them, it might properly, on this account, be styled a *new commandment*.

3. THE circumstance, on which is founded our obligation to this duty, as enjoined by *Christ*, was intirely new, and different from that motive upon which the *Jewish* and Gentile world practised it.

THE motive by which the Gentiles were influenced to the performance of it, was the obligation they apprehended themselves under thereto, founded either on the natural relation between man and man, or on the fitness and expediency of the duty itself towards promoting the good of society. And the generality being (no doubt) more influenced by interest, than the reasonableness and justice of acting so; it was hardly practised by any but those who were actuated by a principle of interest; and by them no further than was necessary to answer the end they proposed by it. To this circumstance there was superadded to the *Jews* another, the positive command of God; which, by virtue of his legislative authority, he laid on them; and affixed punishments to the breach of it, to be inflicted in the same manner on the offender, in which he had offended.

BUT we have another motive to the love of our neighbour, besides all these, drawn from a circumstance entirely *new*; namely,
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the love of Christ: who came into the world to save us, who laid down his life for us. And, that this is urged as the motive by our Saviour himself, appears by his own words set down by St. *John*; *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.* And in the following part of the same discourse, in laying before them the great value they ought to set upon his love; *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, and that whatsoever ye ask of the Father in my name he shall give it you.*—He closes it with these words: *These things I command you, that ye love one another.* As if he had said, “ All
 “ this concerning my love, I inculcate upon
 “ you, that ye likewise may abound in the
 “ practice of charity toward your brethren.”

WHICH method of pressing our obedience to this precept, St. *John* himself pursues in his first epistle. *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we*
might

might live through him. Herein is love ; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

He then pathetically exhorts us to the practice of love and charity, from that great and stupendous example ; *Brethren, if God so loved us, — we ought also to love one another.*

This motive therefore to the practice of love, drawn from the consideration of the love of God and Christ our Saviour, might properly, upon this account, style it a *new* commandment.

II. I proceed now to shew some instances, in which the practice of Christian charity consists. Which before I do, I shall premise in general, that in order to a full performance of this duty, we must lay aside all occasional differences and distinctions, and bear an universal good-will to all mankind. Our Saviour, in dying for all the world, has thrown down the partition-wall between *Jew* and *Gentile* : and has thereby shewn us, that it is not difference in country or religion, that can exempt us from exercising
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our charity to all men;—that, however we may be determined to particular friendships and affections, there are yet some circumstances, wherein no distinction is to be made between man and man. Such are, a readiness to perform the common offices of humanity, even to the enemies of Christianity: that, by compassionating their errors, instead of inveighing against their obstinacy, and behaving to them with candour and mildness, we may prove ourselves true disciples of Christ. And we must ever be careful, to temper our zeal for God's glory with a moderation, which may shew that we are concerned only for his honour, and the welfare of our fellow-creatures.

HAVING just premised this general precaution, I proceed more particularly to observe, that with respect to the spiritual welfare of our neighbour, we may exert our Christian charity,

1st. BY esteeming and publickly honouring the *good* and *virtuous*. For hereby we espouse the cause of godliness; we support
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the decaying interest of religion, and make a worthy profession of the firmness of our faith, and the regard we pay to the commands of God. Hereby we strengthen the resolutions of our weak neighbour; and by appearing advocates for religion, confirm him in those resolutions, which might otherwise be shaken by the prevailing example, the artful allurements, the terrifying power and number, of the wicked. We countenance him in the performance of religious duties; we maintain him in the practice of what is just and right; and by our assistance he proceeds boldly, nor is afraid to encounter the malice, wit, and ridicule, which a great part of mankind exercise on persons of a virtuous and religious disposition.

AND what greater charity can there be shewn to our neighbour, than by thus enabling him to walk stedfastly, to contribute to the keeping him within the bounds of his duty; and so to *guide his feet into the way of peace?*

II. ANOTHER instance of our Christian charity is, the admonishing the wicked to a better course of life.—It must be owned, that this is a nice point, and a difficult duty to be rightly discharged. But nevertheless, we are to use our endeavours; and the more difficult the undertaking, so much the greater pains ought we to take about it. If we saw a friend in danger or distress, would we refuse to help him, because we apprehended it difficult to save him? Would we not rather put out greater strength, and use more forcible means to assist him? How much more then, when his eternal inheritance, and everlasting peace are at stake! The difficulty of succeeding therefore, should never deter us from the performance of this truly Christian office; but rather should make us more careful in the discharge of it. We should study the temper, consider the circumstances, regard the weakness of the persons we admonish; and take care to touch upon his failings with tenderness, to reprove his faults with mild-

ness and sweetness, and to treat affectionately his person while we blame his follies. If he returns our admonitions with anger and resentment, never to fly into passion, nor tax his vices severely, nor threaten punishment imperiously, but with temper set before him the state of his soul, and the unavoidable certainty of his eternal ruin, if he continues in his evil course. To these prudent endeavours should be added a readiness to do him kind offices; and who knows but we may touch his heart, and thereby reap the present satisfaction, and one day the reward, of having *saved a soul from death?*

III. THE duty of Christian charity obliges us likewise to correct the errors, and inform the understanding, of our ignorant or mistaken neighbour. For, as the conduct of our lives depends greatly upon the forming true and just notions of the Deity, and the nature and obligation of his commands; so is it a great instance of our love to our neighbour, to endeavour to rectify his mistakes, and reform his religious principles, by fixing him

in the firm belief of those doctrines, and those only, which are plainly revealed in Scripture, and have a real foundation in God's positive command. Herein have we the example of our blessed Saviour to lead us, to direct us in the performance, and to encourage us to the diligent execution of it. To lead us,—in that he, the Captain of our Salvation, hath shewn us the way, in *coming a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not abide in darkness*; that is, that he might deliver us from a state of ignorance, and instruct us in that wisdom which is unto salvation. To direct us,—in that he hath pointed out to us the methods of proceeding. To encourage us,—in that he has ascertained a glorious and ample recompence to our sincere endeavours: according to that of the Apostle St. James; *Brethren, if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

THESE

THESE are the instances in which the practice of Christian charity consists, with respect to the spiritual welfare of our neighbour. And to the practice of it, as it is thus set down, we are obliged by the command laid upon us by the Apostle, *to love one another, even as Christ loved us*. Now Christ came into the world to save sinners. The end and design of the gospel-dispensation was, to deliver mankind from the slavery of sin, and the punishment consequent thereupon; to dispel those clouds of ignorance, which hung over us and obscured our understandings; to give us a clearer and more perfect knowledge of God, and of the methods whereby we may find grace in his sight. To this great instance of affection, the least return we can make is, to have a compassionate love of souls, and to take all occasions, and snatch all opportunities of promoting the spiritual welfare of our neighbour.

THE instances likewise, in which we may and ought to further his temporal good, I proceed to in the next place.

CHRISTIAN Charity obliges us to promote the temporal good of our neighbour ;

1st. By defending and vindicating his reputation.

THE loss of reputation, may be justly esteemed the greatest evil which can befall a man : since by it his credit in business, and his success in the world, is intirely supported. The precept therefore of loving one another, obliges us to maintain his character when attacked : it being doubtless a proper expression of our love towards him. In regard to ourselves,— we should be slow in believing malicious reports to his disadvantage, and dull in understanding the mean insinuations of those who are ready to malign him. We should weigh well the character of him who is doing this ill office, and be very well assured, that neither ill-nature, interest, or malice, have any share in the accusation. Light suspicions can never justify our resigning the opinion we had of his integrity ; nor plain information, without positive proof, acquit us of the guilt of doing him an injury.

BUT

BUT farther:— This precept of love obliges us to remove the ill impressions other persons may have received, and to endeavour the restoring him to their good opinion, by opposing the slander which loose and intemperate tongues may have uttered against him, by producing all the proofs of his innocence, which we know may be serviceable to his cause, and by taking care at least, that he shall not be suspected without reason, nor condemned without conviction.

2dly. ANOTHER proper expression of our obedience to the precept of loving one another is, — the pitying and relieving the afflicted state of our neighbour: by giving our advice, by employing our interest, and by free contributions. It is certainly no inconsiderable part of Christian charity, to comfort our afflicted neighbour, by setting before him the goodness of God; by exhorting him to apply by prayer for a happy issue out of all his troubles, or patience to undergo his sufferings; by advising him to such methods as are most likely to ex-

tricate him out of his difficulties; by warning him, above all things, of the danger and folly of giving into any sinful compliances, or of going about any wicked scheme to mend his condition; by persuading him that afflictions are sometimes mercies, and to be looked upon as the tender corrections of a Father, not the vengeance of an incensed God: that therefore they should serve to raise his spirits, to enliven his hopes, and to strengthen his faith, as being arguments of God's great affection and regard for him; since *whom the Lord loveth he chastneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

HAVING thus endeavoured to compose their minds, we should further proceed to use our interest with those, in whose power it is to mitigate the rigour of their fortune. But neither is this all we are bound to perform. If our circumstances will afford it, we must crown these good beginnings with free contributions out of those things which God has given us. For, saith St. James, *If a brother or a sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and*

ye say unto them, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body, what doth it profit? Therefore, though we give our advice, though we employ our interest; yet must our hand, as well as our heart, be open to relieve their wants. And this inducement have we to it, this inexpressible satisfaction shall we receive from it, that God will place it to his account, and receive it as done to himself.

3dly. THIS precept of loving one another obliges us to rejoice at the prosperity of our neighbour.

To envy and repine at the happiness of our fellow-creatures, as it is an insolent behaviour towards the Disposer of all things, so is it void of that benevolence which nature enjoins, and directly contrary to the spirit of love insisted on in the Gospel. Pride and self-love, are the foundation of this breach of Christian charity. The ready way therefore to avoid the guilt of it is, upon all occasions to root out these dangerous principles

principles from our hearts, by learning not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, and by endeavouring that the love of ourselves shall never exclude the love of our neighbour. The example of God himself has laid on us an indispensable obligation, *to rejoice with them that rejoice* : who created us out of nothing, that he might communicate to us his happiness ; who, when we had forfeited all title to his favour, by a stupendous act of mercy reinstated us in his grace, and by his overruling providence daily promotes our welfare. He expects therefore surely, that we, who are partakers of the benefits which he bestows upon his creatures, should not repine, but rather rejoice, that others likewise feel the benign influence of that mercy which is over all his works. The contrary spirit, is the spirit of the Devil : who, repining at the greatness of the Almighty, and presuming to oppose his power, became himself an eternal object of his displeasure ; and is still wishing and contriving the ruin of
mankind ;

mankind; and by his insinuations, devices, and attempts, daily endeavours to render ineffectual the gracious measures, which God has taken to secure our happiness; as the Apostle testifies of him, *Your adversary the Devil goeth about seeking whom he may devour*. This spirit then, so contrary to that of the Gospel, we must resist; it necessarily implying in us a defect at least of Christian charity, whose property it is, *that it envieth not*.

4thly. ANOTHER branch of the precept of love is, the forgiving of injuries: a part indeed of the duty of a Christian, but so essential to the right discharge of it, that without this, all the rest is but an imperfect and unprofitable service; a service that merits no regard, and will be entitled to no reward from God. Nay, so far from it, that the want of this shall utterly debar us from any favour, and be an invincible obstacle to our hopes of happiness. This has our Saviour fully and expressly declared to us in the Gospel, and the nature of the
 Christian

Christian institution shewn, to be but a reasonable injunction.

IN the excellent form of addressing ourselves to God, drawn up by our Saviour, are these words, *and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors* : whereby we beseech God to deal with us even as we deal with others, not expecting forgiveness ourselves, unless we freely extend it to our neighbour. Suitably to that part of his discourse wherein he affirms, *blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*. And, lest any one should presume to circumscribe or set bounds to this duty, he informs us upon the question put to him by St. *Peter*, that there are no limits to be set to the performance of it, but that our forgiveness must be extended to the most frequent relapses, and that we must still pardon offences though committed without number. Upon which occasion, and further to shew the reasonableness of this injunction, he introduces the parable of the king taking account of his servants, as a proper resemblance of
God's

God's dealing with man under the Gospel. The vast disproportion between the sums of ten thousand talents, and an hundred pence, being there set down, to mark the injuries we receive, and are required to forgive, and those great and enormous offences, which, in contempt of his laws, and in defiance of his threatnings, we daily and hourly commit against God, and for which we obtain pardon upon our sorrow and submission. But the load of this intolerable burden shall yet be laid upon our shoulders, if we forgive not *our brother his trespasses*.

AND, what are the provocations which we receive from our brethren, that we should not forgive them? Surely they are but trifles; the loss of part of our inheritance, an encroachment upon our liberties, a contempt of our person and parts. How much greater is God than we are? And yet we, who so impatiently bear with such injuries, nay, snatch every opportunity of retaliating them, dare, notwithstanding, put greater affronts upon our God. Do we not contemptuously

tuously break his commands, and thereby violate his authority? Do we not despise his threatenings, and thereby set at nought his power? Do we not, by disregarding his gracious promises, undervalue his goodness; by repining at his dispensations arraign his providence; and by murmuring at his afflicting us, tax his wisdom and justice?

SHALL we, who do these things, expect forgiveness, and yet remain inexorable to those who offend us? Fond and unreasonable men! Well may God expostulate with us, saying, *Are not my ways equal, are not your ways unequal?* For surely, a hard and unforgiving temper in a Christian is, in regard to his profession, the greatest contradiction; and, in respect of his future expectations, the greatest absurdity.

THE duty of forgiveness then appears to be absolutely necessary, were it only upon this consideration, that unless we forgive, we ourselves certainly shall not be forgiven. And herein I have purposely omitted other
argu-

arguments, which might be used to persuade us to the practice of it, drawn from the advantage which it must bring to society, and the long destructive train of mischiefs, which the retaliating of injuries must bring upon communities: it being evident, that peace and quietness, ease, and security, cannot be preserved among men who indulge themselves in the passion of revenge, and are daily sacrificing to their resentments.

As to the farther extent and particulars of this branch of the Christian precept of love, I shall not now enlarge upon it, only leaving you this remark, that our terms of forgiveness with God are conditional; and that if we fail in any point of this duty, we are not to expect from God forgiveness for the like offence; for we pray for forgiveness even so as (and no otherwise than) we forgive others. For *with the same measure wherewith ye meet, it shall be measured to you again*, in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

LASTLY:

LASTLY : There are some particulars contained in this evangelical precept of loving one another, which, as they may be reduced to some one or other of these already mentioned, I shall pass by, or but lightly touch upon ; — Such are, a reverent and proper behaviour to our superiors, a patient submission to pains and penalties inflicted on us by lawful authorities, an open undefigning method in business, a generous and affable deportment to inferiors, a kind and affectionate treatment of our neighbours infirmities, a favourable and candid construction of the words and actions of others : which are all branches of that Christian virtue, which,—*is kind, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ;—beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.*

S E R M O N X.

O n E D U C A T I O N.

P R O V. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

THE least observation of the world will prove, that it is in general very much corrupted; that much the greater part of mankind pay but little regard to their religious obligations, and follow with much more application the gratifying their passions than the performance of their duty. It is acknowledged, that this wrong byas arises primarily from the original corruption of our nature, derived from the offence of our first parents. Nevertheless, it is owing likewise to many other causes;

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and to none more than the want and neglect of timely instruction, to the little care which people take to direct young persons to a right and proper way, both of thinking and acting.

AND yet, when we see persons raising a building, and providing that it shall rise to the sight with a pleasing and advantageous proportion ; is it not to be lamented, that less diligence is used to build up a young mind to the practice of goodness? that so much less care should be bestowed on a structure so infinitely more valuable, even the immortal soul of a rational being? that those who are painfully affected with an irregularity in the material world, should not have at least as studious an aversion to the deformity, which vice occasions in the rational? Whereas if men would consider, there is no appearance so comely as a mind inured to goodness; nor any prospect so truly beautiful, as that of a young person daily advancing in the graces of virtue and religion.

ACCORDINGLY, all people of reflection have judged the education of young persons to be a matter of principal concern; and justly made their future expectations depend on the due execution of this charge. The Wise-man, who composed the book of Proverbs, seems to aim chiefly at the instruction of young people. He calls upon them, especially to hearken to wisdom in their tender years; and directs them to the early practice of religion, as the surest period to imbibe and preserve a lasting sense of it. He recommends the care of instilling it, upon the probability there is then of that care being answered with a suitable success. *Train up, &c.*

WHICH words I look upon, as directed to parents; and not to them only, but to all likewise who have young persons under their government and care. In discoursing upon them, I shall,

I. INSIST upon the duty of parents in this point.

II. I shall enlarge upon the propriety of the time assigned for doing it.

III. I shall conclude with some practical methods for the better success of it.

I. I. IT might be easily imagined, that natural affection would suggest this as a duty. For it is confessed, that parents are bound to provide in the best manner for their children's welfare: in which, proper instruction is undoubtedly comprized. For, those who confine this obligation to that provision only, which immediately affects their subsistence, have very contracted notions of life, and seem little to be acquainted with it. Because, even admitting their narrow measure of a parent's duty, that should extend it to the care of providing them with some prudence and discretion: without which, there will be very little enjoyment, or security, or continuance of what they possess. That affection therefore, which binds parents to make these provisions, binds them equally to furnish them with ability and capacity to preserve

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or improve them. This care must comprehend several articles ; which, though they seem not immediately to relate to it, yet are certainly necessary to be known and practised : such are those common rules of action, without observing of which, no man can go through the world with credit or with comfort. So that, were we to go no further than what bears a reference even to this worldly policy ; it is evident, that the tie which obliges parents to provide for their children, obliges them to furnish them with instruction.

2. But, as a very small part of a child's happiness is comprehended in the article now mentioned, so that should be the least concern of an affectionate parent. Providence, in a great measure, executes this part for them ; or at least assists them so far as greatly to lessen the difficulties. And a miscarriage in this can but affect a transitory and short condition. A parent's affection is undoubtedly most properly placed, where there is the chiefest concern ; where their greatest and most ma-

terial interest is at stake; and that must prompt them, at least their affection should be expressed, by infusing into them a knowledge of religion. For, without that, the best provision is a poor one, and the largest inheritance, but distress and beggary.

THE consequences of a neglect here are so much more important, that a neglect is utterly irreconcilable with the presence of love. Shall a man value himself, that he has provided his children with money, when, at the same time, he has left them unacquainted with goodness? or, that he has secured them from poverty, when he has guarded them neither from the danger of sin, nor from inevitable destruction in consequence of it? How can such a man think that he has discharged his duty, or that he can claim the title of a good parent; since he has bent his thoughts to that which is least material, and wholly neglected that which is most important? That affection, which is so earnestly employed one way, should consistently with
right

right reason be much more assiduouſly beſtowed in another.

AND to this, parents are not only bound by affection, but by their obligation to God the common Father of all men : to whom they undoubtedly owe reverence and obedience ; and conſequently, ought to inſtil it into their children. For all men are, or ought to be, his ſervants ; and thoſe who are incapable of knowing their duty themſelves, are to receive it from thoſe to whoſe hands they are intruſted. Parents are to their children in God's ſtead : for the increaſe of whoſe glory, they are bound to inſtruct them in the duties of religion. For, as it is our duty to ſerve God ourſelves, ſo undoubtedly is it, to take care that his glory ſhall be increaſed by the ſervice of thoſe who ſpring from us.

IN thoſe caſes wherein we may promote his honour, it would be a ſin in us to neglect it. There is none ſo obvious, or ſo entirely in our power, as the training up our children in religious principles ; and

therefore, this must be a case, in which a neglect is highly and inexcusably blameable. What pretensions indeed, can a man make to a regard for religion himself, who forbears to inculcate the observance of it on his child? It is certain, that he cannot be cordially affected with it, or not sensible as he should be of his obligations as a father. So that he must either be acknowledged to be void of goodness himself, or quit his claim to the title of a good parent.

THE knowledge of scripture acquaints us, that this religious care of children has been eminently rewarded. Of which *Abraham* was a pregnant instance; his piety in this being particularly distinguished with marks of favour, upon this peculiar character given him; — *for I know him that he shall command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do judgement and justice.* The Jews were expressly commanded to transmit the deliverances of their fathers to their children, *to shew the honour of the Lord, and his mighty*

mighty and wonderful works which he had done.

Infomuch that there were memorials prescribed of many remarkable blessings, which were to be communicated to their children for the same purpose; to imprint upon them a sense of their religious obligations, that they might inviolably preserve themselves from idolatry. Instructing therefore their children in religion, was, among the *Jews*, in consequence of an express command, *Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children.* I would observe likewise, that it was extended to their household, and therefore comprehended masters as well as parents; as is evident by the words recited of *Abraham*, and by the command relating to circumcision, which extended to their servants bought with money.

To this may be subjoined, that an open neglect of this has met with as signal a punishment; the suffering or permitting children to proceed in dissolute courses, being reproved as an affront to God Almighty; by which he was actually induced to deprive

a family of the honour of the priesthood, punishing, *in his posterity, the criminal indulgence of a father. For I have told Eli, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

HAVING thus far insisted on the duty of parents in this point, I proceed,

II. To enlarge on the propriety of the time assigned for doing it. *Train up a child, &c.*

THE propriety of which term appears, *1st*. BECAUSE, at the age when they are first capable of receiving instruction, they are tender and pliable; easily induced to imbibe what is inculcated, and without difficulty inclined which way you please. Which single consideration removes a great many difficulties that must occur in a maturer growth, by habits already acquired, even to stiffness, which must be unlearned; by inclinations already too far rooted and fixed, to be easily opposed or conquered. The mind, at the time of life we are speaking

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ing of, is prepared like a piece of fair paper, for whatever impression you will give it : entirely vacant, it is ready to receive what colour you will bestow upon it. Now therefore is the time to save an infinite deal of trouble to both parties, by imparting gradually such a measure of good knowledge, as the tenderness of their faculties will admit ; and by continuing to keep peace with the growth of their understanding, supplying it from time to time with such wholesome matter, as will, when rightly digested, improve them in virtue and goodness. Their maturer judgement will confirm and strengthen those first notions, to the practice of which they are already prepared by the early care and concern of the parents.

2dly. No time can be so proper for religious instruction as childhood ; because they are then more immediately under government. Which circumstance improves the opportunity. It is plain, that children are forward enough to withdraw themselves
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from subjection, and quickly take the advantage of increasing years, to plead some sort of independance; that the world assist them in this plea, by exempting persons of any growth from much obedience to their parents. Whereupon it is certain, that if the foundation be not laid very early, perhaps it never may be at all; the consequence of which to the persons themselves, is apparent ruin, and to their parents infinite grief and concern. For they have the utmost reason to apprehend, if they have not prevented the contagion of the world from taking effect by timely care, that it will soon overbear all endeavours to recal them afterwards to goodness. The torrent of vice is in general too strong for those to resist, who have not been timely apprized of it's power; and may possibly occasion a violent struggle for the mastery, even with those who have been well prepared for it's attacks.

3dly. As parents should be induced to follow the advice in the text, from that consideration;

sideration; so likewise from another, namely, that impressions of any sort received then, are most lasting. And, allowing the truth of this observation, it will follow, that then is the fittest time for impressions of religion. In general, every person is a living witness of this. The many things which affected us in our childhood, and have gained possession of us to this time; the prepossession of our younger years as to various amusements and employments; passages which we now clearly recollect, though transacted at the first dawning of the memory, are all of them convincing and unanswerable proofs of it. To which may be added, as a conclusive remark, that the way young people have been brought up in, they generally adhere to; being very hardly induced to love that, for which then they had an aversion, or to conceive a hard opinion of what they were accustomed to admire. There are very few things in which men alter or vary; and least of all in their appetites and passions. It being most common to observe them,

them, in their latest age, retain a tincture of what they formerly pursued and gave themselves up to. It is so in the choice of their diversions; much more in the nature of their business; and most of all in their notion of religion.

How necessary is it therefore, to take notice of this article; and to provide, that they may set out well in that which, as it is their most important, so is it their most lasting concern! For, when the taste of pleasure is gone, when business is no more, when life itself is extinct; then religion, and the concerns of it succeed, and take up the soul when every thing else has deserted it. Whose business is not then like other things of a temporary nature, but lasting even for ever; is not dispatched by a few idle minutes, or a course of fleeting years, but the effects of it remain inseparably united to it, and determine it's condition for ever and ever.

THIS being the importance of religion; it is the proper concern of a parent, to fur-

nish his child with it. And it is equally his duty, to follow the advice in the text, of doing it when he is young : it being agreeable to reason and experience to suppose, that in consequence of such endeavours he will finish his life as he begun it. Not that it is impossible to be otherwise ; but that in these measures lies the greatest probability, and the surest grounds of success. — If these precautions fail, he would certainly have miscarried without them. But as they have been provided, the blame will fall upon himself. Which is the only comfort a parent can have, upon a child's proving wicked : and without this, he must be the most miserable, and, I fear, the most guilty of mankind. Which inclines me to finish this article, with lamenting the inadvertency of the world in this point ; since it is but a very melancholy reflection, how many in the world are likely to answer for other people's miscarriages, nay, for the miscarriages of their own children, as well as of themselves.

III. I come now in the last place to propose a method or two for their success in this work.

1st. IT is evident that none can be of more effect, than setting a good example; which is always very prevailing, but mostly when (as in this case) it is backed by authority. All people in power are most attended to: all their proceedings watched and examined; and when the tenor of their actions is weighed, it has more influence than verbal commands. This takes place with children and servants. For it is no wonder, that they should pay a serious regard to what their parents and masters do. How excellent a caution does this suggest to them; and how profitable a lesson does it propose, to instruct others in goodness by being good themselves! And indeed, any other endeavour of instruction, without this, is ridiculous; and though, from such a man, a sharp correction may for the present, put a stop to a fault; yet there is no likelihood of a continual influence,
when

when those about him are tempted to despise it by observing his own practice. They may shrink under the rod, but be very little concerned at the offence ; it being one thing to be sorry because they feel the smart, and quite another, to be afflicted because they have offended. And where the stress is laid more on the punishment than the crime, there are but little hopes of any lasting good.

THE most proper method is therefore that of example : which, if it should not be so prevalent as it ought, yet imparts a becoming dignity to all other methods of instruction. This being therefore laid down as the principal, I need not descend to all the particular ways which are proper to convey the knowledge of religion to young people ; there being few hours, and much fewer actions of a parent, in which he may not more or less contribute something to this end.

S E R M O N XI.

On the CONSEQUENCES of SIN.

ROM. vi. 21.

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

THE Apostle in this chapter, is arguing for the necessity of walking suitable to the Christian calling; insisting, that a profession of embracing so gracious a dispensation should be accompanied with proper improvements. And this he does the more particularly, that he might remove a mistake, founded on the doctrine already laid down.

FOR, considering that he had asserted, that God's mercy was more illustrated by his gracious pardon of the Gentiles, than if he had rejected and excluded them, he fore-

saw that some perverse spirit might form this erroneous conclusion:—*Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound*, i. e. “ Since you
 “ assert that the glory of God is manifest-
 “ ed by the pardon of sin ; why should we
 “ not sin on, that by still forgiving us, his
 “ mercy may be so much the more magni-
 “ fied ?” *God forbid*, says the Apostle, that
 any one should make such an use of God’s
 mercy as this. *How shall we who are dead to
 sin, live any longer therein ?* “ What pro-
 “ priety is there in our continuing sinners,
 “ who have by baptism vowed a death unto
 “ sin ? Far be it from any man so to inter-
 “ pret my doctrine, or to imagine that the
 “ design of God’s mercy is any other than
 “ to bring men to amendment. This was
 “ the end proposed by God, in bringing
 “ over the Gentiles ; and surely ought to be
 “ pursued by those who are become Chris-
 “ tians.”

THAT this is the Apostle’s reasoning here, seems evident, from his arguing in the same manner in another place about the
 mercy

mercy of God. Rom. ii. 4. *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing (that is, not considering) that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; that his intention in these merciful measures is to bring about your reformation? Which is exactly establishing the same notion of God's mercy with what he insists upon in this place.*

To confirm which, he proceeds by sacred similitudes to press them to the amendment of their lives. *Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Now, by being baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, we understand the forsaking of all our former sins; and by his resurrection, our duty of being quickened to good works; that like as Christ also was raised from the dead, so we also should walk in newness of life.* Wherein it is plain, that the Apostle alludes to Christ's resurrection; first, as a type or figure of our being renewed in all holy conversation, and then, in consequence of such renewal, in

the end, of everlasting life. For, if *we have been planted with him in the likeness of his death*, we shall (or ought to be) *in the likeness of his resurrection*. The design of his mentioning these transactions, the death and resurrection of our Lord, is immediately expressed by these words ; *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth ye should not serve sin*. The continuance in which new state of obedience and purity, is insisted upon in this reflection ; *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more*; and therefore, by parity of circumstances, we should never return to those sins which we have once renounced. The conclusion of the argument is summed up in these words,— *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof*.

THE Apostle having thus removed that stumbling block, and shewn by spiritual similitudes, the Christian duty of reformation ; he proceeds by still more familiar

miliar allusions to do the same: lest, through the weakness or grossness of their understandings, they should not clearly comprehend his reasoning in the former instances: Under the conditions therefore of a master and a servant, he represents the slavery of a sinful course; proving to them, that so long as they lived in sin, they were truly the servants of it; and that by the grace of God only in the Gospel they gained their freedom. *Know ye not (says he) that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey?* “Are ye not sensible; “that in common life, whose servants so- “ever ye become, his you are to do his work, “and to receive his wages?” *But God be thanked, — Ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine which was delivered to you. Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.* “Ye have now “changed your master, and are bound in “duty now to follow after righteousness, “according to your new engagement.”

FROM these resemblances the Apostle having contended for an holy and upright conversation ; he now, from the same, further enforces the necessity of the same diligence in their new service, as they expressed in their former servitude. *For, as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity ; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

By which, it is evident, the Apostle is persuading them to be as zealous in the work of their salvation and amendment, as they had been before in works of sin. *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.* At the time of their idolatrous and corrupt state, they were so wholly immersed in those impure performances, that righteousness had no manner of influence over them. “ And therefore”, argues the Apostle by fair consequence, “ now you
“ have cast off that yoke, you ought to be
“ wholly and absolutely devoted to the works
“ of righteousness.”

WHICH

WHICH way of reasoning the Apostle strengthens, by the consideration of the little satisfaction or benefit, which they did or could receive from the commission of sin.

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? “What pleasure, what
“advantage, in any light, did the commis-
“sion of those things administer to you, of
“which now, upon better instruction, you
“have reason to be ashamed?” — *For the end of those things is death.*

IN which words, as the Apostle has given us the character and consequences of a sinful course; I shall, in the pursuit of this discourse, more particularly consider,

I. THE present fruits and attendants of a sinful course. — *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?*

II. THE future consequences of it. — *For the end of those things is death.*

I. FOR the present fruit of a sinful course — It will be easily admitted, that it is attended with inward dissatisfaction. For
it

it is rarely possible, that sin should be committed, and that he who commits it should reap any solid satisfaction. A man's own conscience bears witness against him, that he has offended God. He has that testimony within, which no outward appearances, no interruptions of business, no engagements of pleasure can silence.

IT is true, that some people do as much as they can to stifle it ; they plunge themselves as deep as they can into reflections of another nature. But they cannot so far suppress the dictates of their conscience, but that it will frequently intrude itself an unwelcome guest.

IT is true likewise, that some men use a great deal of art to disguise any appearance of inward uneasiness ; and guard as much as possible against any one's discovering what passes within them. But all that artifice is too little for the purpose. They frequently betray themselves ; especially to those with whom they are much conversant.

Strangers,

Strangers, upon a little acquaintance, may be deceived : but far otherwise is it with those, who have frequent opportunities of being near spectators. To them the mirth of wicked men appears forced and unnatural, their reasonings incoherent and ill digested, their conversation perplexed and wandering. All which plainly enough signify, that an inward disorder causes these distractions, and disturbs the frame and connection of their discourses. Now this is a lamentable fruit of our actions ; to labour for pain and remorse, to reap perpetual uneasiness and anxiety : thus to be interrupted in business, checked in our pursuit of pleasure, to have all our motions leavened with this bitter mixture ; what is it but to suffer, even immediately upon the commission, some part of the punishment of our sins ?

BUT this is not the only present fruit of a sinful course : the shame which it brings with it is another sad attendant upon it. The gratifications of sin are in general of such

such a kind, as to debase our nature, to take from it's dignity. For, is it not a great disparagement to a reasonable creature, to tie itself down to carnal and sensual pleasures?

As for brutes, they follow the law of their nature, which has put them under the dominion of sensible impressions: the pursuit of which in them is acting but suitably to their obligations. But far otherwise is it with man. God gave him the faculty of reason, to correct the instigations of carnal appetites. He is to be governed, not by sensual, but rational motives. He is to square his actions, not by his own will, but by the notices of reason, and the dictates of religion. Therefore it happens, that when men commit wickedness, they run into corners, they shelter themselves under the cover of the night, and hide themselves from the world. They know that to be detected in unlawful pursuits is to cover themselves with shame; that a just reproach will fall upon them, for having violated

violated the laws of their being, and receded from that purity and uprightneſs, which is required of them.

THUS, though they cannot ſtand clear to their own conſciences, they are willing to do ſo to the world; they by no means would have their ſecret practices communicated to other men: hence they are compelled to deviſe various arts to impoſe on the world; to have recourſe to mean ſhifts, and ſcandalous ſubterfuges; and when hard put to it, are conſtrained to take ſhelter under notorious falſities and palpable lies. How wretched a condition is this! how deplorable a circumſtance to be forced to ſcandalous means, to ſave their credit! Were it even certain therefore, that wickedneſs could be concealed from the world; yet who would chuſe ſecurity upon ſuch baſe and unequal terms?

BUT after all, ſin is ſeldom concealed long: wickedneſs, though ever ſo ſecretly perpetrated, has various ways of diſcloſing itſelf: and then follows that ſhame, which
has

has been so industriously warded off: then succeeds that confusion of face, which must attend the discovery of a wicked conversation. This is indeed the shame, which wicked people dread more than the sin itself: to be exposed to the world, to have their name and character the subject of every one's scorn and ridicule. This they judge to be the worst of evils: this they can less support than remorse of conscience, and pain of mind. No doubt, this is a tormenting circumstance, a sore and painful evil: but by no means to be put in competition with some of the wages of sin. This is a fondness for one's self, a value, not for our lost innocence, but for a blasted reputation: and yet is with too many the only principle, upon which they express any sorrow for their sinful courses: which brings me naturally to discourse of this fruit and attendant upon sin; namely, publick shame and loss of reputation.

FOR, though wicked men have too many known companions to keep them in coun-

tenance; and more secret ones, who, from self-conviction of their own guilt, keep silence; yet neither the one nor the other dissemble their distrust and difesteem of those, whose crimes are come to light. Common decency extorts from even them, an outward shew of displeasure at such people and practices: but much more from the other part of the world, from those, who, in general, act soberly and religiously. They, in a particular manner, are alarmed at those, whom they find to have made shipwreck of their consciences. They justly enough withdraw all confidence from them, and avoid any intercourse with them: they look upon it, that those who have ventured to offend God, will make no scruple to transgress any other obligation; and that there is no further security in any of their professions.

BUT what shall we say to those, who have by a vicious behaviour, defeated all a parent's hope in his child: who have repaid his many hours of tedious anxiety, with
bringing

bringing infamy into his house; and have sadly disappointed his expectations, and frustrated his fond presages of their future well-being? This is one of the sad fruits and present attendants of sin, — that it spreads dishonour far and near: that the scandal of such practices, covers their faces with confusion who have had no share in it, who are no otherwise concerned in it than by an unfortunate relation.

SUCH are the fruits and present attendants of sin. Many more, would the time permit me, might be recounted: but I shall conclude what has been offered on this head, with an observation or two.

1st, THAT sin, and the pleasures of it, are purchased at too great a price. For the pleasure of it is but momentary: but the fruits and effects are lasting and permanent. It is a great while before any person, even by repentance, recovers true peace of mind: but much longer, before he recovers his good name. The world does not so easily forgive or forget offences: they
retain

retain the sense of injuries a long time; and every body looks upon himself as in some measure injured, by the sinful and loose conversation of others.

2dly, FROM what has been said it appears, that a sinful course is the most unhappy state: for it produces evils of all sorts; it raises an enemy in one's own breast, adds more from the resentment of the world; but what is worst of all, is a high provocation to God Almighty. What can be more miserable, than to be deprived of all manner of comfort, and of that especially, which would ballance any, even the greatest evil, the favour of God?

II. WHICH brings me, by way of conclusion, to the future consequences of sin. — *For the end of these things is death.* For notwithstanding all the fruits of sin, which I have mentioned, and the many more which I might have recounted; did they all terminate with life, was this world the only scene of the punishment of sin, the charge of folly could not be so strongly pressed

upon the sinner as it now is. For the misery of a sinful state principally consists in this circumstance; that all these are but the forerunners of greater evils; — that shame and remorse, that uneasiness and anxiety, that loss of reputation and peace of mind, are all preparatory introductions to what is to follow. The term death, here set to express the future consequences of sin, is frequently used in a temporal sense, to signify a separation from worldly good, or a summary infliction of all natural evils. In which sense, when the apostle says, that *the end of these things is death*; it may very truly be affirmed, that sin is the cause and fountain of all natural evil, even to the bringing upon us that worst of temporal evils, a separation of the soul from the body. And this, considering mortality was introduced by disobedience, is properly confirmed by the apostle's words, — *by sin death came into the world*. And in an natural order, death may be said to be the end of sin; as sinful courses

courses introduce, hasten, and strengthen those diseases, which terminate in the total dissolution of the bodily frame. But the apostle intended these words in a higher sense; implying, that the consequences of sin affect the future state and condition of the soul, and fix it in that condition, which, for the extream misery of it, is styled *Death*: expressing, by the common notion of the word, when applied to corporal evils, the extraordinary and peculiar punishment of it in another life. And in this light it is directly opposed to eternal salvation, in the next verse: *for the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

S E R M O N XII

ON PUBLIC WEALTH

COPIED BY

Keep the first rule above said, and the
 first of God — not to be covetous
 to be able to give for the poor
 for the sake of the poor
 the will

I have full confidence in the people
 explained the meaning and extent of
 their words, and their true nature for
 the constant improvement of the people
 words. And they will continue to be
 given in order to be able to do so
 lesson in order to be able to do so
 and the people will be able to do so
 and what shall we do to improve

S E R M O N XII.

On PUBLICK WORSHIP.

ECCLES. v. I.

Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, — and be more ready to hear than to give sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

P A R T II.

IN my first discourse on this subject, I explained the meaning and design of these words ; and from them argued for the constant frequenting of the publick worship. A duty which arises from our obligation to God as our Creator, from the perfections inherent in him worthy our adoration, and the benefits flowing to us from him, which claim our acknowledgement.

These are the proper foundations for the worship of God. They expressly oblige us to the performance of it; and nothing can excuse our refusal or neglect. All which I have, in a particular manner, laid before you.

BUT the words of the text expressly recommend to us another duty: enjoining a reverent behaviour, in our publick addresses to God Almighty, — *Keep thy foot &c.* “Attend seriously to the business you come to do there; consider well the propriety of a decent and religious demeanour at your devotions”. No doubt, this wise and religious king gave this advice, because his own observation informed him, that it was necessary: that he found men came to worship, with minds improperly disposed, wandering after other affairs, and fixed upon things foreign to the purpose of coming there. Which, defeating the end of a publick place of worship, and bringing along with it a show only of piety, was a mocking of God, and an offence to all good men.

Therefore *Solomon* prescribes a form of a more suitable practice : requiring men to reform and correct this great abuse.

IN treating of the text, I proposed,

I. To shew that we are under an obligation to frequent the publick worship of God :

II. IN what consists a proper and reverent behaviour there. To the first I have already spoken, and proceed now to the second.

EVERY one who acknowledges that his duty requires him to attend the house of God, will on the least reflexion, acknowledge the propriety of a decent behaviour in it. For, if we consider who God Almighty is, even the Lord of heaven and earth ; it will appear no less than the most dangerous presumption, to approach him otherwise. What then shall be said of those men, who come into the place of worship, with less respect than they enter the house of another man but little their superior? What religious thoughts can we suppose to

be in that man's breast, when there are not the least traces of it to be seen in his behaviour.

'TIS true, that the heart is the seat of religion; and that whatever outward shows men make, unless they proceed from thence, they are vain and idle. But as men are to avoid hypocrisy in their deportment; so ought the disposition of body and soul to be allied together. There is no necessity for the other extreme: so far from it, that it is utterly unsuitable, both with respect to God and man. For a careless, negligent, or light behaviour, must be improper before the Majesty of God; and is highly offensive in the eyes of good men.

BUT though it ought to be concluded, that they who are truly religious, will of course behave accordingly; nevertheless, there are many in the world, who would be thought so, that act otherwise; that are very defective in this article, and seem to be so satisfied that they are there, as to have utterly forgot how they ought to behave

have themselves. Which practice having an ill effect on themselves, and being of bad example to others; it will be very necessary to shew, in what consists a reverent and proper behaviour.

1. THE first and most material circumstance in our behaviour before God, is that of wholly abstracting the mind from all other concerns. For, what have we to do with the business of this world, when we are employed only about another? Are there not six days to follow the business of our callings, and to employ our thoughts on our temporal affairs? We are supposed to settle every thing material, every immediate concern, every thing of importance, during that term: and that there remains nothing but the necessary provision for the day, to take up our thoughts. Shall then any trifle that occurs, engage our regard? Is it proper, that it should take us off from our devotion, and interfere with our prayers?

BUT

BUT, whatever liberties we take with the rest of the day, that portion of it which is taken up in our publick devotions, should be wholly set apart for that purpose. No other concern is to be admitted: nothing to be suffered to break in upon and interrupt that immediate correspondence, which we then hold with God Almighty. For our whole lives spent in the worship of him, would be but an inconsiderable tribute. But he, knowing our natures, has graciously accepted of a small part of it; leaving us the rest to supply the necessities of our condition. But then, this ought to be sacred: it is solemnly sequestered to this use, and set apart for his worship, as solely and peculiarly belonging to him: therefore it is profane, to admit of any other business during that time: it is impious, to mix the vile concerns of this miserable world with our worship of him; it is sacrilege, to alienate those moments, which are dedicated to his service.

IT is certain therefore, that to incumber the mind, and to employ the thoughts about other things, is highly improper: and that to exclude them intirely, is a material circumstance in our addressses to God Almighty. To which will greatly contribute,

2dly, A due attention to the publick service. For, as any wandering thoughts are to be suppressed; so is all confusion to be avoided: but this is frequently produced by the misconduct of some, even pious people: who mix devotions of their own with the publick form. For in this case, the mind cannot attend to both; it can receive but one thing at a time: and in all such cases, the one or the other must be neglected, or divide and distract the mind so, that it can entertain neither as it ought. But the end of a publick form is, the preserving of order: that every one may, without distraction, worship God in a clear and decent manner; being neither at a loss what to pray for as they ought, nor for words in which they may express their wants.

THE due attention to the publick form, is therefore the best method of keeping out improper thoughts, and of tying down the mind to the business it should pursue : and at the same time, fulfils the design of worshipping God in publick, by turning the hearts of all the congregation, as of one man, to the adoration of the Supreme Being. And this caution is the more proper in this place ; because something like it is given in the verse immediately following the text. *Be not rash with thy mouth : and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God : for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth ; therefore let thy words be few. — For a dream cometh through multitude of business, and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. —* A caution, which the wise-man gives, from the known difficulty of speaking much, and wisely at the same time, to God : observing that it is as natural for a man, who pours out abundance of words in his prayers, to vent a great many vain and unseemly speeches ;

speeches; as for a man, who is hurried with business in the day, to be disturbed with some of it in the night. We of this church have the stronger inducement to follow this advice; as we have an excellent form to attend to, compiled by holy and venerable men, famous for their learning and piety: which, whoever carefully peruses, will find to come nearest to the inspired writings, of any human production whatever; and will therefore avoid any impure mixture with it. As the keeping close to the publick form, is one great help to the right conducting ourselves in the publick worship of God; so does it suggest to us another particular, in which consists a reverent behaviour: namely, a conformity in the composure of the body to what is prescribed in the service. For, this is another help to order and regularity; not leaving every one at liberty to disturb the rest of the congregation, by an ill-timed change of situation; but prescribing those alterations, at one and the same time, to all.

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The propriety of which is evident: whether we consider the intention of publick worship, or the confusion which a contrary practice would introduce. The wisdom of this injunction no one will deny: since, if we weigh well the different fancies of men, it is to be feared, that their meeting together would be so far from promoting the publick worship, that, without such a restraint, there could be no worship at all. For this reason therefore; even for the maintenance of decency and order, that they may neither do an improper thing themselves, nor disturb others; it is incumbent upon every one to follow the rules laid down by his particular church. From which compliance, none, that I know of, are exempt, but those who can fairly plead the impediments of age and infirmities.

FROM what has been said, we may observe the indecent liberty which some take in the publick worship, — either of not attending at all to the service; or of so far
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watching the progress of it, as to discover a manifest uneasiness that it is not over. Which two very contrary practices proceed from one and the same source; a want of a true sense of religion. For, did men apprehend the design of a publick worship, or their obligation to the performance of it, or the improvements which may be made by it; they would discharge it in a better manner. But for want of this, we so often see a behaviour in the church, which those men would think a reflection upon themselves in their own houses: and, even from those who do not proceed so far, a carelessness and inattention, which they would be ashamed of in any private and temporal concern.

BUT this is the misfortune of mankind, that they do not attend to affairs of another life with that application which they set forth in their worldly business. For would they exert themselves in the same manner; would they use the same diligence, and search as eagerly for expedients proper to promote their better interest; we should see

religion more universally embraced, more heartily espoused, and the appearance of it more zealously maintained. But this has ever been the case. *The children of this world* (says our Lord) *are wiser in their generation, than the children of light.* Those who have no other view than this world, shew more wisdom in the management of those concerns, and with more anxiety press the success of them; than those do who profess a better hope, in the pursuit of their eternal interest. To this is owing the general defect of men's behaviour before God; even of those who very readily acknowledge (if we may believe them) their obligation to religious duties.

FOR, as to those who behave ill in the publick worship, from a dislike or contempt of the prescribed form; I take the objections with which they perpetually perplex themselves and others, to be derived from a worse fountain, a dislike to any at all. For all men know that no human institution is perfect. Why then should they con-

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tend for endless alterations, liable to the same imperfections ?

IN which I do not speak to those who publicly dissent from us : though to them, the same observation is very pertinent. For they acknowledge that God Almighty is to be publicly worshipped: but (say they) not in any set-form ; because that is liable to many exceptions. But I would ask, how are the petitions of men, left to themselves, liable to less ? If there ought, as *Solomon* has remarked, to be great caution used in our addresses to God Almighty, both in regard to the matter they utter, and the manner of uttering it ; how is extemporary praying reconcileable with this advice ? Surely a man may modestly conclude, (and every modest man would) that a form compiled by a set of eminently pious and learned men, carefully revised and corrected, recommended by publick authority, is highly preferable to the unguarded dreams, and unadvised utterance of silly and enthusiastick persons.—By being preferable, I mean, a

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much

much safer way of addressing God Almighty; a more reverential manner of approaching him; and a more suitable expression of the sense we ought to have of his majesty, and the immense distance there is between us and him.

BUT to return, nothing can be more absurd, than a light and inconsiderate behaviour in the church. For we are more immediately in God's presence: we resort thither because he has said, *Wheresoever two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of you.* We go thither expressly to make known our wants; and to celebrate his praise. How is a light behaviour reconcilable with this design? Or what success is to be expected from a deportment so little decent? The care with which we proceed, to recommend ourselves to those whom we would engage in our interest, is very well known. The ceremonious respect, with which we approach a person of distinction, no one is ignorant of: how much more then are these things necessary, when we address

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ourselves to God? To him who made all men, by whose Providence the greatest of men is nourished and supported? If without these introductions, no man presumes upon success; how much do we neglect our own interest, when we omit them before God Almighty, from whom alone is derived *their* power, on whom we depend! This is but common wisdom when we ask for the conveniences of this life: but when our petitions are directed for a blessed immortality; all the powers of body and soul are to be summoned together, to urge an acceptance of our prayers. For surely, we can never be too much affected with a desire of eternal happiness, or too ardently testify our sense of such a mercy: Whether therefore we reflect on his majesty, or the subject and importance of our petitions, or the place we are in; all these strongly conclude for a reverent behaviour in our publick devotions, and condemn as infinitely absurd and dangerous, all indecency, whether through inadvertence or design.

I have thus far proceeded with the first part of the text: in which *Solomon* prescribes a reverential regard to be paid to the house of God. I shall observe, by way of conclusion, what is contained in the second: *Be more ready, &c.* In which is recommended to us, a due attention to the design of coming thither, *viz.* our improvement in all Christian virtues. For herein is another mistake in the conduct of some men: that they place the whole of religion in such performances; that they scrupulously affect an esteem for the publick forms of religion, and pass over the influence such practices ought to have upon their lives. This was our Lord's complaint of the *Jews*; that they *honoured God with their mouth, but their hearts were far from him*; that they adhered to the outward forms, and neglected those inward qualifications and graces, which were by these types and figures recommended to them. For this reason *Solomon* says, *Be more ready to obey, &c.* to rectify the mistaken proceedings of deluded men.

BUT,

BUT, whatever notions the *Jews* may have imbibed; Christians are plainly told the contrary. The tribute of the heart, and affections, and the accommodations of the will to his commands, are what God has declared he requires, and will accept no other obedience: that *the doer of the word, and not the bearer only is justified*: that he who builds his hopes on any other foundation, will meet with the fate that man must expect, who builds his house upon the sand; — namely, that of losing all his pains, of being deprived of all his expectations, reaping this only fruit of such a folly, that of being buried in the ruins.

WHEREFORE, let us not be worshippers in word only, but in deed, and in truth: evidencing to all, by our conversation, that we frequent the church of God out of a sincere sense of religion; to the glory of God's great Name, and the salvation of our immortal souls.

T H E E N D.









