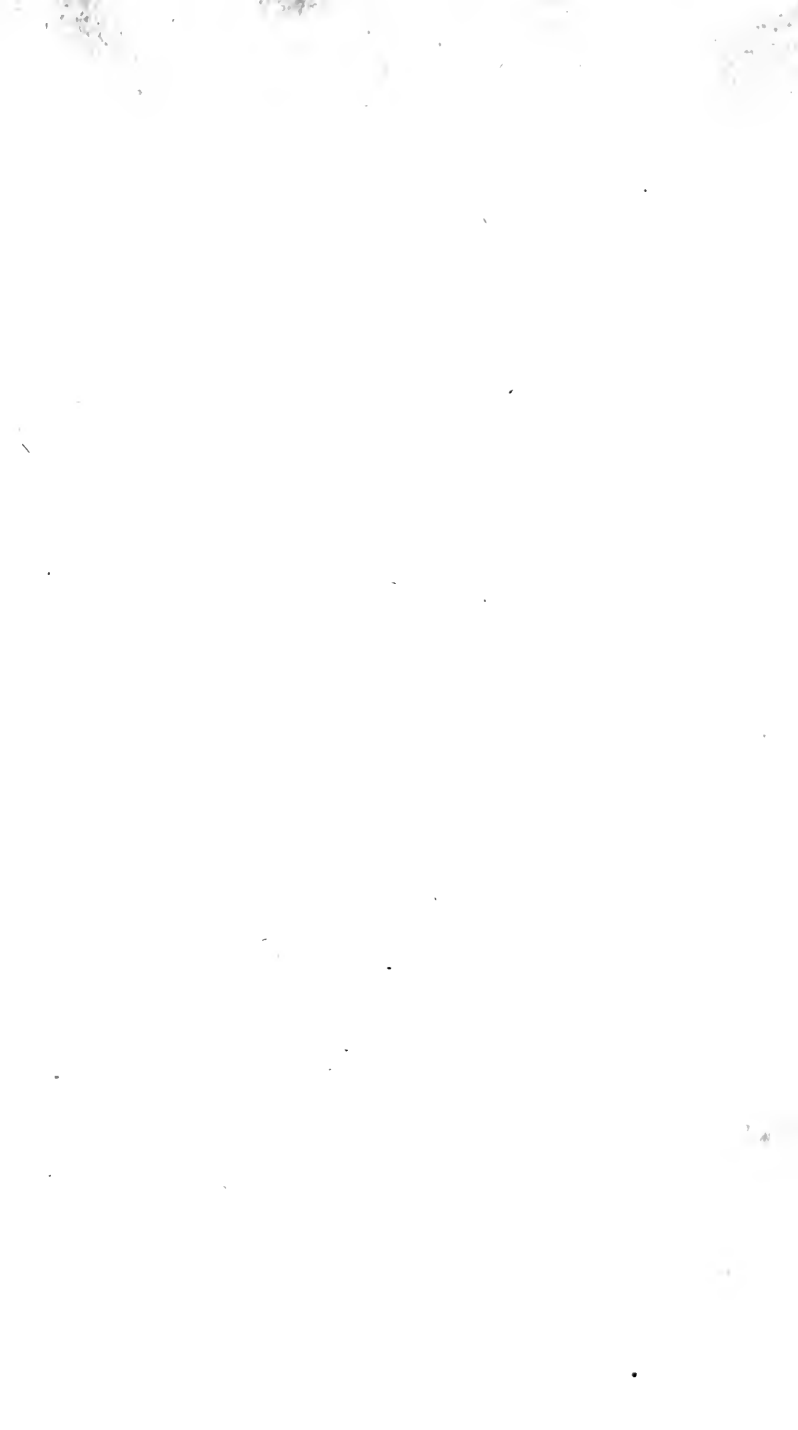


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Various SUBJECTS,

By the RIGHT REVEREND

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*PETER BROWNE, D. D.*

Late Bishop of *Corke* and *Rosfe*.

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T H E  
C O N T E N T S  
O F T H E  
S E C O N D V O L U M E.

S E R M O N XVII.

**T**HE Duty and Measure of Alms-giving.  
Page 1

MARK xii. 43, 44. *And he called to his Disciples, and saith to them, verily I say unto you, that this poor Widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the Treasury. For all they did cast in of their Abundance; but she of her Want did cast in all she had, even all her Living.*

S E R M O N XVIII.

Sense of Religion more observable in the middle and meaner rank of People. p. 45

MAT. xi. 25. *I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things*  
A 2

## C O N T E N T S.

*things from the wise and prudent, and hast  
revealed them unto babes.*

### S E R M O N XIX.

On the same Subject. p. 66

### S E R M O N XX.

On the same Subject. p. 86

### S E R M O N XXI.

The necessity of watching and praying. p. 105

*MAT. xxvi. 41. Watch and pray that ye en-  
ter not into temptation : The spirit indeed is  
willing but the flesh is weak.*

### S E R M O N XXII.

The war of the flesh and the spirit. p. 130

*GALAT. v. 17. For the flesh lusteth against the  
spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and  
these are contrary the one to the other : So  
that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

### S E R M O N XXIII.

The duty of plucking out the eye explained.  
p. 156

*MARK. ix. 47, 48. And if thine eye offend  
thee pluck it out : It is better for thee to en-  
ter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than  
having*

## C O N T E N T S.

*having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.*

### S E R M O N XXIV.

On the same Subject. p. 179

### S E R M O N XXV.

PHIL. iii. 20, 21. *For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

### S E R M O N XXVI.

On the Day of Judgment. p. 219

REVEL. XX. 12. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

### S E R M O N XXVII.

The law proved to be good from the evidence of our own consciences. p. 240

ROM. vii. 19. *For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that do I.*

S E R M O N

## C O N T E N T S.

### S E R M O N XXVIII.

The comfort of a good man at the approach  
of death. p. 265

2 TIM. iv. 8. *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all those also that love his appearing.*

### S E R M O N XXIX.

The necessity of crucifying our affections and  
lusts. p. 285

GALAT. v. 24. *And they that are Christ's have crucified the Flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

### S E R M O N XXX.

The great necessity of purity. p. 319

JAMES iii. 17. *The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

### S E R M O N XXXI.

The divine eloquence of our Saviour considered. p. 340

JOHN vii. 46. *The officers answered, never man spake like this man.*

SERM. XXXII. On the same Subject. p. 368

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# S E R M O N X V I I .

P R E A C H E D

At the Parish Church of St. *Andrew's*, Dublin,  
on *Sunday* the 15th of *April*, 1716. For  
the Benefit of the *Charity-School* for Boys  
in that *Parish*.

The Duty and Measure of Alms-  
giving.

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MARK xii. 43, 44.

*And he called to his Disciples, and saith to  
them, verily I say unto you, that this poor  
Widow hath cast more in, than all they which  
have cast into the Treasury.*

*For all they did cast in of their Abundance;  
but she of her Want did cast in all she had,  
even all her Living.*

**T**HIS treasury was a kind of chest in SERM.  
the temple, answerable to the poor-XVII.  
box fixed in some of our churches, into which

SERM. XVII. the free-will offerings were cast, for pious and charitable uses. Jesus sitting *over against* it where he could have the easiest view, and beholding how the people *cast money* into it, observed a poor Woman throw in *two mites*; which by the best computation were in value *three farthings* of our coin. The eyes of others, and probably those of his Disciples likewise, overlooked this poor contribution of hers, as inconsiderable and below their notice, and were intent upon the greater Sums of the rich: But Jesus who judged not according to appearance, *called to his Disciples*; the expression shews something of solemnity, and that he had a Matter of no small consequence to communicate to them. And lest he might thereby have discouraged the greater *offerings* of the rich, or given occasion of vanity to the charitable Widow, he at that time imparts what he had to say only to them; and lets them know, that what was seemingly so mean and despicable in itself, contained abundant matter of instruction, even to them who were to teach and reform the world: For that this was a singular instance of an excellent and exalted charity, and of the noblest munificence. They were to learn this *paradox*, new to them, as well as absurd and incredible to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees Hypocrites*; but full of *divine wisdom* and *truth* to such as are enlightened by the Gospel: Namely, that *two Mites* were more than an *hundred*; and that one brass *farthing* might be  
of



of greater intrinsick worth and value than *thousands of gold and silver.* SERM.  
XVII.

My business at present shall be to pursue our Saviour's design in transmitting this passage down to us; and to lay this great example before you in the best light I can for your imitation and encouragement. And this I shall do by observing the several things which it naturally suggests to us. Accordingly,

I. We learn from hence that the poorest sort of people are not exempted from this indispensable duty of *almsgiving*. The lowest rank of people under the *law* was not excused from these *offerings of God* which were to be made in the Temple; and the duty of *almsgiving* under the *Gospel* arises from the express command of God, Heb. xiii. 16. *To do good, and to distribute forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* And Luke xi. 41. *Give alms of such things as ye have.* Besides, this example before us is more immediately fitted for the poor; and the gracious acceptance of that little gift shews us how well pleased God was with it. If any were left out of that command of doing good by distributing, this woman had sufficient reason to think her self of that number; being by her *sex* more helpless than a man, and a *widow* too, and not only so but a *poor* one, and reduced to one *farthing* to live upon, and perhaps could not tell when she was like to see another. The *widow* and the *fatherless* are proposed in scripture as the most common and signal objects

SERM. of Charity, and yet even under this circum-  
 XVII. stance she thought it her duty to give *some-*  
 thing, though it was next to *nothing*. If any  
 can pretend to be in a worse condition than  
 this, then may they with some colour plead  
 exemption from the performance of this great  
 duty; for they only are excused from giving  
*alms of such things as they have*, who have  
 nothing to give in alms.

II. The *second* thing we may observe from  
 hence is, that the true Measure of our chari-  
 ties, in the account of God, is not the *quan-*  
*tity* of what is given, but the *proportion* it  
 bears to our fortune in the World. This is  
 the plain import of the text, and what our  
 Saviour expressly asserts in the case of this  
 widow who *cast more in than all they who*  
*cast into the Treasury*; nay though it is not  
 improbable that the Disciples *themselves* threw  
 something into it at the same time; for we  
 find, *John* xiii. 29. that it was their custom  
 to give to the poor out of the common  
 stock. The reason assigned for this judg-  
 ment of his is because the rich cast in *ἐκ τῆς*  
*Περισσεύοντος*, of their *superfluity*; what was *re-*  
*dundant* and *unnecessary*, what could be spared,  
 and that they might be well without. But  
 she gave *ἐκ τῆς ὑστερήσεως αὐτῆς*, of what she *wanted*  
*her self*; what was to procure her not any  
*conveniency* only, but the very *necessaries* of  
 life. So that it was not a *small* gift out of a  
*little*, which would have equalled any thing  
 the

the rich gave out of their abundance; but it was all she had left in the world; and therefore it was impossible for her to be out-done. It was this that rendered her's such an excellent and exemplary charity; and if the widow's *farthing* was so well accepted because it was *all* her stock; nothing is plainer from hence than that the rich man's alms will not be accepted, if it be but a *little* out of his *abundance*.

SERM.  
XVII.

A man who gives but a *little* to pious and charitable uses out of an easy and *plentiful* fortune, is the very *reverse* of this widow; and for the same reason her alms proved an acceptable sacrifice, his will be rejected as an abomination in the sight of God; who has told us that *he that soweth little*, that is little in respect of his wealth and riches, *shall reap little*, i. e. in scripture language, nothing at all; whereas otherwise we are taught by this passage, that he who soweth little out of a mean fortune, shall reap much.

There are in scripture so many *woes* pronounced against *rich* men, and so much said of the danger of acquiring riches, that it is enough to startle the minds of any who have them in possession; and fill them with anxious fears, and even despondency, with respect to their future state, who are not awakened with a sense of their danger, and perpetually on their guard. *Go to now*, says St. James, v. 1. *Ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries*

6 *The Duty and Measure of Alms-giving.*

SERM. XVII. *that shall come upon you. Verse 3. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, i. e. at the day of judgment. And shall eat your flesh as it were fire; subject both soul and body to everlasting fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days, a mass of wealth to inflame your account in the great day of accounts. Verse 5. Ye have lived in pleasure upon the earth, indulging your ease and humour in every thing, and therefore it will fall the heavier upon you in another world: And all this is pursuant to our Saviour's own doctrine, that it is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Would not the consideration of this make any man thoughtful who had wealth or money in store, and who had any serious purposes of saving his soul, and escaping the damnation of hell? For surely there must be some reason extraordinary for pronouncing thus *positively* and in *general* upon the condition of the rich, without any express *exception* or *reserve*; and this can be no other than the insuperable reluctance they always find in themselves to the performance of this duty of distributing to charitable and pious uses, in such quantities as shall bear a reasonable *proportion* to their worldly substance. The great difficulty they are under of making a *friend* in time of the Mammon of unrighteousness,

ness, which will otherwise prove their greatest SERM. XVII.  
*enemy*; that false and treacherous Mammon which, it is odds, will deceive them to their utter ruin and destruction; but rightly managed will at last become their greatest friend, and receive them *into everlasting habitations.*

As harsh and severe as these sayings of our blessed Saviour and his Apostle seem, yet how remarkably do we see them verified in the generality of the rich men of this world? For how few of them are there who *give alms of such things as they have*, i. e. a good share of what God has blessed them with, and who *forget not to do good*; and to *distribute* according to their Abilities? Who *lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain eternal life*. i. e. Lay out so much of their fortune in charities, as shall be a comfortable ground for hope of salvation? How few of them consider they are but stewards, and do not look upon their riches to be all their own? And accordingly either heap them up for their *posterity*, or else live to the *height* of what they have, or even beyond it; and so put it out of their power to perform works of charity in such degrees as God will require at their hands? They live as if they were not one day to account with him for every penny, who has allow'd them part of their substance for a salary, and as to the remainder has left them Trustees only and managers for the poor. A lamentable reckoning too many of

SERM. them will have with their great master at that  
XVII. time when their *souls shall be required of them.*

So much expended in pomp and equipage; so much in gawdy cloathing, and costly dainties; such and such fums laid out in mode, and fashion, and gallantry: And at the foot of the account perhaps some scattered pence or farthings to the poor; as if they were to imitate this widow in nothing else but the bulk and size of her offering. But how very different from this will her account be? So much given at a happy opportunity to a publick and excellent charity, and nothing left to depend on but God's providence for a meal's meat. Learn from this Woman, who could want her food rather than be wanting in the discharge of this duty; learn I say from her, at least to part with all your *superfluities*; to *contract* your expences, and keep within *compass*, and cut off many unnecessary *forms* only of living; that you may not be under a necessity of *robbing God in his offerings*, and of coming short of such a quantity to be distributed for that purpose as shall bear a good proportion to your worldly substance. And this leads me to the

III<sup>d</sup>. Thing observable from the text; namely, that whatever is the *quantity* of our alms, whether *greater* or *less*, yet God chiefly regards the heart it is given with. It is true the better a man's heart is, the more it will dispose him to distribute; but no quantity or proportion

proportion our alms bear to our worldly substance, is a sure indication of their proceeding from a truly *charitable principle*. They may proceed from vanity, or ostentation; or from some other selfish or unworthy motive; accordingly St. Paul supposes that a man may bestow *all his goods to feed the poor*, and yet it may *profit him nothing*, for want of that inward disposition of soul, which was so visible in her who was the subject of our Saviour's remark.

She was in no danger of *vain glory* from a gift so small and inconsiderable, that it seemed not worth the notice of any there present except our blessed Saviour: And if she had not conveyed it into the corban or chest with *privacy*, that which was so approved and commended by him, would in all likelihood have met with contempt and ridicule from the Scribes and Pharisees, who gave their *alms to be seen of men*. Nor could she have any *selfish* or *worldly* motive; for what worldly motive could be stronger than present food for an hungry stomach? And she who could deny the cravings and necessities of nature rather than lose the opportunity of doing an excellent charity, could not have done it in prospect of any other worldly good. Besides, the *alacrity* and *cheerfulness*, with which it was performed, is not obscurely intimated in the particular mention of her giving *two mites*, which was still more than if she had given one *farthing*, though they were of equal value. Had it been

SERM.  
XVII.

SERM. *one* piece of money, the doubt with her self  
 XVII. would have been, whether she should *keep* it  
 to her self, or *lend* it to God? But being  
*two*, there was fair Ground of hesitation whether she should keep *one*, and part with the *other*? This it self would have been a commendable charity, and she could have said with *Zaccheus*, *the half of my goods I give to the poor*. But so great was her soul, that though they were her last, she would not even divide with God, but make him a present of all; and this was sufficient proof of her being sorry it was no more.

How should this great example excite in us the like *ready* mind, and *forward chearfulness* of spirit which raised these *two mites* to such an immense value in the sight of God, who regards not the *quantity* only of our alms, but that *disposition* of the heart with which they are given; who tells us, Heb. vi. 10. That he is not *unrighteous to forget those works which proceed from love*; from the love of him, and our neighbour. Who commands his ministers to *charge them who are rich in this world, that they be ready to give, and glad to distribute*, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Glad to find out opportunities of doing good, and to seek them, and rejoyce to set forward any common and extensive good:

Now since it is the giving freely and willingly is that which sanctifies our alms; and that we are for that reason warned, 2 Cor. ix.




7. not to give *grudgingly*, or of *necessity*, for SERM.  
XVII. that *God liveth a chearful giver*; I cannot close this head without observing, that the main occasion of people's failing in this great and essential qualification of their charities, and the reason why they do not give with a *willing* and *free* heart, is because they do not come to a fixed resolution with themselves to lay aside some certain *proportion* of their clear *gain* or *yearly income* for charitable uses; but generally leave this at *large* and *uncertain*, to be performed when they happen to be well disposed, and that objects or occasions of charity offer of themselves. This makes men careless and negligent in giving, and they do it with a secret reluctance; and at best with coolness and indifference. Whereas if they would observe the rule laid down by *St. Paul*, 1 *Cor.* xvi. 2. that *every one do weekly lay by in store as God has prospered him*, i. e. *treasure up*, as it is in the original, and as it is elsewhere expressed, *Treasure up for themselves treasures in heaven*, *Matth.* vi. 19, 20. they would then be able to make a pretty good computation of what their *treasure* in heaven is; and what *foundation they have laid against the time to come*, for the *attainment of eternal life*. They would then make it their business to inquire for the greatest objects of charity, and seek diligently for opportunities of laying out their money in such an invaluable purchase. They would not trust their own heart, which is *deceitful above all things*, with a matter of

so

SERM. XVII. so great consequence to them; nor leave it to meer chance, and present temper, or inclination only; but determine well upon it from their best reason and most mature deliberation.

If any one should ask what proportion of our worldly substance would be reasonable thus to dedicate to God? I shall make no other answer than what the Holy Ghost has furnished us with in 2 Cor. ix. 7. *Let every man do according as he is disposed in his heart.* And verse 6. *He that soweth little, shall reap little, and he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously.* It does not become us to prescribe bounds to what God has left at large and undetermined for wise and important reasons; namely that our deeds of charity may be *intirely free*; and that there might be *full scope* left for the largest soul to exert itself to the utmost, in a virtue which can never miss of a suitable reward in the highest degree that it is practicable; nay though men come up to this great pattern which Christ has laid before us. Which brings me to the

IVth thing observable from this passage, and that is, how little danger we are in of any *blameable excess* in the practice of this most excellent virtue. There is great danger of coming short, and multitudes have been undone thereby, and subjected themselves to that final and irreverfible sentence, *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*; expressly said to be for their failure in the due discharge of this great duty: But since

since the world began was it never heard that SERM.  
ever any person over-acted this part? If ever XVII.  
it was any one's case, it must be that of this   
widow, who cast into the sacred treasury all  
she had, *even all her living*. The word is  
*βίος* in the original, she parted with her very  
*life and sustenance*; which at *least* must signify  
the whole allowance of that day, perhaps her  
*hire or wages*; and then she both wrought  
and fasted for her gift. The rest out of their  
abundance contributed largely, but they still  
kept more behind; but Christ tells us she  
wanted what she gave: It was no imaginary  
but a real want; the greatest in nature, the  
want of *bread*.

Now though this woman's offering was all  
that God had allotted her for the supplies of  
hunger and thirst, yet we find our Saviour  
did not condemn her, or argue her guilty of  
any indiscreet profuseness; no nor of tempt-  
ing God by rashly and intirely throwing her  
self upon his providence: But on the contra-  
ry magnifies her gift above all the pompous  
charities of the rich; and proposes it by way  
of example and encouragement to all poste-  
rity.

This is not the only instance wherein Christ  
has expressed himself upon the work of cha-  
rity even in this exalted degree; his direction  
to the young man who *had great possessions*,  
Matth. xix. 21. was, *go and sell that thou  
hast*, τὰ ὑπάρχοντα all your substance; ὅσα ἔχεις says  
St. Mark, all you have, *and give to the poor*,  
*and*

SERM.  
XVII.

*and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.* This giving all a man's substance to charitable uses, has but a very harsh and ungrateful sound in the ears of a worldly minded man; nay in the ears even of such as are perhaps at the same time reducing themselves to want and beggary, by consuming all their substance upon their lusts and vanities, and are thereby *treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath.* And yet tell those very people of parting with their substance and giving it to the poor, and that they shall have treasure in heaven, and they will call it mockery.

But let not people be deceived; this saying of our Saviour's was not calculated for that single person alone to whom it was spoke; for then it would not have been on record in the Gospel; but is full of instruction to all mankind, and no more than what he recommends to his own *little flock*, Luke xii. 23. *Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not.*

These sayings of Christ are not to be taken in the utmost *rigour*, as if the advice were to part with all, and reduce ourselves to the extremest want and misery; it is not expected men should act up to this widow, and not leave themselves one farthing. But they import the giving to charitable uses not only some reasonable proportion of their annuity or gain, but the selling even their *possessions* and

and *estates*; the breaking *bulk*, and giving alms out of the *main stock*, and very substance of their fortune; and that the precept is not to be strained beyond this is plain, for that St. *John* had a house of his *own* long after it was given. And that even thus much is not always matter of necessary duty to all christians, is evident beyond doubt, from St. *Peter's* discourse to *Ananias*, Acts v. 4.

The church of *Rome* understands this advice to the young man, to be a counsel only of perfection; as if by that *single* act of selling all they have, and giving to the poor; or by *vows* of a voluntary *poverty*, men were immediately in a more exalted state of *holiness*, in a condition above all other christians, and entitled to greater degrees of glory and to an higher station in heaven; this being a great fund of merit both for themselves and others. Whereas there is no such thing as a *state* or condition of *perfection* in the performance of any *single* virtue, or the attainment of any *one* particular *grace* in the highest degree: But true christian *perfection* consists in a *complication* of all manner of evangelical virtues and graces; in the gradual *increase* of universal piety and holiness; and in such settled and confirmed habits of them in all instances that they become the prevailing temper and disposition of soul and body: And even this is so far from *perfection* in the *strict* sense of the word, that after all we are *but unprofitable servants*. Their straining of the precept thus  
beyond

SERM.  
XVII.

beyond the plain and natural import of it; has given occasion to others to run into the quite contrary extreme, and take off all its force of persuasion and influence upon the consciences of men; and in short to render it no *motive* at all to the performance of this great duty. But as I said, this was designed for *our* instruction as well as *his* to whom it was spoke; and though it be no counsel of perfection in the strict sense of the word, nor matter of positive command to all christians, yet from thence we learn these three things.

1. That *selling* a man's estate or parting with the *bulk* or *substance* of his fortune to be disposed of in charitable uses, is always thus far a degree of perfection; that when it is performed with a good heart, it is a great and exalted degree of this virtue of charity, and ever highly acceptable in the sight of God, and will not fail of a suitable reward in another world: That is where it is truly our own; and that hereby no wrong or injustice is done to others; which in all likelihood was the case of this man who was young, and therefore as yet without necessary dependants and family.

2. We are hereby taught that *sometimes* this giving *all* or much the *greater part* of our substance to the poor, is very commendable and highly convenient; as in such cases of great extremity, when our *abundance* may be a necessary supply to the wants and miseries of many of our fellow-christians. This was  
the

the condition of the first professors of the Gospel; who many of them, Acts 4. *sold their lands and possessions, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.* And St. Paul tells us, 2 Cor. viii. 2. of the christians of Macedonia, that *in a great tryal of affliction their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality*, i. e. that at a time when they were under great streights and difficulties themselves, they out of their poverty gave abundance, even beyond their power, for the supply of their christian brethren in Judæa. SERM. XVII.

A 3d thing plainly implied in our Saviour's discourse with the young man, is, that in some cases the selling all we have and giving it to charitable uses may become even matter of *duty*, and highly *necessary* to salvation. This was his very case; and that he understood it as a positive *command* to him, is plain by his going away *sorrowful*; for he would have gone away *cheerful* if he had thought he might have entered *into the kingdom of heaven* without obeying what was a *counsel* only of perfection, and no necessary *condition* of salvation. It was to him an immediate call to follow Christ in person as the Apostles did, which he could not then do without quitting his great possessions; nor could he be sincere in his faith if he failed in that tryal of it which Christ then laid upon him, namely to sell his estate and distribute it in charities. And this will have the binding force of a *command* in respect of all other christians likewise when

SERM. XVII. God shall call them to it by any publick and general calamities, and that the necessities and miseries of God's church and people plainly require it from them.

There is another case which may turn this advice into a positive and necessary command; and that is, when the frame and temper of a man's mind is such that a great fortune is an *invincible* temptation to him, and leads him into such occasions of sin as he finds by experience he is not able to overcome, but must *inevitably* be hurried away with a constant supply of those allurements which are thrown in his way by it. In this case the parting with great possessions, or at least quitting the use of them, is no more than a necessary act of *self-denial* founded on these sayings of our Saviour's, *where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also.* And again, *what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* For what worldly weight or consideration can a man throw into the ballance against his soul? And surely then it becomes incumbent upon us to sell all we have, and give to the poor, and follow Christ, when we cannot follow him without so doing. When riches become *any way* inconsistent with our eternal salvation, we must part with them as we must cut off a *right hand*, or pluck out a *right eye*. It is more than probable this was the very case of that youth; and that Christ who *knew what was in man*, and could fore-see




see how far he was from overcoming the temptations of a great fortune, from thence made his observation, how difficult it was *for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Does not our own experience shew us how this is daily verified, insomuch that alas! there are not many instances to the contrary? How most who come young into plentiful fortunes are for ever undone by them; hurried into all manner of vice and extravagance; and contract such a habit and relish of sin in their younger years, and do so entirely lavish away that portion of grace afforded them for their first setting out in the world, that they rarely or never after are brought to any feeling sense of *revealed* religion; insomuch that the *christian* is intirely sunk and lost in the *gentleman*. So great are the temptations of riches that Christ himself did not prevail for the performance of this in the circumstance of a person where he saw it necessary; much less may others hope to prevail on any in a like case to act up to this precept of his. Though like that young man, they go away with no other impression than that of some secret sorrow or regret at the hearing of this doctrine, yet let them take this with them, and remember that this saying of our Saviour's holds good to this day, that *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

If there are any so prejudiced in Favour of the things of this world that they cannot re-

SERM. XVII. } lish this doctrine, thus much at least they must allow to be plain and undeniable from hence; namely, that if the heart is right in the point of almsgiving, we shall rather *exceed* than come *short*. If there be a disposition of mind truly charitable, it will ever prompt us rather to err on the right side, than fail of the utmost of what God may require of us; to venture an extraordinary *dependance* upon providence, rather than any *distrust* of it: And in all our doubtings concerning how much we shall give to charitable uses, we shall conclude the *most* we think of to be always *best*; and herein in some degree to imitate the good widow, who, to remove all scruple, decided the point against her self, and gave all she had.

Vthly. I think it a remark upon this excellent act of the widow's charity not to be pass'd over because it is so obvious; namely, that it was performed while she was in *life* and *health*; so as to be able to dispose of it with her own hands, nay though perhaps she might have ventured her life for it, it being *all her living*. If scraping, and hoarding all that is to be gotten, for fear of beggary and starving; and then only leaving all we have heaped together to charitable *uses*, when it can be of no farther *use* to our selves, was ever commendable, it must have been in the person of this woman: But the favourable notice Christ takes of her is for the *contrary*, the giving while she was in a condition of wanting

ing her self. From whence we learn that SERMON.  
when men defer what they give in charity till XVII.  
they are going out of the world, though they   
firmly purpose to perform bountifully *then*,  
it loses all that which renders it acceptable  
to God; the *self-denial* there is in it, and spar-  
ring from our selves; the *cheerful* and *ready*  
mind, together with faith in the promises of  
God, and dependance upon his providence.  
Nay it is in effect a giving away what they  
have no title to dispose of, for as the Lord  
*Bacon* observes, *he who defers charities till*  
*death, is rather liberal of another man's than*  
*of his own.* The right of all our worldly sub-  
stance at the hour of death devolves upon God,  
who then transfers it to another. *He who has*  
*pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord;* but  
sure it is a strange time to *begin* to lend to him  
when he is taking all from us, and that we can  
keep it no longer; and it is plain, if such a  
person could carry his money with him, he  
would leave none behind for charitable uses.  
*Thou fool,* says our Saviour of the rich miser,  
*this night shall thy soul be required of thee,*  
and then *whose shall those things be?* That is,  
any man's in the world rather than his who  
heaped them together.

Take therefore the Apostle's advice, and  
*do good unto all men as you have opportunity.*  
And that of Solomon's, *give when thou hast it*  
*by thee, and say not unto thy neighbour, To mor-*  
*row I will give thee;* that *to morrow* is ever  
coming to the worldly and covetous man,

SERM.  
XVII.

and it is never *to day* with him till he sees his last, and that the next morning is to be in another world. It is a wretched thing for a man to live to no other purpose but to hinder great sums of money from circulating and doing good either to himself or any one else; whilst he *lives* the poor may *perish*, and when he *dies* the poor may *live*: He keeps all from them as long as he can, and at last leaves that for *others* to do, which he could never find in his heart to do himself. If this Widow had done the same by her two mites, and if the rest who gave plentifully upon the same occasion, had forbore giving whilst they were alive, under a notion of some great and bulky charity at their death, how would the temple have gone to ruin? The publick worship of God ceased? And what multitudes of the poor and indigent had perished for want of the necessaries of life?

This is in truth no other than deferring the practice of one of the greatest and most indispensable duties till that time when the exercise of all virtues and graces in this world ceases: Nor is it only thus *absurd* in it self, but a manifest *inconsistency* with all the precepts in the scripture relating to deeds of charity and almsgiving. Is that a time to be *rich in good works*, when you cannot *work* at all? To *bring the poor to your house*, when you are your self in your *grave*? To lay up *store for the time to come*, then only when time is past? To *give* when you can do it neither with *simplicity*,

*plicity*, nor *mercy*, nor *cheerfulness*? To do your *alms in secret*, when all the world must know of it? In short, to begin to *sow*, when you should *reap*; and to think then to make a *friend of the Mammon of unrighteousness* at a juncture when he is to commence your everlasting enemy? But above all, is that a time to *visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*, when your friends are *invited* to your *funeral*? I was sick and ye *visited* me, I was in prison and ye *came* to me; these two words are remarkable and worthy the divine wisdom, which are not to be taken only in the *figurative*, but even in the *literal* sense, and are designed to signify the *actual going* to see the poor; *viewing* their condition and circumstances with our *own eyes*; *finding* them out, and *acquainting* our selves with their miseries; and often giving them our alms with our *own hands*. As the very *presence* of those who relieve them is a comfort to the distressed and afflicted; and as we are hereby enabled to suite our selves to their several wants, and to distribute our bounty more seasonably and prudently; so it is no small improvement to our selves. Such as live an *easy* and *pleasurable* life, and know not the want of a meal's meat, have no notion of the miseries of the poor; and are therefore very bad judges of the real worth of this woman's charity. It is natural for them to think a farthing was as little to *her*, as to *them*; and that she parted with it because it was not worth keeping; but one

SERM. XVII. *visit* to any of those many cells or cottages where *hunger* and *thirst* and *nakedness* have taken up their residence, would make them alter their opinion. If they were eye witnesses of the *streights* and *difficulties* many poor *house-keepers* struggle with, who have no work or employment and are ashamed to beg; and if they did but hear their children's *cries* for bread when they have *none* to give them, this would bring them to a *merciful* temper and disposition; it would make them truly sensible of the *bounty* of God towards themselves; it would teach them to *value* his  *blessings*; it would create in them a true *humility* and *lowliness* of mind, as seeing what they themselves would be if they were in the same condition. And now let any one tell me what *effect* or *influence* all these precepts can have upon a *dying* man? Or how they can operate to all the *wise ends* and *purposes* of them upon him when he is dead? And this naturally leads us in the

With place to observe, what an excellent act of *faith* this woman's charity was, and of a firm *dependance* upon the providence of God. At the same instant she threw into the *treasury* all her worldly dependance, she must have resigned her body and soul into his hands to whom she made the present. This extraordinary act of a publick charity in one who must have been her self an object of charity, and stood in need of an alms, could have proceeded

ceeded from none but a mind exercised to an habitual discharge of holy duties, and wherein there was a complication of virtues and graces. She must have been used to fasting and abstinence, and to frequent self-denials, who could deny her self the necessaries of life. She must have been strongly affected with a belief of God's *all-sufficiency*, as well as with a present sense of his *all-seeing* eye. She must have had a warm zeal for the house of God and his worship; and have been of a tender and compassionate heart towards the poor, as having a fellow-feeling of their miseries. She was surely of a devout and excellent spirit, endued with a great contempt of all worldly pleasures and vanities; intirely void of all discontent, or murmuring at her poverty and the meanness of her condition; and of all envy at the flourishing condition of the rich who were able to give so plentifully. From whence we may learn, that the poorest person in the lowest condition of life, hath it in his power to exercise the most *exalted* acts of virtue; nay and to out-do those of an higher rank in that very particular of *almsgiving*, in which of all other duties they seem to have the greatest advantage over him.

This was a full tryal of the *truth* and *sincerity* of her heart towards God in a signal instance of duty and love, and upon an extraordinary occasion; and a proof that no hardship or difficulty could overcome the resolution of her mind in aspiring to the greatest height

SERM. height of virtue and goodness which was  
 XVII. practicable, nay though she starved for it: A  
 person's passing such a tryal as this, in the only  
 point of virtue and goodness expressly to be  
 recited in the day of judgment, must be ever  
 after a ground of unspeakable comfort for  
 the rest of his life; it shews that God can  
 call him to nothing which he is not disposed  
 readily and chearfully to obey. But it must  
 be a reflection full of sinking and despondency  
 for a man to be conscious to himself that  
 he has hitherto remarkably failed in what is to  
 be the main article of his account; whatever  
 appearance or profession of religion he makes  
 in all other instances, he may conclude the  
 heart is not right, and that his service is di-  
 vided between *God* and *Mammon*.

It is worth observing, that in all this she  
 acted upon no higher principle than what the  
 old testament could furnish her with. She  
 might have heard of *Manna* rained down  
 from heaven for a supply to God's people in  
 the wilderness; of the *Prophet's* being fed by  
*ravens*; and the *widow's* cruce of oyl which  
 failed not in the famine. But she had not  
 been taught that though *two sparrows* were so  
 inconsiderable as to be sold for a farthing, yet  
 that one of them could not be killed without  
 God's permission; and that his care of us is  
 such, that the very *hairs of our heads* are  
*numbered*. And yet we find how little thought  
 she took for her life, what she should eat or  
 what she should drink, who gave away all  
 her



her living; and how truly she sought *first* SERM.  
*the kingdom of God and his righteousness,* and XVII.  
 left it to him to add all other things as he saw

fit. Compare this woman with those who make the fear of wanting an excuse for not giving to the poor; nay some to that degree that they are not without perpetual boading thoughts of starving in the midst of plenty. Then it is faith when we look upon what we give in charitable uses to be the surest provision for our selves and families, and think that we lend upon the best security. *He that bath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he bath borrowed will he pay him again; pay him with interest,* and commonly in this life: And if we had the whole history of this widow, I doubt not but we should have had an account even of a temporal reward for such an excellent charity, and of some providential relief for her who had thus liberally *cast her bread upon the waters.* Whenever charity fails of a return either upon our selves or our posterity even in this world, it is in all likelihood because we give not chearfully or in proportion to our fortune, but sparingly or with distrustful and desponding thoughts. Or because, though we are not wanting in the quantity of our charities, yet we are not all of a piece, but fail in some other duties; for though we should *visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,* it is not *pure religion* unless we keep our selves *unspotted from the world,* James i. 22.

SERM.  
XVII.

VII. The seventh thing we may observe from this remarkable passage, is the great value and real excellency of a *publick* charity. The *corban* or *treasury* was a common fund for the repairs and furniture of the *temple*; for the support of the publick worship of God; and for the relief of the indigent. One would be apt to think that a *farthing* was not worth contributing to so *great* a fund; and that it was *vanity* in the widow not to lay it out in some private charity, whose low condition must have made her acquainted with miserable objects enough, and with such as wanted it to buy them bread. But we find *she* thought otherwise, who chose to contribute her two mites to a publick charity; and so did our Saviour, who from his full approbation of what she had done, and magnifying it above all the great and pompous charities of the rich, hath recommended the like practice to all posterity. It is true, private cases of great *extremity*, or sudden *exigence*, and present *misery*, require an immediate relief, and are preferable to any publick charity whatsoever; and this we are taught by Christ in the person of the good *Samaritan*, who was at expence in taking care of the man he chanced to find stript and wounded by the way; whereas the *priest* and the *Levite*, who passed him by, perhaps would have pleaded for themselves that they reserved their money for the *corban*. Such another seasonable act of generosity and kindness was that of the woman who consumed the precious

cious oyntment on our Saviour when he sat at meat, the price of which would have relieved many of the ordinary poor. The import of his answer upon that occasion was, that *his* was a particular and extraordinary case, it being done not meerly out of a customary compliment, but upon a great and sudden exigence, no less than by an excellent act of faith, the anointing of him for his burial. SERM.  
XVII.

But though such like instances of present exigence or misery claim a preference before all other, yet the contributing to promote a general and publick good is otherwise more preferable, as the good of the community is to be considered before that of any single person. The common poor you *have always with you*, and you need never want opportunity of relieving them; but opportunities of contributing to an united and publick charity you *have not always*. We find this Widow left the performance of those common and ordinary charities to them who were able to perform both; and wisely chose to throw her farthing into the publick treasury: And small as it was, you see it was not sunk in so great a mass, but came into the account with God, and brought her in for no small share of that universal benefit which from thence accrued to the whole nation of the *Jews*. This *little* gift was an argument of a *large* and *generous* soul, and shewed how plentifully she would have given if she had been able. As none could equal her

SERM. her in her bounty for the reason given by our  
 XVII. Saviour, because there was none so poor, and  
 that she could not find any that wanted more  
 than her self: So had her fortune been equal  
 to the goodness of her heart, she had out-done  
 them all likewise in the *size* and *number* of  
 their offerings. She who could freely part with  
 two mites for the publick good, and want  
 bread for it that day, would have found no  
 reluctance in paring off all the superfluous va-  
 nities of a fashionable way of living, and laying  
 of them out in the purchase of heaven and  
 eternal life. Nay it is plain she had a soul as  
 great as that of *David* or *Solomon*; and if she  
 had wherewithal, she would have defrayed the  
 charges of re-building the temple with all it's  
 furniture, nothing inferiour to what it ap-  
 peared in it's greatest splendour.

If you are sensible of the true value and  
 worth of a publick charity in the sight of God,  
 I shall here proceed to the present occasion of  
 my laying before you this great and excellent  
 example of it proposed by our Saviour in the  
 Gospel; which is a good opportunity now to  
 be given of making tryal of our own hearts  
 how far they are in a disposition of being  
 moved and influenced by it. Namely, a col-  
 lection to be made for a number of poor help-  
 less children, to be laid out in providing for  
 them *cloaths*, and *books*, and *schooling*; in giving  
 them instruction in the first rudiments of the  
 christian religion, and acquainting them with  
 the doctrines and principles of our holy church;

in teaching them such things as may qualify them for trades and callings; in binding them out apprentices, and so putting them into a condition of earning bread for themselves, and being some way useful to the publick.

SEPM.  
XVII.


Now because it is no small comfort to such as give, that they do it in a well-chosen charity; that they give with *prudence* as well as with a *free* and *ready* heart, it ought to be considered, that setting aside cases of *necessity* and present *misery*, this is one of the noblest charities in the world; insomuch that it is hard to tell how money can be given to better purposes, and how any liberality whatsoever can be greater in it's effects and consequences. For

1st. It is an immediate relief to the greatest objects of charity in the world; it is for cloathing the nakedness of poor distressed and fatherless children, who are not able to help themselves; and are by the providence of God exposed destitute of friends or relations, on purpose for a tryal of our obedience to God's commands; of our faith in him; and dependence upon those blessings which are promised to them who *provide for the sick and needy*. *Is not this the fast I have chosen*, says God in Isai. lviii. 6, 7. *When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him*. i. e. When you spare it from your selves, and off your own backs to cloath the naked; not only such as are *intirely* so, but such as are either *indecently* or *thinly* clad; in which sense St. Paul says of himself, 1 Cor. iv. 11. that he himself *was naked*. And what

numbers

SERM. numbers of poor distressed children are there  
 XVII. in our streets wandering in rags and dirt, so  
 as to be even offensive and nauseous; and left  
 exposed, as St. Paul speaks of himself at the  
 13th verse, as the *filth of the world*, and *off-  
 scouring of all things*; and in all extremity of  
 weather even perishing with cold? The argu-  
 ment made use of in that place of *Isaiab*, is  
 a very moving one, *hide not thy self from thy  
 own flesh*; we may see our selves and behold  
 our own nature in every one of those mise-  
 rable children; they are the same flesh and blood  
 with us; and therefore if we but look upon  
 them and consider them, we cannot but be  
 touched with a sense of humanity, and nature  
 it self will prompt us to take pity on them.

But 2dly, this charity is not only for  
 the immediate relief of their bodies, but for  
 the saving of *their* souls as well as our *own*. It  
 is for giving them instruction in all necessary  
 points of faith and practice required by the  
 Gospel. It is for moulding and forming of  
 them in their tender years, before their appe-  
 tites get the mastery of them, and that their  
 passions grow resty and callous, and so inflex-  
 ibly hardened, that they are past all relish of  
 the joys of a good conscience, or any feeling  
 of an evil one. It is for rooting out the *seeds*  
 of vice and wickedness; for giving them early  
 habits of *virtue* and *goodness*; for teaching them  
 to *pray*; acquainting them with the *scriptures*,  
 and furnishing their memories with such por-  
 tions of them as may be a stock for the future  
 devotion

devotion of their lives, and enable them to SERM. keep up some communion with God, even in XVII. the midst of work and business. 

It is a reproach to our common christianity, that in the midst of a nation where it is professed and established, such multitudes should be found void of either natural or revealed religion, and even of the *first principles of the oracles of God*; scarce having tasted of the *milk of the word* which is necessary for the nourishment of *babes* in Christ. The ignorance of many among the lower rank of people, is incredible to any but such as have sought for opportunities of trying them; nay, many know no more of Christ than the name, and have as little knowledge of our salvation by him, as if they had been born wild *Indians* or *Americans*. And which is yet more lamentable, when once men are grown up in this ignorance, they are lost and undone past all remedy; for sad experience shews us, that when they pass their childhood and youth without any impressions of virtue and holiness, it is an insuperable difficulty ever after to work in them any truly sincere and lasting sense of religion. So remarkably true is that saying of the wise man's, *Train up a child in the way which he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*; the full import of which is, that if you do not train him up in the right way while he is a child, he will hardly ever be brought into it afterwards. How deplorably is this verified through the whole

SERM. rank of common beggars, who growing up  
 XVII. destitute of all knowledge of the laws of God,  
 and below the notice of humane laws, are generally the most corrupt and profligate part of mankind; without any sense or feeling of religion, and never use the name of any person in the holy trinity, but to profane it in their loud and importunate clamours for an alms: All which would have been in a great degree prevented, had the last age been sensible of the great and unspeakable advantages of this kind of charity. You see the importance of what you give to this use; it is for feeding the *lamb*s of Christ with spiritual nourishment; rescuing them from the jaws of hell; building up immortal souls for heaven and everlasting happiness; souls as dear and precious in the sight of Christ *with whom there is no respect of persons*, as those of your own children, and equally the price of his *blood*. In short, it is to save them from perishing for *lack of knowledge*, which is infinitely worse than perishing with hunger and cold.

A third thing of no small consequence to which we contribute, is the breeding up numbers of children to be true and faithful sons and daughters of the purest and holiest church upon earth; and this must be a motive of great weight with all those who are sincere and unshaken members of it themselves: For surely that communion which they make choice of for their own salvation, *except they be reprobates*, they cannot but judge most safe for the salvation



salvation of others; they must be persuaded that the supporting, and encouraging, and promoting the interest of it, is one of the most acceptable works to God which they can do. SERM.  
XVII.

It must be a great comfort to them to see numbers of poor children, who but for their bounty would have had no religion at all, come duly and orderly to church; to appear there in decent cloathing; and with an awful and reverend behaviour, such as becomes the house of God; to hear them joyn in our prayers and praises to God, and shew as much attention and devotion as can be expected from their tender years. This, God knows, is sadly overlooked and neglected by parents of a higher rank in their children; who for want of being used from the first to a constant attendance upon the service of God, and to the joyning with devotion in the publick worship, for the rest of their lives come to church to *lean*, or *gaze*, or make their *bows* and *compliments* to one another, even in the midst of the most exalted parts of divine service; or for any other purpose rather than to say their prayers with zeal and fervency, or bear a part in singing the praises of God.

I must not omit here that what is given upon this occasion, is for healing those *rents* and *divisions* which are made in the church, and a most effectual means of promoting peace and unity among christians. As too many who set up for *learning* and *refinement* do run into *infidelity*; so on the other hand, *ignorance* is

SERM. the mother of *enthusiasm*; and this begets a  
 XVII. race of *heresies* and *schisms*, which are in a  
 great degree prevented by instructing children  
 not in the *words* only, but in the *sense* and  
*meaning* of the church catechism; making  
 them acquainted with it's *doctrines*, and *prin-*  
*ciples*, and *liturgy*; and creating in them a  
 reverence for all *things* and *persons* dedicated  
 to the more immediate service of God. This  
 ever after prevents in them that *indifferency* to  
 their own religion, and *lukewarmness* so ex-  
 pressly condemned in the church of *Laodicea*,  
 and which is so fatally prevailing in our *own*:  
 O! may God avert any farther parallel in the  
 judgment likewise threatned, Rev. iii. 16. for  
 that prevailing hypocrisy. This will keep  
 them from being *tossed too and fro*, and *car-*  
*ried about with every wind of doctrine*; and  
 from any affectation of that shameful halting  
 between two opinions so much in vogue and  
 fashion: So that they will walk *uprightly*,  
 without a constant turn of the head, and a  
*side look* ever towards separate and contrary  
 communions. This will lay a foundation for  
 that *peace* and *unity*, that *brotherly love* and  
*christian charity* in the next generation, which  
 is so notoriously wanting in this; for these  
 poor children will have this advantage over  
 those of Persons of greater fortune and quality,  
 that they will grow up without any seasoning  
 of *party prejudice*, and prepossession.

4. In the last place, it is worth considering  
 how many and great the *secular* advantages  
 of

of so well placed and prudent a charity are to the state. It is contributing to the common good and benefit of mankind. It is not only for the instruction of children in *divine knowledge*; for the salvation of their souls; but to learn them such things as shall first qualify them for it, and then to bind them out to *trades or callings*. This renders them useful to themselves and to the commonwealth; this rescues them from contracting such inveterate habits of idleness at first, which they can never after wear off; and puts them upon getting their living by an honest industry. This will considerably lessen that great multitude of vagrant and wandering beggars which upbraid us to God and the *world*, and daily multiply, to the disgrace, as well as curse of the nation; and unless the further growth of them be prevented by *charity-schools*, and wholesome *laws* for that purpose, may be the means of bringing down judgments upon us.

This will be found the most effectual means of converting the *Irish Papists* of this kingdom; a work which hath been too long neglected, and the omission hath met with its punishment in those rebellions and massacres they have been hurried on to, by a savage *nature*, and more savage and bloody principles. Experience hath shewn that all other means without this are like to prove ineffectual; the present generation have no more even of a *bad* religion than the giving up their *senses* and their *reason*, which makes it almost impossible

SERM.  
XVII.



for them ever to embrace the *true* one, but a general and united endeavour of setting up these schools for their children through the nation, before they have their *eyes* put out; and are grown up meer *ideots* in christianity, could not but have a great effect in a little time; and is the more likely to meet with a *blssing* and *success*, because of its being performed by *methods* of *charity*.

By *seasoning* so many children with an early sence of religion, and taking them off from a whole life of *idleness* and *want*, how many immoralities do we hinder, which they would otherwise be guilty of, and what a flood of iniquity do we stem? How many *cheats* and *thefts*, and *whoredoms*, and *robberies*, and *murders*, will be effectually prevented, which experience shews us it is not in the power of humane laws to restrain? All which, though committed by the lowest rank of people, yet come into a general account with God, and are added to that mass of sin which ripens a nation for divine vengeance. How many will by this means be relieved not only from *ignorance*, and *cold*, and *nakedness*; but from publick *shame*, and *prison*, and exemplary and untimely *deaths*? And is any thing more common, than for such as are brought to this, in their last dying words at the place of execution, to lay all their wickedness and misery upon the want of some care and instruction in their childhood.

What

What need I say more? Whatever is given on this occasion is for reforming the world, as far as lies in each of us, and laying up a store both of temporal and spiritual blessings for posterity. It is for making many, who would otherwise never come to any sense either of natural or revealed religion, good *christians*, and good members of the commonwealth; good *parents*, and good *children*; good *masters* and *mistresses*, and good *servants*; and in short, good in every relation of life. It is not only for redeeming multitudes from present *sin* and *misery*, who would be otherwise trained up and exercised from their infancy in all kind of villany; but enabling them to convey the many blessings *they* receive, to those who come *after* them; and they again will transmit them farther downward; which is doing good through many generations: And thus a man may be the instrument of unspeakable good to persons who shall be born long after he is dead; *he has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor, his righteousness, even in this sense, remaineth for ever.*

If it should come into any man's heart to think that these are great things indeed in *imagination* and *theory*, but may prove little in the real effects and consequences of the intended charity; and that if they could be sure of the event, they would spare no cost, but contribute with great freedom and alacrity. Then let me ask them, how far do they think this poor widow's farthing could go in the re-

SERM.  
XVII.

pairs of that great temple at *Jerusalem*; in buying of *sacrifice*; and finding a constant supply of oyl and incense for the worship of God? And yet was not this feeble effort as acceptable as if she had paid down the price of hecatombs? If to our power we contribute to a general and lasting good, it is equal in the sight of God as if we singly and in our own person compleated the work: Let us do our duty with faith and dependance upon God's providence; let the *charity* fail of it's consequences, but let us not fail in our *charity*.

VIII. Having shewed you the excellency of a publick charity in general, and of this in particular, which is now promoting, I shall in the last place observe to you from the words of the text, the exact *notice* which is taken by God how all people from the *richest* to the *poorest* discharge themselves in the performance of this great duty of alms-giving. A little before the words of the text it is said, that Christ beheld ὄχλος as it is in the original, the *multitude* or *crowd* of people throw in their money; and yet so curious was he, and had so sharp an eye upon every one of them, that he could form an exact judgment upon the *quantity* of each person's alms, and the heart it was given with; insomuch that he could single out this poor woman, who in appearance gave the least of any one there, for the subject of his *remark*, so full of divine wisdom and instruction; and could pronounce that she had cast *more in than all they who cast*  
*into*

*into the treasury.* This one farthing did not escape his view, and he was so far from overlooking it, that he has published it to the whole world for all future generations; infomuch that wheresoever the Gospel is preached, *this also that this woman hath done, is told for a memorial of her.*

SERM.  
XVII.



Here then is a *corban* or *treasury* for you who have *abundance* to give *plentifully*; and for you who have but a *little*, to give of that *little*. Though Christ is not visibly here in person, and that we cannot see him, yet he is even now looking on, and beholds what every one contributes. Little did that woman imagine *who* was then present, applauding her at the very instant, and saying in effect, *well done thou good and faithful servant.* But we know that the same all-seeing eye which is every where *beholding the evil and the good*, is now upon us, and that every farthing which is now given, and upon the like occasions, will be weighed in the scale; and a most exact scrutiny made what *proportion* it bears to our worldly substance, and what that secret disposition of the heart is with which it is given. Let us learn from hence to take care that the *smaller* contributions of the *poor* are not found to out-weigh the *greater* offerings of the *rich*. Let us learn rather to exceed in our charities, and fail on the surer side, than have them found light in the ballance when the great day of account comes. If we fall short in the performance of this duty, how then will these

two

SERM. two mites of a *jewish* woman rise up in judgment against the *narrow, scanty*, and I may say *beggarly* alms of too many christians, who are directly opposite to the spirit of the Gospel, and of this widow; *rich* in money and worldly substance, but *poor* in good works?

Her contribution was to the repairs of the *temple* only; what is given upon this occasion is for the building up and beautifying many *temples* of the living God. That temple was but wood and stone, and in a few years (as it seems from Luke xxi. 6. our Saviour observes upon this very occasion) there was not to be left of it *one stone upon another*: But these are so many *spiritual* and *immortal* souls, made to last for ever; and every one of them of greater value in the sight of God, than *Solomon's* in all it's glory. That was built only for a *type* of Christ; these are all made after the very *image* of God, and are to be formed into the real *likeness* of Christ's glorified body. She gave for providing of *sacrifices* and *incense*, and the support only of a *ceremonial* worship; but what is now given, is for the presenting many *living sacrifices* *holy* and *acceptable* unto God, and for promoting of a *reasonable* service and *evangelical* holyness. She acted wholly from the dark rudiments of the law which gave a prospect only of a *temporal* reward, the great motive of the old testament; such as *he who giveth unto the poor shall not lack*, Prov. xxviii. 27. And again, *The liberal soul shall be made fat*, Prov. xi. 25. And, *cast thy bread upon*



*upon the waters, and after many days thou shalt find them.* But she was ignorant of those clear revelations which we enjoy under the Gospel; she had not learnt that our alms like those of *Cornelius*, come up for a memorial before God, *Acts x. 4.* That they are a *treasure laid up in the Heavens, that faileth not*, *Luke xii. 33.* That they are the purchase of an eternal weight of glory; and that we shall surely be recompensed for them *at the resurrection of the just.* Nor was she expressly told that *when the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him, and shall sit upon the throne of his glory; and when before him shall be gathered all nations,* that this of alms-giving is the great distinguishing duty upon which the separation of the *sheep* from the *goats* is founded; and the only instance to be inserted in the last joyful welcome, *come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world, &c.* But least of all did this woman know, that all such deeds of charity are in the account of God as if done to the very *person* of Christ himself: *In as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

Behold then, you who have learnt all this, a number of those *little ones* in a very literal sense, who are prepared to be so many advocates for you in that great day; who will plead loudly that charity shewn to them, which your modesty would conceal; they will then rise up and call you blessed, and own the seasonable

SER M. sonable benefaction. That they were *helpless*  
 XVII. or *fatherless* children, and that you took *com-*  
 passion on them; that they were *naked* and you  
*cloathed* them; that they were *ignorant* and  
 you *instructed* them; that you saved them  
 from *want* and *beggary*; from a life of *misery*,  
 and *sin*, and *wickedness*; nay many of them  
 from *prison*, and *shameful deaths*; and were  
 the happy instruments of saving their souls.  
 One would think all good christians should  
 rejoyce to have such a fund as this to cast their  
 alms into, that they may come in for a share  
 in the reward for all that great, and publick,  
 and lasting good, which must be the effect and  
 consequence of this most prudent kind of be-  
 neficence. Remember that all you spend in  
 the *vanities* and *pleasures* of this life *perisheth*  
 with the *using*, and that when *death* or the  
 great *change* at the last day comes, we shall be  
 in a moment stripped of all but what is given  
 in good works, and charitable uses: Thus  
 much we have made for ever our *own*; it is put  
 out of the power of *fate*; and cast into a *treas-*  
*ury* which will remain *untouched*, when the  
 whole world is *consumed* in flames.

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## S E R M O N XVIII.

Sense of Religion more observable in  
the middle and meaner rank of  
People.

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MAT. xi. 25.

*I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and  
earth, because thou hast hid these things from  
the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them  
unto babes.*

**I**T hath been ever accounted a great preju-  
dice against any opinion or profession, and  
never failed to be urged by the enemies  
thereof, where the cause would bear it; that  
it hath been generally received by mean and  
illiterate sort of people; by such as were low  
in the opinion of the world, and in least repu-  
tation for knowledge and quickness of parts  
and apprehension: And this not without a very  
plausible shew of reason; since it must be al-  
lowed, that ignorance makes men easy and  
credulous, and this actually disposes them to  
superstition;

SERM.  
XVIII.

SERM. superstition; to a ready assent to error and de-  
 XVIII. lusion; and such a zeal for what they have  
 once entertained, as makes them resty and inflexible in it.

Now because this prejudice seems to lye so fairly against the Gospel, which comes openly recommended to the poor and illiterate; which applies itself professedly to such, and speaks so plainly of the difficulty there is to the rich and wise to enter into the kingdom of heaven: Therefore my design from these words is, to remove this prejudice, and justify the wisdom and goodness of God in this matter.

And this I shall the rather do, because the enemies of revelation think they have this *advantage* against us; for though they do not yet, that I know of, urge it openly, however they insinuate that this gives a gloss and colour to all their arguments; namely, that *they* are the men of conversation in the world, and of a more refined education and greater freedom of thought, who incline to reject and despise revelation. But this is so far from being any just prejudice against our cause, that, as I hope will appear, it is much to its advantage; it is no new thing; it was ever so from the beginning of the Gospel. And the great author of our religion is so far from lamenting it, or being discouraged with it, that he praises God for it in this hearty form; *I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast bid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

Which

Which ejaculation proceeded from a consi-  
deration of that sort of reception his doctrine  
found among men, and the occasion of it was  
this; when the disciples of John the Baptist  
had departed from our Saviour, to whom they  
came on a message, to know whether he were  
the Messias; he took this opportunity of dis-  
coursing to the multitude concerning John,  
and to shew them how inexcusable they were  
for not receiving John's testimony concerning  
him.

It is plain, says he, *you* all allowed him to  
be a Prophet; for surely you did not go into  
the wilderness upon such a trifling errand as  
to see a reed played upon by the wind; nor  
did you go out to him to gratify your curiosity  
in seeing some great and extraordinary person-  
age; you would have gone to a court for this,  
and not to a desert. So that it is evident you  
all went out to him as to a Prophet. And so  
far you are in the right, for he is more than a  
Prophet; for the Prophets and the law only  
prophesied till John; (i. e.) all that spoke of  
Christ under the law, only marked him out  
at a distance; but John actually *points* him  
out and says, *this* is he. Now though you  
acknowledged him to be a Prophet, as he is  
in truth more than a Prophet; and though  
ye were all baptized into his doctrine, which  
was that of the immediate presence of the  
Messias; yet now you act in contradiction  
both to yourselves and him, in not receiving  
me

SERM. me for the Messias when he tells you plainly,  
XVIII. that I am he.

Upon this he observes to them how they frustrated all the methods of God for their conversion; especially the Scribes and Pharisees, and Rulers, who of all men had the best title to him and his doctrine, and ought to have received him with the greatest readiness and chearfulness. But on the contrary, from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force (i. e.) from the beginning of John's baptism to this very day, it is observable how the wisest and greatest men of the Jews, the generality of the rulers, neglected the high priviledges of the Gospel, and despised the mercies of God offered to them in Christ: Whereas the publicans and sinners, the profelytes, and mixt multitudes break in upon their inheritance, seize upon their birth-right, and share it among them like a prey; and they whose more immediate right the Gospel is, are totally excluded from any share, like persons robbed and plundered of all their substance. Therefore it is that *he rejoiced in spirit*, as St. Luke hath it, and offered up this thanksgiving to almighty God, that he had thus hid these things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes.

By babes, in this text, we are to understand innocent, plain, and honest persons of a low and meaner rank among men, who are  
little

little in the esteem of the world for their want of riches and honours, their learning and parts: As they are opposed to the wise, and rich, and powerful men of this world; and they are called babes from that simplicity and ingenuity of disposition which is generally remarkable in them, and hardly to be found among those whose minds are full of the knowledge, and the wealth, and grandeur of this life.

The occasion and meaning of the words being thus explained; in enlarging on them I shall observe this method.

1. I shall be a little more particular in shewing the truth of this saying of our blessed Saviour's.

2. I shall consider the reasons of this, and where the true cause of it lyes.

3. I shall shew where the great wisdom of God appears in this manner of dispensation.

4. And lastly I shall draw some inferences from the whole, and make some application of it to the two different sorts of people mentioned in my text.

I. As for the truth of this saying, it hath appeared in a great degree already from what hath been said; and perhaps there is not any one thing more frequently and plainly inculcated in the holy scriptures, than the great indisposition of the wise, and rich, and powerful, for the reception and practice of the Gospel; and therefore the poor and ignorant, the people of no figure, or notice in the world, are every where supposed to be the only persons


SERM.  
XVIII.




in a condition of yielding to the sincere belief of its doctrines, and hearty practice of its precepts: And accordingly it is directed to them in particular; and all others are, as it were, given over as men of whom there is little hopes. 1 Cor. i. 26. *You see your calling brethren, (says St. Paul) how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* It is true they are not peremptorily excluded; but however, the Gospel speaks of them with a great deal of diffidence, and very little assurance of any success upon them. And therefore in James ii. 5. it is said, *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world to be heirs of the kingdom?* And as it follows, *the rich men blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called.*

Now this is so remarkably fact, with respect to the christian religion, that it is become one great argument of its truth and divinity; for among many other things which were foretold of the state of the Gospel, several hundred years before it appeared in the world, this was one; and particularly Isai. xxix. 19. speaking of the times of the Gospel says that, *the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and it is the poor among men shall rejoyce in the holy one of Israel.* This, as well as all the other circumstances foretold, had a most exact completion; and therefore, when the disciples of John came to ask our Saviour whether he were the Messias; instead of a direct answer he observes to them, how the blind receive their sight,



sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead SERM. are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel XVIII. preached to them. And accordingly the men  our Saviour chose for his disciples were of mean employes, uneducated, and people of his own humble rank in the world. When he began to preach we find, (Luke vii. 29.) that the multitudes and the publicans heard him; *but the Scribes, (i. e.) Lawyers, and the Pharisees rejected the counsel of God towards them; despising the doctrine of our Saviour, as they had before done the baptism of John; inso-* much that they themselves used this as a powerful argument against him; *have any of the Rulers and the Pharisees believed on him?* They were the Scribes (i. e.) Lawyers who came tempting him, and endeavouring to entrap him with insidious questions: He was condemned by the High-Priest and council of the Jews; and was at last crucified by the power of the magistracy.

After he was gone, and the management of affairs was left to his Disciples, the success was the very same; great multitudes were converted, but still of the meaner sort: And among the Philosophers or Statesmen, the rich and great, and wise men of the world, it was only an odd person here and there that embraced the Gospel. The Christians were of so little note that they could not obtain interest enough in the civil power to stop a persecution, undertaken upon any frivolous pretence; inso- much that they underwent ten of them

SERM. XVIII.  successively. And though the number of christians was very great in the world, yet it was three hundred years before the Gospel was received at court; and it was no sooner there but it found the poison too strong for the cure: It was remarkably corrupted by what it was designed to reform; and then began the *Arian* heresy, with all its various brood of errors, to infect and rend the church in pieces.

Till then heresy never past into a law, nor was supported by the civil power. It was improper to say the church was corrupted, because though there were many hereticks, yet they were always a sect by themselves; and the church never failed to use that power she then had of declaring against vice and error; and purging herself of all infection; and cutting off all unorthodox members, either in doctrine or practice, from the mystical body of Christ.

The governors of the church had not yet given up that power, derived immediately from Christ, into the hands of the civil magistrate; and betrayed that jurisdiction, in matters purely ecclesiastical, which they had no power to dispose of; nor others to receive, or exercise it for them.

Nor doth this saying of our Saviour's respect only the first times of the Gospel, but is universally true of all ages of the church. It is among the middle and lower rank of people that there is generally the truest and most serious sense of religion; and very little of the  
true

true zeal and spirit of the Gospel is visible in the courts of princes. Wherever there is most of worldly business and grandeur, there religion finds the coolest entertainment: Not but that there are and have been many particular instances of the contrary; but my meaning is the same with our Saviour's in my text, that this is generally true. And accordingly, the experience of our own age can let us see plainly, how it is the statesmen, and philosophers, and politicians of the world that slight and disregard the Gospel; it is the pretended wits of the age who make sport with it; and the refined modish freethinkers, subtle reasoners that watch to spy out fallacies, and would seriously argue it out of the world.

II. I am to enquire into the reasons of this, and where the true cause of it lies. And before I come to speak more particularly to this, it will be necessary to shew, that it is not any want of evidence, or reasonableness in christianity, that occasions this disesteem of it in the opinion of the rich, and great, and cunning men of this world; and which makes it more acceptable to the plainer sort of people. If there could have been a religion more agreeable to the highest reason of man, we had not had this. The mysteries of our religion are revealed to us by the same God who gave us our faculties of knowledge; and for him to give us a religion which we cannot entertain without acting in contradiction to these, would be to leave us under a necessity of disobeying

him. But if the truths which God hath revealed to us in Christ be agreeable to the purest, and most uncorrupt reason of men; so that if they consider them without prejudice, it is impossible but they must assent to them; then they are left without excuse; and the name of God will be justified in their condemnation, as it will be glorified in the salvation of all those who believe and entertain them heartily.

Now to make it appear that christianity is agreeable to the strictest and most refined reason of men, let us suppose ourselves in a meer state of nature; the very condition that the enemies of revelation are bringing us to as fast as they can; and then consider what things mankind would wish to be resolved in, and what are the points of greatest concernment to us, about which we should be most inquisitive, and which would certainly take up our most anxious thoughts; and we shall find them to be these following.

1. How we came into being; what sort of beings we really are? And what ends we were made for.

2. How mankind came to be corrupted, and in this miserable condition of infirmity.

3. What cure can be found for this corruption of our natures; to restore us to health both of body and mind.

4. Whether there be another life after this.

5. What shall be the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice.

6. What

6. What sort of government there is in the universe. SERM.  
XVIII.

It is plain if we had no revelation, and were in a state of heathenism, these are the points concerning which we should make the strictest enquiry, or at least ought to do so; because they are the things of the utmost importance to us. Let us therefore consider what account christianity gives us of these things, and compare them with what we have received from the wisest heathens; and then it will appear whether our revealed religion is rejected and despised by the wise men, the wits, and gentlemen of fashion of the world, for want of any *reasonableness* in it. And I shall do this the rather, because it must be acknowledged that the surest way of knowing what men could do, without revelation *now*, is to consider how far their natural abilities have reached, when they were altogether without it: Especially since the wise men of the heathen world have already made as great a progress as was possible, for mere reason in the knowledge of these important matters, which ought to be the greatest enquiries of mankind; and yet upon a view of them both it will appear, that *the foolishness of God is wiser than men*; that *the weakness of God is stronger than men*; and that *no worldly wisdom hath reason to glory in his presence*. And therefore,

I. As to the first great enquiry, which is, how we came into being. This is one of the

SERM. first things that offers itself to our thoughts,  
 XVIII. and that to which the mind of man is led by  
 a natural curiosity : And accordingly all parts  
 of the heathen world have had their different  
 conjectures, and nothing hath occasioned  
 greater variety of opinions. Some of the phi-  
 losophers would have it that the race of man-  
 kind did exist from all eternity ; which opi-  
 nion they were led to for want of abilities to  
 solve the difficulty ; for when they could not  
 tell how mankind came to have a beginning,  
 all they had left to say was, that he had none.  
 Others have guessed that mankind was first  
 formed like vermine, out of slime and mud, by  
 the heat and warmth of the sun. But this is  
 so far from being true of mankind, that mo-  
 dern experiments have shewed us, that there  
 is no such thing as any anomalous generation  
 of animals, not even of flies. Others, and a  
 nation too very famous for learning and arts,  
 held that mankind was first formed in the earth  
 like mandrakes, and then sprang up like trees.  
 The Americans believed that their idol Deity  
 shot some arrows into the ground, which be-  
 came men and women. The Chinese will  
 have their idol to have created the first man,  
 and have given him a power and commission  
 of creating others. And lastly, that is a well  
 known story of Prometheus's forming the first  
 man of the earth ; and when he had done,  
 leaving the lifeless carcass here on earth, till he  
 went to heaven and stole some fire from the  
 chariot

chariot of the sun, by which he inspired it with life and motion; and with all what a strange expedient the oracle found out for the restoration of mankind, after it was destroyed by Deucalion's flood. SERM.  
XVIII.

Now these, and such like, are the ways which the wisest of the Heathens have found to bring us into being. But the holy scriptures tell us that we are the workmanship of the one only true God, who is infinite in wisdom and power, and by whom were all things made that were made; that we were created at the beginning of this earth male and female; that he made us of the earth; that dust we are, and to dust we shall return; that he breathed into us a living soul, and made us after his own image, (i. e.) of a spiritual and immortal, of a free and reasonable nature; so that we now can say with David, *thy hands made me and fashioned me, and I am wonderfully made; thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect, and in thy book were all my members written, which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*

By this we know well from whence we had our being, and to whom we are to return the glory and the praise of it: But all other accounts are trifling and foolish; and though we should grant that many of them are only the fictions of their Poets; yet it is plain they are substituted instead of the truth; and that which put them upon invention was, because they were wholly

SER M.  
XVIII.

wholly ignorant of the true way. But such fictions and inventions as they are, they went to make up the body of the heathen theology; they were part of their creed, and whatever the wiser sort thought of them, yet the generality believed them, as they believe the romish legend in the church of Rome,

II. Another enquiry of the greatest importance to the whole race of mankind is, how we came to be in this corrupt and degenerate state. They all were inclined to think we were not originally so; and therefore as they very much bewailed this depravedness of human nature, and its proneness to all manner of wickedness; so they talked much of a golden age, a time when there was no wickedness in the world; and when men were not afraid of one another; when love, and amity, and peace reigned among men; and when justice, and temperance, and chastity prevailed over the world: But when *Astrea* fled to heaven all virtue and goodness went along with her, and left all vice and wickedness to reign upon earth. Another way they had of solving this corruption of human nature was, by supposing two first principles or causes, the one the cause of all the goodness and perfection, who made us pure at first; the other the author of all evil and imperfection, which corrupted us afterwards; which is a faint allusion to the truth. Some of the Philosophers would have the soul corrupted before it came into the body, and so retain its original pravity, but

gave



gave no account how it became so in that pre-SERM.  
existent state which they suppose. The Ame-XVIII.  
ricans say that mankind came very pure out of  
the hands of the Deity, but he had a mis-  
chievous mother who spoiled all *that he made,*  
*and mankind among the rest.*

Cebes, in his portraiture of human life, attributes this corruption to a poisonous glass, which every one drinks more or less of as they enter into life. And we know the ancients attributed this to a box full of all diseases and infection, which Jupiter sent down among mortals; being incensed with Prometheus for the fire he stole from heaven; or rather out of envy at those new creatures he had made, which when it was opened the infection flew out, and filled them with all those distempers both of body and mind.

These, and such like, are the result of the wisdom and learning of those who were void of all revelation.

I need not stay to shew how ridiculous and senseless they are, and how much below, not only revelation but, the ordinary reason of a man: Whereas the account our revealed religion gives us of this, is plain and easy; it tells us that when God had made our first parents pure and unspotted, they became corrupt by their own wilful disobedience, in transgressing a positive command given them for their good; that they were tempted to this by the Devil, the great enemy of mankind,  
who

SERM. XVIII. who for this very thing is called a murder-  
 er from the beginning; and in the second chapter  
 of the book of wisdom, it is said, *God created  
 man to be immortal, and made him to be  
 an image of his own eternity*; nevertheless,  
 through the envy of the Devil, death came  
 into the world. And that our first parents  
 being thus corrupted, we derive the same cor-  
 ruptions both of body and mind from them  
 by a course of nature.

III. The greatest and most important en-  
 quiry of all is, what remedy can be found for  
 this corruption of human nature; and what  
 means can be effectual enough to restore man-  
 kind to the state of perfection they were in at  
 first?

Now in order to this, natural reason tells  
 us, that when a fault is committed against  
 any one, there are two things necessary in or-  
 der to a reconciliation; there is first some  
 amends to be made for the injury; and secondly  
 a security that they will not be guilty of the  
 same again. And accordingly upon supposi-  
 tion that we are in a corrupt and sinful state,  
 there are these two things to be done.

1st. There is some satisfaction to be made  
 for the wilful corruption of our nature, and  
 our actual sins. And that some satisfaction  
 was to be made to the divine justice, seemed  
 to be known even by an instinct of nature;  
 because that custom of sacrificing prevailed so  
 universally over the world, and in all ages.

This

This shews they all imagined that some atonement was to be made; and the way they took for this was that of offering beasts upon their altars; and thus, as they imagined, appeasing the anger of the Gods with their blood, by making them suffer that death which they acknowledged as due to themselves for their own offences. This was the true cause of their sacrificing, and the very notion which continued it, the principal part of all heathen worship; and this shews it to be the sense of all mankind. And indeed it would be a very hard thing to give a reason, why a satisfaction should be made to men for an offence, and yet not to God: If they say God is more merciful than men; then it is easy to answer that he is more just too, and that there is a great deal of mercy shewn even in admitting of a satisfaction.

Now thus far they were in the right, that some atonement was to be made, especially if we consider that in cases of publick calamities, and where whole cities and nations were concerned, they offered even human sacrifices; and though this shewed they imagined an effectual atonement was to be made by one of their own kind, yet it was impossible to reconcile this to the common notions of justice; why one man should suffer for the sins of another. But it was besides all the sense and reason of man to think as they did, that the blood of a harmless innocent beast, should take any guilt off them, and make a sufficient

SER M. cient atonement by dying in their stead: So  
 XVIII. that as far as they designed and understood  
 their meaning, it was no other than unnatural  
 cruelty; and instead of atoning for them, it  
 looked like adding one guilt to another.

But our revealed religion hath discovered to us the reason of this; and now we see plainly what was the ground of that natural instinct which led all mankind to this way of worship; and withall how no sacrifices could be of any force or efficacy, but with respect to that great sacrifice, which was to be made for the sins of all mankind in the person of Christ.

We see plainly, as the author to the Hebrews argues, that it is not possible that the blood of bulls, and of goats, should take away sin; there can be no reason for it in nature: Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, *sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me,* (i. e.) God will accept of none of those offerings as of a real atonement for sin, but as they are significative of the death of Christ; and therefore *a body hast thou prepared,* (i. e.) therefore it is the decree and purpose of God, that Christ shall come into the flesh, and by offering of himself, shall make such atonement as those sacrifices could not do. *Then said I, lo I come (in the volume of the boock written of me) to do thy will O God,* (i. e.) therefore according to that good purpose of God, I come into the world to offer such a sacrifice as God  
 will

will accept of. And thus revelation gives a clear S E R M.  
solution of this first part of the difficulty; how XVII.  
atonement shall be made for the corruption  
of our natures, and those sins which are al-  
ready committed, (i. e.) by a satisfaction in the  
person of Christ, who was by the good pur-  
pose of God appointed to this very thing, and  
who prepared himself such a sacrifice for the  
sins of men as he will accept of.

2d. Another thing to be done in order to  
the recovery of our corrupt natures, is the  
healing these infirmities and corruptions of  
ours: But how this was to be done they were  
wholly at a loss; and had not the least notion  
or glimpse of any help for human nature. It  
is true they generally thought that this reco-  
very was to be effected by the practice of vir-  
tue; but how, or by what means or expe-  
dients mankind should become sincerely vir-  
tuous and good, who in their very natures were  
evil and corrupt, never entered into their minds  
to think of: Whereas upon supposition that  
men are naturally addicted to vice and wicked-  
ness, and their wills from the very first have a  
propensity to evil, which they all allowed;  
then it is wholly out of their own power ever  
to attain one virtue, or so much as desire it:  
For if the tendency of any thing be natural,  
there is nothing in the nature of that thing to  
alter it; and it must be something from with-  
out which can give the mind a new bias,  
and incline it a quite contrary way. Now,  
though from a principle of reason some help  
and

SERM. and assistance appears thus absolutely neces-  
 XVIII. sary, yet they never thought of this; nor if  
 they had, could they have told what would  
 have been the effect.

But revelation hath opened the eyes of men, so that they now see clearly that some such means is necessary; and the true reason of it is, because we are conceived and born in sin, and of ourselves have no one inclination in our minds to goodness; so that we cannot so much as think a good thought.

And this means, as we are told in Scripture is the secret influence of the holy spirit of God upon our souls, inclining our wills to good, which are in themselves free, and therefore can never be made virtuous and holy by force or compulsion; the renewing of our sinful corrupt natures, by strengthening and assisting our infirmities; helping us to contradict, and suppress, and extinguish all our vicious inclinations; giving us grace and strength in proportion to our difficulties; and working in us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure: Inasmuch that by the power and efficacy of his concurrence, we perfectly conquer and beat down the strongest and most violent tendencies both of body and mind: And this assistance, we learn, is purchased for us by the merits of that sacrifice by which we are reconciled to God, which otherwise could never have been afforded us.

But perhaps it may be thought that the Heathens, even in a state of nature, arrived to  
 great

great degrees of some virtues; it is true they did, but not without some degree of the divine assistance. It is not improbable, that they had a share of this unseen operation of the spirit, though they knew nothing of it; as they will partake of the merits and satisfaction of Christ, though they never heard of him, if their lives were suitable to that natural sense of moral, good, and evil: But I shall defer the further consideration of this subject to the next opportunity.

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## S E R M O N XIX.

Sense of Religion more observable in  
the middle and meaner rank of  
People.

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MAT. xi. 25.

*I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

SERM.  
XIX.

**I**N a former discourse upon this text, after I had shewn the occasion of it, and the force of our Saviour's discourse, concerning John the Baptist in this chapter; and how he shewed the Jews acted in contradiction both to themselves and John the Baptist, in not receiving himself for the Messias. I told you my design from it was to remove one great prejudice, which seemed to lye fairly against the christian religion; namely, that it hath been generally received by mean and illiterate sort  
of



of people. And in order to this, the method I laid down for my discourses on this text was, SERM.  
XIX.

1. To be a little more particular in shewing the truth of this saying of our blessed Saviour's.

2. To consider the reasons of this, and where the true cause of it lies.

3. To shew where the great wisdom of God appears in this manner of dispensation.

4. And lastly to draw some inferences from the whole, and make some application of it to the two different sorts of people mentioned in my text.

As to the first of these, I shewed how the Gospel came particularly directed and recommended to the meaner sort of people; and how it spoke of the rich, and great, and wise men of this world with much diffidence, as if there were very little hopes of their conversion and effectual reformation.

As to the second, before I came to enquire what were the true reasons of this, I was to shew, that it is not any want of reasonableness in revealed religion that occasions the disesteem of it in the opinion of the wise and great men of the world, and makes it more easily entertained by the plainer part of mankind.

And in order to this, to shew that christianity is agreeable to the strictest and most refined reason of men; the best way I could think of was to suppose our selves in a state of nature, the very condition the enemies of revelation are bringing us to as fast as they can;

SERM. and then to consider what things mankind  
 XIX. could wish to be resolved in, and what are the  
 matters of greatest concernment to us, about  
 which we should be most inquisitive? And to  
 compare the account we have of them from  
 revelation, with those we have from the wisest  
 heathens: And they are these.

1. How we came to be, and what sort of  
 being we are, and what we were made for.

2. How mankind came to be corrupted,  
 and in this miserable condition of infirmity.

3. What cure can be found for this corrup-  
 tion of our natures, and to restore us to our  
 health both of body and mind.

4. Whether there be another life after this.

5. What shall be the reward of virtue and  
 the punishment of vice.

6. What sort of government there is in the  
 universe.

As to the first of these, I laid before you the  
 several solutions we have received of this mat-  
 ter from the wisest men of the heathen world;  
 and the several accounts they gave of the origin  
 of mankind: As likewise, that we have re-  
 ceived from the holy scriptures; wherefore I  
 shall now proceed to the

IV. The fourth question of greatest con-  
 cernment to mankind, and a doubt which nat-  
 urally arises in the minds of all men is, whe-  
 ther there be another life after this? To this  
 enquiry all men have been ever led, not by  
 meer curiosity, as if it were matter of specu-  
 lation

lation only; but as to a matter on which depended their greatest and most important interest; for all the heathen world have agreed, that if there be another life after this, the alteration must be much for the better or the worse; and men must needs be much more miserable, or much more happy than they are in their present state: And yet they were strangely divided in their opinions about it, and could come to no fixt and settled resolution of this question. Many of the Philosophers held there was no life after this; the epicureans were of opinion that there was a dissolution of the whole man at his death, and that he should never come into being again; unless in the course of numberless ages, the scattered particles of his frame should be huddled together again, by such another lucky chance as united them at first. Nay even of those who allowed the creation of man by a superior power, many thought they came into the world to dye like beasts; and though they were great admirers of virtue, yet for this reason they made it its own reward; and used no other motives to encourage men to be virtuous than the innate excellency of virtue itself.

And of those who were inclined to believe a future state, none of them allowed it for the body; they all unanimously agreed that, this was never to live again; for it could never enter into their heads, that any power should be able to bring together again into one, the scattered dust of the body; and therefore they

SERM. allowed the soul only to be immortal: So that  
 XIX. this alone should partake of the happiness or  
 misery of another life.

This was the utmost they could arrive to by the light of nature, insomuch that none of them ever suspected the resurrection of the body to another life. But our revealed religion hath brought the life and immortality of the body as well as the soul to light; and gives us this plain and full account of this great and important question: Namely, that *at the end of the world there shall be a general resurrection of all the bodies of men; that the trumpet of God shall sound, and that all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the son of God; and all shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.* And it was the prospect of this occasioned that saying of Job's, *I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for my self, and mine eyes shall behold and not another.*

Nor do we learn by revelation only that the bodies of men shall rise, but that they shall undergo a great alteration, and receive a great improvement. *Though it be sown in corruption, yet it shall be raised incorruption; it is sown a natural body, but it shall be raised a spiritual one.* So that this corruption shall put on incorruption; and this mortal shall put

*on immortality.* And again, *that though all* S E R M.  
*men shall not dye, yet all shall be changed; and* XIX.  
*that this shall be effected in the twinkling of*  
an eye, by the almighty power of God; who  
is as able to do all this, as he was to make us  
at first; and hath given sufficient proof of his  
power in raising up our Saviour from the dead,  
who is therefore called *the resurrection and first*  
*fruits of them that slept.*

5. Another enquiry of the highest concernment to mankind is, what shall be the reward of virtue in another life, and the punishment of vice; and what shall be the different state and condition of good and bad people in another world. As to this they all allowed, as it was very natural for them to do, that there were different mansions for the souls of good and wicked people; and accordingly they called one by the name of *Elysium*, and the other *Tartarus*, placed as they imagined in the confines of one another, both of them below; so that they imagined that the souls of all went downwards, and none went upwards to heaven, but such as were admitted into the number of their Gods. And they found out such rewards and punishments as were fitter to make diversion, than to be any real encouragement to virtue, and to deter men from vice.


As to the rewards, they never thought of any beyond the sensual pleasures of this life: Every one was apt to fancy the happiness of another world to be, whatever pleased him

SERM.  
XIX.

most in this life; such as pleasant meats, and drinks, and women, and walks, and spacious gardens and palaces: And it was no wonder that they could think of nothing better for themselves, when this was the only happiness they allowed their Gods.

And then as to the punishments they found out for the souls of men in another world, they were odd and ridiculous; such as rolling a great stone from the bottom of a hill to the top, which tumbling down again should perpetually renew the labour; the carrying water in a sieve; and that of Tantalus placed up to the chin in water, and many the like witty fancies. These were the result of all the wisdom of the Grecians and the Romans concerning this matter; which were the most refined and polished parts of the heathen world; and therefore must be supposed to have gone as far in the knowledge of this important question, as human reason can reach; and therefore I omit the ridiculous notions of the Americans and Mahometans, and other illiterate and barbarous parts of the world, concerning the future conditions of men.

But the account revealed religion gives us of the reward of men in another world is, that it will not consist in the pleasures of sense, but is something beyond all that we can think, or speak, or enjoy at present, it is *what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive what the pleasures of another life are.* And therefore we must have

have all the faculties of our souls and bodies S E R M.  
improved and enlarged before we can know XIX.  
what they are, or shall be able to enjoy them;   
but we are told that they will consist in the  
knowledge and love of God, and the blest so-  
ciety of those glorious beings that attend his  
throne.

And on the contrary it represents the mi-  
series of the damned to us, by that of *everlast-  
ing burnings in a lake of fire and brimstone, by  
the worm that shall never dye*; by which is  
signified the stings and remorse of guilty con-  
science, and by eternal separation from the  
presence of God, which is the only source and  
fountain of happiness and perfection. So that  
eternal life shall be given to all those who, by  
continuance in well doing *seek for glory and  
honour, and immortality; but indignation and  
wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul  
of man that doth evil.*

And as they knew nothing of the resurrec-  
tion of the body, so they never thought of a  
general judgment of all the world at once,  
which is every way necessary for the mani-  
festation of the glory and justice of God; yet  
they never once suspected any thing of it, but  
appointed several judges of hell, who were to  
judge and try the souls of men as they departed  
out of this life; and it is the Gospel alone  
which hath discovered to us the great day of  
the revelation of the righteous judgment of  
God; that day wherein God hath appointed to  
judge the world in righteousness, and wherein  
the

SERM. the son of God shall come in the clouds of  
 XIX. heaven in power and great glory; that before  
 him shall all nations be gathered; that his angels shall separate the good from the bad; and lastly that he shall acquit the righteous, and pronounce an irreverfible fentence of eternal condemnation upon the wicked.

6. The laft great enquiry I fhall now mention, which is of greateft concernment for mankind to be refolved in is, what fort of government there is in the univerfe; nothing is more neceffary to quiet the minds of men; and without fome fatisfaction in this, they are left in endless uncertainty and diftraction; and yet how far were the wifeft Heathens from giving any fatisfactory account of this. The Epicureans attributed all to chance, and allowed no intelligent being at all to be concerned in the government of the univerfe; and therefore his Gods were faid to be placed in the void fpaces between his worlds, as being wholly ufelefs in them.

The ftoicks attributed the whole ferief of all events to fome ftrange fatal neceffity, though they could not tell where it took its rife, nor what it was that made this neceffity. The want of fome reasonable account of this great queftion was that which made them multiply their Deities; fo that they had a God for every element, for every country and city, nay for every difeafe and misfortune. And all the heathen world were fo much in the dark, concerning this matter, that it was ordinary  
 for



for them to set up one Deity in opposition to SERM. another, to make them clash and quarrel, XIX. and dispute one another's dominion after the manner of petty Princes among men.

But it is revealed religion alone that hath clearly discovered to us the sovereignty of one absolute universal power, wholly independant of all other, and sole manager and disposer of all things, who is infinite in power, and wisdom, and goodness; who created, preserves, and governs all things; who is the fountain of all perfection, and from whom alone every good and perfect gift cometh; whose kingdom ruleth over all, whose mercy is over all his works, and who governs all things both in heaven and earth: and we are told that his providence is so particularly and immediately concerned in the management of the affairs of this world, *that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without him; and that the very hairs of our heads are numbred:* Therefore he is represented to us as omnipresent and filling heaven and earth; a description of which David gives us in the 139th Psalm, in a strain of eloquence beyond any thing that ever entered into the head or heart of a heathen.

*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it; whither then shall I go from thy spirit, and whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven thou art there; if I go down into hell thou art there also; if I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea,*  
*even*

SERM. *even there also thy hand shall lead me and thy*  
 XIX. *right hand shall hold me : If I say the darkness*  
 } *shall cover me, then shall my night be turned into*  
*day, for the darkness and light to thee are both*  
*alike.*

Having thus laid before you the accounts from revealed religion of these important questions, together with the best solutions we have of them from the wisest of those men, who were void of all revelation, I shall at present only make two or three inferences from what hath been said.

I. And the first thing I shall observe to you from hence is, the great improvement revealed religion is in point of knowledge, and what light it gives us into matters of pure speculation; not to say any thing now of those practical points which are directly consequent to them: So that it hath given us a clear and open view of things, in which the wisest of men without it had no notion at all, or at least but very rude and imperfect guesses; they knew those were the things which ought to take up their thoughts, and that there is no concernment in this world of such consequence as the being resolved in them; they were sensible they had not this knowledge in themselves, and yet they knew not where to look for it, and therefore were forced to take up with those odd inventions and extravagant fancies which they made a shift with instead of the truth.

But

But revelation hath given us such a resolution of these important questions as any reasonable man may acquiesce in, so as to look no farther, but rest satisfied in the account we have of these points, which are the very things that are said to be hid from *the wise and prudent, and revealed unto Babes.*

SERMON.  
XIX.

These matters which lay so far out of the reach of the greatest Philosophers, and puzzled all the learning and wisdom of the heathen world, are now brought down to the capacities of all men. In those days, (speaking of the times of the Gospel) saith the Lord, *I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts, and they shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, for they shall all know me from the greatest even to the least*; which is so literally verified, that by the light of the Gospel all these important truths are made so plain that they are become obvious and easy to the common sense and reason of men; so that a mean illiterate person knows more of these things, and hath a larger prospect and clearer insight into them, than the greatest wits and most learned men of the heathen world.

As far as they are necessary for us we know nothing better, and now they are discovered to us we know they are true, for truth always carries along with it an evidence to distinguish it from error, and such infallible marks of its divinity, that men always know

SERM. know it to be so when ever they light upon  
 XIX. it; so that we need not now complain for  
 want of necessary knowledge of these matters,  
 and say, *who shall go up for us into heaven  
 and bring it down to us, for the word is nigh  
 unto thee in thy mouth and thy heart, that thou  
 mightest know them*; we require no new reve-  
 lation for them, nor exact elaborate skill in  
 arts and sciences; they are made plain and in-  
 telligible to every capacity, and fall in so easily  
 with the innate sense of mens minds that they  
 seem to be born with them, and nothing but  
 prejudice and wilful closing of their eyes can  
 hinder men from seeing them.

2. I shall observe to you from hence the  
 tendency that revealed religion only hath to  
 procure peace and tranquillity to the minds of  
 men: If these things were matters of specu-  
 lation only, the want of a competent know-  
 ledge in them need not give us any great dis-  
 turbance; but when our life is in them, and the  
 welfare of body and soul both now and forever  
 depends upon them, then nothing can make  
 us easy and satisfied but what gives us a rea-  
 sonable account of these things; and yet where  
 is it out of revelation that this is to be had?  
 What religion in the world can give any rea-  
 sonable account of any one of these six points?  
 Whereas the Gospel gives us full satisfaction  
 in them all, so as to convince the reason of  
 any unprejudiced man, that he may now  
 come to a resolution with himself and know  
 in

in what to acquiesce: This shews him a solid foundation for his hopes and fears, so as that he is not carried to and fro with delusion and the suggestions of his own or other peoples imaginations.

S E R M.  
XIX.

So that we have now such a religion as all good and considering men would bewail the want of if they were without it, and there is nothing they would make such strict enquiry after; and when a man had let his thoughts range and wander as far as possibly they could, the result of all his wishes would be, that some kind superior being would reveal to him just such a religion as this is, which should enlighten his mind, and give him a reasonable satisfactory answer to all those important questions, upon the knowledge of which the eternal well-being of mankind depended, and discover those truths which alone are answerable to all the straits and exigencies, all the wishes and desires of human nature.

Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards; the condition of our nature is such that our minds are full of ignorance and error, and especially in those things which concern us most; we are surrounded with weaknesses and infirmities of body; we are subject to many evils and calamities both within and without; and all these miseries follow our being by the same natural necessity that the sparks fly upwards: So that of ourselves, and in a state of nature, we are the most helpless creatures

SERM. XIX. creatures in the world, and without revelation man had neither known the utmost of his misery, from whence it came, nor how to remove it; whereas the Gospel hath done all this for us, and is calculated to give us help and comfort under all these distractions of the mind and miseries that attend the body.

While men are in health and prosperity they may seem to have no full conviction of the truth of these relations, but when they come to be under any great troubles or distractions of mind, or groan under the anguish of bodily pains, and all the comforts of this world forsake them, then they feel the truth of this, how there is no other stay or confidence for mortal man to rely upon but what revelation affords us; nothing that can quiet his mind and give it perfect repose in the midst of all the uncertainties and misfortunes that attend our present state; and therefore it is when diseases and afflictions bear hard upon men who have not placed their confidence in these truths, they are necessarily void of all relief and comfort, having quitted these there is no other foundation to build their hopes upon; these are the only security upon which a man can venture soul and body for ever; and finding nothing in this world besides that can give them any hopes, they commonly go out of the world in fullness and stupidity, which passes with men of the same strain for resolution and greatness of mind.

But

But the truths of revelation stick by a man to the last, they do not forsake him in distress, but are always at hand when he hath most need of them; they do not vanish by degrees and steal away from us, but clear up when we are leaving the world. So that under the forest tryals that man can undergo, we can possess our souls in patience, and rejoyce in hopes of the glory of God; and even under the pangs of death, we can look up and delight ourselves with that ravishing prospect of future happiness, which all wise men of this world are blind to. So that I say, if a man were to sit down and consider what it is he would desire or expect from a religion, and were left to chuse one for himself, after he had racked his invention and called up all the doubts and anxieties that vex and disquiet human nature, he would at last close with this we have, as that alone which is able to remove them all, and give full satisfaction and rest to his soul.

3. The last thing I shall observe from hence is, the unreasonable folly of those men who insist altogether upon natural religion in opposition to revelation; it is not only wicked and impious towards God, but it is cruel and malicious towards men, because they do what they can to deprive mankind of those revealed truths by which alone a wise and considerate man would willingly stand or fall; they take away the only help and remedy there is for

S E R M. the ignorance and infirmities of mankind, and  
 XIX. leave the world wholly destitute of any reso-  
 lution of those great questions, which are the  
 nearest concernments of us all; they endeavour to destroy and banish out of the world that revelation, which is the only means left us of information in those things, without which we are in endless confusion and uncertainty.

In this miserable condition of ignorance and infirmity that we are now in, take away revelation, and then tell us whither we shall fly for the healing of our natures? For redress of all our grievances, for relief in all our miseries, and comfort in all our afflictions? Where is it that we can find true consolation in the worst of circumstances, and what can support the sinking and despondencies of a perplexed and troubled soul? And in a word, what is there besides revelation can convince us that we are not born to be miserable for ever?

What therefore can be more injurious to the whole race of men, than to deprive them of that light which shews them what they were, what they now are, and what they shall be hereafter; which furnishes mankind with a remedy for all the evils of his nature; supplies all his defects; answers all his doubts; shews him where to place his affections, what to shun and avoid, and what to aspire to? And without which all mankind were left in a most desperate and deplorable condition.

The



The knowledge of these truths so clearly revealed to us in the Gospel, is so necessary for the ease, and comfort, and satisfaction of all men, and so conducive to the common good and welfare of all mankind, that a wise man would grieve to part with them; and would be heartily sorry they should be false, because he is sure no other account of them in this world can be true: And that we have some account of them is absolutely necessary both for our comfort here, and happiness hereafter; and therefore herein they are utterly inexcusable, because they would take away these accounts we have, and substitute no other in their room.

SERM.  
XIX.

For them to tell us we need no satisfaction, when we find ourselves grievous offenders, and have such a load of guilt upon us, is to leave us over head and ears in debt without a possibility of discharging it; and to tell us that we want no grace or spiritual assistance, is to leave our whole nature in a sick languishing condition without any cure or help, upon this groundless presumption, that nature is able to work off the disease of itself: And lastly, to tell us that we want no information of these great truths from revelation, is to contradict the experience of the whole heathen world before they had any.

And therefore it is but a reasonable request to these men, that they would lay down some other principles or scheme of reason that shall answer all these ends, and give more satisfac-

SE R M. tion in all these points, and bid fairer for the  
 XIX. belief and acceptance of any reasonable man ;  
 } nay that they themselves would rather trust to  
 and confide in : When they do this, we will  
 quit all revelation and go over to them ; but  
 till then let them leave us in the quiet posses-  
 sion of what we have already. But we are  
 very sure the world cannot afford any other  
 reasonable or probable hypothesis, which shall  
 carry us through all these doubts and difficul-  
 ties, and not leave a just scruple in any thing  
 wherein our eternal well-being is concerned.  
 Alas ! what is there in nature that can restore  
 us, what remedy can be found of force and  
 efficacy enough to heal all the wounds of our  
 bruised nature, and restore such miscreants to  
 the favour of God ; if there be, let them shew  
 it us ; if not, why will they disown the ne-  
 cessity of supernatural means procured for us,  
 and applied by the Lord Jesus Christ the great  
 physician of our souls.

Have we not a great deal of reason to com-  
 plain of these men, for thus striking at that  
 foundation which is the only one human na-  
 ture hath to build upon, and depriving us of  
 that revelation from whence we have all that  
 information which a reasonable man can trust  
 to ? Let them rob us of all worldly substance,  
 so as to leave us destitute and naked ; nay, let  
 them have life and all, and our christianity  
 teaches us to forgive them : But let them not  
 take away our faith, and our hope, and strip  
 us of all those sacred truths which alone can  
 fill

fill the mind with solid joy and comfort, and overcome all anxiety and trouble; and fix all the passions of our souls upon the greatest and most substantial good so firmly, that all the powers of hell and death cannot shake us. These things which they thus despise we acknowledge to be the depths of the wisdom of God; and therefore we bless his holy name, who by the revelation of these truths to us, hath begotten us to a lively hope; and may we all have grace to shew forth his praise who hath thus called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

SERM.  
XIX.

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## S E R M O N XX.

Sense of Religion more observable in  
the middle and meaner rank of  
People.

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MAT. xi. 25.

*I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and  
earth, because thou hast hid these things from  
the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them  
unto babes.*

SERM.  
XX.

**A**ND thus I hope it hath sufficiently appeared, that it is not any want of reasonableness in revealed religion, that is the true cause of its being not received so heartily and readily by the *wise* and *prudent* men of this world; since all the wisdom of the whole world besides, is not able to supply us with any satisfactory account of those great questions, upon which depends the welfare of mankind.

This

This is such a clear and unconquerable evidence for the divinity and excellency of christianity, that one would think every considering person would embrace it greedily, and entertain it as the greatest blessing that ever was vouchsafed to human nature. So that the cause of infidelity is not in the religion, but in the men; and this saying of our Saviour's in my text, is not to be understood as if the Gospel were not calculated for the purest and most refined reason of men; and as if parts and learning were in themselves enemies to it, and rendered men indisposed for the reception of it. The case is so much otherwise, that this very thing will one day be an argument of endless confusion to all the *wise* and *prudent* men of the world, that they rejected those truths which were infinitely more agreeable to the purest reason, than those errors which they are zealous for; and which they would surely have entertained, if there were no temptation to the contrary, they are all the wisdom of God, and that must be agreeable to the truest wisdom of men.

And therefore now it is plain how God is said to hide these things from the *wise* and *prudent*, not as if he had ordained them purposely for ignorance and error, with design to impose upon the credulity of men, as if the Gospel were in truth a net to catch none but unwary and unthinking men, and could gain upon none but such as will be cheated into salvation: But because he hath made the nature

SER M. of this light of the Gospel such, that men cannot see it through their prejudices. He hath  
 XX. ordered the matter so, that the plainest reason, and common understanding of men shall discern it easily, when the greatest sophistry and most intricate methods of human art or science shall miss it. So that the excellency of these truths shall appear in their just proportion to the naked eye, when all those elaborate opticks which men of a longer reach and larger prospect make use of, shall sadly misrepresent and disfigure them: For which reason he declares that he spoke to the Jews in parables, *that seeing they might not see, and that hearing they might not understand*: Not as if it were the desire of God it should be so, pursuant to any eternal decree or purpose of his to reject them; for he would have all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth: But because he would deliver the truths of the Gospel after such a manner, that an honest unprejudiced mind should see them; when unsincerity and perverseness should be as a thick cloud over the eyes of men; for to what purpose should they see that light of the Gospel, whose vitious inclinations are so strong that they will surely lead their lives in contradiction to it. So that the meaning of our Saviour is this, *I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast ordered these divine revelations after such a manner, that a plain, honest, well meaning person is better disposed for the reception of them, than the great, and wise,*  
*and*

*and cunning men of the world*: So that it is SERM.  
not the imperfection, but the excellence of XX.  
christianity is the occasion of this; and it is  
not any want of power in men to see this,  
but their prejudices that will damn them.

And therefore now I shall proceed to shew  
what those prejudices are, and what are the  
true reasons of this saying of our Saviour's.  
And accordingly,

I. The first reason why the *wise* and *pru-*  
*dent* men of this world are blind to the truths  
of revelation is, because of that haughtiness  
and vanity of spirit which goes along with all  
worldly knowledge; there is a pride that is  
almost inseparable from it, which makes peo-  
ple positive, and so to abound in their own  
sense of things, that they disdain every thing  
that is not agreeable to those principles they  
have once entertained; this we derived from  
the old Serpent, and had it in exchange for  
our innocence.

This is the very root and first cause of error  
in the minds of all those who are otherwise  
of good sense and understanding; men of  
such quick parts and sharpness, that there is  
no imposing upon them in a matter of their  
private worldly concerns; yet when they think  
or speak any thing with relation to another  
world, and to those matters which are the great,  
and common, and eternal interest of mankind;  
they reason so loosely and incoherently, and  
make such wide and foolish inferences, as if  
they

SERM. they were void of the ordinary understanding  
 XX. of men.

But the bottom of this is the pride of mens hearts, and the true cause of all that opposition given to revealed religion, is the great opinion they have of their own stock of knowledge: So that in truth all that contend for natural religion, and oppose reason to revelation, do plainly set up the wisdom of men in contradiction to the wisdom of God; it is as if they would not be beholden to him for a religion, and would have one of their own or none at all.

But the great blindness of these men is discernible in nothing more than in this, that they set up revelation in opposition to itself, and do not know that they do so; they oppose it with its own weapons, and set up one part of it against another: For what they call *natural* religion, is in truth *revealed*. They think that the knowledge they have now of these six points, which are the great concernments of mankind, is from *reason*; whereas I have shewn that not one of them is so, and that we must have had them from revelation or not at all: Nor without revelation could they have that clear notion of all those practical duties which are consequent to them; and yet reason must be all in every thing with them, when it is plain it cannot give us a satisfactory account of any one of those great truths, upon which, by their own confession, the well-being of all mankind depends for ever: So that they had



as good say they see with their eyes, and not by the light of the sun. But they would rather be beholden to any thing for this knowledge than the Gospel; and they will not own that benefit and improvement of knowledge they have received from it, though it is plain they could come by it no other way. They suspect every thing that is not immediately from themselves; and they doubt the truth of all revealed truths, because they find them not within them; but have a strange and preposterous jealousy that God himself may delude them. And thus, as the son of Syrach says, *many are deceived by their own vain opinion, and an evil suspicion hath overthrowen their judgments.*

SERM.  
XX.

And thus we see how the wisdom and prudence of this world blinds the understandings of men, so that they cannot discern the excellency of the mysteries of christianity, and the necessity of them in order to the salvation of our souls. These notions of their own do so possess the heads and imaginations of men, that they find it very difficult to part with them, and be reconciled to any thing else.

The plainest reason of men is always the purest; and as far as men search by strength of reason alone into the depth of things, relating to another world, so far they stray from the truth; and when we come to another world, we shall find that most of that learning and knowledge which men are proud of here,

was

SERM. was no other than dreams of their imagination,  
 XX. and cobwebs spun out of their own brain.

2. Because of the opposition between the things of this world and the things of another, about which the understandings of men are employed ; the nature of them is very different, so that men cannot be equally intent upon them both : For the mind of man is not made to look two ways at once any more than his eyes. So that he can no more let his thoughts dwell both upon the things of this world and another, than he can look upwards and downwards at the same time. And therefore, when the thoughts and inclinations of men are taken up with the things of this life, and full of the knowledge of the world, there is a sort of natural necessity there should be a neglect and contempt of all spiritual matters.

For we must consider, that the knowledge of the doctrines of religion is a habit, as well as the practice of any of its precepts ; and therefore when men will not accustom themselves to the thinking much of religious matters, and that the whole current of their thoughts doth run another way, it is no wonder they are indisposed for the things of another life, which are to be spiritually discerned ; by which is not meant that any immediate infusion of the spirit is required in order to this, but that it is necessary that men set their minds that way, by taking them off the eager pursuit of worldly knowledge ; by diverting their reason and their imaginations from being fixt and intent upon  
 worldly

worldly wisdom and knowledge, that they may be employed on spiritual matters; for otherwise they can never have a true knowledge of them, or be rightly affected with them. So that we need not wonder that people of ready parts and good understandings in other things, are shamefully ignorant in divine matters: It is for the same reason that they are ignorant of any other art or science that they do not give their minds to. Men are now as little to expect sudden inspiration in the necessary knowledge of religion, as in the business of their trade or calling; they are to look for nothing more than the ordinary grace of God upon their endeavours.

SERM.  
XX.

The knowledge and practice of religion requires thinking and observation, and that their reason and understanding be employed about them with diligence and vigour: So that heaven is to be got as men get riches and worldly policy; they must make it their business, and set their minds to the work, and resolve to acquire these by the same methods they do any other habit: And this they must do with the utmost strength and resolution of their souls; for as I observed before, the prevailing bent of our minds can be but one way at once.

3. Another reason of this saying of our Saviour's, as it respects the rich and great men of this world is, because of the great force that the riches and splendor of this world have to blind mens eyes, and gain upon their affections.

3. Another reason of this saying of our Saviour's, as it respects the rich and great men of this world is, because of the great force that the riches and splendor of this world have to blind mens eyes, and gain upon their affections.

SERM. tions. Both the rich and poor, the mean and  
 XX. great, have many and strong temptations ; and  
 at first thought, one would imagine those of  
 poverty, and a low condition in the world, to  
 be the strongest, and overcome with greatest  
 difficulty ; and indeed they are so in them-  
 selves. But that which makes the difference  
 between these two conditions, in respect of  
 their disposition for the practice of virtue and  
 holiness, is the different nature of those temp-  
 tations which are incident to prosperity and  
 adversity : For though we should allow the  
 temptation of want and misery to be the  
 stronger, yet those of wealth and prosperity  
 are the more treacherous and subtler, much  
 more apt to gain upon us and have the advan-  
 tage of the other several ways.

I. The temptations incident to a low con-  
 dition come upon men with open force and  
 commonly rush in all at once, and their greatest  
 violence is felt at first onset. Now this awa-  
 kens mens minds, and calls up all the powers  
 of their souls ; and if they have any spiritual  
 strength left they exert it vigorously ; they are  
 always upon their guard, and discern plainly  
 every step the temptation gains upon them.  
 But the allurements of a prosperous state infi-  
 nuate themselves insensibly ; they lay all our  
 faculties asleep, and steal in upon us before we  
 are aware. We take them at first for friends  
 and give them admittance ; and we do not see  
 our mistake till they have us in bonds and  
 fetters,

fetters, and such as we are not willing to be freed from. Fear and terror, pain and misery, do indeed ruffle and discompose the spirits of men, but they do not leave that deep impression upon the conscience; for we are apt to resist and struggle with them to the last: But the allurements of ease and pleasure gain upon us by those inclinations that are most intimate to our nature, and make their way through our hearts; which difference of the temptations that assault us in our way to heaven, is well represented in the fable, by the contest between the sun and the wind, which should have the greatest force and influence upon the traveller; the gradual heat and warmth of the sun brought to pass effectually, what the ruder violence of the wind could not effect. And thus it is with the sunshine of prosperity, it dissolves all the powers of our souls, it enervates and breaks the strength of all our resolutions, and too commonly leaves us nothing but faint and languishing desires of virtue and goodness, just enough to keep us in a good opinion of it, but not to influence us strongly to the practice of it.

2. Another great disadvantage of a wealthy and prosperous state is, that it supplies all the sinful inclinations of our natures with objects to gratify them; want of opportunity hath kept thousands in innocence, which from thence hath been improved into solid virtue and holiness. But riches and honours supply  
men

SERM.  
XX.

men with fewel for all their lusts; they lay before us all the allurements of this world, and ply all our vicious inclinations incessantly, and give us opportunities for indulging them all; they beset us round with temptations, and straw gins and traps in our way; so that we meet them at every turn, and it is impossible for man with his ordinary strength to be so perpetually on his guard, as to contradict and overcome them all.

3. Another thing which makes the charms of ease and plenty so unconquerable; is the tendency they have to gain upon our affections. We have a natural abhorrence of those things which are any way the occasion of pain or grief to us, and it is easy to set ourselves against them when they would draw us into sin: But when temptations are agreeable to the inward inclinations of body and mind, and are apt to engage all our affections, and take fast hold of all our passions, it is very hard to shake them off; they cling about us and kill us with a preposterous fondness; they blind our understandings and deprave our judgments, so as to carry our reason along with them into all manner of sin: And when once they have brought us into a love of the world, (which they seldom fail to do) then the love of God and religion is not in us, (i. e.) they take away all just regard to the service of God and the preservation of a good conscience: This is the reason of our Saviour's saying *that it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven,*  
(i. e.)

(i, e.) as he himself explains it for them that trust in riches; but this makes it a little easier only in appearance, because it is hard for them not to trust in their riches: It is the most unlikely thing in the world, that a rich man should not in a great degree place his confidence in his riches, and rest upon them; and it is very hard for him to conquer or avoid those temptations which they necessarily bring upon him; it is very rare they do not set their hearts upon them, *for where their treasure is there will their hearts be also*: Therefore we are often warned in scripture against this love of the world, and bid to set our hearts on things above, and not to be conformable to this world; but that we should be transformed in the renewing of our minds.

4. The last thing which renders the temptations of a wealthy and prosperous condition so dangerous, beyond that of a lower rank, is the tendency it hath to make men thoughtless of another world. Necessity and want, and all manner of afflictions are apt to make men think and reflect; they wean them from all the pleasures of this life, and put them upon thinking of another world; but plenty and ease make people careless and negligent; they divert all thoughts of death and judgment, and of that endless state of happiness or misery that is to follow them. In troubles and afflictions all men are apt to call upon God, and apply themselves for mercy and assistance; but in their prosperity they forget him, and them-

SERM.  
XX.

SERM. felves too; as it is represented by our Sa-  
 XX. viour in the case of the rich man in the Gos-  
 pel, whose thoughts were all taken up in the  
 management of his stores, that he had no lei-  
 sure to consider of the time when his soul  
 should be required of him. This is a very ge-  
 neral case among us, and it is ordinary to see  
 people so intent and eager upon getting of  
 wealth, that they are ever in a perpetual hurry,  
 and in a restless greedy pursuit of it: So  
 that every thing is time lost that doth not some  
 way promote their worldly interest. These  
 are the very men in the parable, who being  
 invited to the wedding supper, had no leisure  
 to come and pay their attendance: And there-  
 fore the poor and the maimed, the halt and  
 the blind were invited in; those who had no-  
 thing else to do, and so little worldly business,  
 that they could not tell how to dispose of  
 themselves.

And thus we see how poverty and a low  
 condition are often the greatest mercies in this  
 world, as being a means to dispose men for  
 virtue and holiness: So that riches and ho-  
 nours are so often a curse upon those who have  
 them, that it is not easy to tell when they are  
 not so. And this brings me to the third thing  
 I proposed, which was,

3. To shew wherein the wisdom of God  
 appears, in proposing the truths of the Gospel  
 to men after such a manner, that they should  
 be hidden from the *great* and *prudent* men of  
 this world, and be revealed unto *Babes*. This  
 would



would appear very plainly if I had but time to shew at large, how it could not have been otherwise from the present condition of our infirmity, and the nature of those things which go to make up the body of a religion if they will have any; and how they must live a life of faith, if they will have any religion at all. But I shall at present give you only one obvious reason, which abundantly justifies the wisdom and goodness of God in this manner of dispensation, and that is,

S E R M.  
XX.


That if the Gospel was not thus contrived, it had not been a religion for all the world; the revelations of God were designed for the salvation of all men, and therefore they must have been adapted to all sorts and conditions, to all ages, sexes, and degrees of men; that which was designed for all men must have been plain, and obvious, and intelligible to the most natural reason of a man; and therefore those wise men of the world, who are apt to despise it for being so, must necessarily loose the benefit and advantage of it. Had God given us a religion which was dark and abstruse, made up of science and demonstration, and that sort of evidence and worldly wisdom which the Greeks sought after formerly, and our modern opposers of revelation require from us now; it had been a religion but for a very small number of men: For very few even of those who insist upon this are capable of understanding it rightly if they had it. Had God given us a religion made up of close ar-

SERM.  
XX.

gument, and such a chain of consequences as in those sciences which are the inventions of men, how few would have been the better for it? And how would the greater part of mankind, which are the best disposed for virtue and piety, been totally excluded; and no one would have been qualified for it, but the wise men of this world.

There is no respect of persons with God; and they are strangely mistaken in thinking that he must value the wisdom and the knowledge of this world in the same proportion that we do. Alas! our wisdom is as trifling and insignificant to him as our riches, which are only thick clay; and we make a very false judgment, when we fancy God must take the methods of our systems in his revelations, and go about to prove to us by lines and figures that we stand in need of a satisfaction, when we find ourselves grievous offenders; or that we stand in need of some supernatural assistance, when we find ourselves unable for the practice of virtue and holiness; that there are three persons in the Godhead; that there are endless joys for good men, and everlasting torments for the damned in another world: had he done any thing of this nature, we might justly have suspected it for the invention of men; but by this method children could not have attained to an early knowledge of religion, and so the time for improvement in what was to qualify them for heaven would have been shortned.

But

But the design of God in his revelations SERM.  
was the saving of souls, and not gratifying the XX.  
curiosity and pleasing the imaginations of men;   
our religion is for practice and not speculation,  
and therefore it was requisite it should be made  
up of such truths as are intelligible to every  
capacity; such as fall in with the plainest rea-  
son and most natural sentiments of men; that  
the most ignorant might be capable of them,  
and the wise and prudent left inexcusable, and  
exposed to a just condemnation for overlooking  
and despising of them.

Having thus gone through what I designed  
from the words, I should proceed to make  
some inferences from what hath been said;  
but the time not permitting me, I shall only  
make some application in short to the two dif-  
ferent sorts of people mentioned in my text.  
And,

I. To the first sort I shall give St. Paul's ad-  
vice, that *they become fools that they may be wise*;  
this is a precept peculiar indeed to christianity,  
but hath a signification beyond all the wisdom  
of the heathens; and the meaning is, that they  
have a more moderate opinion of that know-  
ledge and wisdom that is so much esteemed  
among men, and employed about the perishing  
things of this world; and bend their thoughts  
towards those things which concern the future  
well-being of soul and body for ever; this is  
every where in scripture called *wisdom*, in op-  
position to the learning, and prudence, and  
cunning that is so much admired in temporal  
H 3 affairs;

SERM. XX. affairs; and the reason of it is, because how sharp, and cunning, and prudent, how wise and learned soever men are in the things of this world, it all dies and perishes with them; they leave it all behind them, and it will be of as little use to them then as their money. But the knowledge of those truths which are the great concernments of our souls, follows them into another world.

True wisdom consists in forecast, and the greatest point of it is for men to provide for the worst; he is the wisest man who looks farthest, and considers what things will end in, what will be the final issue of all worldly things, and what shall be his last state and condition. And that is truly folly which leaves all this to a venture, and makes no provision against the evil day, but fixes all his thoughts upon the present, and is intent only upon the perishing things of this world: This is folly or rather desperate madness, and there is nothing on this side hell can express it; it is as if a man were busy in drawing a scheme when he is going to execution; or as if a person should be solicitous about a dress, when the house is all on fire about him; and employ all his thoughts only that he might be burnt in a gawdy garb.

II. But secondly, as to those who are *Babes* in the sense of the text, to whom these things of salvation are said to be revealed, let them not be discouraged or perverted from the truth, because they see it hath so little effect upon the

the

the rich, and great, and wise men of the world; and because that men of wit, and learning, and parts despise it, and expose our christian mysteries; let them not be dismayed as if it were a new or a strange thing; it was ever so from the first preaching of the Gospel, that these things were hid *from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto Babes*: It is the very nature of the Gospel, and it is the effect of infinite wisdom that it should be so.

SER.M.  
XX.

Nor need we wonder so much at the degeneracy of the age, and fancy immediately that the church of God must fail; for infidelity and atheism are the natural result of plenty and ease, and those who move in a higher sphere among men, were always most subject to impiety and prophaness, and a disregard to all religion; and it will be so to the end of the world: And he hath warned us of this beforehand, that we might not be staggered, and take any offence from thence or prejudice to christianity.

Though the preaching of the cross is *foolishness to them*, yet to us it is *the power of God*. Notwithstanding they endeavour to pervert our faith, and corrupt the Gospel both in their practice and conversation; yet these secrets of God shall be among them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant, and the truth of God shall prevail in the end; for God will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nought the understanding of the prudent. Let us therefore, with our Saviour, here bless and

SERM.  
XX.

magnify the holy name of God, that *he hath thus hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto Babes*; such as are best qualified to be his children, and heirs of his glorious kingdom in heaven; that he hath not made any stock of worldly knowledge, or learning, or great quickness of parts and apprehension necessary to salvation; but a plain honest heart, and a sincere industrious mind; that he hath not regard to the persons of men in the revelations of his will, but had respect to the humble and meek, and made humility and sincerity the only necessary qualifications for the reception of the Gospel. Let this cheer up our spirits, and excite our diligence, and confirm our faith of all the mysteries of christianity, in opposition to these men of the world; for when Christ shall destroy the *wisdom* of the *wise*, blessed, ever blessed shall they be who are not offended in him.

S E R M O N

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# S E R M O N XXI.

The necessity of watching and  
praying.

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MAT. xxvi. 41.

*Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.*

**A**LL men have ever had a great sense of SERM. the corruption and weakness of human XXI. nature, and it is what hath ever sufficiently been felt, and complained of, and bewailed; and the Devil hath in all ages made his advantages of it, giving men a formidable prospect of the difficulty of virtue and holiness, by subduing their lusts and vitious inclinations, and restraining all the evil tendencies of our nature: This hath never failed of its effect in those who consider this grievous infirmity without an eye to the mighty power and energy of those means by which it is to be cured.

And

SERM.

XXI.



And accordingly some looking on the restraint of their lusts to be a strife against nature (as indeed it is) cease all endeavour towards a good life, they quite give out; and then the only work they have left, is to take care that the thoughts of another world give their pleasures as little intermission and disturbance as they can.

Others less hardy, but every jot as foolish, are always struggling with their lusts, though not to any substantial purpose of religion; they live in hopes this weakness is incurable; this is their great support and comfort in their sins, and they have all along in their minds a strange mixture of sensual pleasure and remorse; of lust and godly sorrow.

The last sort of men, on whom the sense of this infirmity hath a malignant influence, are those who have set in earnest upon the work with great sincerity and vigour, with great courage and resolution; and if the work were to be done of a sudden, nothing would be too hard for them. But after some tryals, finding the work always new, they come off of this religious fury; and when these first warmths are abated they feel this weakness of the flesh as much as ever: These cannot be easy under the thoughts of damnation; and therefore though they are foiled and beaten back again, yet they are always beginning but seldom make any considerable progress.

Nay even in those who have made considerable advances in piety and holiness, this weakness

ness



ness of the flesh often gives a check to their endeavours, it makes the work go on heavily and fills them with despondency; so that the consideration of this weakness of human nature hath unhappily every consequence but what it should have in the minds of men, and that is to awaken them with a sense of the danger they are in, and stir up their endeavours, and make them constant, and vigorous, and resolute.

Our blessed Saviour, who had himself a feeling of our infirmities, in these words describes most exactly wherein this weakness of our nature consists, and the most effectual method of our cure. *The spirit is willing, the difficulty doth not lye there, but the flesh is weak*; and for that reason we must *watch and pray that we enter not into temptation*, (i. e.) that we are not overcome by it. He said this at a time when he himself was under the greatest temptation and tryal that ever loaded any of the sons of Adam. Watching and praying were the means he used himself and found effectual; these are what he recommended to his Disciples then, when a great temptation was coming on them, and they failed for want of using them; and these are what he hath laid down for all succeeding christians if ever they hope for success. Without the use of these means our natural infirmities are never to be overcome; and on the contrary a right use of them will never fail: So that the words are no excuse for sin, but a powerful motive to subdue and overcome it.

My

SERM.

XXI.

My business at present shall be to enlarge upon these two things contained in the text, being of the highest consequence and nearest concern to us: Namely, to consider

1. The great frailty of our nature, wherein it consists; and the great difficulty of attaining to any good degree of virtue, even after a full purpose and resolution of the mind to endeavour it.

2. The true remedy for this weakness, and the great means by which we are to overcome and surmount this difficulty.

As to the first, in order to a more distinct knowledge of the frailty of human nature, it will be necessary to observe, that the scriptures do every where suppose two contrary principles within us interwoven in our frame, parts of our first make, and distinguished in holy writ by the names of *flesh* and *spirit*. The latter of which is that more refined and exalted part of us which derives its original from heaven, carries on it a stamp of the divine likeness; it is that immaterial, immortal part of us, whose first and innate tendencies were all to good, and all its inclinations to virtue and holiness; and when it can act of itself it cannot help owning and acknowledging them. This is what the Apostle St. Paul 1 Cor. ii. 11. calls the *spirit of a man which is in him*, in distinction from the spirit of God in the verse immediately preceding. And in Rom. vii. he calls the *law of his mind*.

Now

Now though this be in itself purely spiritual S E R M.  
ever ready to own and acknowledge the excel- XXI.  
lencies of virtue and goodness, and in a dispo-  
sition made for the beauty of holiness, to feel  
its charms, and be ever carried towards it by  
an incessant strong propension; yet it is but a  
part of us, and since the fall and corruption  
of our nature, it is immersed and sunk in flesh;  
to which, though it communicate life, and  
motion, and understanding, yet it cannot dif-  
fuse its own native inclinations and desires  
through the unweildy mass which sets up a  
great variety of lusts and appetites of its own  
in direct opposition to them; insomuch that  
the pure spirit hath lost all power of direction  
and government; and in a state of nature its  
faculties are so broken and impaired, so over-  
powered and obstructed, that of itself it is ut-  
terly unable to restrain any one irregular pas-  
sion or appetite of the lower man, and exert  
itself to any good purpose by thought, word,  
or deed.

This wretched feeble condition of the mind  
of man is, that which hath made some help  
and assistance absolutely necessary in order to  
its recovery; and that could be no other than  
the secret influence of the holy spirit of God  
upon this spirit of ours, which hath been used  
to be called by a particular emphasis, the grace  
of God, because it is the greatest favour ever  
vouchsafed to mankind, and a purchase made  
for us by the blood of Christ.

This

SERM. This inspires the soul with new life and vi-  
 XXI. gour; that same breath of God which gave it  
 being, blows it into a flame; it stirs up the original tendencies of the mind, and fills it with new and fresh desires of virtue and holiness; and this is the beginning of a christian life.

So that now we see how to understand distinctly what is meant by the spirit in those many places of the new testament, where it is set in opposition to the flesh, (i. e.) that spirit of a man that is in him thus newly animated and revived by the sweet influences of the holy spirit of God. *The spirit indeed is willing*, (i. e.) the mind of man, wrought upon by the operations of God's holy spirit, is filled with good desires and holy resolutions; it is sincere and forward, and apt to be flushed with great hopes and assurance of success, and ready to encounter any temptation. And thus it is opposed to the flesh, by which, both here and in other places of scripture, is meant not only this grosser body of ours with all its fleshly lusts and appetites; but the inferior soul which is the seat of our passions and affections, and all other corrupt desires and vices of the mind, which hath been used both by Jews and Christians to be expressed by the name of a third principle, resulting from the union of the pure spirit with the body.

This is that part of us that is said to be weak in the text, very weak indeed to all goodness, but violent and headstrong to all manner of vice and wickedness; which natural condition  
 of

of infirmity the holy scripture represents, by SERM.  
our being *shapen in iniquity, and conceived in* XXI.  
*sin*; by having every imagination of the thoughts  
of our hearts to evil continually; they call it  
the law of the members warring against the law  
of the mind and bringing it into captivity, in-  
fomuch that in this *flesh dwelleth no good thing.*  
And with respect to religion we are said to be  
in a state of death, (i. e.) in a condition as  
unapt for the exercise of virtue and holiness,  
as a dead body is for those of life and motion.

After this, when the holy Ghost hath  
breathed into us a new principle of spiritual  
life, and that by God's preventing grace the  
mind is roused out of this lethargy, then be-  
gins the struggle; the principles of reason and  
grace against the appetites and propensions of  
nature; and then it is we begin to have a sense  
and feeling of our weakness and the manifold  
infirmities of the flesh. We are full of holy  
desires and good resolutions; we are daring  
and resolute, very confident of ourselves, and  
have a secret pleasure and rejoycing as a *Giant*  
*that is to run his course*, having a full affu-  
rance of the victory.

We are apt then to fancy it will never be  
otherwise with us, and to think the work done  
before we have well begun it; this is com-  
monly in the absence of temptation, the first  
approaches of which shock and stagger all  
these resolutions; and as it steals upon them  
by degrees, so they are all melted down into a  
compliance; infomuch that it could not enter  
into

SERM. into his thoughts that ever he should be so  
 XXI. baffled and overcome: Then when remorse of  
 conscience, a scene of shame, and prospect of  
 damnation sets him a thinking again, all his  
 resolutions are renewed; but the temptation  
 returns again with the same success, and  
 quashes all those good desires and holy pur-  
 poses of the mind: This is done frequently;  
 and every defeat contributes to the impairing  
 of our spiritual strength, and breaking the  
 powers of the mind; our desires of goodness  
 decay, our good purposes grow faint and lan-  
 guid, till at last we have only one resolution  
 left; namely, that we will resolve to purpose  
 some time or other.

This is the very state of infirmity described  
 in the text, which was occasioned by a fam-  
 ous instance of the most ardent and forward  
 zeal, and of the great infirmity and weakness  
 of human nature; when Christ was to be  
 apprehended and crucified, *though all men shall  
 be offended because of thee, yet will I never be  
 offended*, says Peter, *though I should dye with  
 thee yet will I not deny thee*: Likewise also  
 said all his disciples, yet there was not one  
 that stood by him; and he that expressed  
 himself with the most confidence of them all  
 denied him thrice with oaths and protesta-  
 tions. Our blessed Saviour who had himself  
 a sense of this infirmity, and foresaw what  
 temptation was coming on them, advised them  
 to the use of those means which alone could  
 enable them to overcome it, (i. e.) watching  
 and

and praying: They however slept, *for their eyes were heavy*, and they fell shamefully. Their master put them both in practice and obtained a glorious victory over all the powers of hell.

SERM.  
XXI.

And now we see what that work is that lies before us, the great business and employment of our lives. The flesh is weak indeed, but it must be made strong in a spiritual sense. Nature must be overcome, and a second nature introduced; all, even its most craving appetites must be left unsatisfied, and so frequently crossed and disappointed that they shall all be brought under the power of the mind, inasmuch that we shall be ready to pluck out an eye, to cut off a right hand, and remove from us that very darling temptation which hitherto hath been dearer to us than our souls and everlasting felicity: Our very members must become instruments of righteousness to God, and we must glorify God in our bodies; so that even they shall become *a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him.*

I shall now proceed to consider the means laid down here for the doing of this; means that never yet failed of success, where they were duly put in practice, and without which it is in vain ever to attempt the healing of a sickly and corrupted nature. And therefore,

2dly. The great means, by which we are to surmount and overcome this difficulty, are here said to be watching and praying.

SERM.  
XXI.

I. As to the first of them, that of watching against temptation, is a metaphor taken from the careful observance of an enemy or robber in the night, and being upon our guard that we might not be surpris'd by them and taken at a disadvantage; it is a very general word, and doth more particularly imply, diligence and perseverance.

By diligence I mean a sincere and earnest endeavour of virtue and holiness, and of subduing all our fleshly inclinations; that our heart be in the work, and that we do this with the full bent of the soul: So that we labour to carry on and improve our good resolutions into a staid and settled state of holiness; and do this with the same vigour and intensesness of the mind that some pursue riches and honour, or any other worldly ends. It is a vain expectation of people, who think that the work of religion will go on smoothly without let or disturbance, whenever they resolve in earnest to set about it; it hath been a mistake fatal to the souls of many, who after they have begun well, and meeting with such difficulty and uneasiness as they did not expect, in denying the vitious inclinations of the flesh, and restraining their lusts they are beaten back and quite discouraged; and there is no thought so natural to such beginners than, that when they resolve indeed to be good and virtuous, they shall in some degree live a life of Angels, in undisturbed innocence and tranquillity. The spirit of God foreseeing the evil of this,  
hath



hath not more effectually endeavoured to remove any mistake or error, to which the mind of man was subject than this; warning us of the difficulties we are to meet with in a christian course, representing it by the similitudes of a *race*, a *journey*, a *warfare*, telling us that we wrestle *not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world*, (i. e.) against all the malice and subtilty of hell: And therefore advises us to put on the whole armour of God, and all little enough.

And accordingly, in the text we are bid to watch, (i. e.) to look for and expect uneasiness and difficulty. Eccl. ii. 1. *My son, says the son of Syrach, If thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation*: It will certainly come upon you, and probably when you least suspect it, and are in the least preparation for it; therefore sit down first and consult whether you are able, with ten thousand, to meet him that comes against you with twenty thousand; whether, with this willingness of the mind, and those supplies of grace that are given you, you are able to encounter the world, the flesh, and the devil. If you thus look for temptation, and set your mind into a posture to receive it, and put your whole strength to the work, you cannot fail of success.

Virtue is indeed difficult, but it is necessary and practicable; and nothing need to be said

SER. M. more for that on which eternal salvation de-  
 XXI. pends.

The attaining any commendable degree of virtue and holiness, will require constant application and incessant labour of the mind; this will shew what it can do, it will exercise all its power and most vigorous efforts: For this flesh of ours *must be crucified with all its affections and lusts*, and we *must be renewed in the spirit of our minds*; the prevailing bent of our minds must be to piety and holiness, and what it is to do this to any good purpose, they little know, who have not felt the trouble of it, and no one can be sensible what it is to become a truly good man but by the trial; what pains he must take with himself in finding out all his corruptions and infirmities, that none of them might escape him; what nice observation of what virtues and graces he is yet without, and what advances he hath made in those he hath; what unwearied care and watchfulness lest he be any way brought under the power of temptation: Now to do this habitually, so as to keep up a sense of holiness in the mind, and preserve a secret communion with God in the midst of the business, and diversions, and conversation of a sinful world; *hic labor, hoc opus*. Let any man weigh this thoroughly and then tell me, whether this can be compassed on any easier terms, than having it ever uppermost in our thoughts, and making it the chief employment of our lives.

The other thing intended by watching in SERM. the text I said was perseverance; we are not XXI. only to put our whole strength to the work, but we must continue so to do without intermission; and therefore here I must obviate another mistake near allied to the former, but not the same; and that is, of those who are indeed sensible of the difficulty of the work, but imagine that it is to be compleated of a sudden, and that all the danger and difficulty will be soon over. And therefore, after they have gained some good degrees of religion, and perhaps done a great deal in a little time by a violent obstinate resolution, they are apt to fall into security and triumph too soon, not considering that they are but still a beginning; for the breaking off from a course of sin, and the improvement of every particular grace and virtue, into a settled state and temper of the body and mind, are two very different things. The first may be done by help of a sudden furious zeal, and the heat and fire of our imaginations; and so far it is very well; it doth great things while it holds, and it is a pity it cannot last; but nothing that is violent can do so; and therefore when these heats are expired, they must be supplied by consideration, and judgment, and reflection; and after all, we shall find that cool and gentle reason is the greatest friend of virtue, and the shrewdest enemy to vice. This doth not rise and fall with the weather, or ebb and flow with the circulation of the blood, but will

SERM. last as long as the temptation, and be ready to  
XXI. engage it at every turn.

The great strength of temptation doth not lye in a sudden violent onset, and an open furious assault, this happens but in a few instances; but in the constancy and perpetuity of it: And herein is the great weakness of the flesh, that its sinful appetites are natural and permanent; so that it must be dealt with not as being ill of an acute disease; but as being of a crazy habit and infirm constitution, which is to be healed by variety and continued application of remedies, by diet, and physick, and uninterrupted regular management; and with all this it recovers but slowly, and it is a long time before it is brought to a firm athletic state of health.

Now because all our corruptions are natural to us, and all virtue and goodness is acquired, there is no way of overcoming nature but by custom and habit. For want of weighing this thoroughly, many a resolute and sincere christian hath been cut off short in his progress, and hath fallen from the fairest hopes into the depth of despondency; whereas he had nothing more to do but to persevere, and though he could not be sensible of any ground he gained, yet to go on and be always doing. Though he is not aware of it, yet he grows in grace and goes on insensibly from strength to strength. No opposition of infirmity or temptation should make us desist or be any just discouragement to us, because the means  
of

of grace are put into a method as sure and infallible as the course of nature, and all great productions in both of them spring from very minute originals; they take their first rise from a point, and are carried on to their full proportion by a very gradual increase.

SERM.  
XXI.

No force but that of custom and habit can overcome nature; we every day see the power of it in the body by constant practice, even to that degree that it would exceed all belief but that we hear and see it. Just thus are the weaknesses of nature healed, and the habits of virtue to be obtained by unwearied application; by having a sharp and watchful eye upon all our vitious inclinations and appetites; by continual crossing and thwarting them, interrupting all their acts and lessening them perpetually; and by taking every little opportunity of putting virtue in practice: For every single act of virtue gains a new accession of additional strength; and the frequent repetition of them is the same with this multiplication of powers in mechanism, which from the greatest weakness is enlarged by a continued motion to an immense and irresistible force.

Thus by constancy and perseverance we shall arrive to a fulness of stature, to a confirmed and manly state of holiness; insomuch that that grace or virtue, for which we had not the least disposition at first, shall grow up into our very constitution and temper, *crescit occulto velut arbor ævo*, says Horace speaking

SERM.  
XXI.

of the growing virtue and fame of young men; but David more fully speaking of the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who exercises himself in that law day and night, he likens him to *a tree planted by the water side, that will bring forth its fruit in due season*: The similitude is very expressive and full of signification, for the seeds of virtue are small, and its increase is by imperceptible degrees; till at last it shoots up to a mighty height; it becomes conspicuous, as a tree spreads its branches in the air, and is proof against all storm and weather. It will surely come to this at last with us, if we never cease endeavour but proceed in a constant steady course of improving every good and virtuous habit; but then on the contrary, every intermission will carry us backward and renew the difficulty; and therefore we must ever have it in our minds that we strive against nature, and are rowing up the stream; and while we continue to do so, our progress though but slow, yet it is sure; but every time we slacken we are carried down the torrent, and by frequent neglects and intermissions we occasion a perpetual round of the same trouble and difficulties over again.

The most resty and stubborn nature will be tamed at last; and though it may indeed give us work enough to manage, and create us much pain, and disturbance, and uneasiness, yet it can never run away with us till we have let go the reins.

2. Another

2. Another means here proposed for overcoming temptation is that of prayer, the absolute necessity of which arises from hence, that the weakness and infirmity of our nature is such, that without God's special assistance all temptation will be too strong for us; and therefore we are taught to pray daily that God *would not lead us into temptation.* The most pernicious effect, and the greatest danger of all temptation is, that it takes away the very disposition to pray; and when once it hath cut off the assistance of divine grace, then it is sure to prevail upon us.

Let therefore no infirmity of ours, or strength of temptation discourage us from praying, since this is the very reason why we ought to pray, because we are weak and temptation strong; and that God will surely give *his holy spirit to them that ask him.* No custom whatever hath so direct a tendency to spiritualize the mind and disengage it from the world and all fleshly appetites; and every prayer we make is an act and exercise of that virtue or grace we pray for: Wherefore if temptation press hard upon you, be thou urgent in prayer, as it increases so repeat your importunities; if it continue pray again, and let every return of the temptation send you to God for help; if you take care to go on to do this incessantly, and *not to faint*, assure yourself God will never be tired with your prayers; so that the temptation must be the first thing that fails; though you find not as yet

SERM.  
XXI.  
}

SERM. yet the effect of your prayers, yet pray on,  
 XXI. and this is faith. *All things whatsoever ye shall*  
 } *ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive,* (i. e.)  
 whatsoever is necessary for us. If we firmly  
 depend on him for the doing it after his own  
 manner, and in his own good time; so that we  
 can never be disappointed but by our own im-  
 patience, or distrust and weariness.

When we have brought our minds to a dis-  
 position to pray on all occasions; to power  
 out our souls to God; to lay our weakneses  
 and infirmities before him; and to implore his  
 aid in all difficulties and temptations, and per-  
 sist in doing this *in faith without wavering:*  
 The Devil will then hardly know how to as-  
 fault us; because every temptation to a sin,  
 will serve only to encrease our devotion, and to  
 mind us of putting in practice the contrary vir-  
 tues.

This is an excellent frame and temper of  
 mind. But then this spirit of devotion is not  
 to be had, but by the same means that other  
 virtues are obtained, by a long use and custom  
 of praying; it is a habit, and must be got by  
 practice and frequent exercise; and as the  
 Apostle speaks *by watching thereunto with all*  
*perseverance.*

Having thus spoke to those things which  
 are more expressly contained in the text, I shall  
 only make three inferences from what hath  
 been said, with respect to three sorts of people  
 who take in the whole body of christians.

I. Thô



1. The first is the fatal mistake of those who rest in the desires of goodness, and are easy in the midst of known and wilfull sins, only upon this presumption, that the temptation is insuperable; and make this very text an excuse for their sin, which will be an unanswerable argument of their condemnation: Because the flesh is weak, and the spirit as yet only willing; therefore, they are to *watch and pray that they enter not into temptation*, (i. e.) that they are not overcome by it; and if they are overcome by it, it is an infallible sign they did not watch and pray, to as good purposes as they might have done. The text was spoke to the Apostles before the holy Ghost came upon them, and though they fell at that time, yet they afterwards glorified God in their lives, and by their deaths; and no temptation was too strong for them. This text, together with all others in the new testament of the like nature, is applicable only to the first beginnings, and infant state of a christian, when he first sets upon the work of religion, full of good desires and sincere resolutions of virtue and holiness; and nothing can be more absurd than to imagine that it must be always thus with them: And to conclude, that the great and glorious work of religion is done, when they have only a willing mind to it; the flesh indeed is weak, but this weakness must be healed or we are undone for ever.

A sad condition of the soul this, when people have no other hope of salvation left them, but that

SERM  
XXI.

SERMON.  
XXI.

that their duty is impracticable. They are indeed in a state of infirmity, as they say of themselves, and therefore they should spend their whole lives in its cure. But this is so gross and palpable a delusion that nothing can move admiration more, than that such numbers of people should be gulled and cheated with it: But I am perswaded that notwithstanding all their shew of sanctity, there is no one who allows himself in sin upon colour of this principle, who would not have been as wicked without it; it is only their way of stifling conscience for the present, and if they had not this, they would have found some other way of doing it as effectually, or continue in sin against the full and clear conviction of their consciences.

2. Another thing I shall observe from hence is, the deplorable condition of those persons in whom all inclination of the mind to virtue and holiness is ceased; who have worn out all designs and purposes of religion and piety, and have so increased this natural weakness of the flesh by vitious habits, that they are *past feeling*, and quite *alienated from the life of God*: Who have given themselves over to *lasciviousness*, to work all *uncleanness with greediness*: And then every serious thought of God is a check upon their minds, and carries terror in it, and the very mention of virtue and holiness makes them uneasy.

The desire of goodness is the last thing that leaves a man, it is the *ultimum moriens* in a christian

christian sense ; something of it remains while there is any vital heat or spirits left, and is hardly quite extinguished till the man is spiritually

SERM.

XXI.



dead: And then if a state of virtue and holiness were to be had for a wish, he can hardly frame his mind to it ; for the *very mind and conscience is defiled*. His soul is so polluted in every faculty, and the most secret recesses of it so impregnated with the gust and relish of sin, that he can have no more desire of being good than a man in the height of drunkenness, of being sober, the cause and the effect is the same in nature ; he hath sinned away his reason, his head swims, and for the remainder of his life he talks and thinks from a disordered imagination: Then at last tumbles into the grave, where having slept out his debauch, reason then takes it's place again, it recoils terribly upon him, and fills him with endless and unspeakable remorse.

Now though we cannot say that such men have sinned out their day of grace, so as to be sealed up to damnation by any positive act of God's ; yet we know that the spirit of God may be so far grieved as to leave off striving, and when that hath left a man he is carried to all sin as necessarily as a body moves downwards: So that though we cannot say his damnation is absolutely certain, yet it is high'y probable ; because there is no ground of hope left either in nature or grace: And therefore all who have any suspicions of their bordering upon this condition, would do well to look before them,  
and

SERM. and see how near they are to the very brink of  
 XXI. this precipice; and for ought they know, one  
 step farther may plunge them into the bottom-  
 less pit. The less inclination they have to  
 God and goodness, let them suspect their con-  
 dition the more; and if they find in them-  
 selves any remains of this spiritual principle,  
 any sparks of these holy desires, let them im-  
 prove them without delay; let them call up  
 all the powers of their mind, and shew what  
 is the mighty force of an obstinate resolution,  
 and a persevering prayer.

3. The last thing I shall infer is the en-  
 couragement that may be drawn from hence,  
 to all who are sincere and hearty in the work  
 of religion, and do in earnest set about the  
 conquest of all their lusts, and healing all the  
 vitious tendencies of nature; but are apt to  
 be discouraged at the prevalence and constancy  
 of temptation. *Watch and pray that ye enter  
 not into temptation.* And therefore if ye do use  
 these means ye will not enter into it, (i. e.) so  
 as to be overcome by it; for *God will never  
 suffer you to be tempted above what you are able,*  
 (i. e.) above the power of those means that he  
 hath appointed for that purpose.

Wherefore, if God hath given us a willing  
 spirit and put in our mind good desires, our  
 business is to cherish and improve them into a  
*hunger and thirst after righteousness.* Till these  
 inclinations have taken full possession of our  
 souls, and got the ascendancy over all the af-  
 fections and appetites of nature; insomuch  
 that

that the main current of our thoughts runs all that way; so as to put in practice all the means of grace, with the same vigour and application and eagerness, that we would endeavour to get meat and drink when we are thirsty and starving: And to use as much temperance and restraint and management in healing this weakness of the flesh, as we would do to save our lives in a dangerous languishing distemper.


S E R M.

XXI.


If we thus press on forward, and not suffer ourselves to be beaten off from our hearty endeavours by any difficulties we meet with; a sure and certain victory attends us: For *through God that strengthens us we shall be able to do all things*: We shall gain insensibly every day, till at last *our strength is made perfect in weakness*, (i. e.) till temptation itself shall serve only to renew our resolutions and increase the vigour of our minds, till it shall be only the exercise of our virtue, and not the occasion of sin to us; and then it is that we may count it *all joy, when we fall into divers temptations*.

O! it is a glorious conquest this, when temptations become only an occasion of our virtue, and that the Devil himself withdraws them out of malice to us, lest they should be instruments of our virtue here, and of greater degrees of glory to us hereafter. When light and wanton objects only raise our indignation, and the most exquisite meats and drinks become opportunities of selfdenial. When the highest station doth not raise our minds above the level of the meanest sincere christian, and that the hardest

est

SERMON. XXI.  The greatest pressure of affliction exalts our souls above the world; insomuch that the greatest extremities make us take faster hold on the promises of God. When our very religion and piety cause in us a jealousy of ourselves, so that spiritual pride, the last and most subtle temptation of the Devil, is fully discovered, and itself become a prevailing motive of humility in us. When temptations beat upon us as the waves upon a rock not only to recoil again, but to wash off all the dirt, and leave our virtue brighter and more conspicuous.

Then is the man all tranquillity and innocence within, though there is nothing but storm and tumult about him; and like Lot in the midst of the sodomites keeps his reserve till he leaves the world to be consumed with all its lusts and vanities. In short, he hath then gained a good resemblance of the Holy Jesus, on whom the greatest temptations could not make the least impression. Then the soul is fit for that place where there is no temptation; it is already upon the wing for Heaven, and waits with impatience till this clog of flesh and blood is struck off. Blessed God what a semblance of Heaven is there in the breast of that man, in whom all the pleasures of the world have lost their charms, and that we have a quick gust and relish of virtue and goodness; so that all our longings are that way, even to pant after them when we find a secret delight in the practice of virtue and holiness, and are then only filled  
and

and pleased and *satisfied as it were with mar-* SERM.  
*row and fatness when we obtain it; then we* XXI.  
have laid a foundation for peace; for that   
*peace of God which passeth all understanding,*  
and therefore cannot be understood till it is  
felt.

Having therefore this encouragement (*dear-*  
*ly beloved*), *let us cleanse ourselves from all fil-*  
*thiness of flesh and spirit: Perfecting holiness*  
*in the fear of God.*

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## S E R M O N XXII.

The war of the flesh and the spirit.

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GALAT. V. 17.

*For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other: So that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

SERM.  
XXII.

**T**HIS distinction of flesh and spirit, and the great opposition between them, is intirely new under the Gospel, wherein it is made so much use of that it runs through the whole style of the new Testament. The heathen Philosophers did indeed distinguish nicely, between the sensitive appetite which is common to us with brutes, and that rational faculty which they found in themselves, (i. e.) between sense and reason; and this was so obvious they could not miss it. They saw a mighty difference between these two, that they often clashed and disagreed; they found themselves drawn two different ways at once by an  
opposite



opposite force, and that the violence of their sensual appetites hurried them on to the doing of things contrary to the dictates of their reason, and the full conviction of their minds; this they felt and complained of; but they little imagined what was the first spring and true cause of all this contradiction within us; namely, that there are two distinct parts of our frame of a very different nature, endued with contrary qualities, and opposite in all their inclinations and tendencies. This is peculiar to the Gospel, and such a key of knowledge, as opens to us those difficulties both of nature and grace, which were lockt up from the whole race of mankind before: and no man is aware at first reading how far this one text leads us into the knowledge both of ourselves, and of religion in general. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* Insomuch that I would put this one saying of St. Paul's in the ballance with the united moral wisdom of the heathen world.

For as it supposes the original of our corruption by the fall, which they knew nothing of, so likewise it intimates to us that there are two very distinct parts of our make, and contrary in their whole nature. The true seat of this great corruption of humanity, with the exact manner and cause of it, namely the contradiction of that fleshly part to the genuine dictates of the spirit, which then becomes par-

SERM. taker of its corruption, when it yields and is  
 XXII. captivated by it; that the reason of our yielding  
 to sin is because of that impetuouſneſs and violence of our fleſhly inclinations, which like a mighty ſtream bear down all the reſiſtance of that ſpiritual part of us, ſo that this makes men act againſt the clear light of reaſon and full perſwaſion of their minds; that this contradiction of the upper part to the motions of the lower, is a ſufficient demonſtration of the eſſential goodneſs of the laws of God, (which is the uſe he makes of it, in the vii. of Romans,) and conſequently that the true perfection of human nature conſiſts, in bringing the fleſhly part in ſubjection to the ſpiritual, this is the true *παλιγγνεſία*, or renovation of our natures; and laſtly that the only effectual means of doing this, is by conſtant habitual oppoſition to the inclinations of the fleſh, and thwarting and croſſing all it's appetites till it is brought to be tame, and yielding, and ready to comply with the genuine ſentiments of the pure mind.

This is the philoſophy of the text, this is philoſophy for all the world, they are things of the laſt conſequence to mankind; and therefore the contemplation of them muſt be profitable and delightful. But becauſe I am not now to write a tract, but make a diſcourſe, I ſhall put what I have to ſpeak to theſe into this method.

1<sup>ſt</sup>. I ſhall conſider a little more particularly, what is here meant by fleſh and ſpirit.

2<sup>dly</sup>,

2dly, I shall consider in what instances they are contrary to one another, and the nature of their opposition. S E R M  
XXII.

3dly, I shall speak something as briefly as I can, to those several things which are either expressly contained in this text, or directly deducible from it.

I. As to the first then. By the *flesh* is here meant not only those bodily appetites which are common to us with brutes, but likewise those irregular passions and affections of the soul, which are proper only to rational creatures. By the *spirit* is signified, that most refined and excellent part of us, by which we are more immediately formed after the image of God: That which the Hebrews expressed by the word *Ruah*, that immaterial immortal part of us, which is the seat of the pure understanding and will; in opposition to *Nafash*, the seat of all carnal desires and affections; (i. e.) the sensitive soul as it includes all those evil inclinations of the mind, which proceed from any compliance with sensual appetites, and as far as it is tainted by any intercourse, or commerce with them.

But because it is a distinction of no small use, both in the theory and practice of religion, that we may apprehend the difference more exactly, we must consider that it is an opinion founded on very good reason, that our frame is composed of three distinct parts, each of them severally expressed by St. Paul, in *1. Thess. v. 23.* *And I pray God your whole spirit,*

SERM. *spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless,*  
 XXII. *unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The

Greek word is plainer to this purpose, it calls these three parts *ὁλόκληρον ἑμῶν* the whole of you. It is not likely that St. Paul here would have made use of a frivolous and groundless distinction with so much solemnity; And a learned man in his comment upon the text, remarks, that the same difference might be observed from the words of the creation of man, where there is mention made distinctly of the *dust of the earth*, the *living soul*, and the *breath of life*; and shews withal, how this text of St. Paul's was so taken by the learnedest fathers of the Church; which is not at all to be wondered at, since I cannot see how it can be understood any otherwise, without a needless tautology.

Now by the body we are to understand this bulky weight of flesh and blood, this unweildy grosser part of us which we see and feel as we do any other body, and lies as plain and obvious to our senses as any other mass, a stock or a stone.

By the spirit is signified that sprightly immaterial part of us without bulk or quantity, not confined even to motion; which comes immediately out of the hands of God like himself a pure uncompounded being, the only seat of our understanding and reason, which the Greeks express, by the *τὸ ἡγημονικόν*, the commanding principle part, *τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν θεός*, the God in us; and the Latins by *particulam aurse divine*, a particle of the divinity, or communication

communication of the divine nature; and which Lucretius meant by his fourth ingredient of the soul, his something, he knew not what, which he called the *animam ipsius animæ*: And in the language of the New Testament, it is usually express'd by the word πνεῦμα or spirit, as particularly in the 1 Cor. ii. 11. *What man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him*: And it is the more remarkable, because here there is a comparison made between ours and the spirit of God, in the former verse.

SERM.  
XXI.

Lastly, by the soul in that text of St. Paul's is meant that middle part of us, which includes our imagination, and is the seat of all our passions and affections; which is express'd here by ψυχὴ the Soul: And for this the Greeks had many names of contempt, they called it ἀλογία unreasonableness; ἐπιθυμία concupiscence; ἵππος the horse; τὸ θηρίον the wild beast and brutal part of the man.

So that now we may see very distinctly what is meant by the flesh in my text, (i. e.) the body with all it's natural appetites; and the lower soul with all it's variety of passions and affections; and by the spirit, that immortal immaterial part of us, which is the immediate seat of our understanding.

It will be only necessary to remark farther here, that though the spirit of man is more immediately intended in this text; yet we may likewise understand the spirit of God as

SER. M. far as it works in concurrence with our spirit,  
 XXII. and assists it against the opposition given it by  
 the lower and corrupted part of the man.

II. To consider in what instances they are contrary one to another, and the nature of their opposition. And first, in general they are contrary in this; that the spirit is in it self pure and undefiled in it's own nature, as little liable to moral as natural corruption; and can be no otherwise polluted, than by those stains which are derived upon it by its union, and close conjunction with the lower soul and body: It may be so overcome by the force of bodily appetites, and borne down by the violence of our sinful passions and affections by giving way to them, that it can no way exert it self: So that there shall not be one virtuous inclination left in the whole man: And then he may properly be said to be *corrupted in his very mind and conscience*. And again, when by any secret impulse of the spirit of God the mind is roused, recovers it self again, so as to bear down all the vitious inclinations of the inferior man, that they become obedient to its motions; that it can sway them which way it will; then he is said to be *renewed in the spirit of his mind*: So that my meaning is, that there is a spiritual principle within us, that must, and will ever acknowledge virtue and goodness, and will it too; infomuch that the wickedest man living would be good and virtuous, if it might be had for a wish;

Nay,

Nay, even the Devil himself would be an Angel of light again. SERM.  
XXII.

Now that there is such an indelible character of goodness, and innate tendency towards it, imprinted upon the spirit of man; which though it may be defaced and obscured, yet can never be totally obliterated; such a portion of heavenly fire, which though it may be buried under a mighty heap of ashes, yet can never be wholly extinguished. This I say seems to be the sense of most of those divine epithets, given to the superior part of man by the Philosophers; though they took it only for a distinct quality. Among others they gave to the rational soul one was, that it was ἀπαθής without passion, and therefore not subject to transgress; which in all likelihood gave occasion to that mistake of the Stoicks apathy, which opinion was true, if-applied only to the purely spiritual part. And Plato says, this rational part of us, *like the top of Olympus, enjoys a perpetual serenity; and looks down upon the irrational part, beholding all the storms of it's passions and affections, like clouds, and winds, and thunder in the lower region.* And the learned Dr. Willis, in that excellent chapter, where he compares the soul of man with that of brutes, speaking to this very purpose hath these words; *non ita tamen accipi debet, quasi anima rationalis utpote immaterialis; proindeque, ἀπαθής habita a quolibet impulsu boni vel mali, succussa turbulentis cupiditatibus, aut conversationum affectibus obnoxia fuerit; hoc enim naturæ*

SERM. *turæ ejus incorporeæ, quin & dignitati, su-*  
 XXII. *perque aliis potentiis prærogativæ repugnat.*

Besides, the scripture seems to be very express in this; our Saviour says, *the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.* And this notion runs through the whole 7th of the Romans, where the *law of the mind* is supposed to be very good, even in those corrupt and unregenerate persons he is there describing; and opposes it to the *law of sin in their members.* And at the 16th verse, he supposes a man may do that that he would not, (i. e.) that in the committing of sin, the inferior man acts in plain contradiction to the purely spiritual part of him; and therefore it follows, *it is no more I that do it,* (i. e.) the purely spiritual part,) *but sin that dwells in me,* (i. e.) the vicious inclinations of the lower man. For *I know that in me dwelleth no good thing:* And he explains himself, (i. e.) *in my flesh.* So that he all along supposes a spiritual principle within us, pure in its sentiments, in the midst of all bodily pollutions; the mistaking of which, and imagining that St. Paul meant that of the whole man, which he applies only to one part of him, gave occasion to that damnable heresie of the Gnosticks, who fancied that a spiritual person was no more polluted by his sins, than gold is by being rolled in the dirt: And likewise to that fatal error so near of kin to it, of our dissenting brethren; who imagine St. Paul speaks here in the person of a regenerate man; which




which I shall have occasion to speak of before I have done with this subject.

SERM.  
XXII.

II. But 2dly, as this is in itself pure, so the lower man composed of the body and sensitive soul, is the immediate seat of all our corruption, and is totally polluted and defiled in all its faculties; there is not by nature one regular motion in our whole frame; and all the inclinations and tendencies of it are so stubborn and inflexible to good, and under so little command, that without the motions and concurrence of God's preventing grace, we are not able so much as to think one good thought; much less to put any good purpose in execution: And now, because the nature of the pure mind is such, that it can never be brought to approve those corrupt and wicked appetites and inclinations; therefore, there is perpetual war and eternal contradiction between them. There can never be any league or truce, they are implacable enemies; and there is such innate inveteracy between them, that they can never come to any terms of composition; and nothing can put an end to the strife, but the absolute intire conquest of one or the other.

Here is the true cause and ground of that civil war within us; this spark of divinity which lay buried under the ruins of the fall, is first blown up by the same spirit that breathed into us the breath of life; then are all endeavours used to stifle and suppress, and if it were possible, utterly to extinguish it. As the spirit prevails,

SERM. XXII.  prevails, so for a while, the resistance of the inferior man is stronger; its appetites and passions oppose it with their utmost violence; and when they begin to fail and give ground, then the powers of hell are alarmed, and the wiles of the Devil are lent for succours; and then the mind doth not wrestle only *against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and against the rulers of darkness*: However, if it do persist, the grace of God is sufficient for it, and a sure and certain victory attends it in the end.

However, such is the corruption of the lower man, that it makes a strong resistance, and loses it's ground but by inches; sometimes it gains upon the mind, and then is beaten back again; but never ceases to oppose and contradict all its sentiments and resolutions: And these two contradictory principles within us was what the Heathens were very sensible of, and bewailed even in the most obdurate state of impiety; and when they were about the greatest villanies, they had a sense of the guilt, and found something within which dissuaded them from it, but was always overpowered. Medea, in the tragedy, ready to murder her young brother, and cut him into shreds says, I am sensible of the villany I am about to commit, *θυμὸς δὲ κρίσσω τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων*, but my passion overcomes my will. And Laius being dissuaded from his cruel purpose of making away his son, answers, I am-already sensible of all

all you say, it is all right, γνώμων δ' ἔχοντα μὴ φύσις ἐιζήτηται, yet nature hurries me on contrary to the sense of my own mind : And Ovid gives a short description of this in that well known saying of his, *vid. o meliora probrisque deteriora sequor.* And says Seneca, complaining of this contradiction within him, *quid est quod nos aliò tendentes, aliò trahit? Quid colluctatur cum animo nostro? Fluctuamus inter varia consilia:* And therefore well might another say with indignation, *odi artus, fragilemque hunc corporis usum, desertorem animi.* I loath these members, this feeble body of mine runegado from the soul.

But St. Paul gives a much more lively description of this opposition, and wherein the corruption of our nature consists; for speaking of a person yet in his sins, *I delight*, says he, *in the law of God after the inward man; but there is another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members:* And again, *He finds a law, that when he would do good evil is present with him:* And again, *I know that in me, (i. e.) in my flesh dwelleth no good thing, (i. e.) in the lower man, as it is opposed to the purely spiritual part of us; which till it is stifled, and utterly put to silence, never fails to contradict all the motions of concupiscence in the body and sensitive soul; and to dissuade us from giving way to all their sinful desires and affections.*

The

SERM.

XXII.

The experience of every man's own conscience, who looks into himself, will give him a lively notion of this warfare; he finds two contradictory principles within him, drawing him two different ways at the same time; he finds himself often distracted with contrary resolutions; he feels warm disputes within him, arguments offered on both sides, and urged on both sides, with potent and prevailing motives; this minute he is bold, and fixt, and determined to take the council of the spirit; the next perhaps he is shaken, and staggered, and bends quite another way. And while we are deliberating we are carried down the stream of our fleshly desires, at the same time that we are listening to the dictates of the mind; and plunged into sin with the applauses of them in our mouth: So that the lower man often drags the spirit with it, to wallow in the mire of those sins, which it can never justify or approve. When the relish of the sin is over, then the spirit chides, and upbraids it with the guilt and the folly of the sin; this is remorse. Then the mind prevails to put the whole man again into a posture of defence, and he is prepared for another tryal; and this is repeated, till by frequent relapses, the power and influence of the mind, over the inferior faculties, is much impaired. At last they grow rampant and ungovernable; they run into open rebellion; cast off its yoke; disown its power; bind it hand and foot in chains, till, as the scripture expresses it, *it is captivated to the law*

of

*of sin:* Then they take their swing without SERM. controul; and then the man is spiritually dead; XXII. because the condition of the mind is then so weak and feeble, that nothing less than a miraculous degree of grace can restore it to a mastery and dominion over the lower man.

But on the contrary, if at any time during this engagement, (though it be when the mind is near dethroned) being roused by any potent motive, or quickened and encouraged by the secret operation of the spirit of God working with our spirit, it lays in its claim; asserts its right of dominion; then it brings over first the weaker party; by degrees it gains strength enough to grapple with the strongest appetites; it recovers its birth-right, sits in the throne and governs the rebellious passions with a rod of iron; revenging itself upon them with mortifications and self-denials; and upon all occasions punishing them with severities according to their deserts; and then the man is in a happy and regenerate state.

Herein therefore, lies our disease and our misery, that the desires and inclinations of the lower soul and body are, by nature, so much stronger than the purely spiritual part of us: But the grace of God helps this infirmity of ours, and conveys secret assistance to the mind, in proportion to the degrees and violence of our corruption; which if it makes use of, it will gather strength every day; but if it fails to exert itself according to that power that is afforded, it will lose ground continually; the  
grace

SERM.

XXII.

grace of God will be withdrawn from it by degrees; till it is left at last in a pure state of nature, unable to overpower the least tendency in us to sin.

III. I shall not here stay to shew how this opposition of two contrary principles within us, is a plain and evident proof of the immateriality of the soul; nor how far this notion may be improved, to give a clear solution of most of those difficulties, both in the theory and practice of religion, which have run men into so many perplexities; which have been canvassed with so much heat and uncharitableness on all sides; and have been the grounds of many objections made against the christian religion, by men who are glad of any pretence to be debauched; and since they are resolved to be so, do catch at any thing that makes for the present ease and quiet of their consciences; such as the necessity of a supernatural assistance; the justice of eternal torments; the nature and propagation of original sin; the essential difference between moral good, and evil; together with the natural necessity of misery to the wicked in another world: Which are plain consequences from this text; but I leave these things for another place, and shall now only mention two of the most practical inferences from this text. And accordingly,

1st. We may, from what hath been said, observe what a fatal error those people live in, who mistake this meer state of nature for a state of grace; and make use of this very text  
to

to support the vilest and most dangerous sort of hypocrisy. It is said plainly, say they, *that we cannot do the things that we would:* SERM.  
XXII.

But the words in the original are *ὅνα μὴ ἂν θέλητε, ταῦτα ποιεῖτε*, So that ye do not the things that ye would. So that the plain sense of the text is this; the purely spiritual part of us, stirred up by the grace of God, disapproves and opposes the committal of sin; but the appetites of the body, and evil inclinations of the sensitive soul, make a strong opposition; and this is the reason why so many persons act clear contrary to the judgment of their minds, and the suggestions of the holy spirit of God, (i. e.) in short the reason why so many sins are committed, though they know better, and have an inclination to virtue, is, because that in opposition to the mind, they suffer themselves to be carried away with the violent inclinations of the lower man: this is the literal sense of the text. And now therefore, what will become of all those who have comforted themselves with this notion amidst their habitual wilful sins, and built all their hopes of mercy upon this airy foundation; nothing but a meer mistake in the translation? O but say they, though this saying of St. Paul will not bear that meaning, yet he speaks it plainly in another place, in the 7th of the Romans, *The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that do I.* But they should consider that these two are parallel places, and therefore must have the same meaning; especially

SERM. cially being spoke by the same person. If he  
 XXII. hath no such meaning here, that a regenerate  
 person may be guilty of wilful sins, they  
 may well presume that he can have no such  
 meaning in the other.

And indeed this text naturally leads us into the true meaning of that whole chapter. The whole substance of his argument in that chapter is built upon what he says expressly here; that there are two very different parts of our make, the pure mind, and the fleshly part of us, which includes all the appetites of the body, and sinful passions of the inferior soul. This spirit of ours, by the motions of God's grace, approves what is good, and hath a will to it; but the less noble part of us is polluted in all its faculties, and inclines quite the contrary way; and from hence he infers his conclusion undeniably, since I or any man else that commits a sin, hath something within him that at the same time disapproves it, and tries to dissuade him from it; this is a fair proof that the laws of God are holy, and just, and true.

So that we see these are some of those places in St. Paul's epistles, which St. Peter observes, *some that were unlearned and unstable should rest to their own destruction*; which is so remarkable of our age, that vast numbers of christians, whole societies, and professions of them are zealous asserters of this false and groundless interpretation; though as a learned  
 made



man observes in his comment, these texts were understood in the right sense, by all the orthodox party, for the first three hundred years of christianity. SERM. XXII.

We are so sensible of our own frailty, that God knows how little reason we have to make the conditions of salvation harder than they really are; and did we not see plainly that this is a broken reed, we should be as ready to catch at it as they: But we see plainly how it is contrary, not only to St. Paul's design in these places, but against common sense and reason, to think that the abhorrence of a sin, and reluctance of the mind, which is the great aggravation of sin, should be the excuse for it; it is this very thing that makes it a sin; and this present sense of the mind, and judgment of their consciences, will one day render them liable to the judgment of God and eternal damnation.


A strange reason this for people to give, why they may live in any sin, because they have a temptation to it; if there were no temptation to sins of lust and covetousness; of intemperance, of cheating, and dishonesty, and spiritual pride; they would be very chaste, and liberal, and temperate, and just, and humble. But it is a dangerous state of soul when people are holy without being virtuous: For sure I am, our christianity requires them both; and it is then people become truly sanctified and regenerate, when they are able to abstain from the evil they would not, and have it in their

SERM. power to do the good that they would; when  
 XXII. they have brought the flesh so much in sub-  
 jection to the mind, that they can glorify God  
 in their body, as well as in their spirit.

This reluctance of the mind, as you have already seen, is no more than what the Heathens found in themselves at the committal of the greatest and most unnatural villainies; it was no excuse for them, and shall it be an excuse for christians, who have greater assistance of grace?

They must own at best, these texts are not very clear for them; but I will give them plain texts against them, Rom. viii. 13. *If ye live after the flesh ye shall dye; but if through the spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live:* And that they may have no opinion at all left of the goodness of their state, from that mighty abhorrence they find in themselves of those sins they are guilty of, let them consider that St. Paul says, *that though they may be delighted with the law of God in the inner man; at the very same time, the motions of sins may work in their members, to bring forth fruit unto death.*

2. Another thing we may observe from these words is, the true worth and value of mortifications, and the absolute necessity of habitual self-denials: We have seen how the case is with us, the parts of our frame are become a contradiction to one another; and our misery is, that the inclinations and appetites  
 of

of the lower man have now the upper hand; SERM.  
*the flesh lusteth against the spirit*, and opposes XXII.  
all it's motions with such force and violence,   
that it bears down before it all the suggestions  
of the spirit; which makes so weak and fee-  
ble a resistance, that we rarely do the good  
things that we would; we are hurried into sin  
with impetuous violence, contrary to the sense  
of our minds, and the judgment of our con-  
sciences; which condition of infirmity is very  
well expressed by that similitude of Socrates,  
who calls the purely rational part of us the  
*rider*; and the lower part of us, containing our  
passions and appetites, *the Horse*; which being  
resty, and wild, and unmanaged; frets, and  
foams, and plunges, and runs away with it's  
rider into bogs and precipices.

Now there is no way of taming this beastly  
part of us, and bringing it to some temper and  
obedience to the mind, but by crossing and  
contradicting all it's motions; abating the fury  
of it's passions and appetites, by denying it  
those objects that gratify and nourish them;  
if we continue to do this, this horse of ours  
will become tame and gentle; it will keep the  
road, and carry us on our journey to heaven  
with courage.

This is the proper business of our lives, to  
break the force and violence of these irregular  
inclinations, by self denials, and mortifica-  
tions, and severities; these are the sure and  
effectual means of virtue and holiness, and no  
good degree of these is to be obtained without

SERM.  
XXII.

them. And this is the reason why the stile of the new testament is so full of expressions to this purpose ; and that such an air of sadness and melancholy runs through the whole tenor of the Gospel ; because crosses, and pain, and trouble, do all of them break and suppress the vicious inclinations of the lower man ; they quicken the mind, and make it exert all it's strength and force : Whereas riches, and plenty, and quiet, *make provision for the flesh, to fulfil all the lusts thereof.* And this is the reason why our Saviour says, it is so *hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven ;* because there are constant supplies of all objects, which gratify their fleshly desires ; inso-much that it is next to a natural impossibility for those who live in softness, and ease, and pleasure, ever to gain an entire conquest over the lower man.

And therefore, all those who live in plenty and ease would do well to consider, that since the providence of God hath exempted them from necessary want, and crosses, and afflictions ; how necessary it is for them to supply the absence of them with voluntary self denials and severities upon themselves, one way or other ; for it is most true that, *through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

How much self-denials and mortifications are out of request, and undervalued by those very persons, who fancy the grace of the Gospel will dispense with the sins they commit  
with

with great reluctance, I need not mention; because though they are always uneasy at hearing the truth, yet they are never convinced. Fasting from sin, say they, is the true fast; and denying our lusts, the best self-denial: Yes, if they could be sure of denying their sin, without ever denying themselves that which is no sin. But of all people living shall they have this in their mouths, who yield to their lusts in hopes of mercy, because they are too violent to be overcome; and at the same time despise this only effectual means of conquering them. Catch them in such a contradiction as this is, in buying and selling if you can.

But I am more concerned to take notice of the great neglect of these things, among those of our own communion. It is hard to tax the lightness of the age, after any manner, without the imputation of ill nature and founness. But if we must not upbraid people with their vices, yet I hope we may bewail the danger of their condition; since it is almost impossible to reconcile all the modes of vanity, and usual gaiety of the world to christianity. That vain, and costly, and affected variety of dress, shews plainly that the mind is sunk in flesh; and that notwithstanding some little appearance of a fashionable piety, yet, there is a manifest want of the very life and substance of religion. *They that are after the flesh*, says St. Paul, *do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit*: Which

SERM. of these two is their case, they must be blind  
 XXII. that cannot see; it is a sure way of judging  
 whether or no they *give way to those fleshly lusts  
 that war against the soul*: And therefore, since  
 they thus low to the flesh, they must expect  
 of the flesh to reap corruption.

Our Saviour says, *if any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me*. Let him not wait for afflictions, and troubles, and crosses; but take it up of his own accord, by many instances of self-denial, and the frequent exercises of severities upon himself. And St. Paul tells us, he *fought not as one that beat the air*; because *he kept his body under and brought it into subjection*; and indeed all religion is but hypocrisy without it. So that we see what is generally mistaken for a degree of perfection in religion, is for the most part a thing of indispensable obligation. And from hence we may see the true value even of the greatest voluntary severities, and retirements, and abnegations of the world; because they effect the mastery of themselves in a little time, and as it were all at once; which perhaps would not otherwise be compassed in the course of many years: Though it must be confessed, they commonly have this ill effect, that they puff men up with an opinion of themselves; so that they become haughty, and troublesome, and arrogant. I do not say that these extraordinary degrees are matter of duty; but as much of them is necessary as is required to vanquish these bodies of  
 OURS,

ours, and bring them into absolute subjection: SERM.  
And still the more we are mortified to our- XXII.  
selves and the world, the clearer and more af-  
fecting sense we shall have of virtue and holi-  
ness; and the greater advances we shall make  
towards heaven and happiness.

Let us therefore set ourselves to the work of renewing our nature, and purging it from all this dross and corruption; let us offer up our prayers to almighty God for daily supplies of grace, that *the spirit of God may work together with our spirit*, that it may obtain an intire victory over the lower man; and let us omit no means of doing this; let us in this contest give the mind fair play; let us hearken to its dictates, and cherish all its motions; let us give it all the helps we can; assist and encourage it, by cutting off all supplies of the lower man; and let us maintain the ground it gets by constant perseverance, till by degrees our bodies become a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.

I must confess there is a great deal of trouble and uneasiness in the work; and it will cost many a sore conflict before it comes to this; and little do those people know, who never tryed heartily, what a difficult thing it is to be intirely and sincerely good; all the means we can use is little enough. Let us therefore be content to be restless and uneasy for a while; and then rest, eternal rest, will follow. This little pain will be our security from eternal torments,

SERM. ments, and will purchase for us an exceeding  
XXII. weight of glory.

~ O! it will be a most glorious change, even in this life, when all the appetites and passions of the lower man, by a holy violence and course of rigorous and voluntary severities, are so tamed and intirely subdued that they shall wait the motions of the mind; when it governs them with absolute power, says to one go, and it goes; to another come, and it comes; and can say to the proudest passion, *hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther.*

Then shall be effected the most wonderfull change in nature; these two combatants shall lay down their animosities, and kiss and embrace each other; these enemies, from the most inveterate enmity, and implacable malice, shall become the most intimate, dearest friends; they will live together here in a more than conjugal affection; till they depart hence in peace, and their next joyful meeting shall be at the resurrection of the just; never to part again, and yet never to be weary of one another; never to fall out or disagree: There will not be the least jarr nor suspision of one another left; but they shall live in everlasting joy, and peace, and love.

This flesh, *in which now there dwelleth no good thing*, shall then have nothing in it that is bad; that which is now so full of stubbornness and contradiction, shall then close with the pure mind in all it's motions; and what is now its load, and its prison, shall then be its ornament,



ment, and it shall delight in the union; for there shall be no perfection in the soul but shall have a correspondent beauty in the body; and it shall be more perfect and glorious than when it first came out of the hands of God. SERM.  
XXII.

Call up therefore all the powers of your minds, and set to the work. The weakest person that hears me hath this image of God, this spark of heaven within him; and it is not worldly wisdom, but the divine grace that must be your assistance: Make it therefore your business to trim this lamp, and supply it with oil, that it may burn clear at the appearing of the lamb. And I pray God *your body, and soul, and spirit may be preserved unblameable, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*: To whom with the Father and the holy Ghost, the holy ever blessed and glorious Trinity, be all honour, and glory, and praise, and thanksgiving, adoration and worship, now and to all eternity. Amen.

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# S E R M O N XXIII.

The duty of plucking out the eye explained.

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M A R K ix. 47, 48.

*And if thine eye offend thee pluck it out: It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.*

SERM.  
XXIII.

**T**H E S E words of our Saviour are re-cited, as spoke upon two occasions: In the 5th of St. Matthew they are an application to what he speaks concerning the purity and chastity of the mind, which is equally necessary with that of the body. Here, and elsewhere, they follow our Saviour's discourse, concerning giving offence to weaker christians, and discouraging any beginnings of christianity in others, out of spiritual pride and fondness for our own opinions. In one place is signified,

our

our being drawn into sin ourselves; in the SER. M.  
other, the being the occasion of sin to others. XXIII.

Now whether the text is an answer to any objection expressly made, as some think; or whether they were spoke to obviate the thoughts of mens minds, upon hearing of precepts which had so much appearance of difficulty, is much the same thing; it is plain they suppose precepts he had been giving of the chastity of the very eye, and the sincerity and humility of the mind, by cherishing all degrees of religion and piety in others, in contradiction to their own opinions and worldly interests, might look like a heavy yoke, and were hard sayings, and degrees of virtue too refined for flesh and blood. If people must not transgress with a look themselves, nor be any way the occasion of sin to others, though by doing what is innocent and lawful in itself; who then can be saved?

But in the words of my text he lets them know, that these degrees of virtue are both necessary and possible; and therefore, that they are difficult is no objection; for what ought not men to do to gain heaven, and avoid the everlasting torments of Hell? If men will endeavour as much for the preservation of their souls, as they ordinarily do for the health of their bodies, they will surely gain their point, and overcome the strongest temptations: If thy hand or foot offend thee cut it off; and if thine eye offend thee pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of  
God

SERM. God maimed, or with one eye; than having  
 XXIII. two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

The word to offend or scandalize is metaphorical, and taken from walking: So that it signifies any thing such as a stone, or block in our way, which may make us trip or stumble; from thence it is used to express any thing which may let or hinder us in our christian course, and make us stumble or fall into sin; and therefore if our eye offend us, or be any occasion of sin, if all other ways fail; we are bid to pluck it out.

As to that expression of entering into the kingdom of God with one eye; the meaning is, that it is better for us to want one of our eyes while we are in this world, and go to heaven at last; than to keep both our eyes here, and by that means be cast into hell hereafter. A form of speaking very agreeable to what we find in other places; as where our Saviour says, that the publicans and Harlots enter into the kingdom of Heaven before them; (i. e.) those who had been publicans and harlots.

Nothing is less intended here, than that people should use any violence to their bodies, by wounding or maiming themselves any way, and disabling it for any the actions of life; this is contrary to the laws of God and nature; we are never to do any thing for religion and virtue that is unnatural or unreasonable. But the whole is a figurative way of speaking; by our eyes, is signified any thing that is near and dear

dear to us; and by plucking them out is meant, the removing them from us, and denying the gratification of any inclination of the body, or desire of the mind which betrays us into sin. The force of the argument is in this; it is highly prudent and advisable to quit some present pleasure or advantage, though with great uneasiness and reluctance, than lose a greater good hereafter, and undergo a greater evil; it is a piece of prudence that common sense suggests to every one; it is no other than what men practise every day in the concerns of life: And nothing is more usual than for people to have their flesh fear'd, and their limbs cut off to preserve the rest of their body; they undergo a present pain, though very acute and violent, for future health and ease. This is what he adviseth men to in religion; and though they feel much uneasiness and hardship, in denying their lusts and vicious inclinations; and find the attainment of virtue and holiness ever so difficult; yet, let them act by the same rules and principles of prudence in this, that they do in other things; and let the expectation of those advantages they shall procure by it hereafter, prevail on them to undergo cheerfully the hardships and difficulties; and let the prospect of hell flames on the other hand, make them forego those sinful pleasures which will surely bring them to that miserable end.

SERM.  
XXIII.

So that here we have in these words,  
1st, The hardship and difficulties of virtue  
and holiness on one side, laid against the joys  
of heaven on the other. And,  
2dly, The pleasures of sin in this life compared, with the torments of hell hereafter.

And therefore, to carry on this motive of our Saviour's, and render it of as great efficacy as we can; let us in each of these instances consider, the great disproportion between the loss there is on one hand, and the gain on the other.

I. As to the first then; the great disproportion between the difficulties of virtue and holiness, and the advantages obtained by them will appear, if we consider these three things.

I. That since it is even possible to secure our innocency and to be virtuous and holy; let the hardships and difficulties be what they will, yet they are nothing to what is gained by them. If it had been utterly impossible for us to attain that virtue and holiness, which is necessary to qualify us for heaven and happiness, then all our reasonable wishes had been that God would only put it in our power; nay, we had desired no more in order to obtain heaven; and what ever the difficulties were, we should appear willing to undergo them. What is it we should not be willing to do in such a case, in order to procure the everlasting joys of a future state? Now this very wish we have obtained; it is in our power; and by the unspeakable goodness of God we are left

left in the hand of our council; life and death is before us, we have a perfect freedom of choosing either one or the other; and the worst we can imagine is what our Saviour supposes here, that we voluntarily undergo some pain and uneasiness for the prevention of a Sin. SERM. XXIII.

And therefore, were we all literally to cut off our hands and feet, and that God required we should actually pluck out our eyes to preserve our innocence, yet this would be but a small and easy condition for obtaining those unspeakable joys of another life. Men will do all this for a little health, and suffer the torture of cutting off their limbs only to prolong their life, and support a sinking carcass a few years longer in this world: They will have one limb cut off after another, and dye by piecemeal rather than go off all at once. What is more usual than for people to undergo the severest methods of cure, and endure the searing, the cutting, and burning of their flesh, in order to their health and easy living a while longer here.

And if men will do all this for a little health, and to continue perhaps a crazy sickly carcass in life, only a few days longer; then how much rather should they undergo this, to preserve that health and innocence of soul, which places them in a condition of entering into the kingdom of God, where there is fullness of joy, and unconceivable pleasures for evermore; nay, if we were to cut off a limb (if it were possible) every day, and pluck out an

VOL. II. M eye;

SERM. eye; yet, this would bear no proportion to that  
 XXIII. weight of glory which shall be revealed in us.

Now though this be not required from us in any general precept, and that no one may exercise such unnatural violence upon himself; yet (as it is with the health of the body) men may fall into such circumstances, that there is no preserving their souls in virtue and innocence, without yielding their members to be cut off, and their very eyes to be pluckt out, if the enemies of religion and virtue should make use of these methods of cruelty. If we cannot keep them without a sin, without transgressing some of the commands of God, or denying the faith of Christ; we must yield them up to the tormentors: All natural affection must cease, even to the members of our own body; and we must cast them from us with indignation, for the effects of willful and deliberate guilt upon the soul are as real, and of as fatal a consequence, as that of a spreading gangrene in the body, and will as surely prove mortal in the end; and when once it comes to this fatal case, there is no other method of cure.

So that then the question is often literally, as our Saviour puts it; whether it be not better to cut off their hands and feet, and pluck out their eyes, or being maimed here, or suffering a painful and violent death to enter into the kingdom of God; than by preserving their life or limbs to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched?



ed? And accordingly we find many who have been actually reduced to this extremity whose lot, or rather whose great glory and happiness it was, to be thought worthy to suffer for the truth, have made the better choice; to whom this precept of our Saviour was practicable in it's strictest sense. Who having their eyes upon that recompence of reward, in the midst of racks and tortures, have rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. If it should come to this with us, yet it is no more than what hath been done before us, by those who were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, slain with the sword, were destitute, afflicted, tormented. The histories of the primitive Church, abound with examples of multitudes who underwent great variety of torments for the faith of Christ, and the preservation of a good conscience; and we need not look far back for large catalogues of martyrs who endured cutting, and racking, and burning, and all that the malice of their enemies could inflict upon them, or the body of man could suffer; and all upon this principle, that it is better to enter into life maimed, than by sparing their life and limbs to run the hazard of eternal death.

II. The disproportion between the difficulty of virtue and holiness here, and the joys of heaven hereafter will appear, if we consider that the difficulty is not so great as we imagine; for the greatest difficulty in religion

SERM.  
XXIII.

(excepting the case of persecution only) is, the first curbing our vicious inclinations, and breaking the force of our evil habits: This indeed is difficult to flesh and blood, for many of those inclinations are now in one sense natural to us; we are shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath our mother conceived us. The evil tendencies of our nature, are part of ourselves, which is the reason why they are here exprest by cutting off a hand, or a foot, and plucking out an eye, and they are still more rivetted and confirmed by custom and habits, which are as a second nature to us; and therefore it cannot but be a matter of great difficulty; nay, it is so great, that the scriptures exprest it by that of a natural impossibility, as of the *Æthiopian* changing of his skin, and the *Leopard* his spots: And in truth it is so hard, that it is utterly impossible for us by meer natural strength to get over the first difficulty, it is too strong for all the power of human resolution; and therefore it is, that the supernatural assistance of God's preventing grace is afforded us. And though we have this, yet our own experience may tell us, what a mighty conflict there is between the flesh and the spirit, between the grace of God, and our own reason on the one hand, and the law of sin in our members on the other; when we attempt to oppose and contradict the sinful appetites of our body, or vicious inclination of our mind, we meet with mighty opposition and reluctances; the temptation  
draws

draws us one way, the prospect of our loss and danger another; the temptation whispers nothing but delight and pleasure in one ear, our consciences, the loss of heaven, and the vengeance of hell in the other; so that what between doubting and wavering, yielding and recoiling again, the mind is in perplexity and distraction, and can hardly come to a fixed purpose and resolution.

We must confess this is hard; and so great a difficulty that few make their way through it. The curbing or stifling a natural inclination, or breaking off a sinful custom, either of injustice or envy, of intemperance or unchastity, of pride or luxury, is in truth a cutting off a limb, or plucking out an eye; it is like the tearing of our flesh and parting with a rotten member; but how hard so ever it may be, even upon this supposition, that it is the greatest difficulty in the world, since it is but difficult and not impossible, it is better to undergo it than never enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Consider what strange difficulties men will undergo in prosecution of any worldly ends; how much pains they will be at to get a sum of money, or preferment: They will deny themselves most of the diversions and satisfactions of this life, their meat and drink, and sleep; they will impair their health, break off with their dearest friends, they will venture their limbs and life and all, and actually go through fire and water to gain their

SERM.  
XXIII.  
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SERM.  
XXIII.

point: How sedulous and careful they will be to mind an error in their carriage and deportment, and how restless and uneasy they make themselves to rectify a natural defect in the body, nay, almost to the quitting most of the enjoyments of this life; and it is with incredible trouble that some men attain to habits, either of body or mind, in order to their pleasure or profit.

Now there is not the twentieth part of this difficulty even in the first cutting off a sinful inclination, or a vitious habit; and indeed men take infinitely more pains for these little trifles, than they need do for heaven.

For as I said before, all the difficulty is in first cutting off our evil habits; when once that is over we are more easy, and the pain wears off by degrees: And the reason why this appears much harder than it is in reality, is, because men are a great while about it, and do not enter upon it with that firmness and constancy of mind, that the matter requires. As the comparison here in my text, imports an evil inclination or habit; must be cut off short all at once, and cast from us by a sudden force and violent resolution; and then as it is in the cutting off our limbs, the extremity of pain is short, and the wound heals by degrees, till at length we have perfect ease. And where men's minds are as intent upon heaven, as they are upon the objects of this world, they actually take this course, and make nothing of the trouble and anguish, which  
never

never lasts long, if after this they persist and suffer not themselves to be tainted any more. SERM. XXIII.

But when men, as they generally do, attempt this irresolutely and faintly, and are long about it, and but half resolv'd, sometimes intent upon it, and at other times wavering and dubious; then they renew the pain and the difficulty, they are ever in the midst of the greatest hardship and extremity; then it is like trying to cut off the same limb every day, the wound is always fresh, and the pain continues exquisite. This makes the way to Heaven appear so narrow, and the gate so strait; because men are always pressing backwards and forwards, only stepping out and into it perpetually, and make little farther progress. Whereas if they would do this, all the business of religion would become pleasant and easy, and vice would be irksome and loathsome to us: So that in truth, the difficulty is not worth a naming in comparison of the advantage it brings us. Let us but secure a firm fixed resolution in our minds, and the body will suffer any thing: *Projice* (says Seneca) *quæcunque cor tuum laniant, quæ si aliter extrahi nequirent, cor ipsum cum illis evellendum est.* Cast away from you with violence whatsoever disorders your heart, and if you have no other way to be rid of it, tear out heart and all. It was a brave expression of the generous resolution of a heathen, and all he proposed by it was no

SERM. more than the present ease of a man's mind.  
 XXIII. But how much doth this saying of our Savi-  
 our's exceed him, who, when he bids us pluck  
 out our eye, adds the reason; because it is  
 better to want our eyes here, and enter into  
 the kingdom of God hereafter, than by pre-  
 serving both our eyes to be cast into hell fire.

III. The disproportion will appear greater  
 yet, if we consider, that the difficulties of vir-  
 tue and holiness are but short; If they were  
 ever so great, the enjoyment will infinitely  
 exceed the difficulty of the purchase. As I  
 have shewn, the trouble and uneasiness is over  
 with the first violence of our vicious habits;  
 but if it were continued all our lives long, yet,  
 this could bear no proportion to that felicity  
 which shall never have an end. When a  
 few days are told here, all the hurry of our life  
 is over; *so soon passeth it away and we are gone:*  
*And yet this light affliction which can last but*  
*for a moment, works for us a more exceeding*  
*and eternal weight of glory.*

By the kingdom of God here is meant,  
 that everlasting state of bliss, which will be  
 the sure reward of our virtue and holiness in  
 this life; and we learn from the text, that our  
 eternal well-being depends upon this short  
 space; and since it doth so, whatever resist-  
 ance or opposition temptations give us, this  
 consideration should be always present to our  
 minds: How much better it is to undergo  
 trouble and uneasiness, than lose that crown  
 of glory which fadeth not away; a state of  
 joy

joy and felicity, which is uncorruptible un-SERM. changeable, and everlasting in the heavens; a XXIII. state which we know nothing of, as it is in itself; and for that very reason must be exceedingly happy, because we can conceive nothing of it's real nature now. Whatever our trouble is, *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

And this leads me to the second comparifon,

II. Between the pleasures of fin in this life, and the torments of hell hereafter; and the great disproportion between these will appear, if we consider these two things.

I. How little real fatisfaction there is, in all the enjoyments of this world: He that made it his business to find out the utmost there was in them, came to the result at last, that they were *vanity and vexation of spirit*. He calls it all *folly and madness*, as being unworthy of rational creatures, and as if all those were out of their wits who pursue them with so much eagerness: Many of them are such as nature blushes at, and is ashamed to own; most of them are nothing but a meer outside, and make us happy only in the opinion of others; when at the same time they are so far from giving us real enjoyment, that perhaps they are a load and burthen to ourselves: And did not the custom of the world raise these unnecessary things into some esteem; and that people could be rid of them without

SER M. out the remarks and reflections of others, they  
 XXIII. would chuse to be without them, and throw  
 them away as troublesome and uneasy trifles.

All the pleasure this world affords, beyond the necessary supplies and conveniencies of nature, is so inconsiderable that it is hardly mist; and nothing makes them agreeable to us but the being used to them; nothing but custom and opinion renders many of them tolerable: And if we consider the matter justly, there is no such thing as real and positive happiness in this world; since most of the enjoyments in it are only the supplying the defects of nature, and ridding it from uneasiness at the present. We eat only to cure the gnawings of an empty stomach; we drink to quench the irksom violence of thirst; we clothe ourselves to prevent the pain of cold and nakedness; and thus it is in most other instances: All that we do is not to make us happy, but to prevent a little present misery and uneasiness; when we are at the height of all worldly enjoyments: even a pain in our finger shall make them all vanish like a dream, and rob us of all gust and relish of them; and though there were no interruption from any pain in the body, yet, even in the most hardened sinners, there is some remorse of conscience always attending the committal of sin, which palls the enjoyment: Nor are all the pleasures of this life, in their greatest purity, comparable to the secret complacence and the real positive satisfaction of mind, which follows



follows the cutting off a sin, and the conquest of a strong temptation; so little are they worth buying at the rate of our souls, and the being cast into hell fire. SERM.  
XXIII.

Alas! how low and mean, and wretched are all those things that are called enjoyments in this world! The gratifying mens brutish appetites, a little fine cloaths and equipage, a few meats and drinks extraordinary; the privilege to sit, or go before other people; a few glittering titles, and to be called by some other name besides their own; to have their house a little larger than others, and many useless things about them to look at every day; and above all to have a considerable sum of money to leave behind them when they dye. These are the things which go by the name of pleasure and enjoyment, which people are as fond of as they are of their eyes; daily purchase at the price of their souls, and will rather be cast into hell fire than part with them. This is such a degree of folly and madness as men will never be thoroughly sensible of, till they come to another world; it is as if one should drink a glass of deadly poison, only that they might taste the sweet of it while it is going down: But then they will feel how little it profits a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul, and how much better it is to pluck out the eye that offended them, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

II. If we should suppose the sinful pleasures of this life, to be as great as the most corrupt and

SERM.  
XXIII.

and defiled imagination can represent them, yet they will last but for a short time; the longest is but for the life of the man, and then *this world passeth away, and the lust thereof, and all that is in it; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life* disappears; then the scene changes, and they are succeeded by an eternity of woe and misery; a sure and certain change! and then the greater their pleasure was before, the more they *enjoyed of their good things in this life*, the more unsupportable will be that state of misery, which shall never have an end.

Now, the eternity of those torments is the great aggravation, here mentioned, of that woe, which shall be the punishment of sin; and of the folly of making such an exchange, by enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, to be cast into hell, where their *worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched*.

This was a received form of speaking among the Jews; who as the son of Syrach says, vii. 17. were generally of an opinion, that the vengeance prepared for the ungodly consisted in fire, and worms. The most probable account how it came to be so was this: Among the Jews, the utmost severity they executed upon malefactors for any grievous offence was, not to suffer them to be buried after execution; and the place they cast their dead bodies into, was the valley of Hinnom, a little distance from Jerusalem, where they lay till their flesh was eaten up of worms, and then their  
bones

bones were burnt to ashes in a fire kept always there for that purpose; from which fire, together with that supposed to be in the same valley, where the idolatrous Jews burnt human sacrifices to their idols, the extreme punishment of wicked men in another world was usually signified amongst them, by that of fire and worms; and the being cast into a place of torment hereafter, was signified by the being cast into Gehenna, (i. e.) the valley of Hinnom. SERM. XXIII.

Now from hence the words are transferred by our Saviour, to signify the torments of the damned. And

1st, He says their worm shall never dye; which expression hath been used to signify the torments of the mind, as that of fire expresses the punishment of the body; and it aptly represents to us that everlasting remorse of conscience, which shall be the consequence of guilt in another world; shame and remorse and anguish of mind, are the inseparable companions of guilt, and people never fail to find it while they are young sinners, till by habits of sinning it becomes so familiar to them, that in time they wear off all sense of it, and by this means the worm of conscience dies in this world; yet it shall be revived again in the other, where we are told it shall never dye.

How exquisite a punishment this will be, is impossible to conceive, till men come to know what that kingdom of heaven is which they have

SERM. have lost, and at how great a distance their  
 XXIII. sins have placed them from God, whose pre-  
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 fence alone can make us infinitely happy, and  
 preserve us from being miserable; yet there  
 are two things which may help us to some  
 notion of it.

I. One is, that compunction of mind, and anguish of heart, which every sincere penitent feels for his past sins; that sorrow which (as the Apostle speaks) *works a repentance never to be repented of*. What this is, those alone can be sensible of who have felt it; in some it is so great that it leaves a lasting impression on their minds, it dwells upon their spirits; so that they can scarce be said to enjoy any thing in this world: In the whole course of their lives they cannot lift up their eyes to heaven with cheerfulness; and their greatest hopes have a mixture of despondency. But above all the most pungent sense of guilt is that which follows the committal of a sin, after the strength of the temptation was broke, and after a long confirmed habit of the contrary virtue: This renews the wounds of conscience, it makes them bleed afresh, and all before seemed but a smarting, in comparison of that raging pain in such a person's mind; he hath now many additional degrees of folly to upbraid himself with; he is now under the displeasure of God, who was once in his favour: The bitterness of his soul is such, that his flesh trembles for fear of God, and he is afraid of his judgments.

Now

Now if the anguish of a truly penitent heart be thus great, while men are in this world, and have it in their power to repent; then what must it be hereafter, when there is no room left for repentance. SERM.  
XXIII.

II. Another thing, which may help us to conceive what that worm of conscience shall be hereafter, is the fearful condition of persons in despair. I am not inclined indeed to think, that all those persons do indeed despair, who affirm it; nor that the condition of those is desperate who obstinately decline all comfort, and can entertain little or no hope of the mercy of God. While their fears are all on their own side, and they do not abate of their endeavours to amend, others may reasonably conceive good hopes of them, and may justly have entertained a great charity for them, though they will have none for themselves.

Yet it is not unlikely, that even in this life, God may give over a perverse and obstinate sinner, to the malicious insinuations of the Devil, and the lashes of an evil conscience; and perhaps we are not without some terrible instances of such black despair in wicked men, especially near their death; when the grace of God is intirely withdrawn, the time of repentance past, and all degrees of hope entirely cut off, so that the wretch hath nothing left to reflect upon but his sins, and that eternal vengeance that expects him. When a dead and hardened conscience is thus awakened in the last extremity, it is visible how the terrors  
of

SERM. of the Lord are let loose upon him; he is then  
 XXIII. in the gall of bitterness, and this worm of con-  
 science torments him before his time, as if it  
 were in haste to devour him. He raves incessantly of the wrath and fury of God, of vengeance and damnation; he breathes out nothing but horrid execrations; and scarce names the name of God but to blaspheme.

Rage and madness are terms of peace and mildness to this, insomuch that he scares and confounds all about him; his very silence is full of horror, and his looks betray a legion of tormentors within. To express compassion would be to mock him; for there is no use of pity from men where there is no hopes of mercy from God.

I must confess all impenitent sinners at their death, have not this amazing sense of guilt, and the vengeance that belongs to it; the nature of their distemper, a sudden violence, and many accidental causes may prevent it; and where there is none of these, the consciences of some sinners are so stupid and benumbed that they continue insensible to the last, and go with a fullen silence, into the regions of darkness. But the gnawings of this worm will be more surprizing and never the less fierce and violent in another world; though wicked men feel it not at present; yet like those rotten carcases in the valley of Hinnom, they are engendering those worms that shall eat though their own bowels; and the fiercest sting of that worm will be the sad reflections

reflections upon their own madness and folly, who for want of bearing a little trouble and uneasiness in this world, quitted heaven, and lost the kingdom of God; and for those short momentary pitiful pleasures, which did not deserve the name of such; are now cast into hell fire. SERM.  
XXIII.

II. Another aggravation of that future state of misery is, that their fire is not quenched. This expression of an unquenchable fire, took it's first rise from a fire which consumed so intirely, as to leave no memory or remains of what was cast into it, as it is said, *Isai. xxxiv. 10.* Speaking of the destruction of Idumea: *He says it's fire shall not be quenched, night nor day, the smoak thereof shall go up for ever, from one generation to another it shall lye waste.* So Sodom and Gomorrah are said to be set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; (i. e.) a fire which consumed them, so as that they shall lie eternally waste: From hence it became the usual phrase, to express those torments of wicked men in another world, which shall never have an end. And thus it is used by our Saviour in his last sentence upon the wicked, *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,* and in the 20th of the *Rev.* It is called a lake, of fire wherein the wicked shall be tormented for ever and ever: And in this sense hell fire is said in the text not to be quenched.

SERM.

XXIII.



Now whether it be a real fire or no, is not at all material for us to determine; for if it be, and if the flames of hell are literally to be understood, then *who will be able to dwell with everlasting burnings?* And how dear will the sinful pleasures of this world be bought, at such a monstrous price. Men shrink at the thoughts of burning alive, and nature starts at the mention of it; and therefore it is strange that people should have such a mighty dread of fire here, and yet be so little moved with the burning for ever hereafter. Nothing can possibly be the reason of this, but because they do not believe it, or do not consider it. But whether men have any hearty persuasion of the truth of this or no, it is better to part with all the pleasures of this life, than run so great a hazard.

If it be not literally a fire, it is certainly called so for want of something on earth more dreadful, and of a pain more exquisite, whereby to represent it, so that this instead of lessening the terrour adds extremely to it. Whether it be one or the other, it is surely insupportable and eternal, and therefore as our Saviour says here, it is better, infinitely better, to part with all our dearest sins, and pluck out the very eye that offends us, and enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.

I should now proceed to make some observations and inferences from this text; but this I shall defer to the next opportunity.

S E R M O N.



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## S E R M O N XXIV.

The duty of plucking out the eye explained.

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M A R K ix. 47, 48.

*And if thine eye offend thee pluck it out: It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

I H A V E already spoke to these words, S E R M. XXIV. which whether they are an answer or not to any objection made, or designed to obviate one which might reasonably be expected, yet, they suppose the duties our Saviour had been discoursing of, to be of some difficulty and uneasiness. But though they are hard, yet he shews in these words that they are necessary and possible, if men will do as much for the innocence of their souls, as they ordinarily do for the health of their bodies.

SERM.  
XXIV.

And he teaches us here how much it concerns us to undergo some trouble and uneasiness, and quit some present pleasure or profit, in order to virtue and holiness. For it is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. So that here we have these two things,

1st, The hardship and difficulty of virtue on one side, laid against the joys of heaven on the other. And,

2dly, The pleasures of sin in this life, are compared with the torments of hell hereafter.

In each of these I carried on the comparison, and shewed the great disproportion between them, and consequently the folly of those who take up with the present pleasures, and decline the trouble and uneasiness of virtue. From thence I proceeded to consider, the two aggravations of those infernal punishments signified here, by that of their worm not dying, and their fire not being quenched.

And therefore, having already spoke to what was more expressly contained in the words, and more immediately intended by our Saviour who spoke them; because they seem to be of farther use and instruction to us all, I shall here make some of those observations and inferences, which follow easily from them.

I. The first thing I shall observe to you from the words is, the great condescension there is to the frail condition of humanity,  
even

even in the strictest and most severe precept of christianity; for by our Saviour's giving the instance of mortification and self denial, in cutting off only one of our hands, and plucking out but one of our eyes, he well signifies here, that in order to virtue, and the graces of the Gospel, it is not necessary that we quite extinguish all our natural inclinations and appetites, but that we moderate and restrain them within the due bounds of nature and religion. So that our business is not utterly to destroy, but to rectify them; and this seems to be the reason of that emphasis laid upon this expression, as it is in St. Math. *If thy right eye offend thee*, which is an usual form of speech, to express how dear and valuable a thing is to us, and it imports thus much, that though a sinful manner of gratifying our natural inclinations, should appear more agreeable and pleasant to us, than what our religion hath prescribed, yet we are to check and curb them, and give way to them no farther than is consistent with the law of God.

Were it indispensibly required from us, to cut off both our hands, and pluck out both our eyes, (i. e.) so to deface and abolish all the inclinations and appetites of nature, that there shall be no remains of them left, it were indeed a very hard saying, and who could bear it? This is utterly impossible to flesh and blood, for many of them are part of ourselves, and wholly to root them out, would be so far to

SERM. destroy our being; so that if this were the  
 XXIV. meaning, we might all ask who then could  
 be saved?

But the Gospel proposeth to us only, the rectifying all those tendencies of body or mind which follow our being; to curb and restrain them from those excesses, which they were not originally made for. So that as the Gospel is calculated for the truth and purity of reason, so it is for the first frame and disposition of nature; though it is from God, yet it is a religion for men; and at the same time it raises us to an imitation of the divine perfections, it doth it by condescension to the weakness, and infirmities of man.

It gives way to the innocent gratification of our natural appetites and inclinations, and there is room left for an innocent enjoyment of all the blessings of this Life. So that the ends both of nature and religion may be answered; and in cases even of the greatest extremity we are to consult our health and safety; *if they persecute us in one city, we may flee to another,* nor are we commanded not to be angry, but not to sin when we are so, and the state of marriage is not only permitted to avoid fornication, but commended and said to be honourable in all.

And therefore those libertines who give way to their lusts upon that principle, and argue the unreasonableness of christianity from this topick, as if it's precepts were a direct contradiction to nature, and therefore required what

was

was unreasonable and impossible ; they do it out of ignorance of the true nature of virtue, and temper of evangelical holiness ; which may be acquired without bereaving ourselves of all worldly satisfaction, and consists in moderating our bodily appetites, restraining the inclinations of our minds, and keeping them within compass, and by governing our passions, and exercising them on proper, and worthy objects.

SERM.  
XXIV.

And this is one thing which distinguishes Christianity, and makes it differ from all other religions, which do commonly run into these extremes either of giving a loose to all mens natural appetites, and driving men on to extreme riot and excess in them, or else to such degrees of restraint as defeat the ends both of nature and religion ; insomuch, that their greatest strains of virtue are an unreasonable force upon the mind.

II. Another inference I shall make from these words is, the great necessity of mortifications and self denials in order to a good degree of virtue and holiness ; the words of the text do plainly suppose there are some temptations so strong, and importunate, that there is no dealing with them any other way ; and that they are unconquerable without using such hardships and severities to ourselves, as are here exprest, by *cutting off a hand, or plucking out an eye* : For though christianity doth not oblige us to any unnatural violences upon ourselves, yet, the conditi-

SERM. on of our infirmity is such, and our vicious  
 XXIV. inclinations are so head-strong and violent,  
 that they will hardly ever be brought under  
 and subdued, without some methods of severity,  
 and such restraints as give us much uneasiness  
 and regret.

It hath been the practice of some people, to  
 decry all mortifications and self denials in any  
 instances whatsoever, which they do by magni-  
 fying the grace of God, as if this were pow-  
 erful enough to renew us thoroughly in body  
 and soul, to heal all the distempers of our  
 corrupted nature, and set us right in all our  
 inclinations and appetites; and they have im-  
 prov'd this notion so far as to slacken all hu-  
 man endeavours, and bring the necessary  
 means of virtue and holiness into contempt,  
 so that even fasting is looked upon as an useless  
 work of supererogation.

I must confess if they could approve them-  
 selves to be holy in all respects, without any  
 thing of this nature, and found that they were  
 strictly upright, and could acquire the virtues  
 of meekness and charity, of temperance and  
 chastity, and devotion, without giving them-  
 selves this needless trouble, they would effec-  
 tually confute both us and the scripture,  
 which frequently recommends these methods  
 of severity and self denial. They are men of  
 like infirmity with ourselves, and we trust we  
 have the spirit of God as well as they, and yet  
 our own experience sufficiently convinces us of  
 the necessity of using those means of virtue,  
 they

they are all but little enough, and it is well we can preserve our innocency when all is done. SERM. XXIV.

Nor can it be any disparagement to the grace of God, but for the praise and glory of it, that it is powerful enough to prevail with men to put in practice all those means of virtue recommended to us in the holy scriptures, and that it gives a blessing and success to them in the attainment of virtue and holiness. St. Paul who had miraculous degrees of the spirit, and had vouchsafements and revelations beyond any they can pretend to, tells us it was his own practice to keep his body under, and bring it in subjection. And to convince us how necessary a means of virtue this may be, he adds this reason for his so doing, *lest while he preached to others, he himself should be a cast away.* Our Saviour who had the spirit without measure, yet lived a life of constant severity, and self denial, and fasted forty days and forty nights, and bid his disciples *watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation.* And after the Holy Ghost had come upon them, fasting and prayer was their constant practice. And if after this, these persons will think or say, they have less occasion for mortifications and self denial than any of these, we must leave them to their spiritual pride, and in the humility of our souls, set our selves to the practice of what the wisdom of God hath thought necessary  
for

SERM. for us, thus *through the spirit to mortify the*  
 XXIV. *deeds of the body.*

And as we learn from hence the necessity of mortifications and self-denial, which the text supposes frequently to occur in the course of a christian life, so we learn likewise the true limitation of them; how far they are to be esteemed and thought necessary; and wherein the just value of them lies; namely, as far as they are instrumental to the prevention of a sin, or obtaining of a virtue; it is when our eye offends us we are to pluck it out, when it is the occasion of sin or hindrance of a virtue; for otherwise, where men over-value things of this nature, and lay too great a stress upon them, considered in themselves without farther regard to the end or design of them, they become foolish and superstitious.

By this mistake men lose the end, and rest only in the means, as is manifest and visible in the church of Rome; for to what purpose are all those whippings with scourges, and lashing of themselves; that pageantry of heathen cruelty? What means that shunning of the conversation of the world in cloysters; their pilgrimages, their antique shavings, and frightful dresses; their hair clothes; going barefoot, with eyes fixt on the ground, and all that strange variety of ill contrived penances; who requires these things at their hands? Our Saviour indeed bids us cut off our right hand, and pluck out our right eye when it offends, us (i. e.) to part with



with the dearest enjoyment in this world, when it is the occasion of a sin or the hindrance of a virtue; therefore they will cut off a great many things which do not offend them, and spare and cherish those things that do; in hopes that their penances shall atone for the guilt of those sins they indulge themselves in; thus they pervert our Saviour's design in this, as they do in all other respects; destroying the power of godliness, and turning all religion into air.

SERM.  
XXIV.

III. Another thing which is evidently implied in these words is, that there is no purging or expiation of a sin in another life; and that there can be no such place as purgatory, where by undergoing very acute pains, for a limited time, and enduring exquisite torture in proportion to the greatness of mens sins, or by the prayers of the church which are offered up for them; all their vitious inclinations are cured, and they perfectly cleansed from the guilt of all their sins, and in the very same disposition for heaven as if they had mortified and subdued all their sinful inclinations in this life.

I say it is plain from the text, how there is no such provision made in another world, to save men the labour of acquiring true virtue and holiness here; for there is a direct opposition here made between the kingdom of God on the one hand, and hell fire on the other, a fire which never shall be quenched; and the whole force of what our Saviour says here depends upon this supposition, that there is an  
unavoidable

SERM. unavoidable necessity of mens taking up with  
 XXIV. one or the other, and that they are for ever to  
 be determined by that choice they make in this  
 world. Whereas upon the principle of the  
 church of Rome in this matter, it is easy to  
 evade the force of the dilemma; namely,  
 that we may keep both our eyes in this world,  
 and yet enter into the kingdom of God  
 through purgatory; it is only the being cast  
 into a place where their worm will dye, and  
 their fire be quenched after a season, at least  
 in respect of us who shall be delivered out of it  
 by the prayers of the saints upon earth.

But here we are taught, that men are under  
 a fatal necessity, either of entering into the  
 kingdom of God, or of being cast into a fire  
 which shall never be quenched; and that the  
 final issue of things in another world will de-  
 pend upon our cutting off our limbs here, and  
 plucking out our eyes, (i. e.) upon the effec-  
 tual mortification of all our sinful appetites and  
 vitious inclinations, while we are in this world;  
 now is the only time of putting ourselves into  
 a posture for heaven; and if we slip this short  
 space of life, we shall never have another op-  
 portunity afforded us in all eternity.

And yet how contrary is the doctrine of  
 the church of Rome to this plain and express  
 doctrine of our Saviour, which teaches us, that  
 in case men do slip their time here, yet there  
 is a farther remedy hereafter; another way  
 of being purged from their sins, though more  
 painful

painful and troublesome than that which is SERM.  
here proposed to us: Upon which groundless XXIV.  
confidence people omit the practice of all those  
virtues and graces, that have any thing of trou-  
ble or uneasiness in the attainment of them,  
and indulge their vices; so strangely are men  
misled and deluded, by the opinion they have  
of others, contrary to their own sense and  
reason: For if they would freely use that mea-  
sure of understanding they have, instead of  
observing this plain express doctrine of our Sa-  
viour, they would never give themselves up  
to the conduct of those who teach the very re-  
verse of this precept; and by keeping their  
people in ignorance, do in effect take away  
both their eyes, and send them blindfold into  
that fire which shall never be quenched.

4. Another thing I shall observe to you  
from these words is, that the only sure and  
effectual means of overcoming temptation is  
to cut off all the occasions and opportunities  
of sinning, either to remove the temptation  
from us, or ourselves from the temptation; if  
we suffer it near us, it is odds but it will gain  
upon the strongest and most sincere resolu-  
tions: And therefore, our blessed Saviour who  
knew the infirmity of our nature, and the ut-  
most of our strength, prescribes us this as the  
only expedient in cases of strong and dangerous  
temptations; to cut off and cast away from us  
any thing that offends us, and is the occasion  
of drawing us into a sin; and the reason why  
the

SERM. the plucking out our eye is given as an in-  
 XXIV. stance, is, because it lets all the temptations of  
 the world in upon us; for which reason it is  
 said, if thine eye be single thy whole body  
 shall be full of light; and yet we must part  
 with it though it is one of the tenderest and  
 most ornamental parts of the body.

And this is so far from being a hard saying,  
 that the only intent of it is to make the prac-  
 tice of virtue and holiness easy to us; it would  
 have been a very hard saying indeed, if he had  
 required us to expose ourselves to all manner  
 of temptations, to be ever in the way of them,  
 and yet to resist and overcome them all; if he  
 had commanded us to be always in the midst  
 of infection, and yet never suffer ourselves to  
 be tainted with it. This perhaps would have  
 been as impossible in religion as it is in nature;  
 for many temptations are infectious and catch-  
 ing, and we are naturally disposed to be  
 wrought upon by them as by sickness, and  
 there is a great likeness in both with respect to  
 us: So that it is easy to keep ourselves from  
 it, but the remedy or cure is very hazardous  
 and uncertain.

So that there is a necessity of depriving our-  
 selves of any enjoyment whatever, though as  
 dear to us as our eyes, if it be the occasion of  
 sin to us. Some temptations are of that na-  
 ture, that they never will be conquered by any  
 other means; if we venture upon them any  
 other way, at the best we do but create our-  
 selves

selves a great deal of danger and uneasiness; and it is ten to one but it gets the better of us at last. So that in many cases we are to shun temptation, and fly from it rather than stay and encounter it: There is a great deal of christian fortitude in flying; for if I know my frailty to be such, that the presence of a temptation is too strong for me, I overcome it effectually by keeping out of the way of it, and cutting of all occasion or opportunity; and though some affection or inclination to the sin may remain, (as people may have a great tenderness for those infected limbs they cut off to preserve their life,) yet if I restrain myself so far as to keep out of the reach of the temptation, which if present I have reason to fear would be too hard for me, it is but temptation still, and my innocence is preserved.

Men never gain any thing by daring of their spiritual enemies; this vaunting hath commonly as ill success in religion as it hath in war; they are not to be met in the field and engaged in a pitched battle, unless in extraordinary cases, where God gives us a warrant and unusual strength for the fight. Instead of engaging them all at once in the field, in their greatest force, we have more need of prudence, and caution, and foresight to weaken them by degrees; by guarding all our out-works, preventing their approaches, and keeping them always at a distance.

5. Another inference I shall make from these words is, that no wilful sins persisted in  
can

SERM.  
XXIV.

SERM. can be of excusable infirmity; nothing is more  
 XXIV. ordinary in the world, than for people upon  
 the strength of a lively imagination, and a  
 warm temper, to keep up a great appearance  
 of devotion and piety, though they at the  
 same time continue in the practice of wilful  
 and deliberate sins; and they quiet their con-  
 sciences with the hopes, that they are only the  
 unavoidable infirmities of good and regenerate  
 persons. But let the temptation be what it  
 will, it is absolutely necessary that we should  
 conquer it; for if our hand offends us we must  
 cut it off; if our very eye offends we must  
 pluck it out; there is nothing so dear to us  
 that we must not part with to avoid a sin; no  
 pleasure so great that we must not foregoe;  
 and we must quit the greatest worldly enjoy-  
 ments, which our own experience shews us  
 we cannot preserve without a sin; this is in-  
 dispensibly required from us in the words of  
 my text.

And it is certainly in our power to undergo  
 the severest methods of virtue, and to conquer  
 the strongest temptation incident to human  
 nature, if we will but follow our Saviour's  
 directions, and cut off and cast away from  
 us every thing that is a strong temptation to  
 us; for though it may not be in our power to  
 overcome the temptation, yet, it is certainly in  
 our power to remove it, and this will render  
 us inexcusable before God. How strong so-  
 ever our natural inclinations to sin are, we  
 must

must suppress and restrain them, and how great soever the temptation is we must overcome it; there is no other condition of salvation, and we are told plainly we cannot enter into the kingdom of God upon any other terms.

No excuse of weakness or infirmity will serve our turn, for the grace of God will be sufficient for us if we use the means; and this is the proper means to cut off the temptation, and remove from us what we are not able to conquer. All pretence of infirmity is shamefully foolish and ridiculous, while people continue the immediate causes and opportunities, and occasions of sinning: This is the true reason of that weakness they complain of, because they will not part with the temptation; they will cherish a snake in their bosom, and then complain they cannot prevent being stung by it.

Let no one therefore encourage themselves in any false hopes of salvation, while they remain in any known sin; for it is certain that he that commits sin is of the Devil, and they that are born of God do not commit sin; there is no pleasure or advantage this world affords, but they are ready to cut off and cast away from them with indignation; and they are ready to part with all that is near and dear to them, for the preservation of innocence and a good conscience.

VI. Another thing I shall observe to you from these words is, that a thorough conquest

SERM. of that temptation which is strongest and  
 XXIV. most prevalent with us, is the greatest evidence  
 of our sincerity in religion; and indeed the  
 only one upon which we can build any comfortable hopes of heaven: It is true what our Saviour says here may be applied to all temptations which assault any of us; but however they plainly intimate that some one temptation in each person is most powerful, and that one person may have a hand to cut off, and another an eye to pluck out; and he seems to lay the greatest stress upon that very instance of virtue and holiness which we are aptest to transgress; and upon avoiding that very sin which we are most violently tempted to.

It is very common with people to say, by way of justification of themselves, as they ordinarily do for other people, that this is my only great failing, and the only infirmity I have not mastered; I am very well inclined in all other respects; and since I am not otherwise faulty, I hope God in mercy will pass by this, and accept of my obedience in all other instances; especially since I do not persist in sin out of any designed contempt: This is too general a deceit, and a prevailing hypocrisy; but it is a fatal one, and will as surely cut them off from heaven, as if they were guilty in all other respects; for he that offends in one point is guilty of the whole law, he is as liable to condemnation as if he had transgressed it all.

How



How many more persons would have been saved than there are, if it were not for that one prevailing lust or temptation, which they never can bring themselves to part with, that one sin which they found out several excuses to retain; which they palliated and disguised, and made a thousand useles pretences to bring it under the notion of infirmity, and within the conditions of pardon? But all in vain, there was but one effectual way of dealing with it, and that was what our Saviour here proposes; namely, though it were as dear to them as their limbs to cut it off and cast it from them, it had been much better for them to have done so, than to be shut out of the kingdom of God, and cast into that fire which shall never be quenched. That one sin, for which alone they hoped to be dispensed with, was their trial for heaven; it was by conquering that very temptation that they were to escape damnation: They had resolution enough to do every thing else for heaven, and so far they did well; but one thing more they lacked, that which was in a more especial manner their way of trial; and for want of that one thing all the rest of their religion is but hypocrisy, and all their labour lost.

VII. The last inference I shall make from these words is, that the happiness of heaven, and the misery of hell torments are a motive of obedience strong enough to prevail with men to preserve their virtue and innocence in the most difficult cases whatsoever; they are

SERM. able to make us undergo the greatest hard-  
 XXIV. ships, and quit the greatest pleasures of this  
 } life in order to the practice of virtue and ho-  
 linefs: For if we weigh the matter rightly  
 we fhall certainly conclude with our Saviour,  
 that it is better to part with any finful plea-  
 fures whatfoever, than lofe heaven and fuffer  
 eternal mifery for it; and if we confider this  
 motive enough, it could never fail to work  
 it's effects upon us. So that men have nothing  
 more to do but to perfuade themfelves that  
 they have fuch an intereft at ftake, to be  
 thoroughly convinced of the truth and cer-  
 tainty of it.

Nor is it enough that people barely believe  
 the rewards and punifhments of another life;  
 for even of thofe who yield a hearty affent to  
 the truth of thefe things, how few are there  
 that are wrought up by them? Beaufe they  
 do not ponder and confider them enough, fo  
 as to make them ever prefent to their minds,  
 till their hearts are deeply affected with them,  
 and that they are as feelingly touched by the  
 thoughts and mention of them, as they are  
 by any prefent danger that threatens the body.  
 If men would do this, nothing could poffibly  
 influence our hopes and our fears more power-  
 fully, infomuch that no one perfon whatever  
 who thinks of them enough could ever mif-  
 carry.

The word of God is quick and powerful,  
 and the terrors of the Lord are of fufficient  
 force to perfuade men; if they will fet their  
 minds

minds that way, and yield themselves to be SERM. persuaded; otherwise these motives will lose XXIV. all their virtue and efficacy, and be in respect of us as if there were no such things. Now nothing can conduce more to the making of us do this, than those two considerations the text suggests to us.

I. First that misery, everlasting misery, is the sure and necessary consequence of unrepented guilt, for the custom or habit of any sin, like a spreading gangrene in any of our limbs, if it be not cut off and forsaken, proceeds till at last it becomes incurable and brings certain death. Every wilful sin you are guilty of and persist in, forfeits heaven and puts you into a state of damnation: And besides, nothing can be a greater evidence of that everlasting sting and horror of conscience, than the remorse which ever accompanies guilt in this world; for no man would have any regret at the committal of a sin, if it were not for something within, that suggests a future vengeance, that tells him they who do such things shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of God, and that the wicked, and all that forget God shall be turned into hell. And,

II. That the one or the other of these two things must unavoidably be the final condition of every man; there is no middle state, eternal happiness, or everlasting misery must be your lot; and therefore expect one or the other, and reckon upon it as your inheritance for ever. It would astonish most of us if we

SERM. knew how soon it would be determined; and  
XXIV. that we shall be sealed up irreversibly to one  
of them: The day will come as surely, as if  
it were to morrow; perhaps there may be but  
a few hours between, when you must either  
enter into the kingdom of God, or else be cast  
into hell fire, which shall never be quenched.

And therefore God of his mercy grant, that  
we may lay this to heart in time; that we may  
never come into that place of torment, where  
there is nothing but weeping, and wailing,  
and gnashing of teeth to all eternity.

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# S E R M O N XXV.

On our change at the resurrection,

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PHILIP. iii. 20, 21.

*For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

**T**HESE words of St. Paul have a peculiar force and significance in the original, which cannot be easily expressed in any other language. And it is very observable, that whenever he does but touch upon this subject, of the change our bodies are to undergo at the last day, he is warmed in an instant; his stile swells, and he can hardly speak of it but in rapture. In the 15th of his 1 Cor. where he enlarges upon it, he outdoes himself; and is carried on to a height of eloquence, which

S E R M.  
XXV.

SERM. which never yet was unparalled, The sub-  
 XXV. stance of which he sums up towards the close,  
 behold I shew you a mystery, *we shall not all sleep,*  
*but we shall all be changed: For the trumpet*  
*shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incor-*  
*ruptible, and we shall be changed.*

In speaking to these words, I shall crave leave to consider the several particulars contained in them, in the same order the lye in the text before us. Accordingly,

I. The first thing to be observed is, that in them we have a clear and full account of the hope of Christians; and that too in direct opposition to those, *who mind earthly things.* who are given up to the pleasures of sense and appetite, who have their minds so taken up with the things of this life, that all their desires and affections are that way; insomuch that things of another world have lost all force of perswasion and influence upon them: And are no more the governing principle of their life and actions, than if they were altogether feigned and imaginary.

This sort of people he had described exactly in the foregoing verse, but as for us, says he, *we on the contrary look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.* Look for him, (i. e.) have our eye fixed upon him, and our hearts set upon his coming. This expectation is our whole dependance, it is our all; it is this alone hath full possession of our hearts, it fills our thoughts, and the main tendency of our whole life and actions is all that way.

And

And now we see the reason of that solemnity in this expression of the Apostles, using these four names, the Saviour, the Lord, and Jesus, and Christ. Because the text is leveled at such as had but a low and contemptible opinion of him, and his Revelations: And the plain import of it is, that, that very person called Jesus Christ, so much despised and neglected by such people as he had been describing, we own to be our Saviour, and our Lord: This is the very man we look for. And we depend so entirely upon him, that we *live by faith and not by sight*. Looking for that joyful day, when he shall come in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory.

II. The next thing remarkable in the text is, that debasing epithet, *our vile body*. The Greek expresseth it much more emphatically by a Hebrew idiom, *σῶμα τῆ ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν*, the body of this low abject condition of ours, in this life: So that he doth not call it vile only in respect of those many defects and miseries to which it is now subject, but means that it is so even in it's best state, and when it appears to most advantage in the bloom of youth, and greatest gaiety of health and vigour. It is true this amuses us now, because we are acquainted with nothing better; and it becomes agreeable only by comparison, when we observe the little differences of shape and colour in others, who are in truth only a little less deformed.

The

SERM. The body was without doubt very excel-  
 XXV. lent in it's first design, when newly formed;  
 when God viewed the work of his hands, and  
 we pleased him; and he could call us good.  
 Yet even in that state of innocence it had im-  
 perfections which required a change, before it  
 could be translated up into heaven.

But in the ruin of our nature by the  
 fall, the body sunk into a wretched and  
 despicable condition, subject to number-  
 less diseases and infirmities; insomuch that  
 all our care in this world, is only to supply  
 the several defects of nature; to support this  
 tottering fabrick. To stave off that corrupti-  
 on, which is every hour seizing us: And when  
 the soul hath left it, it turns all to stench  
 and rottenness; it sends out poison and infec-  
 tion; and quickly becomes the most loath-  
 som and odious thing in nature.

The Heathen had so contemptible a notion  
 of the body, that they called it the sepulchre  
 of the soul; they imagined the soul confined  
 to it by way of punishment. The resurrec-  
 tion of it, by way of derision, they called the  
 hope of worms. And looked upon the rising  
 again of such a body as this is, to be a nause-  
 ous and abominable thought, unworthy of  
 God. What! says Celsus in Origen, ' that e-  
 ver God should raise so foul and odious a  
 thing as a dead carcass!' thus they erred, *not  
 knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*

III. But thirdly, another thing expressly  
 asserted in the text is, that notwithstanding  
 this



this mighty alteration, it will be the same body SER. M. still, and not another. And now we see the XXV. reason why the Apostle used a Hebrew idiom on this occasion, namely, the more effectually to prevent and obviate that imagination, of our having other bodies at the last day, instead of these; and composed of celestial matter. Who shall change this body of our present low dejected state, (i. e.) the very body we carry about us, in this vale of misery.

It is here plainly called a change; and lest we should mistake, and fancy it a change of one body for another, the original says, it shall be only transformed; a word always in use where the substance remains, and a thing is changed only in it's form and figure: Which is the very thing spoke here at length, for in the original it is, that this body may have the same form or figure with the body of Christ.

The spirit of God foreseeing there would in time arise a sort of men, who should elude the doctrine of the resurrection by this wrong turn; hath thus plainly, and with design been so particular in direct opposition to them; not only in this text, but in all other places where this change is spoke of. Our blessed Saviour, who is the earnest, and standard of our resurrection, rose again before his body was in any degree corrupted; and it was so literally the same, that it retained the very marks of the wounds he had received, before the separation of it from the soul.

But

SERM. But what is there so contrived even by the  
 XXV. wisdom of God, which the mind of man  
 cannot pervert to it's own destruction!

IV. And now I come to the fourth and main point of the text, which is a revelation peculiar to Christianity; namely, that this change of our bodies, shall be into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. We are told expressly in another place, where this change is spoke of, that *it doth not yet appear what we shall be.* And it is plainly implied, that we are not to hope for any knowledge of this likeness, till the coming of Christ at the last great day, when we shall be actually possess'd of it; So that it is in vain to go about to form any notion of it. We have not the least glimpse or idea of that glorified body we shall be like; it is as much out of the reach of all human understanding, as the real perfections of the divinity; for which reason it is said, that our *life is hid with Christ in God.*

Here then we are at a full stand, we have gone the length of our line, we frankly own our ignorance; and that what is farther incumbent upon us is, with a full trust and confidence in the power and wisdom of God, to wait for such a change as we have no conception of.

And now the matter is thus reduced to a point, by this concession; are we to yield and give up the cause to the *disputer of this world?* No when we seem to give the enemies of revelation all the advantage they could

could wish, by acknowledging ourselves at the utmost stretch and period of human understanding; we shall now set out again, and launch into that immense field of knowledge opened to us by the revelations of the Gospel; that those men may see how this *foolishness of God is wiser than men.*

And therefore in this one instance, let us observe the true nature of all the other mysteries of the Gospel.

*Behold I shew you a mystery,* says St. Paul, *we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.* Now it is revealed to us that these bodies of ours shall receive such a mighty alteration in the resurrection, it is what we all understand; it is very easy and obvious; and yet plain as it is now, all the wit of man and utmost imagination could not have found it out; and nothing but a revelation from Heaven can convince us of the truth and certainty of it. And here is our faith, that we believe a thing we so well understand, upon the testimony of him, that reveals this doctrine to us.

Again, the same St. Paul says with respect to this change, that *it doth not appear what we shall be.* This is the other part of that same mystery, which is yet in the dark and unrevealed. And herein is our faith and our hope, that we look for this change and have our whole dependance upon it, though we have no capacity at present to frame the least thought or conception of it.

And

SERM. XXV. And here is that faith, and that knowledge put together with respect to the same mystery, which the wise men of this world have made such a noise about, and laboured to represent as inconsistent.

Thus we see how that which hath taken the colour of an objection, is in truth the transcendent excellency of Christianity. That it carries the mind beyond it's present sphere of knowledge; and raises our hopes in another world, to something that we neither do nor can know; and which it *cannot enter into the heart of man to conceive*. It is this alone which makes it a powerful motive to virtue and goodness; and of weight and influence enough to restrain the headstrong appetites, and unruly passions of human nature. For alas! all that we can have a notion of in this world, is too low for our hopes. But when we are to expect a change of our bodies, which can be no otherwise represented to us now, than that it will be like that of Christ's; this enlarges the mind of man, gives it full scope, and fills the vast ambition of our souls.

And why? because the reason given why we cannot form any conception of this likeness, is because we have no capacities for it in this world. *When He shall appear, we shall be like him*, (says St. John,) *for we shall see him as he is*, (i. e.) by having all our faculties enlarged and exalted, we shall be rendered capable of that beatifick vision. In the mean time, we take the same method in thinking  
and

and speaking of it, that we do of all other things of another world: First, by considering what it is not, removing from it all the imperfections of our present state, and then representing it by the greatest ideas our imaginations are stockt with, and choicest resemblances this world can afford. Though when all is done, we speak in the language of children; and we shall never be able to think of it, as it really is in itself, till that great day, when there shall be a *manifestation of the sons of God*.

SERM.  
XXV.

We are, in ourselves naturally very aspiring; the mind of man is framed to great and lofty thoughts; and yet we are so far from being limited or restrained in our hopes of this glorious change, that the divine revelations do not only cherish and encourage them; but they carry them on yet farther, even vastly beyond our most elevated imaginations.

This likeness of Christ which we are told we shall resemble, is no less than that of the divinity it self. He is called *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*. Which doth not come up to the word in the original, for that implies the full and perfect transcript of the living God. And again it is said that *in him dwells all the fullness of the God-head bodily*: Which can mean nothing less, than that his body now partakes of the glorious perfections of the divine nature. Thus high are our hopes raised by the Gospel,  
even

SERM. even to a likeness of God himself, that foun-  
 XXV. tain of all perfection. There is no check  
 given to our ambition; short of a resemblance  
 of the divinity; and here the mind must stop,  
 since there is nothing greater to be wished for  
 either in this world or the next.

That very image of God which the angels  
 lost, is to be conferred upon us; and if this  
 had not been so plainly revealed to us, the first  
 thought of it would have struck the mind with  
 terror: And what we are now so much en-  
 couraged to hope for, would have appeared to  
 us like the blasphemy of Lucifer, whose crime  
 was, that he would have ascended and *been like  
 the most high*.

So that after this, we may give the utmost  
 loose to our imaginations; leave the mind to  
 dilate itself; and let the fancy traverse over all  
 the beauties of the visible creation, it shall  
 find nothing to compare with what it shall be  
 itself. For our bodies to put on the bright-  
 ness of the firmament, and outshine the sun  
 and stars; is indeed a dazzling thought! but  
 alas! what is all this to a resemblance of that  
 stupendous being? And what are all the co-  
 lours of the rainbow, or glowing of a great  
 ball of fire, to that *eternal weight of glory  
 which shall be, one day, revealed in us*.

We are in no danger of exceeding; let us  
 say what we will of this mighty change, we  
 are sure to come short. And therefore what  
 we have to do is, to think and speak the best  
 we

we can of it, from the light of nature assisted SERM.  
by those revelations that are afforded us. XXV

Accordingly we are told that this *mortal shall put on immortality*: (i. e.) The body shall then be framed into a temper disposed for endless duration; subject to no principle of decay in itself, nor to any violence from abroad; so that no power either from within or without, (excepting only that which is almighty,) shall be able to disorder or destroy the glorious creature. The union of soul and body will be so intire and complete, and they shall be so much the same, that they shall never more be liable to dissolution. Nay, perhaps the distinction of soul and body will cease; both substances be wrought up into one undistinguished essence, and so *mortality shall be swallowed up of Life*.

Again it is said, *this corruptible shall put on incorruption*: (i. e.) all imperfections both natural and moral, which we now labour under, shall quite disappear; we shall be purged from all those gross and impure qualities, which clog our nature, and render us a burden to ourselves. We shall be perfectly cleansed *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, these two shall no more be *contrary, the one to the other*: All contention between them shall cease, and they shall be united in perfect harmony and agreement. Their inclinations and tendencies will be all one way, insomuch that even in the body, there will not be the least reluctance to the greatest goodness. Thus

SERM. shall it be adorned with *the beauty of holiness*,  
 XXV. not with that virtue which is acquired by habit. No, we shall be pure and holy by the internal rectitude of our nature; and this shall be more the temper and disposition of our bodies, than vice and wickedness is now; by which means we shall be as securely good, as if we were necessarily so.

Another epithet by which this change is described is, that *it shall be a spiritual body*.

It is true, we know not what a spirit is, and therefore cannot tell wherein this resemblance of it will consist. However, though the body will have many perfections which we cannot now conceive, yet certainly it will want none of those we can; therefore, it must mean what first occurs to our thoughts, namely, that the body shall be rendered capable and apt for all the operations of the mind. That whereas it is now tied down to this little globe of earth, it shall then be raised above all the laws of nature, which we are acquainted with; expatiate into the world of spirits; and be fitted for a communication with the universe.

Whereas the body is now unequal to the powers of the mind, so as to check and obstruct it's noblest and most vigorous efforts; it will then promote and forward those operations of the soul, which it now obstructs; and contribute to render them more excellent and admirable: Inasmuch that we shall act with the same pleasure and freedom, as if we were all spirit.

Whereas



Whereas it is now under confinement and restraint, it shall then be sprightly and uncon-  
fined; we shall then move with the same ease we think; and the body shall be quick enough even for the will. SERM.  
XXV.

Accordingly we read, that we shall no sooner find ourselves thus happily transformed, but we shall immediately take our flight. The Apostle tells us whither, *To meet the Lord in the air*, when he shall descend *with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God.*

It is said indeed *we shall be caught up in the clouds*; but this is by the same figure that they are called the chariots of God. We shall be with him in the instant he appears, with a motion quick enough to prevent our wishes. And when the solemnity of that great and terrible day is over; we shall mount with our Saviour into the highest heavens; that vast and boundless space: And go in *to possess the kingdom*: That kingdom which was prepared for us before the beginning of the world.

V. That this change shall be effected by the mighty power of Christ. It is *the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*, whom we look for, that shall change our vile body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Here is plainly Almighty power attributed to him; and that which renders this more remarkable is, that this is the very form of speaking which is used of God the Father, *Eph. i. 19, 20.* with re-

SERM. XXV. spect to the raising of Christ from the dead. And he shall do this great work by that omnipotent power, *whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself*, (i. e.) whereby he can make even dust and ashes, death and corruption, turn to this great account; and render them thus signally instrumental to his own glory, and our great advantage.

And who are they that will take upon them to set bounds to that power which is infinite? He that made a human body out of the dust of the earth; who made that dust out of nothing, and afterwards united it to the Divinity; what must we think of them, who undertake to say, that hitherto he can refine matter, and no farther? Is it not better to wait with faith and humility to see what God can make of us. Certainly we shall be a *building*, as the Apostle calls it, worthy the art of God, at a time when he undertakes to shew how fine a structure he can raise out of these gross materials. And this is so far from having any difficulty in it with respect to him; that we are told this astonishing work shall be performed *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*.

Having thus gone through the particulars in the text, I shall only make the same application of it which the Apostle here doth, namely, to oblige us all to have *our conversation in heaven*: Which he would urge upon our consciencies from his own example; and which

which is indeed the main design and purpose of this revelation. By that expression he plainly intimates to us two things. SERM.  
XXV.

1. That virtue and holiness here, is a necessary disposition for this glorious change hereafter: That if we would be like God hereafter, we must attain some likeness of him here. This is the constant style of scripture, wherever the appearing of Christ, and this change is spoke of: As in 1 John iii. 3. *Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself; even as he is pure.* I chose to instance in this one only, because the reason here given why we should endeavour to be pure and holy is, because God is so; which plainly implies, that purity and holiness are necessary in the very nature of the things, to render us capable of that image of God; and puts the whole man into a posture, fitted to receive a likeness of that immaculate spirit: This is that seal of the living God, in the Revelations, with which the servants of God are said to be marked. This future glory is founded in grace, and they both receive their improvements gradually in the same proportions; the change is now beginning in this life; the holy spirit is already forming us to this likeness of himself; and every virtue, and every grace we acquire, there is so much of the divine nature transcribed upon ours; and the greater degrees of them we attain, we shall shine with greater lustre in another world.

SERM.  
XXV.

The case of the wicked is quite the reverse ; it is said, they *shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt*, which expression being, in Daniel 12. opposed to those who *shall shine as the brightness of the firmament*, shews, that their change shall be quite contrary, into the likeness of the Devil. Vice and wickedness have a direct tendency, even in this life to wrest our lineaments. Anger, when it rages gives the visage a frightful aspect, envy, hollows and contracts the features ; and no imagination can paint out the horror of a despairing look : Racks and tortures cannot distort the face to so much terror and amazement, as that remorse of conscience in a resolute sinner, when he hath before him a certain prospect of damnation, and no hope of mercy. This will disclose itself yet more in another world ; when the wicked shall appear in their own eyes, the most detestable and loathsome of all beings ; terrified with their own deformity, and racked with indignation at themselves.

Whereas we see virtue and goodness hath a quite different effect, the calmness of the soul displays itself with serenity in the looks ; it settles the countenance, and forms all our lines to the sweet and easy air of innocence ; insomuch that the joys and transports of the mind have been visible, even under the pangs and agonies of death ; which are in truth no other than the faint glimmerings of eternal light.

2. The

2. The other thing which is implied in SERM. having our conversation in heaven is, that we XXV. raise our minds to a full assurance and lively hope of this surprising change, into the likeness of the glorious body of Christ; having our heart and our affections set upon that great day, and *looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Till this becomes the great prevailing motive with us; the strongest bent of our minds; and able to influence our whole life and actions to such a degree of virtue and holiness, that we shall long for his coming with impatience: Nay, till it becomes the joy of our hearts, and that we can breathe out from the humility and faith of a pious soul, *even so come Lord Jesus, and be it unto us according to thy holy word.*


• The Apostle, in 1 Thes. iii. 18. giving a particular account of that great day, and how *the dead in Christ should rise first*; he advises them to *comfort one another with these words*: Accordingly let us do so. Nothing but want of faith, or of a true repentance, can deprive us of this unspeakable comfort.

*Now are we the sons of God, and joynt heirs with Christ. The glory that thou gavest me,* says he, *I give unto them*; and that we read was the glory he had with God *before the world was.* How then shall we be filled with transport, to behold our Saviour's body in the glory of God; and our own in the glory of Christ's? The change will be so surprising,

SERM. that we shall then wonder at the low and nar-  
 XXV. row thoughts we have of it now.

Our imaginations cannot paint out to us any creature so rare and beautiful, so lovely and admirable, as the body of a saint will be at the resurrection. The finest personage upon earth, is but a dark and gloomy shade to it. Imagine a human creature in the most exact symmetry and proportion of all its parts; with a fairness beyond the light, and a complexion exceeding the gayest pride of art and nature; clothe it with the brightest beams of the sun; then add to all this whatever the most extravagant imagination can fancy; after all, this creature of our brain comes as short of that workmanship of God, as a lump of earth doth of the sun. And if we were, in this life, capable of the least glimpse or idea of it, we should be ashamed of our ignorance, and blush at the comparison; one such glorious appearance would now confound us; and we should be apt to worship our fellow-creature.

It will be a being of that unconceivable sweetness, and marvellous aspect, that God himself shall be pleased with it. He will see so much of himself in us, that he cannot but love us; and it must please him, to see the work of his hands so much improved beyond the first design: For then, like the original standard, we shall be disposed for glory and happiness in ourselves, so as not to be beholden to any outward ornament: No, our perfections will be all internal and essential to us;  
 this

this glory will issue from within, and we shall SERM.  
be an everlasting fountain of rays: We shall XXV.  
*shine as the stars in the firmament*; only with   
this difference, that they are now obscured by  
the greater light of the sun; but we shall shine  
*forth in the kingdom of the Father*, and appear  
glorious even in the presence of God.

Let us therefore *wait all the days of our ap-  
pointed time, till our change comes*. Though  
it doth not yet *appear what we shall be*; let us  
*possess our souls in patience*; and stay but a *little  
while*, and we shall *see him*, him whom we  
look for. He is only gone before to prepare  
a place for us; where all the rays of that stu-  
pendous being shall not only be visible; but  
shall be so far diffused through our whole na-  
ture, that we shall become intellectual light all  
within, and radiant brightness all without.

Yes, we shall; and therefore in a full as-  
surance of this change, let us bless the holy  
name of God, *who hath begotten us to this lively  
hope, through Jesus Christ*: Let it be the sub-  
ject of our meditation, of our wishes and de-  
sires; and let it make such a deep impression  
upon our hearts, that it may be a motive  
powerful enough to draw us off from the sinful  
pleasures of this life; and spur us on to the at-  
tainment of those virtues and graces, which  
are the seeds of Glory. And since it is never  
to be attained to, without the habitual practice  
of virtue and holiness, I shall end with these  
words of the Apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 13.

*I charge*

SERM. *I charge you all in the sight of God, who*  
 XXV. *quickeneth all things; that you keep his command-*  
 } *ments without spot, until the appearing of our*  
*Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Which in his time he shall shew; who is the blessed and only potentate; the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

*Who only hath immortality; dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who no man hath seen, nor can see. To whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.*

S E R M O N



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# S E R M O N XXVI.

On the Day of Judgment.

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REVEL. XX, 12.

*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of Life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

**T**HES E words are part of a vision seen S E R M.  
by St. John, wherein was represented XXVI.  
to him the solemnity of the last great day of  
accounts. They are a lively prophecy, and  
very particular description of a general judgment, which in scripture is usually represented by the formality of courts of judicature among ourselves; as being the most lively emblem of it, and the aptest to make impressions on our minds. And therefore it is said, in the verse before this text, That he *saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it; from whose face*  
the

SERM. *the earth and the heavens fled away; and there*  
 XXVI *was found no place for them; which is a short*  
 and elegant description of a new state of things:  
 and then it follows, that he *saw the dead both*  
*small and great stand before God, i. e. before*  
 Christ, who is God. John v. 22, 23, *for*  
*the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed*  
*all judgment unto the Son: that all men should*  
*honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.*

The several particulars of this solemnity are spoken of in a figure, in condescension to our present way of thinking; but the whole substance of them will prove nevertheless literally true. And it ought to affect us the more, because we are now able to conceive them by resemblance only and similitude. For the true reason of this is, because our limited understanding in this life is not capable of so much joy or so much terror as the reality shall occasion; this we must wait for till our change comes. However in the mean time this is a very obvious consequence, that if these things are so apt to affect us in the resemblance only, and at a distance; then what must they do in the reality, and when they are present.

This description of a day of judgment is so natural and agreeable to the best understanding of men, that now it is revealed to us, nothing is more easy of belief; because it falls in with the reason and practice of mankind, who, if they will allow any universal judgment, must own this to be a probable account of it.

I shall

I shall consider the several things contained in these words in this order: SERM.  
XXVI.

I. I shall explain what these books are which are here said to be opened. }

II. Who are meant by the *dead small and great*, who are said to stand before God.


III. What those works are which are said to be written in the books, according to which men shall be judged.

As to the first, the books here spoken of are of two sorts.

1. Those books which contain the laws of God.

2. Those books in which are contained all the violations and transgressions of those divine laws.

1. Those which contain the laws of God are,  
1. The book of the laws of nature written in our hearts; 'tis that innate sense of good and evil interwoven with our frame, which qualifies us for a judgment to come; namely, because we are able to reason of righteousness, and temperance, and chastity, and all other moral virtues, so as to determine what things are in their own nature *bonest*, what things are *just*, what things are *pure* and lovely, and of good report; and in short, what things are virtuous, and praise-worthy. Our finding within us a power of distinguishing between virtue and vice, and setting them in opposition one to the other from the force of our understanding, even contrary to the violent tendency of our corrupt appetites and affections, is instead

SERM. XXVI. stead of a thousand arguments, to shew that the difference between them is essential and eternal; and that a time must come, when all the degrees of them will become conspicuous, either in the great improvement, or depravation of human nature. This should make all people have a great regard to the dictates of natural conscience, and to the practice of all moral virtues; and they who neglect or despise these, under any pretence or notion of a strong faith, or a more refin'd and exalted piety, to their great amazement, will find themselves come short in a main part of their account in the day of judgment.

2. The Holy Scriptures is that other book of laws which shall be opened for the tryal of all that ever had the opportunities of the Gospel, those oracles of God which were given by inspiration; which are profitable for instruction in righteousness, which contain the whole counsel of God, and are able to make us wise unto salvation; and wherein we have the whole dispensation of God towards mankind, from our first creation to the last great day of accounts. These carry in themselves such evidence of their divinity, that 'tis sufficient to convince all who are at the trouble to consider them with humility and sincerity; insomuch, that the most professed and positive deist will be left without excuse, when he comes to be tryed for his infidelity. They will all then see that *there is no other name under heaven given, where by they may be saved, but that of the Lord Jesus*

*Jesus Christ. And that he that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved, and that he that believeth not, shall be damn'd.*

SER. M.  
XXVI.

Nor can their condition be much better, who now believe the Scriptures to be the very word of God, and yet omit the constant reading and understanding of them. For men to allow that they set life and death before us; that the true will of God is revealed in them; and that they shall surely one day be acquitted or condemned eternally, as they frame their lives and conversations by them; and yet hardly ever mind them when they are read, or look into them themselves; when at the same time they are intent upon such books as gratify their curiosity or pleasures, is a folly no way to be accounted for, but from the lamentable stupidity and infatuation of human nature.

O! did they but consider how this book will, at the last great day, be produced as the *Glorious Gospel of the blessed God*; and laid open to upbraid their stupidity and contempt of that inestimable treasure; and how it will be *more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah* in the day of judgment, than for such as did neglect and despise so great salvation; they would study them day and night; *when they sit in their houses, or walk by the way; when they lie down, and when they rise up.*

2. The second kind of books intended more directly in this text are, such wherein the violation of those laws of God are registred. 'Tis in allusion to these books that those expressions

SERM. XXVI. preffions are spoke, Col. ii. 24. *forgiving our trespasses by blotting out the hand writing that is against us.* And again where we are bid to repent, that our *sins may be blotted out*, which tho' they are spoken in condescension to our capacities, and after the manner of men; and that we know not the true nature of those divine records, yet we may reasonably conclude, that there are those four several ways of recording the actions of men.

I. By the *omniscience* of God, whose eyes are said to be in *every place beholding the evil, and the good*, and Jer. ii. 19, upon *all the ways of the sons of men*, there is nothing in Scripture more frequently mentioned, and urged after a more lively and affecting manner, than the particular notice God takes of all our thoughts, words and actions, and the reason assigned is, that he might give *to every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings*. So that all this exact and unerring knowledge of our ways by that all-seeing Eye, being only in order to a future judgment, and general retribution; we may conclude that every minutest circumstance of guilt, with all its aggravations, are recorded in the unbounded mind of God, which comprehends all things. He who knows all our thoughts, long before they are conceived, can never forget them when they are past; and He who so long before *ordained* those *good works* that we should *walk* in; and in the *volume* of whose *book* was written from eternity, that  
whole

whole will of God which Christ came to fulfil; keeps as sure a registry of the performance of those works, and of our failure in the discharge of them, Nay, we think meanly of God, when we imagine any thing is past, or to come in respect of him with whom there is no *variableness*, or *shadow of turning*, or succession of time. From whence 'tis plain, that as we are now as much in the immediate presence of God as if we saw him, so all that he now beholds in us will be as present to him at the time of tryal, as they were the first minute they were transacted.


2. But secondly, 'tis not enough for the manifestation of God's justice, that He himself will then have a perfect knowledge of the sins of men: but that finners might acknowledge the justice of their condemnation, they must themselves have an exact remembrance of all their sins; and therefore by one of these books must be meant, the *consciences* of men, which take a nice account of all our sins, and book them down in the order they are committed. That secret remorse and clamour within us, which is the inseparable companion of guilt, is a certain sign that our sins will come to light some time or other; for otherwise, why should we find any uneasiness at what can never be discover'd or known to any one else? And on the other hand, if a man is innocent, he finds comfort within, tho' the whole world accuse him; now there can be no reason for this, but because a day will come, when they shall be all undeceived, and his innocence

SERM.  
XXVI.



SERM. cleared to all mankind. This regret on the  
 XXVI. one hand, and peace of mind on the other,  
 } arises only from the exact knowledge we have  
 of what passes in our selves; and that is con-  
 science, an unerring, faithful witness, within  
 us. 'Tis true, the transgressions of habitual  
 sinners, are so numerous, that were they ever  
 so willing, it is impossible for them in this life,  
 to recollect and retain them all. But tho' the  
 remembrance of mens sins, wears off as they  
 are succeeded by new ones; and tho' men sin  
 on, till they are *past feeling*, and have no re-  
 morse left; yet we are to look upon our con-  
 sciences as part of ourselves, and therefore in  
 the last great change, when the whole man  
 will revive, he will then appear to be all that  
 ever he was, and will become in one instant,  
 what he had ever been in every moment of his  
 life; and thus the conscience, will lay before  
 the sinner, one general view of all that ever he  
 committed, and give in its evidence to a tittle.  
 Tho' he is *dead* in sin, yet his conscience is a-  
 wake; when it is most silent, it takes the  
 sharpest notice; the less it speaks, the more in-  
 tent it is in taking an account of all the hidden  
 motions of the soul; and it does not cease to  
 be a *witness*, when it leaves off to be a *moni-*  
*tor*. It is necessary that God should have such  
 a witness within us, that men being condem-  
 ned by no other evidence but themselves, He  
 might be justified in his sayings, and clear when  
 he is judged, clear even by their own confes-  
 sion; and that they might for ever own and  
 acknowledge



acknowledge the justice of that irreversible SERM.  
sentence, whereby they are doomed to ever-XXVI.  
lasting punishment. But, 

3. It is not sufficient that God knows all the sins of men, nay, and that men shall then have an inward conviction of the guilt of them in themselves; but it is further necessary for the justification of God's attributes, that all the sins of men be known to every body else; and therefore, there must be another way of recording the sins of men, a way, which shall render them visible to all orders of intelligent beings, men and angels, that all might know those crimes, for which the wicked undergo such a dreadful sentence, and are necessarily consign'd over to endless and unsupportable torments. And that can be no other than the very nature of the sins themselves, which have all a tendency to dispose men for inconceivable deformity in the last great change. All the motions and sentiments of our souls, will then become conspicuous, as our bodily parts are now; and disclose themselves in the very make and constitution of our whole frame. Sin will then appear to be as real a deformity, as an unnatural shape or a distorted member in the present condition of the body; only with this difference, that the one is a defect only in nature, the other will be monstrous in another world, and seem a foul and odious deflection from that eternal order of things, which God hath observed in the works of the whole creation. Then will it be discover'd, at what a

SERM. distance the fins of men, place them from  
 XXVI. the likenefs of God, that fountain of all beauty and perfection; and how it imprints the fimilitude of an infernal fiend. Thus the fins of men will become vifible, by a natural neceffary confequence; and will be recorded as one fpeaks, *non in chartis corruptibilibus, fed in immortalī naturâ*: not by writing on paper, but in eternal nature. All the great variety of guilt, will then difplay itfelf in the horrid foulnefs of the fhape, infomuch, that every feature of the mifcreant, will call aloud for vengeance on his own head. And how muft he then give himfelf up to terror, when he fees there is no room for mercy, without changing the nature of things, and overturning the whole order and œconomy of the univerfe.

4. There is another way of taking an exact account of the actions of men, and that is by the miniftry of Angels. We know from many instances in fcripture, that they are miniftring fpirits, and very much employ'd in the affairs of mankind. It hath been an opinion, not without fhew of probability, that every perfon hath a good, and an evil angel, to attend him; whether this be fo or no, to be fure we are furrounded with angels, who, tho' they are invifible to us, yet we are not fo to them: we are acting upon the ftage of this world, and they are the fpectators; and 'tis fure they muft be very nice and curious obfervers of our whole behaviour, by that joy there

is in heaven, over one sinner that repents. SERM.  
 'Tis certain the evil spirits watch us narrowly, XXVI.  
 for the Devil is call'd, the accuser of the brethren.


Now that this can be done without them, is no argument at all, that they are not concerned in it; because the mighty power and knowledge of God is able to perform every thing without them; and therefore for the same reason, there would be no occasion for their ministry in any thing else. Now how, or after what manner they register those sins of men, is utterly unknown to us; without doubt it is by some way that exceeds all human certainty.

II. This brings me to the second thing I was to speak to, namely, who are the *dead, small and great*, who are here said to *stand before God*. By this is meant persons of all ages and conditions, the whole race of mankind, from the beginning of the world to the last great day. Agreeable to what the apostle says, *2 Cor. 5, 10. for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Both Jews and Heathen, had some knowledge of the souls of men being tryed and condemn'd after their departure: but they had no notion of one general judgment of the whole race of mankind at once, both for soul and body. This is a revelation peculiar to the Gospel, which doth not only tell us that God

SERM. *hath appointed a day in the which he will judge*  
 XXVI. *the world in righteousness*, but is so particular in  
 describing the manner and circumstances of it, with the very words of the sentence which will be pronounced, that nothing seems to be conceal'd from us, but that of the time when it will be.

Now it is necessary that there should be one general day of judgment, and that all mankind should come upon their tryal at once.

I. For the justification of God, and clearing of his mercy and his justice, that he might appear to be *just and true in all his dealings by the children of men*. How many ways have men of charging God foolishly? As if permitting Adam and Eve to fall, were not consistent with his Goodness. As if the curse for his disobedience were wrongfully extended to his posterity. As if the laws of the Gospel were unnatural restraints, upon such appetites and passions as are essential to us. And lastly, as if the eternal punishment of the sins of men, were not consistent with infinite mercy. Now for the clearing up of these and such like difficulties, 'tis necessary that all mankind should appear at once, that in their presence, he might convince all that *are ungodly among them*, of all *their ungodly deeds*, and of all *their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him*; that they may see and allow, that God did all that was consistent with the purity of his attributes, for the salvation of men's souls,

fouls, and could not have done more without SERM. injury to his nature. That it might be ma- XXVI. nifest, how he is *clear from the blood of all*  *men*; and how the everlasting damnation of the wicked, is wholly chargeable upon themselves.


2. Another reason why mankind must appear all at once in the last day is, because the sins of men will never come to their full size, and receive all their aggravation till the whole race of men are extinct. The consequences of some men's sins, run thro' many generations, and by a notorious bad example, and corrupt writings, may receive new aggravations to the end of the world; and therefore 'tis reasonable, this general judgment of wicked men, should not be until the measure of their iniquities is filled up.

3. The last reason I shall assign of this is, for the perfect completion of all the threats and promises of God. We are now told, that the righteous shall be *rais'd in glory*, and that when Christ appears, they shall appear with him, as he is. And on the contrary, that the wicked shall be *turned into hell*, and doom'd to *everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels*; wherefore 'tis necessary there should be a general meeting of all the race of mankind, that the wicked might actually behold, the glory of the righteous; and the righteous, the miserable condemnation of the wicked: that, as Job speaks, all men might see with their *own eyes, and not another's*, how not one

SERM. jot or tittle will fail of the word of God,  
 XXVI. 'till it be fully accomplished in the presence of  
 the whole world.

And now when all the whole race of Adam, is thus called together into one company, by a general summons of the last trump; what an amazing spectacle will it be! The very thought of it bears hard upon the mind, and fills it with horror. I know not how to go about to give you a notion large enough, to bear any proportion to it. Consider the *sixscore thousand souls*, at once in Nineveh, who *knew not their right hand from their left*. And that the posterity of Abraham only, were said to be as *the sand of the sea*; then where shall we find a comparison for that astonishing multitude, which St. John says, Rev. 9. that he beheld, *which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues standing before the throne*. And yet these are only the good he speaks of here, which are said to be the lesser part. Then what must that whole number be, mention'd in Daniel, vii. 10. where he says that when *the judgment was set, and the books were open'd; thousand thousands, ministr'd unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand, stood before him*.

Now if to all these we add, those myriads of holy angels, who are said to come *in the clouds of heaven* with our Saviour. And likewise those accursed spirits who fell with Lucifer, and are said to be *reserved in everlasting*

*lasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*; this will be a number SERM. **XXVI.** worthy the majesty of that great tribunal. 

Should any of us behold this multitude in a vision as St. John did, without being supported with the same strength of spirit which was necessary for him, it would strike us with confusion. I shall only mind you, that every one of us here present will bear a part in this last great scene; and either be acquitted, or condemned, as we now prepare ourselves for that great account. And this leads me to the

III. And last thing I am to speak to from the words; and that is, what those works are which are written in the books. And they are,

1. All men's outward actions, all the frauds and oppressions of the poor and needy, that ever they were guilty of; all their deceits and unfair dealings; all the adulteries, murders, and fornications; all the wickedness they were prompted to commit by their lust, or avarice, or pride and ambition; all the wrongs and injuries they have done to the persons and fortunes of other people; every act of gluttony or drunkenness that ever they were guilty of.

2. All their evil words are wrote in these books, every Oath they swore through their whole lives; all the curses and execrations; all the prophane jests and virulent scoffs they cast upon religion and holy things; all lies and flatteries, dissimulations and hypocritical speeches; all their back-biting and defamation of other  
people,

SERM. people, and malicious reflections upon the per-  
 XXVI. sons and actions of other men.

3. All their thoughts will be more perfectly described than it was possible for themselves to express them with a multitude of words; all the evil imaginations and wicked designs of their hearts, which were never reduced to practice; all the pride of their minds; their secret vanity and envyings; and all thoughts of lust, or malice, or treachery, or revenge, which either want of opportunity, or regard only to their temporal pursuits, hindered them from accomplishing.

4. And lastly their sins of omission will make up no small part of that account which is taken of the wicked: all opportunities of doing good they ever slip, are noted down; every sacrament they turn their backs upon; all their neglects of his publick and private worship; with their undevout and careless, their indecent, light, or wanton behaviour in the house of God; all neglect of necessary instruction of children and servants, and those who have a dependance upon them; all the acts of charity and beneficence that ever were in their power, but omitted by them.

Nor shall all these be recorded barely as they appear to us, but with a thousand aggravating circumstances, which men never dream of now; they shall be recorded with all their black train of attendants, and numerous evil consequences, which we are not able to comprehend; for men's sins have a malignant influence



fluence farther than we can reach with our limited stock of knowledge. SERM.  
XXVI.

Nor shall there any one good work that ever a wicked man did be remembered to him; they shall be all as if they never were; they shall be all blotted, together with his name, out of the book of the living: and when they begin to mention some of their good works, and plead for mercy upon that score, *Lord have we not eaten and drank in thy name, &c.* He will own nothing at all either of them or their works, and will openly declare he knew them not.

Now as to such as are perswaded this day will surely come, and that they themselves must in a short time be consigned over to it by death: the next thought that naturally arises in the mind is, what if it were to be now present? with what consternation would this strike the soul of an unrepenting sinner, who is in no preparation to meet his judge? Let us suppose then that this were the very moment the apostle speaks of, and that the *trumpet* should *sound*, and that the great and general change were even now to be performed *in the twinkling of an eye*. Good God! how should we see the little distinctions of this life vanish, and all worldly grandeur and precedency at once destroyed and confounded? How should we see the whole order and subordination of all ranks and degrees of men among us quite inverted; so that perhaps the first should be last, and the last might be first? And how different would  
men

SERM. men appear from that shew they make in the  
 XXVI. eye of the world, when the secret virtue and  
 { uprightnefs, and piety and devotion of some  
 men's souls, become visible in the very frame  
 and make of the whole man, and dispose them  
 for being transformed into the bright and glo-  
 rious image of the Son of God? How would  
 the secret lust and vanity, pride and covetouf-  
 ness, malice and envy; with all the other un-  
 restrained and unconquered passions of a wick-  
 ed person, combine together to make up a  
 hideous and terrible composition, the most  
 frightful spectacle in the universe? A horrible  
 shape and form that must be, that leaves them  
 in no condition of mercy from God, or pity  
 from man or angel, and disposes them for al-  
 mighty vengeance and fury, and to be loath-  
 some and detestable in the view of all intelli-  
 gent beings; but to none more odious, than  
 they will be in their own eyes.

Now thus transformed into a creature in-  
 conceivably deformed, startled and confound-  
 ed at his own image, let every person who is  
 conscious to his own heart of living in wilful  
 and habitual sin, imagine himself to be, and  
 that he were to be, this instant dragged by the  
 infernal fiends, to make his dreadful approach  
 to the tribunal of an incensed and angry judge:  
 consider but the consternation of a criminal,  
 when he comes before our courts of judicature  
 to be tryed for his life; then who can con-  
 ceive the anguish of him who is to come up-  
 on his tryal for soul and body; not with any  
 prospect

prospect of being acquitted, but self-condemn-  
 ed, with a glaring proof and evidence of his  
 sin in every shape and feature; and with a  
 ghastly mixture of all variety of guilt and  
 horror in his countenance.

It cannot enter into our hearts to conceive what a surprize it will be to him, who endeavoured nothing more than to forget his sins in this life, to find an exact and impartial transcript of the whole course of his life in those books which shall be opened: When he shall have all the sins that ever he committed in one view, together with all their aggravations; when, as 'tis said in Psalm 50, 21, *God shall set his sins in order before his eyes.* What must it be to have all this load of guilt prest upon him at once, without any thing to support him; he will not be able to bear the weight; tho' he will have strength for ever to labour under it. How must he stand astonished at this tribunal, where all the hidden counsels of his heart are manifest; all his thoughts and works of darkness placed in open view, which he made it his study to conceal; and those things exposed to the sight of all men, which he would now rather die than have discovered? How must he be filled with insupportable shame and confusion, when he finds there is no corrupting or gainfaying these records; and that no artificial colours, false delusions, or subtile evasions, will stand him in any stead?

And to make the scene yet present, let such a person imagine he were immediately to hear that

SERM. that final sentence pronounced upon him, *De-*  
 XXVI. *part, thou cursed, into everlasting fire, prepar-*  
 ed for the devil and his angels. O eternity of  
 misery! doom'd to everlasting burnings! how  
 must the mention of it scare and terrify the  
 guilty conscience? that when infinite ages are  
 expired, his torments are not nearer to an end  
 than when he was first plunged into the fiery  
 lake. Let him carry his mind on to the close  
 of this great and terrible solemnity, and ima-  
 gine that the sentence is no sooner pronounced,  
 but that the good and bad are actually separa-  
 ting from each other, never, never to see one  
 another more. When he looks up and be-  
 holds the glorious company with *the Lord in*  
*the air*, and takes his last parting view, as they  
 are going in to *possess the kingdom*; how must  
 this thought gnaw and sting his soul, that it  
 was once in his power to have been of that  
 blessed number, but he slipt the happy oppor-  
 tunity, and can never have another trial to  
 all eternity.

No distorted visage in the midst of racks and  
 tortures, can give us any notion of it; nor can  
 any imagination paint out to us the wild dis-  
 traction of their souls. No! they will then  
 have ways of expressing their anguish and re-  
 morse, which is but feintly signified to us now  
 by *weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*.  
 Alas! shrieks and groans are but ways men  
 now have of complaining, and giving their  
 fears or sorrows vent; but those will be wholly  
 useless then, when there is none to pity; and  
 nothing

nothing is left them for their portion, but black  
despair for ever.

SERM.  
XXVI.

I wish I could leave these terrors of the Lord  
on the mind of every one that hears me ; that  
they may dwell there, ready to start up at the  
approach of every temptation ; to break the  
force of it ; and render all the sinful pleasures  
of this life little and contemptible. I beseech  
God, that what hath been said may have that  
effect upon you ; that this and such like warn-  
ings beforehand, might not add to your con-  
demnation in that great day of accounts ; but  
that when Christ shall come to judgment,  
every one of our names may be found *written*  
*in the book of life of the Lamb.*

S E R M O N

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## SERMON XXVII.

The law proved to be good from the evidence of our own consciences.

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ROM. vii. 19.

*For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that do I.*

SERM.  
XXVII.

**T**HERE is little doubt but that this is one of those passages in St. Paul's epistles, which St. Peter observes are *hard to be understood*, and which they that are *unlearned and unstable, wrest as they do other scriptures, unto their own destruction*.

The usual cause of most erroneous interpretations of scripture is, that people singe out particular texts, and then put their own construction upon them, without any regard to what goes before or after; and without considering the context, and the whole drift of the discourse: Whereas it is plain, that those very persons who deal thus by the book of  
God,

from the evidence of our own consciences.

241

God, would censure any one, who would do the same by any other book whatsoever.

SER. M.  
XXVII.

There is nothing more common than this in the world, and it might easily be shewn, how this is the occasion of most errors, that are held in opposition to the established doctrine of the Church.

When we all come to have our differences decided in the last day, by him who revealed the Gospel to us, 'tis to be feared that this very thing, will hinder multitudes from pleading invincible ignorance for their errors, viz. because that they did not use the same ingenuity and common sense in understanding the Scripture, which they never failed to use in any human author.

This is one of those texts which hath been thus singled out, and to worse purposes than that other of our Saviour's, *This is my body*; for that opinion of transubstantiation, is big with errors in opinion only, and is the immediate occasion but of one error in practice, that of *Idolatry*. But the false acceptance of this text, hath an universal malignant influence upon the *practice* of men, in which consists the very life and soul of religion.

For the notion that multitudes, and particularly the *Presbyterians*, and all our Sectaries have of the sense of these words, is this, viz. that tho' they do indeed *omit* some necessary duties, and are guilty of some *wilful* and *habitual* sins; yet it is much against the inclination of their souls, their heart is right

SERM. with God; so that they serve him in the *inner*  
 XXVII. *man*, and make no question, but that he will  
 accept of those good *wishes* and *desires* of  
 theirs.

Many indeed, will not express thus much, but they carry this in their minds, to quiet their consciences, whenever they find them uneasy at the sins they live in.

And others will not stick openly to justify their *gross, wilful, habitual* sins by it; and call them the unavoidable weaknesses and infirmities of their nature; and all the while assume such an air of piety and holiness in their countenances, and make such confident pretences to sincere religion, that they appear the most sanctified people in the world: And indeed, their great unhappiness is, that they think themselves so, for this makes it a dangerous sort of hypocrisy.

It is a case very common in the world, and therefore it must be worth while to consider the true sense of this part of scripture, on which they build that false and mistaken opinion of themselves.

That which makes this Chapter seem thus obscure is, St. Paul's supposing, the objections which he answers, already known; as indeed they were among those he wrote to, and therefore he only glances at them, and doth not express them in full, so as to state them formally and at large.

Wherefore the only way to know his meaning is, to observe the drift and chain of  
 his



his whole discourse. His main design in this and the foregoing chapter, is to convince both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that they lay under no obligation to observe the law of Moses.

SERM.  
XXVII.

As for the Jews, they were so wedded to their law, that at the first preaching of the Gospel, it was not safe for the Apostles to insist upon this great point of doctrine to them. For if they had fallen directly and immediately upon it, this would have stuck as an invincible prejudice with those who were otherwise well enough inclin'd to embrace the Gospel; so that this matter was to be opened by degrees: our blessed Saviour began it first in his discourse to the woman of Samaria; and as he himself observed the whole law, so the disciples complied for some time after his ascension. And at last St. Paul, who was himself a zealous and obstinate Jew, was by the wisdom of God made choice of to declare the *abrogation* and *nullity* of what himself was but lately so active and violent for. And accordingly he began it among the Gentiles, as we read in the 21st of the Acts, who were much easier to be convinced than the Jews. And here in this chap. he speaks of the matter fully, to the Jews that were at Rome, and tells them in plain terms, that they are wholly freed from the observance of the ceremonial law, that they are *dead* to the law, and delivered from it. And urges and explains the matter by the similitude of a married woman. While her husband is alive she is bound to

SERM.  
XXVII.

him by the law; but when he is dead, she is free to marry another: so when the old law was in force, men were obliged to obey it, but now it being *done away* (as he speaks) and *dead* in the person of Christ, who was crucified for that purpose, they were free to embrace the Gospel of Christ, which is a much better dispensation, because it requires the purity of our *hearts*, and inward holiness of soul, instead of those outward ordinances. Upon this there occurs an objection, If so, then the law was the cause of sin, viz. because it commanded only an outward obedience, and did not exact that inward spiritual purity.

To this he answers, that the law was not the cause of sin, for it did require *inward* as well as *outward* obedience, as is evident from that precept, *thou shalt not covet*. But the truth of it is, tho' the law required this inward obedience of the mind, yet it had no penalty annexed to the breach of that part of the law, as the Gospel hath, viz. that of eternal damnation.

And therefore men took occasion from this to indulge themselves in all their lusts, as far as they could without temporal punishment: and thus the law which was in itself *good*, and *ordained to life*, was found to be unto *death*.

Here another objection is raised at the 13th verse, where he comes more immediately to the matter we are now upon. The objection is this, However good as the law is, yet it became death to us; and the fault of men's mis-

carrying,

carrying, will lye upon the law, and not upon themselves. No! he answers, that men's ruin will lye upon their own heads for all that; for the law forbidding those impurities of our *hearts*, doth not make any alteration in the nature of them; they do not become evil only, because forbidden by the law, they are bad in themselves, and the law only declares them to be so; it makes us sensible of their guilt, and makes them appear to be exceeding vile and sinful as they are: So that it is plain our sin and ruin is no way chargeable upon the law.

SERM.  
XXVII.

But it is we, who are naturally very corrupt, and it is this corruption of our hearts, which incessantly inclines us to act contrary to it's dictates; that is the true and only cause of our ruin, and not the *law*, which so fairly warns us against it. He goes on, and says, that which puts this beyond all doubt, is the inward sense of our own souls, and the regret we have, when we are guilty of any of those things which are thus forbidden by it. And to urge the matter more home to them, he appeals to the consciences of men, whether they did not check and rebuke them at the very instant they sinned.

*For the good that I would, I do not: and the evil that I would not, that do I;* which is as much as to say, you, or I, or any other person, when we omit the doing of any good action we have opportunity for, we find our minds uneasy at it; we are well enough in-

SERM.  
XXVII.

clined to do it, and would surely perform it, if the vicious bent of our natural inclinations did not divert us from it, and draw us another way. And so likewise, when we are about to commit a sin, it is plain we have something within us, that checks and deters us from it; and the voice of conscience is so plainly heard, that we would not commit the sin, if there were not a temptation, and our corrupt hearts too well disposed to yield to it. However, by our own experience we find it is always with regret and remorse of conscience we comply; and from hence he infers his conclusion very naturally, that we must own the *law* to be good, and no way the cause of their death: but that it is chargeable upon the base and sinful compliance with the corruptness of their own hearts.

This, in short, is the substance of what he enlarges upon in this discourse; and this methinks, should be enough to shew that St. Paul means nothing less than the giving people encouragement to commit sin by his own example: A thing which at first hearing, appears so absurd, that people ought to suspect it so far at least, as to weigh well whether he means any such thing or no; especially since if they are in the wrong, it is a mistake that may prove fatal to their souls. And therefore, for the sake of such as are inclin'd to this erroneous interpretation, I shall be a little more particular; and shew, that St. Paul cannot mean what he says here, in his own person,

*from the evidence of our own consciences.*

247

person, or in the person of any good christian.

SERM.  
XXVII.

And,

1st, That he cannot mean what he says here in his own person, is evident from that character he gives of himself in other places of his epistles. He tells us of himself in another place. Rom. viii. 2. That *the spirit of life, had made him free from the law of sin.* And again,

That *the world was crucified to him, and he to the world.* And in another place,

That *he kept under his body, and brought it into subjection.* And,

That he had *fought a good fight, and finished his course.*

Now let us compare those places with what he says here.

Here he says, that *sin revived, and he died;* that is spiritually, and one spiritually dead is in a state of eternal death and damnation, if he goes out of the world in that condition of soul.

That it had *slain him;* that is, destroyed his soul; utterly defaced and abolished all sense of God and goodness, and rendered him lyable to the just punishment and vengeance of God.

That he was *captivated and sold under sin;* a perfect slave to all his lusts and passions.

That *sin wrought in him all manner of lust and concupiscence;* so that he gave a loose to all his lusts and appetites.

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Now

SERM.  
XXVII.

Now these things are so inconsistent, that it is utterly impossible they should be both meant of the *same* man. The things are in their own nature contradictory to each other; so that they who affirm St. Paul speaks in his own person here, must at the same time say that he plays the hypocrite in all those other places, where he gives a quite different account of himself.

2 And then 2dly, that he doth not mean what he says here in the person of a good christian, and a regenerate man, is plain; because what is said here is directly contrary to the whole tenor of christianity; which lays down quite different conditions of salvation, and gives quite another description of such as are sincerely good and regenerate. And particularly,

That they are *made free from the law of sin and death*. They are described to be such as *do not commit sin*; and that their *bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost*. And James ii. 10. *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point (that is wilfully and habitually) he is guilty of all*.

And in this very discourse whereof my text is a part, he describes good people after a quite different manner. In the 18, 19, 22, 23. where he says they are such as are *become servants of righteousness*; such as *yield their members to be servants of righteousness, unto holiness*; That *they have their fruit unto holiness*.

Now

Now all this, and more to this purpose, being said in this same discourse, one would think it were enough to prevent effectually any such odd interpretation of these words. For it is plain, that they who say this place is spoke in the person of a regenerate man, do make the spirit of God speak things contradictory, even in the same discourse.

SERM.  
XXVII.

And thus I think it appears very plain and clear, that the Apostle can have no such meaning as they fasten upon him.

But to all this they answer, that he must mean *himself*, because he uses the first person all the way. But it is a thing very usual, not only with St. Paul (as it were easy to instance) but even in common conversation to use the first person when they speak of another. Suppose I should go about to dissuade any person from the sin of *drunkenness*, and should address my self to him after this manner; and tell him, that drunkenness is a sin against which we all know there is a positive command; by this sin I render myself odious to God, by defacing his image; I expose myself to be laughed at by men; I disorder my reason; I mispend my time; I ruin my health and reputation; and by it, I become obnoxious to eternal damnation. And if I should add to this, that the very reluctance and remorse of conscience with which I commit that sin, is a plain and convincing argument of the excellency of the Gospel, which strictly forbids all drunkenness. It is so much against the light of nature, that in  
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SERM.  
XXVII.

being drunk I act against my judgment, nay, and against my inclination too, so that it is evident, *that the evil which I would not, that do I*, by yielding to temptation, contrary to the sentiments of my own mind.

Again, suppose I should endeavour to make a man sensible of the sinfulness of his want of charity to the poor, after this manner: Surely nothing can hinder me from relieving the sick and needy, but my own covetous temper and immoderate love of money; and were it not for this, I should perform that necessary duty willingly; nay, and find great pleasure and satisfaction of mind in the discharge of it: So that in this sin of omission it is plain, *that the good that I would, I do not*. This plainly demonstrates the excellency of the evangelical law, which requires charity and giving of alms; and though the Gospel becomes death to men by this means, yet it is through our own wilful neglect and disobedience to its most holy and righteous precepts.

Now it would be very odd to infer, that therefore such a one were guilty of drunkenness, because he dissuaded another from it, by describing the guilt and danger of it in his own person.

Yet odd as it is, the case is the very same here: if St. Paul goes about to shew the law not to be the occasion of sin, by the conviction of men's own consciences who act against it, and doth this in his own person, it is very absurd to infer, that therefore he himself was  
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the guilty man he describes; and from hence immediately to catch at an opportunity of justifying our wilful habitual sins, as if they were the unavoidable infirmities of our nature.

SERM.

XXVII.

But because I would leave no room for doubt, let us change the argument, and apply what St. Paul says of the *Law* to the *Gospel*, and those under it; to christianity, and those professors of it, who own the Gospel, but do not think there is that indispensable necessity for an universal and entire conquest over all their lusts and vicious inclinations; and do from this place infer, that the grace and mercy of the Gospel will dispense with those sins of theirs, which they commit unwillingly, and with regret and reluctance.

And the rather, because this is the very thing which St. Paul designs to confute, and the very mistake which first gave occasion to this whole discourse; as we shall find, if we look at the 15th verse of the foregoing chapter.

When he had said that they were freed from the law, *what then, says he, shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?* Because there is more abundant mercy and room for repentance under the Gospel, shall we therefore think that we may commit sin, even wilful deliberate sins, because the grace of the Gospel will dispense with them? *no, God forbid.* And from hence to the end of this chapter he shews, on the contrary, the indispensable obligation that lay on them, effectually to conquer  
and

SERM.  
XXVII.

and suppress all their lusts and vitious inclinations, and to perform an universal and entire obedience.

Therefore I say, instead of the *Law*, let us apply those mistaken verses to the *Gospel*, and to those who think the gospel may be thus far the occasion of sin, by permitting it thus, and dispensing with it: We will suppose them spoke in the person of a *Christian*, instead of the person of a *Jew*, and then see how much they will make for their purpose; at the 7th verse of this chap. *what shall we say then, is the Gospel thus far the occasion of sin?* no, *God forbid*. At the 14th verse, *for we know that the Gospel is spiritual, but we are carnal*. The Gospel plainly forbids those sins they indulge themselves in, but their corrupt heart carries them on to act contrary to its precepts; and at the same time that they are guilty of those sins, their consciences check them; they know them to be against the express commands of the Gospel; but they are won upon to comply against their judgment and their consciences, with the importunity of their sinful lusts and passions.

And herein they tacitly acknowledge the purity of the Gospel, and consequently the indispensable obligation that lies on them to an entire obedience. For as it is in the words of the text, it is evident that they omit those good things which they ought to do, as they are Christians; and which they would do, did they not find the law of their members make  
some

some opposition, and their vitious inclinations bias them another way.

And it is as evident, that they commit those things which the Gospel tells them are sins, and which they are never guilty of without uneasiness in their minds, and without a remorse and regret of conscience; sins they would never be guilty of, if they were not inveigled to comply with those vile inclinations, which the Gospel tells them plainly it is their duty to suppress and conquer effectually, if ever they hope to be saved, and received to the mercy of God.

So that you see, instead of excusing those sins of theirs by the gracious dispensation of the Gospel, all that they can infer from this place is, that such sinners stand convicted by the judgment of their own consciences; and that whosoever says that the Gospel will afford them pardon for any wilful sin they continue in, are condemned by their own consciences: Therefore, let no one flatter himself upon this score; for the same conscience of the sin which thus accuses them here, will undoubtedly do the same when they come to appear before the judgment seat of God.

And now all the difficulty concerning this matter, is resolved into this one question, *viz.* Whether, with the assistance of grace, they are able to avoid those sins, or whether they are not? (*i. e.*) whether they are truly sins of infirmity, or no? for that the Gospel forbids all those sins is undeniable; and that their consciences

SERM.  
XXVII.

sciences accuse them for them is plain; so that, if it be any way in their power to avoid them, then they will certainly be accountable for them; but if it be not in their power to avoid them, then indeed they will never be required at their hands: And in truth this is the thing they would fain perswade themselves. They are willing to believe that the temptations are so strong, that they are too weak to overcome them, and they yield to them tamely, in hopes that they are too weak, and please themselves with the serving God, as St. Paul says, with the *inward man*, with holy thoughts, and purposes, and desires, and with continual bemoaning the frailty and weakness of the flesh.

But they would do well to consider, that no less than the effectual mortifying of all our sinful lusts and passions, is the necessary condition of salvation proposed to us in the Gospel. Our Saviour says, that it is they that *do the will of his heavenly father that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*; and in the chapter following my text, 13 verse, 'tis said, *if ye live after the flesh, ye shall dye; but if through the spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*


And that this is not too hard for us is evident, for otherwise God would not require it from us: Though we are not able of ourselves, yet *through God that strengthens us, we are able to do all things* required from us; 1 Cor. x. 13, it is said, that *God will never suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.*

So

So that it is the treachery and corruptness of our own hearts that makes those temptations seem invincible; if we were not wanting to ourselves, nothing, with God's assistance, would be too hard for us; for the same Gospel which threatens damnation to those sins, doth afford us grace sufficient to overcome them.

If such as complain of the strength of temptations would but consider by what steps they fall into their sins; by what degrees the temptation insinuates and gains upon them; if they did but consider seriously as they ought, what are the best and most effectual means of conquering temptations, and carefully avoid the occasions and opportunities of sinning; and when they have thus done what lies in them sincerely and heartily, if they would put up their prayers to Almighty God continually for his assistance, they would soon find how little reason they have thus injuriously to charge their sins upon the want of sufficient strength, or upon the invincible corruption of their natures.

When a temptation is very strong, and that they are violently inclined to commit one of those sins they think they cannot avoid, if they did but imagine that they were instantly to be committed to the flames for it, this would take off the edge of the strongest temptation, and render it very weak and feeble. And why should not the thoughts of eternal fire be of as great force? for that is certain and unavoidable, and, for ought any one who commits a sin

SER M. fin knows, may be sudden and immediate too.  
 XXVII.  And now it is time to wonder that, since the case is thus evident, any persons should deceive themselves, by understanding a text quite contrary to the intent of it, and make use of it to justify an opinion, which (as we have seen) it was purposely designed to confute. The true reason of this is, a secret desire men have to reconcile their hopes of heaven with the gratifying their present lusts; it is this that puts them upon wresting scripture to such mistaken senses: And if they would consider themselves impartially, they would find that which makes them catch at this mistaken sense, is to quell the clamours of their consciences, merely for the present ease of their minds, and not to lay any solid foundation on this text for the salvation of their souls.

Some sins are so profitable, or so agreeable to their constitutions, that they cannot find in their hearts to part with them; and yet they are not able to bear the thoughts of being damned for them; and therefore they silence the clamours of their consciences with such charms as these are. If they would look into themselves they would find this at the bottom of this opinion; it is a pernicious and a dangerous error, and they may well say as it is in the close of this chap. *O wretched men that they are, who shall deliver them from the body of this death?*

And now I have been thus long upon it, yet most of what hath been said being of some difficulty,

ficulty; I shall for the sake of such as cannot go along with the chain of a discourse, make the case yet plainer. And that I may do this, and bring what hath been said, home to particular consciences as I can, I must observe to you, that the reluctance men find in their minds to the committal of sin, is no other than the opposition given to the flesh by the spirit; the spirit of a man assisted by the grace of God. These two are in a state of war, and our eternal salvation or damnation, depends upon an intire conquest and victory on one side or the other. I shall in few words represent the true state of this Christian warfare between the flesh and the spirit, and then leave it to the conscience of every particular person who hears me, to consider which is his own case.

Now there are four sorts of people, in whom the state of this war is very different.

1<sup>st</sup>. The first sort are those in whom the spirit or the mind is in perfect subjection to the flesh. The mind is in the condition of a slave, quite conquered and utterly disabled from making any resistance; intirely at the command of every brutish lust and passion. And this is the case of such, who have been long and habitually vicious; who have worn off all serious sense of religion, and have given themselves up to commit any sin that shall offer it self; who have cast off all serious thoughts of saving their souls; who not only neglect or despise all reveal'd religion, but have

SERM.  
XXVII.

so defaced all the impressions of natural conscience, that they have worn off all uneasiness and remorse in sinning, and nothing gives them more disturbance, than the thoughts of such as live conformable to the laws of God; who are for that reason the sure object of their scorn and contempt, as well as the constant subject of their scoffs and raillery. These have no striving within them, no doubts or scruples; their consciences are dumb, and rarely give them any disturbance; so that they sin with very little regret and reluctance. St. Paul describes them as men whose *very minds and consciences are defiled*; the whole bent and inclination of their souls is all to the gratification of their appetites and passions; the want of any sense of religion at the heart, is visible thro' the whole course of their life and conversation.

Now this is not properly a state of war, because the fight or contest between the flesh and spirit is ended; the spiritual part is captivated to the law of sin; the mind truckles to it, and dare not so much as contradict the motions of a tyrant lust.

This is a desperate condition, because they are past all the ordinary methods by which God useth to save men's souls; and for that reason, they seem to be seal'd up to the dreadful day of vengeance upon all impenitent sinners.

All the comfort we can give to these is only, that they need not yet despair. For if  
they



they would, even yet, bravely put on a might-  
ty, obstinate resolution, to break through all  
this restraint, tho' they have lost that strength  
of soul they once had, yet this may move  
God to renew it again to that degree, that  
they may in time overcome all their enemies,  
so that the mind shall have the mastery at  
last.

2d. But 2dly, another sort there are, in  
whom the war between the flesh and spirit is  
newly begun, which is the case of every one,  
when they first enter upon an holy life. The  
mind struggles, and will not yield, tho' it  
fights to all disadvantages. The flesh at first  
hath yet the upper hand, because of our natu-  
ral tendency to all sin ; however, the mind is  
resolved to fight it out, relying on those assist-  
ances which God hath promised ; and will not  
yield, tho' frequently foil'd by the violence  
of temptation.

This is a nice and critical juncture, and the  
dangerous point in the christian life, because  
the first onset, is ever the most fierce and vio-  
lent. Many, in their younger days especially,  
put on firm resolution of entering on a holy  
life, and they begin well, but not being able  
to bear the first shock of temptation, they are  
so quite beaten off the field, that they are en-  
tirely to begin a new. And the fatal conse-  
quence is,

That multitudes are all at once so dismay-  
ed and terrify'd, that they never rally again

SERM.  
XXVII.

through their whole lives, but basely and cowardly yield themselves up to be for ever the slaves and servants of sin: they lay aside all thoughts of a virtuous and holy life, and habitually follow the bent of their natural passions and appetites. These have remorse of conscience for some time, but it wears off gradually, until at length they are easy and secure, so as not to have the least inclination to the greatest good, nor any reluctance to the greatest evil.

Others again there are, who are not so effectually overthrown and discouraged by the violence of temptation on their entrance on a holy life, and who resolve to take the field again, and meet the enemy, but yet still with the same success; thus they are ever resolving one time after another, and ever breaking their resolutions; they are always beginning, they live and dye resolving, but never make any progress in the conquests of their lust and passions, and in the attainment of true virtue and evangelical holiness. To this irresolute wavering state of people, who are ever new beginners, my text is particularly applicable. *The good that they would, they do not, and the evil they would not, that do they.* They have a willing mind, and are ever full of feeble resolutions, but because they do not keep the field of battle, they never have a prospect of victory over the world, the flesh and the Devil, and then they are apt to fall into the fatal delusion and hypocrisy,  
and

and ridiculous imagination that God will accept of their good wishes and desires of holiness, for that virtue and holiness itself, which is their indispensable duty to acquire, under all the difficulties and hardships of christian warfare.

SER. M.  
XXVII.

3d. But 3dly, another sort there are, in whom these enemies seem to stand upon equal terms, neither is conquer'd, and neither hath the victory; sometimes the flesh gets the better, and the mind is overborne with the number and incessant importunity of temptations. At other times the spirit baffles the strongest of them.

Now this is the heat of the battle, and the weighty juncture that must decide the victory on one side or the other. These have many anxious thoughts and desponding scruples; but they may be all reduced to this one, viz. whether they persevere or no; for they have not the victory which will crown them yet. It is yet but a partial obedience; they are indeed near the kingdom of God, but they must thoroughly subdue their enemies before they have a just title to it. It is a thorough conquest that is the necessary condition of salvation; therefore let none think themselves safe, while they come short of intire and universal obedience; for the living in one habitual wilful sin, will blast all their hopes.

The danger of those who thus engage in earnest, commonly lies in some one particular sin, to which their respective natural temper

SERM. and constitution, or their calling and condi-  
 XXVII. tion of life, or their worldly interest leads  
 them into; it is notorious that many, who  
 appear in other respects to be good men, do  
 yet indulge some one darling lust or passion,  
 which like Agag is spared and cherished, tho'  
 the rest of their spiritual enemies are destroy-  
 ed. The surest and the shortest way to a com-  
 plete victory, is to single out that one giant-  
 sin, for a single combat, and when that is  
 vanquished, all the rest of their enemies will  
 be overcome with ease; and this these com-  
 batants may be assured of, that their hopes  
 and their fears of eternal salvation, are better  
 or worse founded, in proportion to their ob-  
 stinate perseverance, and the degrees of that  
 victory they obtain over their spiritual ene-  
 mies, just as the strength of all temptations  
 proves weaker, and all virtue and goodness  
 becomes more easy and practicable, and plea-  
 sant to them.

Let us not fancy those giant-sins of ours, to  
 be unconquerable, but strive all we can, and  
 pray heartily for grace. Let us but beset them,  
 and God will fight our battle. But if we say  
 as the Jews did, *the people of the land are  
 mighty*, and only wish we were fit for the  
 possession of heaven, we shall never enter in-  
 to it.

4th. A 4th and last sort, are such as by a  
 continual hearty endeavour, assisted by the  
 grace of God, have brought the flesh intirely  
 in subjection to the spirit; so that it truckles

as much to the mind, as the mind did to it before the engagement. Nor can this so properly be called a state of war; for the spirit hath compleated the victory, (i. e.) when we have arrived to a settled habit of virtue and piety. Then are we truly saints, and not till then. Then we are truly regenerate and in a state of salvation.

SERM.  
XXVII.

When we have so mortify'd the lusts of the body, and conquer'd the sinful passions of the mind, that we commit no sin wilfully or deliberately, or habitually; and when all the sin we are guilty of is in smaller instances, and that too by surprize and inadvertency. When in all material instances, the good that we would we do and perform, and the evil which we would not, we constantly forbear, and avoid. When we press on towards perfection, and have no cause to lament and bewail any other than the unavoidable infirmities of human nature, I mean such as are truly such in the sight of God.

Let us therefore not flatter ourselves with any thing short of this, for this is the truth of God, and nothing less will do.

When we are become universally and habitually holy, in all our actions as well as thoughts, and desires, and inclinations, then we may with an humble assurance say, *we have fought a good fight, and that henceforth there is lay'd up for us a crown of glory, which God the righteous judge, shall give us at that day.*

SERM.  
XXVII.

It is true, while we are in the flesh, the remains of captivated sins will murmur, and upon all occasions strive to break out into violence; but this will do us no harm, if we prevent their actually doing so; if we suppress them in their beginnings, and not let them grow upon us, and gain ground again.

This itself, is a business of great care and circumspection even in the best of men; however, it need be no matter of scruple and dependency, for if they persevere they need not doubt their reward; they may rely intirely upon the promises of God to have their victory crowned with a glorious immortality: And from that peace of conscience which they may even here enjoy, they will be translated to that place where they shall for ever reign in the full and just perfection of the sons of God.

S E R M O N

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# SERMON XXVIII.

The comfort of a good man at the approach of death.

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2 TIM. iv. 8.

*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all those also that love his appearing.*

**T**HE time when this epistle was writ, S E R M. XXVIII. hath been disputed, whether at St. Paul's first appearing before Nero, or at his second, which was the time of his death: But the reasons which are given why the epistle was wrote immediately before his martyrdom, seem much to out-weigh those of the contrary side; and the postscript is very exprefs that it it was written from Rome when Paul was brought before him the second time, which, if it be allowed authentick, puts the matter out of doubt: And indeed it is not likely that the Apostle would

SERM.  
XXVIII.

would have used such solemn expressions of his courage and behaviour in any one particular danger, as is supposed by those of the other opinion. It is much more probable, that these words were a result of a serious view of the manner of his discharging the great trust committed to him, and that at a time when he had an immediate prospect of death, and was like to have no farther opportunity of confirming the truth of the Gospel, but by his blood. He was now apprehended by the Emperor, as is thought, under pretence of firing the city; and was sentenced to death for that crime, which he himself was guilty of: For when he had fired the city in sport, to take off the odium, he laid it on the christians. And that which is said to have incensed him more against the Apostle, was his converting one of Nero's concubines, from lewdness and heathenism, to the modesty and chastity of the Gospel. His end being near, as he says in the verses before the text, when he was ready to be offered, and the time of his departure being at hand, all his labours and services administer solid joy and comfort to him; his hopes clear up at the approach of the death; all his despondences begin then to vanish, and he hath such a full assurance of hope, that he already sees Heaven open to receive him, and the inward testimony of his conscience is so clear and sincere, that it breaks out into these expressions of a full trust and confidence in the veracity and goodness of God; *I have fought a good fight; I have*



*I have finished my course. Henceforth, &c.* SERM.

In which words, we have these five things XXVIII.  
expresly contained, in this order.

The 1st thing is, That there is a reward of virtue and piety in another world, which is here expressed with a full confidence, and the greatest assurance imaginable, which shews that the faith and perswasion of his mind, founded upon the promises of God, was as firm and unshaken, as any assent could be from demonstration or sensible evidence. When men's minds are purged of the prejudices of sense, by the habits of virtue and piety, and are disentangled from the sensual pleasures of this world, and are used for some time to reflect upon themselves and a future state, then their minds clear up as to these matters; they begin to have quick and lively sentiments of them; and then the evidence they have of moral truths, is nothing short of what knowledge we acquire by the strictest methods of reasoning: And that prophane and carnal men, persons habitually wicked, whose eyes the God of this world hath blinded, are so much in the dark, as to these things of another life, is no wonder; for people that do not apply themselves to search into the nature of any particular science, cannot expect to comprehend the force of any reasoning of that nature: And so it is in religion; unless people will bend their minds this way, and put themselves in the road of thinking, they will not discern the great strength, and invincible force of that evidence

SERM.  
XXVIII.

vidence we have for the moral and mystical truths of our religion, and particularly of this, of an eternal weight of glory, for good and virtuous people, in Heaven; of which St. Paul's words shew us he had such a firm persuasion.

The disposition of men's minds, when death is near them and unavoidable, is very different, according as their lives have been truly good and virtuous, or lewd and vitious: When good people are going out of the world, then they are filled with comfortable and joyful expectations of being for ever happy; and the wicked in those circumstances, are terrified with *a dreadful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation*. These things are not fleeting and transient, but lasting and durable, and leave such deep impressions upon the minds of men, that they can never bear them off. Though vitious men, in health and prosperity, banish all thoughts of another world, and feel but little remorse of conscience, yet when any danger threatens them, then they are alarmed with sudden apprehensions of vengeance; whereas, the greater the danger is, the more firm and positive is the testimony of a good conscience; and the nearer death approaches, these hopes and fears become more strong. And thus St. Paul, when he was in prison, and was convinced that the time of his execution drew nigh, instead of being dejected, his hopes were enlarged at the approach of death. But 2dly,

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The second thing expressed in these words, SERM. XXVIII. is the nature of the reward of virtue and goodness in another world, and it is here called *a crown of righteousness*. That of a crown is the most usual representation of those heavenly joys that are to be the reward of virtue hereafter; and accordingly, it is called elsewhere *a crown of glory that fades not away*. And it is said, that *Christ hath made us kings and priests to God, and that we shall reign with him for ever*: By which expressions is undoubtedly signified some extraordinary dignity that shall be conferred upon us in heaven, but of what nature, we are able not now to conceive. It is called a crown of righteousness for these two reasons:

1st, Because the promises of eternal happiness are made only to good and virtuous persons; and therefore it is said, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. And,

2dly, Because of the natural tendency of virtue and holiness to make men glorious and happy in another world, insomuch that glory is literally begun in grace; and this is the reason of those scripture expressions of calling virtue and goodness by the name of light, and that *the righteous shall shine beyond the glory of the Sun*; and that piety and holiness go by the name of the white robe in the Revelations.

I shall only observe to you, that this crown of glory is said here to be *laid up* for us; because the true nature and degrees of this glory and happiness of the saints is so obscured from

SERM. us now, that we have little or no notion of  
 XXVIII. them, and therefore it is said, that *our life is hid with Christ in God*; because, as it is said in another place, *it doth not yet appear what shall be; but we know, that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him.* But then we must consider well, that this crown of glory is not laid up for us as an inheritance that will surely devolve upon us as heirs, by any unalterable settlement or decree, as we are the peculiar elect of God; but it is laid up as a reward or prize that is to be obtained by labour and industry, by resolution and courage, and by an habitual practice of a holy life: So that if ever we hope to obtain it, it must be by thus *pressing towards the mark for the prize of our high calling*; for if we do not make this calling and election sure to us while we are in this world, we shall come short of the glory of God in the next. But  
 3dly,

The third thing exprest in this text, is the giver; *which God the righteous judge shall give us*; and that this is not added here without very good reason; for that must be exceeding great and valuable, which is worthy of God to bestow, who is the great Creator and Disposer of all things; and nothing is so apt to raise our thoughts, to enlarge our apprehensions, and give us worthy notions of those rewards of virtue in another world, as the consideration of the giver. If we do but consider, that he is a God of infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness, what can be too great to hope for

for from him? As he is Omnipotent, what is it he cannot do for us? And since he made us out of nothing, to how great a degree can he improve our nature? And to what a vast extent can he enlarge all our faculties? Of how great things can he make us capable? And then how great things can he prepare, to fill them all with unspeakable delight and ravishment? And then, as he is of infinite wisdom, there is nothing so great, that he cannot contrive for us: He knows what will be most suitable to all our spiritual appetites and desires; and therefore, we shall not only be possessed of that which is good in itself, but of that which is exquisitely best: For what can lye hid from infinite wisdom and knowledge?

But above all, the consideration of his goodness strikes our minds with a yet more quick and lively sense of those heavenly joys; for this will engage him to bestow upon us all that his wisdom can contrive, or his almighty power can effect. For this crown of glory that he will place upon our heads, is not the payment of a debt, or the reward of our merit; if it were, we should justly have but very scanty notions of it: But it is the free gift of his grace; it is the bounty of God; and therefore, how great must that glory be, when he shall reward us, not according to our services, but according to his own immense, unlimited goodness. Nothing can be too great for him to confer upon us, though the least of his favours is too great for us to deserve. Nay, what must

SERM.  
XXVIII.

must it be when he himself becomes our reward; he that is the source and fountain of glory and happiness, who hath all perfections, and makes all things good and happy only by discoveries of himself to them. It must be something unconceiveably great and worthy of him, when he sets himself after a solemn manner to shew us what he can do for us at a time when he shall come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed in him; when he gives us a near view of himself, and unfolds all the excellencies of his nature to be adored, and praised, and magnified by all the choicest works of his creation.

Nay, what must it be when we come to be one with him, which is an expression we durst not utter, but that our Saviour spoke it first, and gives us warrant for it; this carries the mind on to something so lofty and aspiring, that we are apt to check our too forward thoughts, and fear the sin of Lucifer. But oh! the depth of the goodness of God to us, beyond even what we read of to the Angels, for undoubtedly, this expression of being one with him, signifies a mystical union, the nature of which we are not able to conceive; however, thus much we may say of it, that it imports these three things.

I. That as the humanity of Christ is united to the Godhead, so there shall be a union of all glorified saints in Heaven, to the same eternal

ternal God, though we know not in what it will consist.

SER. M.  
XXVIII.

2. It denotes a likeness of nature, and a great resemblance we shall then have of the divine nature, and a participation of his excellencies and perfections.

3. And lastly, it must signify a sameness of enjoyments in kind, though not in degree, and then if we do but consider what is the nature of those enjoyment which make up the felicity of God, then when we come to partake of the same, how happy must it needs make us, this is the very top of what we are able now to think or speak of those heavenly joys, and therefore nothing more remains for us in this life, but silent wonder and admiration.

I shall only observe to you here, that God is said to be a righteous Judge in conferring these things upon us, not because they are any due reward of our merit, but because he hath bound himself by promise to give this crown of glory to all that seek for it by patience in well doing; so that it is become a debt in respect of God, and the obligation he hath laid upon himself, though it be none in respect of us; so that though we cannot earn it and deserve it, yet we have a sure and solid foundation for our hopes, the repeated promises of almighty God, who is a God of truth, and keeping his promise for ever, and this is the ground of St. Paul's confidence; his conscience approved of his services, and

SERM.  
XXVIII.

since he had done what God required, there remained nothing but the fulfilling of his word.

4. The 4th thing mentioned in this text, is the time when this crown shall be given, (i. e.) at the day of judgment, which is here called, as it is in many other places, that day, by way of excellence, as it is the great and terrible day of the Lord, and the day of the revelation of the power of God. And the reason why this crown is laid out of our sight until that day, is,

1. Because while we are in this world, is the time of tryal, and since it is a kingdom to be fought for, and a prize to be obtained, it is not to be conferred until we have conquered our spiritual enemies, and that our race is ended. And then

2. We can not hope to come to the consummation of our happiness until soul and body meet, to be rewarded together; not but that the soul, even in the state of separation, shall enjoy great degrees of bliss, but that it is much short of what will be conferred upon them at the day of judgment is plain, from that impatience of theirs for that day, expressed in the Revelations.

3. And then 3dly, this is designed to shew us that the rewards of virtue and goodness, are not to be expected in this life, as some persons have dreamt of an earthly crown, and then reigning here on earth with Christ in a visible appearance; no, it is a crown of righteousness, which



which will not be conferred until that day, which is not temporary, but shall remain eternal in the heavens.

SERM.  
XXVIII.

5. The 5th and last thing expressed is the character of the persons to whom this reward will be given, and that is to St. Paul and to all who love the appearing of our Saviour. By his appearing, is more especially meant that time when the son of man shall appear in the clouds of heaven, arrayed in the glory of his father, with the holy Angels, to reward every man according to his work; and they are said to love his appearing, who by an unfeigned repentance, and a sincere practice of a holy life, have just reason to hope for his coming at the day of judgment, those who have quitted and foregone all the sinful pleasures and vanities of this life, and brought their mind so much off from the perishing satisfactions of this world, that all their hopes and expectations are bent upon what shall then be conferred upon them; it is natural for all people to long for the time when they have any certain expectations of good, especially what their hearts are set upon, and therefore if persons by denying themselves many of the pleasures and satisfactions of this life for the preservation of a good conscience, have few or no worldly desires left, if by frequent conversing with God, by prayer and meditation, by thinking often of divine things, and letting their mind run upon virtue and holiness, upon God and the things of another

SERM.  
XXVIII.

world, have arrived to a good degree of sincere religion, so as to render all the appetites and affections of their souls divine and spiritual, they will of course be pleased with the thoughts of that day when all these desires of theirs shall be filled, and all they lived in expectation of brought to pass.

I am sensible the thought what I am now speaking occasions in the mind of every sincere Christian that hears me is this, if the loving his appearing, and longing for the day of judgment, be a necessary qualification for it, they have reason to suspect their condition, for they find in themselves a mighty fear of that day, and they are apt to be filled with terror at the thoughts of it. But there is a great difference between these fears of good Christians, and those boading thoughts of vengeance, which upon every appearance of danger or approach of death, rise up to terrify and fill the wicked with black and dismal thoughts; there is a great difference between despondency and despair: to despair, is to have no degree of hope left, but to despond, is only to have our hopes intermixt with fears and jealousies of our selves, and our own performances, which proceed from the weakness of our judgment, or from a melancholy constitution, or from the suggestions of the Devil; and the first occasion of them, is the great eagerness of our minds, and the earnest bent of our souls upon those heavenly enjoyments, so that we think we can never be sure enough  
of

of them. But that all these distractions do not so much destroy their hopes while they continue their endeavours, is plain; for no man would use the least endeavour in a thing he had no hopes at all of succeeding in. So that if these things quicken their endeavours, make them more watchful over themselves, and more exact in the discharge of their duty, it is so far from destroying their hopes, that it encreases that very grace which they think they tend to destroy. It is with religion, as with our endeavours in any worldly matter which we prosecute: if men have no hopes at all, they wholly desist: if their confidence be too great, this naturally makes them careless and negligent, and many a person hath lost heaven by this presumptuous assurance: if his hopes are mixt with fears, this quickens his endeavours, makes him more resolute and vigorous, and active, and thus his fears become the greatest means of gradually strengthening and enlarging his hopes.

But I must confess there seems to be something beyond this, designed in these words of *loving his appearing*, and that is, that Christians by constancy in virtue and holiness, should wear off these fears by degrees, and arrive to such a disposition of mind, that the thoughts of that day shall be comfortable to them; that it shall cheer their minds, and that they shall live in a joyful expectation of it, and this is the reason of those expressions

SERM. where we are bid to abound in hope, to rejoice  
 XXVIII. in hope of the glory of God.

So that in truth it is matter of duty to acquire as good a degree of this joy in the holy Ghost as we can; and therefore we are bid daily to pray *thy kingdom come*, because all sincere Christians are supposed to be in a condition of wishing for this appearance of the son of God. And the reason of this is, because a strong and lively hope is the greatest encouragement to virtue and holiness that possibly can be; he that hath this hope purifieth himself as God is pure, it is the natural effect of hope, to make us cleanse and purify ourselves, and this hope of salvation is by St. Paul, more than once called a helmet. The similitude is very apt and significant, for when our thoughts are thus taken up with the things of another world, when our fancy is full of it, and our imaginations deeply affected with them, temptation cannot tell how to assault us, nor where to enter.

I shall observe here, that this crown of glory is laid up not for him only, but for all that love the appearing of our Saviour, for all good Christians who in the piety and sincerity of their hearts, are disposed for any suffering if God should call them to it, for it is not prepared for Apostles, Martyrs, and Confessors only.

So that there is not one of us here present, but through the grace of God we have it in our power to arrive at this comfortable assurance,

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we have the same encouragements and the assistance of the same spirit. So that we may triumph even on this side the grave, and glory over our spiritual enemies here in the midst of their own kingdom. There wants nothing to effect this but an obstinate invincible resolution in time, before we have lost all opportunity for virtue, and it is this will sting the souls of wicked persons, when they are near their death, that they did not provide this comfort for the evil day, when it was so easily in their power.

SER M.  
XXVIII.

Having thus spoke to those five things contained in the text, I shall only make two inferences which directly follow from this passage of Scripture.

1. And the 1st is, that the only good foundation for assurance of glory and immortal life, is that of good works and the practice of a virtuous and holy life; it is this we find was the ground of St. Paul's assurance, and that upon it he built all his hopes. In the verse before the text, he says, that he hath fought a good fight, he hath finished his course, he hath kept the faith, and therefore it is that he concludes so peremptorily, that henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of glory, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give him at that day.

It was not any confident persuasion of his particular election by which he came by this assurance, but by those good works and vir-

SERM.  
XXVIII.

tuous practices of his, which he proposes to our imitation in the 2 Cor. 6. by patience, by labours, by watchings and fastings, by pureness, by enduring afflictions, giving no offence, and approving himself to God.

It was by keeping his body under and bringing it into subjection, and in short, by exercising himself in all things, to have *a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man*, and this good man had so little dependance upon his being of the number of such as were absolutely elected, that in the latter part of that former verse, the reason he gives why he was so vigorous in acquiring these virtues and graces, and in the discharge of his duty in all respects, is, lest that while he preached to others, he himself might become a cast-away; and in the words of my text, he declares, that this crown is not laid up for him only, or for any peculiar number of people, but for all persons who live in obedience to the Gospel as he did, and secure themselves aright, in the promises of God by the habitual practice of a virtuous and holy life.

From whence we may see plainly what a sandy foundation they build their hopes of salvation upon; who instead of acquiring assurance by this only one infallible method, make it a great part of their religion to be all their lives working themselves up to a strong imagination of their being of the number of God's elect people; and upon this confidence fancy, they can never fall finally, and therefore

fore live in the practice of some sins, thinking that either they are pure infirmities, or that they shall surely repent of them some time or other.

SERM.  
XXVIII.

I appeal to the consciences of many that hear me, whether this hath not been their own case, and whether it is not plain, that such persons build their hopes upon the wind; this is what St. Paul calls running uncertainly, and *fighting as one that beats the air*. These fancies will all vanish at the approach of death, and leave them poor and naked, and comfortless; and though custom, and a warm imagination, may keep up something of this to the last, yet in that day it will appear to be *the hope of the hypocrite*; for *the hope which maketh not ashamed*, as St. Paul tells us, is that which is from experience; *i. e.* that which is built upon tryal of ourselves; what degrees of virtue and goodness we have attained to.

2. The other inference I shall make from hence is, that a full and absolute assurance of our salvation, is not to be had till the approach of death: This is a direct inference from these words of his, since in all the former part of his life we read nothing of this nature, at least so positive; but, on the contrary, we find expressions of his fearfulness and despondency, and particularly in Philip. 3. he speaks how he had not already attained, nor was already perfect; and therefore, forgetting those things he had already arrived to, he reached forth unto those he as yet wanted. But these  
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SERM.  
XXVIII.

of the text were spoke when he had finished his course. That which gives us a full assurance of hope, is the holding out to the end; and though a man be ever so well disposed at present, he cannot tell what he shall be hereafter: They who stand, are bid to take heed lest they fall, because they may do so; and we are told, that then is the time of boasting and glorying; not when we put on our armour, but when we come to put it off; till the battle is near over, we cannot tell whether we have won the day; nor can we tell whether we have gained the prize, till the race is near ended.

When men come to dye, then indeed their eyes are opened, and they have a clearer prospect of that eternity that is before them; and their minds are filled, either with terror or joy, as either the flames of Hell or the glories of Heaven come within their view: And then the most terrified fancy cannot paint out to itself the horror and consternation of a wicked man, when he reflects upon his former sins, when he hath slipt his time for repentance and good works; when all the comforts of this life have left him, and that he must expect none in the next; when he sees there is no remedy, but he must go hence into the other world, then he may affirm the clear contrary to what St. Paul says: That henceforth there remains nothing to him, but a sad expectation of a due reward of his unrighteousness, *and a dreadful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation*, which  
 God,



God, who is a righteous judge as well as merciful father, shall surely denounce against him, and not only against him, but against all such wicked impenitent wretches who, by reason of their sins, have cause rather to tremble at the thoughts of his appearing than to wish for it with impatience, and rejoice at the hopes and expectation of it.

SER. M.  
XXVIII.

But, on the contrary, when they find they have conquered all their sinful inclinations, and made it their business to acquire the virtues and graces of the gospel; when looking back on their former life, they find they have laid hold of the opportunity, and have not slipt the proper seasons for virtues; when they consider how they were meek and humble, and sober and temperate, and chaste in the greatest vigour of their youth; that they were just and upright in all their dealings in the busiest time of their age: When by recollection they find, that in the forest tryals of affronts and injuries from others, of reproaches, and slander and calumny, they had borne it all with patience, and an humble resignation to the divine will, and without any returns of fury, or recrimination or revenge; that they did all acts of mercy and charity when opportunity offered, and while their substance was truly their own, before another had any right in it by the approach of their death; that they were diligent in their proper business, and faithful and active in the discharge of their calling while they were in full strength of body and vigour of mind; and, in short, when they consider that they took  
up

SERM. up in time, *remembered their Creator in the*  
 XXVIII. *days of their youth,* and begun the practice of  
 virtue and holiness soon enough to make all  
 virtues and graces of the Gospel habitual, so as  
 to grow up to this very temper and disposition  
 of their soul.

O! these are the things will give solid joy  
 and comfort to a dying man; it is this will  
 make his conscience speak peace to him, though  
 it were in the midst of racks and tortures;  
 these are the things that will make him triumph  
 over death and the grave, and fill his soul with  
 so much sweetness and complacency, with such  
 joys and transports, that no expression can  
 reach them; they have so much of Heaven in  
 them, that it cannot enter into the thoughts  
 of any, but those blest departing souls who  
 enjoy it; who with just confidence, and a  
 full assurance of hope, may with St. Paul say,  
*that henceforth there is laid up for them a crown*  
*of glory, which God, the righteous Judge, shall*  
*give them in that day; and not to them only, but*  
*to all those who love his appearing.*

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## SERMON XXIX.

The necessity of crucifying our affections and lusts.

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GALAT. V. 24.

*And they that are Christ's have crucified the Flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

**T**HIS of crucifying the flesh is a figurative expression of a very large extent, and comprehensive signification, and imports no less than the restraining and mortifying all the corrupt and vitious inclinations of our nature, rectifying and correcting all the excesses and irregularities of our appetites and passions, and the gaining such a conquest over them, that they shall be brought intirely under the direction and conduct of reason and grace: The allusion of the phrase is to the body of Christ, which was nailed hands and feet to a cross, fixed so, that it could neither stir nor move, nor go whither it would, (as Christ himself speaks, alluding, as is conjectured, to the same death of crucifixion, which St. Peter underwent for-

SERM.  
XXIX.

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SERM. ty years after.) The body thus nailed and fastened, hath lost the use of all its members; XXIX.  it is past the exercise of any of its powers and faculties; it grows still more faint and languid, till at last it expires, and has neither sense nor motion left. And that which makes this manner of speaking yet more apt and expressive is, the similitude there is between the great trouble and uneasiness men find in crossing and breaking the force and prevalence of their affections and lusts, and that pain and anguish endured by a body nailed to a cross. It is in allusion to this, that the stile of the New Testament runs so much upon our being dead to sin, and living to holiness. Rom. viii. 10. *If Christ be in you the body is dead, because of sin; but the spirit is life, because of righteousness;* consonant to which, the whole complex of all the evil propensions and tendencies of our corrupt nature is called the *body of sin*. Our old man, says St. Paul, Rom. vi. 6, *is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed*. In other places, it is called the *flesh*, in which the same Apostle says *there dwelleth no good thing*, Rom. vii. 18. And in another place, Gal. v. 17, *that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other*.

Thus we see the great excellency of this manner of speaking, which is plain and easy, yet very expressive and full of signification, in-somuch, that the opposition made between the flesh and spirit, the crucifying the one, and  
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the cherishing and encouraging of the other, together with the comparison so frequently made between the natural life and death of the body, and the good or ill condition of the mind, with respect to virtue or vice (the sure effect and consequence of which is, literally, either the everlasting life or death of body and soul); these obvious figures, I say, and easy comparisons, have given greater light into the knowledge, even of natural religion, than all the morality of the Heathen world; they enlarge our thoughts, and open to the mind a vast scene of the most useful and necessary knowledge, a distinct knowledge, void of all confusion; it takes away all blindness and uncertainty concerning our greatest interest; our duty is hereby fixed and determined, and the work of our life plainly cut out for us; so that there is no difficulty now left in the theory, but in the practice.

We must not mind the things of the flesh, *to fulfil the lusts thereof*: We are to *mortify the deeds of the body*; so that our very members must be made *instruments of righteousness*. And in the words of the text, we must *crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts*; we must cleanse ourselves *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, and be *renewed in the spirit of our minds*. This is the work that lies before us; in this consists the true perfection of our nature; thus we are to be restored to a state of innocence, to the favour of God; and thus we are to avoid the misery, and attain to the happiness

SERM. XXIX. happiness of another world ; and thus we see that Christ crucified, which to the Greeks was *foolishness*, appears to be in truth the *power of God to restore fallen man ; and the wisdom of God in a mystery, which God ordained before the world for our glory.*

In discoursing of these words, I shall observe this method :

I. I shall instance those affections and lusts in particular, which are to be crucified.

II. I shall speak of the most effectual means and method of performing this.

III. I shall observe two or three things as rules of prudence, for our better conduct herein.

IV. I shall apply the motives implied in the text, to prevail on us to the performance of this great work.

And 1st. As to the first then, St. Paul tells us, at the 19th verse of this chapter, that the works of the flesh, which are to be crucified, are manifest ; *i. e.* they are well known by the light of reason ; they are against natural religion, and the common sentiments of the best informed part of mankind, which are these ; *μοιχεία Adultery*, the wronging and defiling the marriage-bed, *πορνεία Fornication*, the defilements of persons unmarried ; either with one another, or with married persons, *ἁκαθαρσία Uncleaness*, by which is signified all manner of lustful actions that are incestuous or unnatural, and whatever is not referred to adultery and fornication, *ἀσελγεία, Lasciviousness*, to which is to be referred all the unchastity of the mind,  
impure

impure thoughts ; all obscenity in words and expressions ; all wantonness in looks or gesture ; all incitements to lust, and whatsoever disposes the body or mind for the committal of any grosser acts of this sin : So very particular hath the Apostle thought it necessary to be, in enumerating the several instances and degrees of this prevailing sin. And if the Apostle here affirms, that they who indulge themselves in any of these *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, what shall we think of such who have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness ?

The next is *ειδωλολατρία Idolatry*. This was levelled by the Apostle at the Heathen practices in his days ; but, if he were alive now, he would apply it to the practice of Christians in ours, who pay that worship, which is due to God alone, to wafers, images, and reliques, and to saints and angels, their fellow-creatures. *Φαρμακεία Witchcraft* ; which, besides the grosser act of compact with the devil, implies the consulting of fortune-tellers ; using of any means of incantation by spells or charms, which is at this day in practice among the ignorant and superstitious ; though it be in truth no other than going to the devil for solution of their doubts, and repair of their losses.

*Ἔχθρα Hatred*, manentia odia, says Grotius ; settled inveterate hatred conceived against any one, or for any cause, which prompts us to wish for and catch at all advantages against him we hate, to vent our rancour and spleen

SERM. against him on all occasions. To this the  
 XXIX. Apostle afterwards opposes *love*, which disposes  
 men to friendliness and an amicable correspondence  
 with all men, even with their greatest  
 enemies, as far as may be with safety to them-  
 selves.

*Ἐρις Variance.* By which is meant all words  
 and expressions that are the result of anger and  
 fury; all opprobrious language, railing and re-  
 viling; all contentious disputes, perverse rea-  
 sonings, and obstinate debates which proceed  
 from a spirit of contradiction, and a designed  
 industrious opposition to the sentiments of o-  
 ther men.

*Ζηλοῖ Emulations.* Eager contentions about  
 place and dignity; strivings about superiority,  
 and restless pursuit of preferment; together  
 with those unjust and uncharitable criminations,  
 malicious insinuations to blacken competi-  
 tors, and lessen their character; grieving at  
 their success; together with all the other indi-  
 rect practices, so notorious in all such compe-  
 titions; which proceed from a great opinion  
 we have of our own merits and qualifications,  
 and the contempt we have for others, perhaps  
 more deserving men than ourselves.

*Ὀυμοῖ Wrath.* This is spoke of persons who  
 are apt to resent, and take fire on all occasions  
 that offer, who are subject to sudden and vio-  
 lent passions upon every surmise or colour of  
 provocation given them; who are of a wasp-  
 ish temper, of a peevish and fretful disposi-  
 tion, made uneasy to themselves and others by  
 every



every trifle; ever ruffled and discomposed by things of no moment or consideration; displeas'd with every person and every thing, that doth not hit their humour, and exactly suit their fancy. That which discovers the great impotence and prevarication of men of this temper is, that they always make the fairest shew of gayity and an agreeable conversation to strangers, and such as do not value their resentments; and turn their dark and gloomy side to their own family, and such as have a necessary dependance upon them; they vent all their good humour abroad, and wreck all their spleen at home, upon such as are under a necessity of bearing it; upon such whom, of all people, they are bound to love and cherish most, and who have the best title to their tenderest affections, by the laws of God and nature.

*Ἐπιθεία, Strife.* This imports a mind troublesome and turbulent; bent upon promoting debate and contention among men; sowing the seeds of discord, and setting them at variance with one another; and taking a delight and pleasure in the dissensions and quarrels of other men.

*Διχομασία Seditious.* The same with *schisms* in other places of the new testament; dividing from the rest of our Christian brethren, and setting up distinct and separate communions, without a plain and absolute necessity. The consequences of separate communions in the church are so numerous; namely, by weakening and destroying the power of the church

SERM.  
XXIX.

to restrain vice and wickedness, and so giving a loose to all irreligion and prophaness; by abolishing all Christian charity; by bringing a disteem on the moral duties of religion, which are the life and substance of it, turning them into zeal for a party, refining of it into airy and fantastical opinions; and, in short, by defeating all the ends of God in constituting a church. The consequences, I say, of separate communions, are so many and dreadful, that wherever that load of guilt will lie, it will be insupportable. There is not any thing in this world that ought to be more clear or undoubted, than the cause for which a man separates, and it must be of weight enough to out-balance all these, and the many more evils that ensue. A man had need of a full conviction of his judgment, so as to leave no room for doubt, since the Apostle says here, that they who are guilty of this sin *shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

The next αἱρεσεις *Heresies*, do differ from *seditions* or *schisms* in this, that a schism is a separation from the communion of the church without a sufficient cause; a heresy is when men do not only separate, but do likewise, in opposition to the church, maintain doctrines openly and directly destructive of the faith of Christ, and purity of the Gospel; such as if they persisted in, though they were of the communion of the church, they should be cut off from it.

••••• *Envyings*; by which is signified the basest

fest passion of the soul, grieving at the successes and prosperities of others; the having our eye evil because God is good.

SERM.  
XXIX.

Φοροί *Murders*; i. e. not only the taking away the life of another unlawfully, but being any way accessary to it, wishing it, or being pleased with it when it is done; and therefore instanced here, because the preceding passions dispose men for the committal of it.

Μέθαι καὶ κῶμοι *Drunkenness, Revellings*; all excesses in drinking and eating, and those extravagances that are consequent to them.

It follows, *and such like*, to shew, that he hath named here only the most common and principal lusts and affections, and supposes the other sinful lusts and affections as well known by the light of nature as these. I am now to consider

II. Idly, The most effectual means and method of getting a conquest over all our lusts and affections; and I shall at present instance only in three.

I. And 1st, whosoever will gain a conquest over all his passions and appetites, must begin with a constant and regular temperance; the first appetite which must be effectually overcome, is that we have to eating and drinking; till a man hath gained a conquest over himself in this point, all other endeavours for the suppressing and restraining his affections and lusts, will prove fruitless and vain; it is in truth no other than heaping on fuel to make our lusts burn more violently, and then labouring

SERM. XXIX. ing to extinguish them. There is nothing we eat and drink beyond the just proportions, but is poison to our nature, and directly destructive of all inclinations to goodness both in body and mind. Intemperance is the sure and immediate cause of unchastity, which of all manner of sin hath the most fatal tendency to the defacing and abolishing all sense of virtue and holiness; insomuch that a man may have other virtues and vices, both of them in no small degrees, but this is utterly inconsistent with all kinds and degrees of virtue; it is infection to our whole nature; it spreads confusion over the whole man like a leprosy; the very mind and conscience is defiled by it; and for the time it remains unrestrained and unmortified, it suspends all exercise of virtue and goodness; of piety and holiness; and, if it continues to be indulged and gratified, it quite extinguishes the grace of God, and leaves the man void of all religion: There are but too many living instances of persons thus dead to all sense of virtue and holiness.

Then, as to the effect of intemperance in the mind; the extreams of gluttony and drunkenness have such immediate visible effects, that they put a man intirely out of his own power, past any contest with his lusts and affections. But I am now speaking of lesser degrees of intemperance, which, though they do not commonly go by the names of gluttony and drunkenness, do however disorder and impair the mind, render its operations dull and inactive;

inactive ; so that notwithstanding many good purposes and resolutions, we cannot proceed with constancy in this great work ; and experience will convince us what interruption one intemperate meal will give to the work of piety and religion. They who will make any commendable progress in the crucifying their affections and lusts, and obtaining good degrees of those virtues and graces that are contrary to them ; who will bring their minds to habitual holiness and a heavenly temper ; to meekness and humility, and all the graces of a devout and pious soul, must bring themselves to that pass, that they shall command their appetites, with respect both to the quantity and quality, of such meats and drinks as they find prejudicial to the health either of body or mind. Every man *that strives for the mastery*, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 25, *is temperate in all things* ; which is meant more particularly of eating and drinking ; since the allusion is to such as dieted themselves after a particular manner for running a race, and he proposes his own example ; *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air* ; because, as it follows, he by temperance and abstinence kept his body under, and brought it into subjection, which if he had not done, his progress in a Christian course would have been with great uncertainty ; his struggle with his affections and lusts be but beating the air, and he himself would have been a cast-away.

SERM.  
XXIX.

2. He that will intirely get the better of himself in restraining all his appetites, and governing his passions, must take his mind off from this world, and place it upon the other: This indeed looks like a very general saying, and in its full extent takes in all the business of religion; but I speak of it now in a more restrained and limited sense; and my meaning is, that a man must once for all propose to himself Heaven, and the happiness of the life to come, as the chief end of all his actions; he must resolve to save his soul, though it be at the expence of all the satisfactions and pleasures of this life; and possess his mind thoroughly with this thought, *what shall it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul.* He may be very industrious in the business of this world, and it is often his duty so to be; but in the midst of the greatest hurry of worldly affairs, our mind must be so loose to them, that the main bent of our thoughts and inclinations must be the other way; and so forceably too, that all the things of this world, shall be subservient to another. It is in this sense our blessed Saviour says we cannot *serve God and Mammon*; either this world or the other will have the ascendancy in us, and be the chief prevailing motive; and that which is uppermost in our thoughts, will have the best title to our services.

Now when this is once become the firm and unshaken purpose of the mind, and that we have laid down to ourselves a fixt and de-  
 terminate

terminate scope, then of course all the powers SERM. and faculties of soul and body take a bias that XXIX. way, we have our eye upon it through the whole course of our lives, and it becomes the object of all our passions and inclinations, in-  
 fomuch, that from the hour that a man thus sets his mind upon heaven, he strikes off those bands that tie him down to this world; he is disengaged and at liberty, and all the things of it begin to lose the power and force they have to work upon his passions and affections; and then he will find the work of crucifying them easy and practicable: *where your treasure is, i. e. your main scope and great end, there will your hearts be also*, all your desires and longings will be that way; we shall be ever pursuing of it; all our affections and passions will center there; it is that will sway and influence them all, and though there be ever some reluctances and contrary tendencies in the flesh, which may occasion many interruptions, yet whenever the mind hath time to deliberate, the great end we have laid down to ourselves will prevail.

Thus it was that St. Paul was *crucified to the world*, and the world to him; the things of this life became dull and insipid to him, trifling and untempting, so that he was past being seduced by them. He had lost all taste and relish for them, he counted them all but dung, and was as unmoved by them, as if he had neither sense or appetites left; so strongly had he impregnated his soul with a great  
 opinion

SERM. opinion of the cross of Christ, and set his  
 XXIX. heart upon the view he had to the glorious  
 } consequences of his death and sufferings.

3. Another great means of crucifying our affections and lusts is the use of voluntary mortifications and self-denials. When any thing becomes the occasion of sin to us, and hath the force of a temptation likely to prevail upon us, whether our company, our diversion, our food, nay, our business or any worldly enjoyment whatsoever, we must deny it our selves be it ever so dear to us, ever so agreeable. This is matter of indispenfible duty; this is not in our choice; for those temptations which are not to be overcome when they are upon us, must be always kept at a distance. The mortifications and self denials I am now speaking of, are more voluntary, namely, what St. Paul, 1 Timo. iv. 8. calls *bodily exercise*, which he says, *profiteth little*, i. e. they are of no value, if compared with that holiness they are only the means of acquiring, that righteousness which he opposes to it which is *profitable for all things*, i. e. truly valuable in it self, and which intitles us to the blessings of this life and another, so that considered in themselves, and put upon the level with righteousness, or in opposition to it, they are of no weight at all; but as they are means and instruments of acquiring that holiness, they are of great value. This bodily exercise consists in frequently restraining ourselves  
 in



in our lawful pleasures; and occasions pain and uneasiness in the use of things disagreeable to our sensual appetites, habitually crossing and thwarting our inclinations and desires, and using them to disappointments, even in instances no where forbid. This becomes matter of duty in some cases, where the power of sin in us cannot be broke without a rigorous course of severities; some kinds will not be cast out without fasting and prayer: and this expression in the text, of crucifying our affections and lusts, supposes such prevalent corruptions in our nature, that they are not to be overcome without the use of such mortifications and self-denials, and particularly without chastening our soul with fasting, as David speaks, which is therefore so much recommended in the New Testament, wherefore if in the denying your lusts and affections, and in the use of these voluntary self-denials and mortifications, you find uneasiness and regret and trouble, consider that the flesh is then a crucifying; the more pain and uneasiness, the better; and that whatsoever the anguish and trouble is, it is vastly short of those pangs which were endured by our Saviour on the cross, and which we ourselves must endure, if God should call us to it.

Now from hence appears the great advantage of all afflictions and sufferings, and the reason of that stress which is laid on them in the New Testament, in order to the attainment of evangelical holiness; namely, because  
of

SERM. of the direct tendency they have to subdue and  
 XXIX. mortify all our corrupt inclinations, to hum-  
 ble the mind, and take it off from the things  
 of this world. Rom. viii. 29. it is said that  
*whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to  
 be conformed to the image of his son, (i. e.) by  
 sufferings; these having so great an efficacy  
 to form us to the image and likeness of the  
 son of God. Therefore St. Paul tells us,  
 Phil. iii. 10. that his earnest ambition was to  
 be made conformable to his death, by suffering  
 as he did, who himself was made perfect  
 through his sufferings: and he says in another  
 place, that he bore in his body the marks of the  
 Lord Jesus, that is, his sufferings, which  
 gave him such a resemblance of his Saviour.*

The pains, and labours, and miseries, inci-  
 dent to us all in this life, are so necessary to  
 wean us from it, and crucify all our affections  
 and lusts, that the cursing of the ground, and  
 dooming of man to eat his bread in the sweat  
 of his brow, seems to be turned into the great-  
 est blessing. For to what stupendous height  
 of wickedness would mankind have arrived to,  
 if they had all variety of incitements to work  
 upon their lust and passions, without these fre-  
 quent and powerful checks and allays.

It is true, that if the afflictions come upon  
 us for the testimony of a good conscience, and  
 profession of the truth of the Gospel, the  
 bearing of them with patience carries with  
 it an additional merit. But however they  
 come upon us, there is this great and excellent  
 use

use to be made of them, and therefore, what we are to do is, by a perfect resignation to the will of God, to turn them as far as we are able, into voluntary acts of mortification and self-denial; this is so far from being any height of fancy, or abstracted thought, that it will be literally performed if we make the right use of them, and apply them all as happy opportunities of crucifying our affections and lusts, and taking off all the passions of the mind from this world, to place it upon another.

SERM.  
XXIX.

And there is this difference between making a good and proper use of those afflictions which come upon us unaccountably, by a general providence, and those which are apparently for the profession of truth; that the former supposes in the mind a full conviction of the over ruling hand of God in all things that befall us, and a firm persuasion that God will make all things work together for our good in the end.

Having thus spoke of the most effectual means of performing this great work of crucifying our lusts and affections, I am now come to the third thing I proposed.

III. Namely, to instance in two or three things, in order to prevent mistake, and for the more prudential conduct of ourselves herein.

I. And first then, the wisest and the shortest course we can take is, to mark out that lust or sinful affection which is most reigning  
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SERM.  
XXIX.

and predominant in us. In all tempers there is some one sin that prevails beyond all other, I mean till men are become intirely proffligate and quite alienated from the life of God; then they are equally disposed for all wickedness with greediness. I am not now speaking to these, but even in such as have not cast off all resolutions of repentance and amendment, there is some one temptation which hath the ascendancy of all other, and is aptest to captivate and overcome them; in some it is unchastity; in others coveteousness; in others vanity and ambition; in others gluttony and drunkenness; in some one, in some another, according to their different ages, or constitutions, or circumstances: this darling lust or dearest affection, must be singled out, and we must engage it with the utmost vigour and resolution; we must set ourselves against it with all our might, and though the struggle be painful, and the habit inveterate, yet we must never desist nor yield, until we have got the better, and gained an intire conquest over ourselves in that point.

When once this is performed to good effect, and that the one grand aspiring sin is thus thrown down; it's fall will be like that of Lucifer's, and carry with it a numerous train of inferior lusts and affections, which were all it's constant attendants and necessary adherents; for if you observe it, whatever lust or passion predominates, it hath a strange power to distort all the faculties of body and mind,

mind, and wrest them to it self, so as to make them all subservient to the great end it pursues; so that when the force of this great temptation is broke, the greatest part of our trouble and uneasiness is over; the rest will fall of course, and we shall find but little pain in crucifying whatsoever of them lurk behind, upon the first discovery.

The only great danger here, is lest we should what this strongest tendency to sin in us is; for though people are commonly very quick and discerning in smaller instances of sins, yet they are blind to that which is most reigning and predominant in them. It may be for the same reason, that we can easily spy out lesser spots in the skin, but when the taint is general, and over runs the body, it deceives the view; when it is all one colour, we mistake it for our natural complexion, and are not solicitous for a cure. Upon this fatal mistake it is, that you will see men express much zeal in mortifying their other lusts and affections, and yet intirely overlook the great prevailing sin; though this be such trifling, that it is hard to find a comparison that will come up to the folly of it; it is as if one should sadly lament a little pain in the finger, when the whole body is affected with a mortal distemper: for this very reason it is, that so many struggle with temptation to so little purpose, and labour all the days of their lives with so little progress, because they began at the wrong end; they never gain a comendable

SERM.  
XXIX.

ble conquest over their spiritual enemies, because they never engage the main body, and spend all their strength in skirmishes with the outguards only, and inconsiderable parties.

2. Another thing we are to observe, is that the great work of crucifying our lusts and affections, is not to be performed all at once; it is not one single act of execution, as that of our Saviour's, from whence the expression is taken; but a continued habit of breaking the force and power of them gradually. It is true, that upon the strength of the first resolutions, men may abstain from all grosser acts of every kind of sin, but to gain an intire conquest over all the vitious inclinations of our nature, and bring them intirely under the conduct of reason and grace, so as to adorn our souls with all the instances of evangelical holiness that are opposite to them; this is a work of time, and is to be the employment of our whole lives.

If this work of crucifixion were to be effected by the violent effort of a furious zeal, many more would attain to it than do; they would rush upon it of a sudden, and bear a great deal for a little time; but when the heat of their resolution abates, and they find such constant returns of the temptation, and feel the pain and anguish still remain, then they can bear it no longer, and quit the glorious conquest for a little present ease.

Alas! the crucifying our affections and lusts, is more than giving our body to be burnt;

burnt; it is a work of mature deliberation, of SERM. a continual patience and steady perseverance. XXIX.

Those primitive Christians, whose forward zeal hurried them on to a voluntary resignation of themselves to torments and death, might this way have gratified the utmost ambition of their souls, by rendering their whole lives one continued martyrdom; they might thus have died daily with St. Paul, for months and years, and many revolutions of them.

3. Another thing we are to observe in crucifying our affections and lusts is, that we are not to expect that they can be totally extinguished. This was the foolish extreme of Pagan ignorance, and professedly maintained by a whole sect of men; and is at this day no small hindrance to the progress of virtue in Christians, who do not consider it: for being for this reason ignorant of the true bounds and nature of virtue and vice, it becomes matter of no small scruple and discouragement to them. All our natural appetites are necessary for the life, and health, and vigour of the body, and our passions are necessary instruments of virtue and goodness in the soul; in our first creation, they were the ornament of our nature, and the immediate seat of our perfection and happiness; and it is by the improvement of these, that we shall shine with rays of glory in another world.

The true import of this expression, of crucifying our lusts and affections is, that we regulate and govern them; that we break the

SER M.  
XXIX.

violence of all our bodily appetites, so as to have it in our power to gratify them in such degrees only, as reason and religion shall prescribe; and that we ever deny them in all forbidden instances, that as the Apostle expresseth it, *sin might not reign in our mortal bodies*, and that we should not *fulfil the lusts of the flesh*; that we moderate our passions and rectify the desires and affections of our minds; that we place them upon right objects, take off our affections so from the things on the earth, and set them on things above, that nothing here may ever move or transport us to any immoderate degree, that we may know how to be angry and not sin; this the Apostle calls mortifying our *inordinate affection*. When our passions are brought under this regulation, even the most violent of them, by giving them a different turn, may be changed from the depth of sin, to a great height and perfection of holiness, as it was in the case of St. Paul. When they are thus under government, and exercised upon their proper objects, they give life to the will, render it active and forward, and inspire it with vigour and sprightliness.

Because neither our appetites nor passions are to be totally extinguished and destroyed, the struggle between the flesh and the spirit will never cease intirely in this world; our appetites will be ever craving, and our affections will always have some tendency to such things as give a present pleasure and entertainment to the mind: while we live in this world there will



will be always some remains of them, and they will be the occasions of a continual exercise of virtue: but they are then said to be crucified, when they are restrained from being luxuriant and exorbitant; when they do not domineer or rage, when they resist but with faint and feeble efforts, when they struggle, but always without success, when though they crave continually, they are always cross and disappointed, and in short, when they are so perfectly conquered, that though they live, yet it is like captives in chains and fetters, which serve only to grace our triumph.

I cannot forbear observing here, how full an answer this is to the taunts and fleeing objections of wicked and profligate men, against persons of a true profession of piety and holiness; by saying that they are not without the same appetites and inclinations with other men: it is true they are flesh and blood, and men of like passions with themselves; we have all the same natural propensions of body and mind, and thus far they say true, but that which makes the difference is, that some men restrain and govern them, and indulge them in such degrees only, and in such instances, as are permitted by the laws of God and nature; the other give them a loose, and gratify them in all instances indifferently, without regard to either. And this is so great a difference, that it renders one a good man, and the other a wicked; a distinction so great, that it will last to eternity. That is a true

SERM. XXIX. condition of soul, where the appetites are never indulged beyond the due proportion; where the affections obey, though unwillingly, and are under intire command, though against their own bent and tendencies; where they will yield, though against nature, and submit to principles that thwart and contradict them, and comply with what is most opposite and disagreeable to them.

IV. And now I am come to the 4th and last thing I proposed, which was to apply the two motives in the text, to prevail on us to the performance of this great work.

I. The first of them is more plain from the text, namely, that they who do not crucify the affections and lusts are none of Christ's. A little before, where he numbers up many of those affections and lusts that are to be crucified, it follows, *of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* i. e. remember, I warn you before hand, and tell you over and over, that they who live and die with any of these affections and lusts unmortified in them, can never hope to be saved: and then he says at the 24th verse in the words of the text, that *they that are Christ's have crucified them already*; and if they have not done so, it is plain they are Christians in name only, in a publick shew and appearance.

Now if a man had but a thorough sense of the great infirmity and corruption of human nature,

nature, he would begin to be sensible how great and difficult the work is, this of crucifying all our affections and lusts, it is no obvious easy thing to be begun and carried on to perfection upon the strength of a few good resolutions, though ever so sincere; this is no more than a good beginning, and the cool of the morning with the labourers, and they cannot yet make a judgment of what they are to undergo in the heat of the day, when they find the stubbornness of their vicious inclinations abate but by insensible degrees, and that nature is ever and anon recoiling upon them, and withal, by what slow steps they will advance, in introducing into their souls the habits of all the contrary virtues, and by what continued and unwearied diligence, they must add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and so through all the virtues and graces of the Gospel.

No man can know the difficulty of this work but by the trial, it is a long time before the anguish of this crucifixion abates, and one hardly ever arrives in this world to be altogether insensible of the pain, though he may bear it with resolution, and triumph over it. The many poor souls who are deceived with this notion, that they can commence saints of a sudden whenever they please to set about it, little consider this, and how great the change is which the Scripture supposes to be made in the inclinations and tendencies of our whole nature,

SERM. nature. Infomuch that we shall with a  
 XXIX. mighty emphasis, be denominated dead and  
 crucified. Rom. viii. 10. *If Christ be in you,*  
*the body is dead because of sin,* says St. Paul,  
 and he says of himself in another place, Gal.  
 ii. 20. *I am crucified with Christ.*

And yet as great and difficult a thing as this is, it is the sure mark of distinction between those that are truly Christ's, and those who are none of his. And it is not difficult for a person to form a judgment of himself from hence, whether he be a true and sincere Christian, or in profession only. The Apostle hath put the matter upon a short and peremptory issue, Rom. viii. 13. *If ye live after the flesh he shall die; but if ye through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;* what then must they think of themselves who grow old in their sins? and through the whole course of their lives never have one serious thought of crucifying their affections and lusts, nor ever decline the gratifying of any of them, in all instances wherein they may do it without an open violation of the rules of civility, and the laws of the land. Should you point one of these men out, and tell him that he is no Christian, or that it is mockery to call himself so, he would take fire at the affront, and though perhaps he hath an inward contempt for all revealed religion, and not the least regard for it left, if he were to be cut off from the body of the church by excommunication, he would oppose it with all  
 his

his worldly substance, and to his ability SERM.  
would stir up all the powers of Earth and XXIX.  
Hell to wreck his revenge upon those who  
should attempt it; and all this for the name  
of christian, which will serve for no other  
purpose, but to render his damnation the more  
insupportable : with such monstrous absurdity  
and contradiction do men act in religion, who  
in all the things of this world are very quick  
and discerning.

But I am sensible how little any discourse  
of this nature is like to touch those that are  
past feeling. I wish I could tell what to say  
that might leave a deep impression upon the  
minds of such, who having a plentiful fortune,  
and being in easy circumstances, never  
think of these severer duties of religion, and  
who, though they are guilty of nothing gross  
and exorbitant, yet indulge themselves in all  
tenderness and delicacy; live in wantonness  
and luxury, and who make it the study of  
their lives to gratify every longing desire, in-  
somuch, that they are scared with the very  
expression of crucifying their lusts and affecti-  
ons. It is for this very reason our Saviour says,  
*it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of  
a needle, than for a rich man to enter the king-  
dom of God,* because of the insuperable diffi-  
culty there is in restraining and mortifying  
our vitious inclinations, where there is afflu-  
ence and abundance of the things of this world  
to gratify them all; they would do well to  
consider our Saviour's similitude is drawn

SERM. from a natural impossibility, and that he re-  
 XXIX. solves the work of their salvation into the mi-  
 raculous and extraordinary power of God.

2. The other motive I shall mention, is a very strong one, though drawn from the text by implication only, that is, that unless we crucify them, they will crucify us, and be our tormentors both in this world and the next.

How far unmortified appetites and passions unrestrained conduce to render people miserable in this life, is the observation of every day. All the miseries that come upon human nature proceed from this cause; and you shall rarely hear of any person ruined and undone, but it is originally from the gratifying of these: And how many instances are there of persons, who, by one single act of gratifying a lust or disorderly passion at their first setting out in the world, have entailed upon themselves a series of miseries for their whole life; and by making but one false step, have never been able to recover it. In some this happens all at once; in the case of others, the mischief steals upon them more gradually, sooner or later, as they give way to the indulgence of their sinful lusts and affections.

But where it never comes to this extremity, there is not so poor a wretch as he that hath given himself up to the slavery of his sensual appetites and inordinate affections; and is come to that pass, that he is ever easy or uneasy in his mind, just as these are gratified or disappointed; then it is in the power of  
 every

every body and every thing to ruffle and dis-  
compose him, to break his rest and destroy  
his quiet; any one with the breath of his  
mouth may raise a storm in his breast, and  
make it work like the troubled sea; and he is  
never without perpetual uneasiness when all  
things do not suit his fancy and humour, and  
exactly hit his gust and relish.

Now this shews itself much more when  
men grow into years, when all their bodily  
appetites decay; when these become languid  
and feeble, then they are nice and curious; there  
is perpetual vexation and anxiety in the hu-  
mouring of them; they are more craving than  
ever, and yet more difficult to be gratified;  
and that which compleats the misery of this  
condition is, that at the same time the appe-  
tites grow weaker, the passions grow stronger,  
and both of them much more difficult to be  
rectified and overcome than ever; insomuch  
that it is an observation well worth laying to  
heart, namely, that unless men obtain a conquest  
and mastery over their lusts and passions in the  
strength and vigour of their life, when they are  
in their greatest force and violence, the work is  
hardly ever to be done to good effect afterwards.

But there are yet worse effects of giving way  
to the inordinate and irregular passions and af-  
fections of the mind; for by a long and habitual  
indulgence of any of them, they often gain such  
an ascendancy over a man, that he shall be  
intirely out of his own power, and it shall  
end in some degree of frenzy and distraction.

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SERM.

XXIX.




SERM.  
XXIX.

I do not say that this is always the cause of a disturbed imagination and disordered reason; but it is more commonly so than is generally believed; and it is often a degree of madness before it goes by that name. The disorder of the head begins in the heart; they set their hearts upon some worldly enjoyment, upon which their minds dwell so long, and all their affections are so intensely employed upon it, that their thoughts are fixed; and that alone can move them, and every thought or mention of it moves them intemperately. This same holds true in a great variety of instances of this sort; insomuch, that nothing is more ordinary than to see people so far gone in the habitual indulgence of some sinful affection, that they are past all cure, from the reasonings either of themselves or others; and when they are thus possessed with their own, as with an evil spirit, it hurries them on to many extravagancies, and casts them sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water. Nor will the disorder of their reason take away the guilt of the sins they are betrayed into by this, it being all wilful in its cause, and should have been prevented by a timely restraint and regulation of those passions which have brought them to that.

This I take to be much the case of melancholy. It is true, some constitutions are more disposed for it than others; but in all, when it is indulged to that degree as to impair the reason, it too often proceeds from the predominance



minance of some sinful passion or affection; SERM.  
such as discontentment at their condition; XXIX.  
want of faith, and distrust of God, and his   
promises to us through the merits of a crucified  
Saviour; or from something of that nature  
which they let grow upon them, till it takes  
full possession of their minds; and thence it  
proceeds to the unreasonableness, and  
groundless fears and despondencies, of a reli-  
gious melancholy; whereas it was all at first  
the sin of their souls, which it was their busi-  
ness and their duty to have rectified in time.

And thus it is with those splenetick pangs  
and agonies of the mind, which some people  
describe to be so grievous and terrible. This  
passes currently for a distemper altogether of  
their body; whereas it is too often the sin of  
their souls, and takes its first rise from affec-  
tions unmortified, and passions too intently  
bent upon the things of this world: Sometimes  
from fear of some misfortunes falling upon  
them in this world, they know not how nor  
when: But all fears unaccountable or ground-  
less are sinful. Sometimes from covetousness,  
or envy, or anger; nay, sometimes from ma-  
lice, and want of opportunity of revenge:  
Sometimes from ambition, and a close inten-  
tion of the mind upon worldly schemes and  
projects. When these, or any thing of this  
nature fastens upon the mind, so as to grow  
troublesome and uneasy to a man in his retire-  
ment, then it gets the name of a disease, and  
then it is a ready excuse for sin; it is at last  
indeed

SERM. indeed a bodily distemper ; for the continuance  
 XXIX. of any of these affections does operate upon  
 the body till it grows into an habitual infirmity: This again infects the mind, and then indeed the help of physick is necessary to work the cure. But it is very often laid upon the body, when the disorder is in the mind ; and is in truth a predominance of some sinful passions and affections, and a want of those evangelical graces, which, if rightly improved, would fettle and compose the mind.

Now as to another life, how far unmortified affections and lusts will contribute to the misery of the damned, is impossible to conceive ; but that they will do so, is more than probable from those sad effects we see of them in this life. And I take this to be the very reason of the precept of crucifying them ; because the wisdom of God doth see, that otherwise they will render us eternally miserable ; for certainly damnation and misery in another world, will follow by a necessity more natural and inevitable, than is generally thought.

It is observed, that when the health and vigour of the body decays by age or infirmity, all its appetites that have been habitually and immoderately gratified, leave so deep an impression on the mind, that they remain there to the last, in full strength, and become then more insuperable than when they were in the body. And if the defilement of fleshly lusts, can thus taint the very mind and conscience even in this life, it is more than probable that the  
 wretch

wretch will carry them all to another world SERM.  
with him. And what a deplorable condition XXIX.  
of soul must that be, when he hath no power  
left for gratifying his appetites to the things of  
this world, and hath not the least inclination  
or desire for the things of another; when he  
hath nothing now to expect, but the time  
when all the great variety of lusts and passions  
in human nature, shall revive again, and ren-  
der him fit company for those infernal fiends;  
of whom we can form no conception now,  
but under the similitude of a body racked and  
distorted with raging lusts and furious passions.  
It is no wonder that libertines and sensualists  
when they come near their end, are observed  
to cling to this world, loath to let go their  
hold; and catch at every little hope of life, as  
a drowning man would at a bulrush; and sure-  
ly they must have no slight notion of what the  
torment of insatiable lusts and raging passions  
in another world must be, who run the ha-  
zard of everlasting burnings, rather than un-  
dergo the pain and anguish of denying the  
gratification of them in this life.

On the contrary, if we persist with resolu-  
tion and constancy in crucifying these affec-  
tions and lusts, till we get intirely the com-  
mand of them, it is the most glorious con-  
quest in the universe. Our whole nature is  
then put into a posture and disposition for that  
glorious change at the last day; for the migh-  
ty power of God to carry on that improve-  
ment, wrought by the assistance of his grace  
in

SERM. in us here, to inconceivable degrees of perfec-  
 XXIX. tion. This brings us to that heavenly temper  
 that will one day render us fit conversation for  
 those celestial spirits; who are in their first  
 make framed to love, joy, peace, and all those  
 gentler passions of the mind, which we with  
 so much pains attain to here below, and will  
 qualify us to be partakers of their bliss.

When a man hath arrived to this heavenly  
 temper, so as to be perfectly disengaged from  
 this world, and his affections all bent towards  
 another; when he is athirst for God, and all  
 the desires and longings of his soul are towards  
 him; then he hath laid a foundation for peace.  
 Peace with God; with all good men here;  
 with saints and angels hereafter; for eternal  
 ease and quiet, and everlasting peace in him-  
 self.

And may with an humble confidence say  
 with St. Paul, Gal. ii. 20, *I am crucified with  
 Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ  
 liveth in me: And the life which I now live in  
 the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God,  
 who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

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# SERMON XXX.

The great necessity of purity.

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JAMES iii. 17.

*The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

Nothing hath done Christianity more SERM. XXX. harm, than that humour which hath more or less prevailed in all ages of the church, of refining upon its doctrines, and making them more mysterious and spiritual than they really are. As far as they are designed to have an influence upon our lives, nothing can be more plain, and easy, and intelligible; nor better fitted for the encouragement of virtue, and utter subversion of all degrees of vice and wickedness, when they are considered and urged with that simplicity they were first delivered. But by this means men take off the edge and power of the Gospel; they turn it all into air and notion; so that instead of being a rule

SERM. rule for life; a light and direction for our  
 XXX. paths, and powerful motive to solid virtue and  
 holiness, it thus becomes the entertainment of  
 men's fancies, and too often works no effects  
 beyond those powerful impressions it leaves on  
 the imaginations of men.

This was the first policy of the Devil against Christianity, and the greatest stratagem that ever he put in practice to defeat its ends, and make it as useless as he could to the great purpose for which it was designed, the subversion of vice and wickedness, and reformation of the world. For no sooner had the Gospel been preached, and the number of converts were multiplied, and that people were taken with its simplicity and agreeableness to the natural sense of their minds, but there arose a sort of people, who turned all its doctrines into mystery, to avoid the practice of its precepts. The Gospel was too low and mean for them, and but a beggarly element; and therefore they would outdo the Apostles themselves, and go beyond all mankind in divine knowledge, and mysteries, and revelations, insomuch that they were called Gnosticks, from that profoundness of knowledge which they arrogated to themselves.

Thus they wrapt up all the clear light of the Gospel in clouds and obscurity, that they might work the works of darkness; and this they called wisdom, and knowledge, and a degree of revelation out of the reach of any but those of their own way. And therefore they pitied and despised all those who could  
 find

find no way to dispense with their duty ; and wrought out their salvation by a solid intire virtue, and a pure and undissembled holiness. SERM.  
XXX.

It is to these exalted knowing men in spiritual matters, that St. James here in my text opposes the wisdom from above. Under pretence of knowledge and mystery, they had found out a way to evade the discharging all necessary practical duties, and had incorporated all vitious lascivious practices into the very body of their religion. And therefore at the 15th verse of this chapter he tells them, this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish. Those elevations of mind, and pretences to something very great and extraordinary in religion, were not from God, but from the Devil. Whatever gave any encouragement to vice and wickedness, and a l arts of reconciling sin with the Christian religion, could not be from any infusion of the Spirit of God, but the delusions of their fancies, and came from Hell. *Who, says he, is the wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom*; i. e. if any man will approve himself to be truly wise, let him shew his wisdom, not in nice and intricate opinions, in pretences to revelations and mysteries, and unaccountable elevations of mind, out of the way of other people; but in the prudent conduct and management of his whole life, and a constant universal discharge of those virtues and gra-

SERM.  
XXX.

ces which are plain and obvious to every body. And here in the words of my text he proceeds to give a character of the true wisdom from above, or that which proceeds from the holy spirit of God, as it is distinguished from all false pretences whatsoever. *The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, &c.* So that here are six marks of that truly divine wisdom, and the first of these shall be the subject of my present discourse.

I. And first, the wisdom from above is said to be pure, *ἀγνή*; *i. e.* chaste; or, as another Apostle expresseth it, by the cleansing ourselves from filthiness both of flesh and spirit, from all unchaste inclinations of the body, and impure desires of the mind; from all immodesty in outward deportment, and from all the defilements of the fancy or imagination. This is the first property of that truly divine and heavenly wisdom, which St. James here places in direct opposition to that specious pretence of elevated sanctity and holiness in those first hereticks, who under colour of a more refined and spiritual religion, and of more extraordinary degrees of knowledge, despised the practice of plain solid virtues; such as justice, and temperance, and particularly chastity; inso-much that their consciences were easy, and they frequently entertained themselves with religious transports, in the midst of all manner of lascivious practices.

Now though nothing in nature can be more absurd, and contrary not only to Christianity,  
but



but to that common sense of good and bad, of SERM. vice and wickedness, which is in every one: XXX. Yet there are not wanting, even at this day, many who lye under this fatal delusion; and think that their devotion and outward piety, their spiritual vouchsafements, their confident persuasion of their election, their frequent religious heats, and the zeal and warmth of their imaginations, shall out-power the guilt of all their unchastity and lasciviousness, and sanctify these worst of vices. It is this which supports the esteem of these things in the hearts of many, and which puts them upon making it the main business of religion to labour after these things incessantly, even to the utter neglect of a thorough reformation of all vice, and the practice of solid virtue.

I am persuaded I speak to their consciences, and reach the very bottom and first spring of all those spiritual delusions, when I say, that which makes them so intent and eager after things of that nature, is a secret opinion they have, that they will in a great degree compensate the want of a strict discharge of these moral practical precepts of Christianity. Thus they turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, going on in habitual lewd and vicious practices, together with a constant discharge of all things which carry the appearance of holiness: Their pangs of conscience, and elevations of mind, have their due returns, and succeed each other. So that the zeal of those people is a strange kind of monstrous composition,

SERM. made up of the heats of lust, and the warmth  
 XXX. of a religious frenzy : The saint and devil is  
 united in one person, they are now rejected,  
 and again very full of confidence and assurance,  
 both in very great extreams ; but their  
 imagination commonly gets the better of their  
 judgments, quiets their consciences, and leaves  
 them easy at the last. There is a lively description  
 of this sort of people in the Proverbs,  
*There is a generation who are pure in their own  
 eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness :*  
 And the Apostle's description of them is, that  
*they hold the mystery of faith, but not in a pure  
 conscience.* They believe all the articles of  
 faith, and are very much affected on all occasions  
 with the consideration and mention of  
 them ; but are manifestly defective in that  
 inward reformation of life which the Gospel  
 requires.

The chief causes and ground of this delusion  
 seem to be one or both of these things, either

1. That opinion so many have taken up of  
 their absolute election, a doctrine so directly  
 destructive of virtue and goodness, that it hath  
 sent many a soul to hell, with a full persuasion  
 of their being saved ; because they did not  
 well consider, that the Gospel will never save  
 any but those that it reforms. So that though  
 people were endued with the gift of prophecy,  
 and unawares understood all mysteries and all  
 knowledge ; though they had all faith, so that  
 they could remove mountains ; yet, without a  
 strict observance of the precepts of the Gospel,  
 and of those

those of chastity among the rest, they shall all SERM. avail them nothing; as the Apostle says in the XXX. case of charity, they shall be as *sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal*; nothing but an insignificant empty noise, without any thing of the real power and efficacy of religion.

2. Another too general cause of these groundless presumptions is, their inclinableness to lay all their sins, of this nature especially, upon the account of infirmity; they look upon the temptations of this kind to be the greatest that are incident to human nature, and therefore they hope it is not in their power to conquer them. So that they appease the clamours of their consciences with this thought, that their minds are pure, though their bodies are polluted; and though they do indeed commit sin, yet it is with no hearty concurrence of their judgments; it is *the evil they would not but they commit*; and they are the more confident of their being sins of unavoidable infirmity, because they serve God after the inner man, in all other instances of devotion and piety. But as it is the most profound hypocrisy, so this excuse doth but render it more dangerous and incurable; for this very thing, as the Apostle argues in that whole chapter, from whence they fetch their comfort; this very thing, is what will render their sin yet more sinful and damnable. For to commit any sins with a full persuasion of mind that they are such, is one of the greatest aggravations in the world; they are already accused by  
Y 3 their

SER M.  
XXX.

their own consciences; and though they acquit themselves by a vain confidence of their own religious performances, yet as St. John says, *God is greater than their consciences*, and will surely condemn them. And it is then only we can have a just confidence towards God, when our hearts condemn us not; *i. e.* when we cannot accuse ourselves of any unmortified lusts, or wilful sins that we live in.

The Evangelical precepts of chastity of body and purity of mind, are indispensable; and God will surely judge all whoremongers and adulterers, whether these sanctified and timorous ones, or the more bold and profane; nor shall any lascivious person enter into the kingdom of God or of Christ.

All the devotion and piety in the world, will not atone for the want of any one virtue whatever; and particularly that of chastity. The true life and power, and energy of religion, doth not consist in the outward pomp and solemnity, but in the inward substantial change of the heart and mind; in the renewal of our nature, by a perfect conquest over all our sinful inclinations; and instead of them, introducing into our souls all the virtues of morality, and the divine graces of the Gospel; among which, this of purity of mind is one.

Having thus laid open that hypocrisy of men, which it was St. Paul's design here to expose; I shall observe to you a few things concerning the nature and excellency of this most divine virtue of purity.

I. And

I. And first, it is the foundation of all other virtues and graces whatsoever; and therefore the Apostle says, *the wisdom from above, or that religion which is from God, is chaste and holy*, and allows no degrees of impurity, either of body or mind. He places this qualification of it in the front of all the rest, and says, *it is first pure, or chaste*, because this is a necessary disposition for all goodness, and a fruitful parent of all virtue and holiness; inso-much that without this, it is utterly in vain to endeavour after virtue and goodness in any other instance whatsoever. Let a person get but this conquest over himself in this, and then all other graces and virtues will flow in upon the soul: And it is easy for one who hath acquired habitual purity of body and mind, to be any thing else that is good. When they have obtained this glorious victory, nothing in religion can be too hard and excellent for them: Nay, I may say, it is hard for them not to be good in all other respects; for when this clog is removed that weighs down the soul, it mounts of its own accord towards Heaven, for its original desires were there: And it is the sensual pleasures of this life that sink it as low as Hell; and instead of being invested with the bright glory of Seraphims, they leave it in endless flames, which shall never cease to burn, but never purify its dross.

By the attainment of this purity, the most inveterate prejudices against religion and virtue are removed; then they have a clear prof-

SERM.  
XXX.

pect of the innate excellency and necessity of them; they make a true judgment of things, and can think rightly, and consider coolly, and give a just weight to all the arguments for religion, and motives to virtue; which they can never do who give way to their lusts, and indulge their sensual appetites: For of all sins those of impurity have the directest tendency to blind the understandings of men, and take away the use of their reason, as well as of their passions in matters of religion. It spreads a dark cloud over all the faculties of the mind, so that they neither see nor consider any thing beyond this world. It utterly destroys all sense of virtue, and leaves no place in the soul for grace or goodness; it hardens the heart as if it were seared with a hot iron; their very mind and conscience is defiled, as St. Paul speaks, so that they become callous and insensible, and hardly ever to be restored to their native softness and temper again. And therefore in another place, speaking of those who gave themselves over to lasciviousness, he says, *they have their understandings darkened, being quite alienated from the life of God, because of the blindness of their hearts*; that they are past all feeling, and therefore *they work all uncleanness with greediness*; which are sentences so full and significant, to express the desperate condition of all those who are given up to this; how it wastes the consciences, embases their minds, obliterates all sense of God and goodness, and leaves them under a fatal necessity of damnation;

tion ; so that they seem to be already in the possession of the Devil. I say the Apostle expresseth himself so positively to this purpose, that it might well strike all those with horror and confusion, who are persons of the same stamp and character. SERM. XXX-  
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2. Of all virtues, this of purity gives us the greatest likeness of God. He is a spirit, and therefore the felicities and perfections of the divine nature are all intellectual, and farther removed from sensual pleasures than we can imagine: And therefore it is said, that they who have any hopes of glory, *purify themselves, even as God is pure.* They imitate this purity of God by weaning themselves from all sensual pleasures, and fixing their minds upon the felicities of heaven. When the minds of men are purged from those gross and earthly pleasures, then it is that the love of God takes place, and that our bodies become the Temples of the Holy Ghost ; and by his secret powerful operation, we are formed in all our faculties to the likeness of the divine perfections. Whereas the contrary vice, by a natural efficacy, creates in us a hatred of God ; it defaces the image of our Maker in us, and spreads the likeness of the Devil over all our faculties, by giving them a disposition to all manner of vice, so that they have not one sincere inclination to goodness left. But when the beauty of holiness shall become visible to all the world, then how shall we be ravished with the sight of

of

SERM. of a pure soul transformed into the similitude  
 XXX. of Christ, by being weaned from the pleasures of sense; then we shall see what are the charms of a chaste mind and a pure soul, which in the midst of even this infirm state, breathes out nothing but holy wishes of future enjoyments, when all the desires of it are towards heaven, when the mind is athirst for God, and can say with greatest ardency and vehemence, O! when shall I come to appear before God, that I may behold his glory, and be made fit for the conversation of those unpolluted spirits, who kept their station and never knew sin? How different is the state of these men from the condition of those who are given up to the gratification of their lusts, who cannot think of God without terror, nor of heaven without despair, nor of their sins without a secret dread and fearful expectation of future vengeance; for alas! all these gaudy incentives to lust, must first be turned into rottenness and corruption, and then become fuel for the infernal flames.

3. The 3d thing I shall observe to you concerning the nature of this most divine virtue of purity is, that it must be intire; it admits of no degrees of impurity, and it must be had to a good perfection or not at all. We may have a moderate degree of any other grace or virtue, and continue at a stay without any great improvement or decrease, but there is no mean in chastity. If there be any way given to impurity it knows no bounds,  
 and



and when people will indulge it in any degree, SERM. it is surely no sense of conscience, but some XXX. temporal regard that restrains them from going farther. So that it is easy to be wholly and intirely chaste, but nothing is more difficult than to be partly so. In respect of this virtue men are placed upon a precipice, and one false step sends them down a deep descent to the chambers of death, and their steps go down to hell with that violence, that though it's flames are within view, yet they have neither will nor power to draw back, but are hurried on to eternal death and damnation, with a clear prospect and full conviction of what they are coming to. But where people resolve to give no way to this sin, and to be intirely pure, and cut off all the prologues and incentives to lust and debauchery, and to avoid those common levities of a mixt and promiscuous conversation, which betray them to the first degrees of it, no virtue will become easier and better secured.

If people would but carry a firm persuasion in their minds, that all degrees of this sin are unlawful, and withal, that the least degree of it leaves them in a full disposition for the greatest: I say if this were thoroughly considered, it would be an effectual motive to purity, to all those who have any serious thoughts of salvation left.

Though of all sins in the world, this leaves people under the greatest difficulties of repentance  
and

SERM.  
XXX.

and reformation, yet if they have not finned away all desire of purity and holiness (for then their condition is desperate) and that they have any sincere purpose of becoming truly virtuous left, it is certainly in their power to break through all difficulties, until they arrive at a perfect chastity. An orderly conduct of their lives, and prudent choice of their conversation, a regular temperance and diligence in their calling, together with certain returns of prayer to almighty God. I say, a firm resolution and obstinate perseverance in these things, will overcome the strongest inclinations in our nature. In this as in all other temptations, if we set our minds to it, and our heart be in the work, we shall overcome all difficulties; for we cannot express the mighty power of custom, and the secret force of a habit, in any instance of virtue and goodness whatsoever; though it work its effects but gradually, yet if it proceed it is irresistible; nothing is too strong for it, nor is any obstacle able to stand before it; it defeats all the powers of hell, and operates until it makes a change in us as great as if we were born again, and in a word, until virtue becomes easy, and pleasant, and natural to us.

4. The last thing I shall observe to you concerning this continence or purity is, that no virtue whatsoever hath such a tendency to give us comfort in the time of age or sickness, and in the hour of death. There are two things chiefly which administer comfort to a  
 person

person in the time of extremity, and when he is about to depart this world; the one is a view of his past life, and the other the influences of the holy spirit of God. As to the

SER M.  
XXX.

1st. A view of his past life, those who in the time of youth and health did not get a conquest over themselves in this point, and did not restrain and subdue their lustful inclinations when they were at the strongest, can never be able to judge of the sincerity of their repentance, when they come into a condition of weakness and infirmity, for there are two conditions necessary to that repentance which is never to be repented of, sorrow and amendment. As to their sorrow, there is no judging of the sincerity of this, because every body is sorry for their sin, when they can sin no longer; so that let the sorrow and anguish of their minds be ever so great, yet it may be nothing more than what the Gospel calls the sorrow of the world, that worketh death, that is, such a sorrow as men conceive for any worldly cross or disappointment, which doth not at all contribute to mend what is amiss, or retrieve the loss, and provide a remedy, but serves only to vex and disquiet the mind; so their sorrow may be no other than the gnawings of a guilty conscience, and apprehensions they have of the deplorable condition they have brought themselves to; and they have no way of judging of the sincerity of it left, since the other necessary condition, that of amend-

SERM. XXX. amendment, is then wholly out of their power. Men in age, and sickness, and infirmity, may have a trial of most other virtues and graces in some degree, but when the sins of lust, and temptations to impurity have left them, the measure of their iniquity, in this respect, is filled up; they have slipt the season for this virtue, which will never return again.

And besides it is very observable, how persons who in their younger days have given themselves the loose, and have indulged their vicious inclinations, do carry them with them to their graves; for as the Apostle speaks, *their very minds and consciences are corrupted*: what were the appetites of the body, take such deep root in the mind, that they remain there when the temptation ceases in the body, so that they become the exact emblem of the Devil, who though he be a spirit, and therefore can have no bodily appetites, yet is pleased and delighted with them.

But on the contrary, when a person in old age, or on his death bed, looks back upon his former life, and hath it to say that he exercised this virtue in its proper season; that he brought his body under, and by the grace of God suppressed and overcame the strongest tendency of human nature to vice and wickedness; and acquired habitual chastity in the greatest strength and vigour of life; that then he glorified God in this body; that he was modest and reserved in his whole deportment

ment, and that his chaste conversation, was visible to God and men. O! what a foundation has he laid for comfortable hopes of pardon and acceptance at the hands of God; what clear evidence this is for the truth and sincerity of his repentance, and how sure is he that he would do the very same, if he were to live his life over again.

SERM.  
XXX.

2. Another thing which administers comfort to a dying man, is the secret operation and influences of the holy spirit of God: no virtue doth so fit and prepare the soul for the entertainment of the Holy Ghost, which as he afforded help and assistance for the attainment of this virtue, so he will apply comfort and refreshment to the soul, when it stands most in need of it. By purity more especially, the body of a man becomes the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and he delights to dwell there, and where he dwells there must be peace of conscience, and joy, and assurance, when he sees them necessary for our support and comfort.

There are secret and insensible ways, by which the holy spirit of God doth influence the mind, and convey strength and comfort to our souls: by which I do not mean any such visible effects as shew themselves by violent heats of the imagination, and are express with extravagance of gesture and vehemence of speech, and are but often the transports of such as live in sin, and die in raptures; for  
when

SER M. when hypocrites through the course of their  
 XXX. lives have got a custom of dissembling with  
 themselves and all the world besides, it is just  
 in God to give them up to strong delusions,  
 that at the approach of death they should be-  
 lieve a lie.

But the effects of the spirit are such, as never will deceive any; it gives such a peace of conscience, a joy in the Holy Ghost, as creates a calmness all within; it is the still voice of God that whispers salvation, and gives us such an assurance as is full of humility; such desires of the presence of God, and the glories of heaven, as are rightly tempered with fear and reverence; and such a full trust in the merit and mediation of Christ, as is accompanied with a modest distrust of ourselves and our own performances; and upon the whole matter, such a degree of hope, as suffers us never to let go our hold and confidence, but wafts us safe over into the mansions of the blest; though our heads are giddy with scruples and despondencies by the way; where those sparks of light and uncertain dawnings of glory which are here afforded in the midst of clouds and darkness, shall clear up into a perfect day, and leave us in the full fruition of an eternal weight of glory.


This blessed degree of hope and comfort in the hour of death, is the natural result of this most divine virtue; whereas on the contrary, no sin like that of impurity empties the soul of grace, and so totally cuts off all communi-  
 cations

cations of the spirit of God: the body and mind are become foul and odious, and a fit-  
ter habitation for the unclean spirits of dark-  
ness, than for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; so  
that nothing sets men at a greater distance  
from God, in whose presence alone there is  
fullness of joy: and therefore when men are  
utterly deprived of all the emanations of his  
spirit, and totally separated and cut off from  
him for ever, if they have not sinned past  
feeling, if they can consider and reflect, and  
have any thought at all left, there can be no-  
thing but fright and astonishment; for when  
once they are wholly forsaken by the spirit of  
God, and that he is quite gone away, then  
all the terrors of hell rush in upon their souls.

SERM.  
XXX-  
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It is a dreadful thing for the mind of man  
not to know which way to turn itself in the  
midst of pain and weakness, and in the ago-  
nies of death, nor where to apply itself for  
help and comfort; there is no help from God,  
nor can we have it any where else. And  
therefore after the restless soul hath surveyed  
Heaven and earth, and left no place unsearch-  
ed, it is forced to retire at last, that it might  
give itself up to horror and amazement, and  
acquiesce in misery, without any expectation  
of relief, or the least prospect of ever being  
otherwise.

O! there is no describing it! nor is it possi-  
ble to imagine what it is to want the com-  
forts of the spirit in the time of extremity;  
until they come to feel it, they cannot be sen-  
sible

SERM. XXX.  fible what it is for a man to look up to God, but in vain; to cry for some help and comfort, and yet to have no answer; to be assured that there is no help but from God, and yet to despair of it there; and to beg for mercy and pardon, and yet find no room for it.

This is what all are coming to, that give way to their sins of impurity and lasciviousness. And therefore I have now no more to do at present, but to exhort you, that no one person here may go out now from the presence of that God of purity and perfect holiness, without a thorough conviction of the great excellence and necessity of this virtue of purity, and of the stupifying, damning nature, of the contrary vices, that you may be prevailed upon to exercise this virtue in its proper season, and acquire it while it is to be had.

By this means you will provide solid comfort for the time of age and weakness, and secure the consolations of the spirit in the hour of death. You will render yourselves amiable and lovely in the sight of God, that immaculate being and eternal fountain of purity and holiness, and you will become fit companions for those glorious and spotless spirits which surround his throne, and for those blessed Saints who have done the same before you, and who because they kept themselves undefiled, are now said *to follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goes.*

Let



Let us follow their example, by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, *looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.*

SERM.  
XXX.

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## SERMON XXXI.

The divine eloquence of our Saviour  
considered.

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JOHN vii. 46.

*The officers answered, never man spake like  
this man.*

SERM.  
XXXI.

WHEN the chief Priests and Pharisees, the most inveterate enemies of our Saviour, saw that his divine discourses met with success among the people, they began to be apprehensive what might be the consequence; for *many believed on him*; inasmuch, that the multitude was already divided, and they had reason to fear, as they did, that *the world might go after him*; and since they had no other way of confuting him but by force, they sent soldiers to apprehend him; who when they came, and heard those excellent discourses he made to the people at the feast, they returned without executing their commands; and made no other excuse for themselves but that in the words of this text, *that never man spake like this man.* They did not say for themselves  
that

that they could not find an opportunity, or that they feared the multitude, which they might have done, as the case stood, with great shew of probability; but they freely and ingenuously confessed the truth, that though they went with command and firm resolution to seize him, yet there were such charms and conviction in all he said, that he sent them away with a full persuasion that he was an excellent person. He spoke so well in his own defence, and reasoned so clearly concerning things, out of the reach of the common understanding of men before, that they were even amazed to hear, and had neither heart nor power left to lay hands upon him.

I shall not stay to draw a comparison between those great names for oratory among the heathen, and the divine eloquence of our blessed Saviour; I shall only observe in short, that they adapted themselves and all they said to men's lusts and passions; to their corrupt appetites and inclinations, and took all advantages of their ignorance, and prejudice, and credulity; whereas our Saviour laid all that aside, and applied himself only to the purest reason of men, and their best and most regular inclinations; having no end but one, namely, to lay a firm foundation for holiness; they persuaded by soothing and cherishing the imperfections of nature; his discourses tended only to heal and rectify them, they moved with sensible representations only, he insisted on things spiritual and insensible; their great

SERM. XXXI. topicks were riches, and honours, and pleasures, and ease and splendor; his rhetorick was crosses and misfortunes, afflictions and miseries, torments and death; insomuch, that he preached what was altogether new to the world, that they were blessed that mourn; and that *through much tribulation men must enter into the kingdom of Heaven*; they used all the methods of delusion and fallacy, those *words of men's wisdom*; he overcame only by undisguised and naked truth. By this short comparison, we see how little those mighty standards of heathen eloquence begin to appear already; for in truth their oratory was but one great art of deceiving. How very different from this is that of our Saviour, who never spoke but that men might become more wise, and virtuous and holy? It is no strange thing that a great father of the primitive church made it the first of his three wishes, *to have seen our Saviour in the flesh*: But it may justly raise our admiration, that the second should be *the hearing St. Paul preach*; for who was more like to have gratified his curiosity, and filled his expectations, than he who was *the very word of God*, as he was the most excellent person that ever was, so he was the greatest orator. The tongues of men and angels are not able to describe this divine eloquence, according to the worth and dignity of it. But since he is our great Lord and Master whom we must follow, though at such an immense distance behind; and a guide that

we must ever keep in sight, though we can never overtake him; and that we of the clergy are to imitate him in a double sense, as well in his manner of teaching, as in the practice of holiness; I shall enter upon the consideration of this divine eloquence of our Saviour; that through the assistance of that spirit that was on him without measure, among the other perfections of his most holy life, we may in some degree copy after him in this, which is the great privilege and glory of our order. And in doing this, I shall

I. Consider the matter and substance of what he spoke, and the stile he used.

II. I shall consider some of those advantages our blessed Saviour had, beyond all others, to *spake as never man spake*; and how far he is imitable by us in those instances.

I. And first, as to the matter and substance of his speech, it excelled all others in these three respects.

I. That it was of things beyond the reach of men to conceive, those mysteries of Christianity which lay hid from the foundation of the world, and which it was impossible for the utmost strength of reason to discover any thing of. And indeed who could reveal the secret will and mind of God, besides him who came down from God? Who but he that was the eternal wisdom of the Father, could shew men that there was a satisfaction to be made to the justice of God for the sins of men? That God incarnate was to *lay down his life a ransom for ma-*

SERM. *ny*: and that through his blood, repenting  
 XXXI. sinners were to be made clean? The whole  
 world had been used to offer sacrifices, in order to appease their Deities; but he alone could discover to us, that *the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin*; and therefore, that what efficacy there was in them, was only, as they had a respect to that one great sacrifice, which alone could be a sufficient atonement for them.

Who besides could teach men, that a supernatural assistance was necessary to think rightly in religious matters, to help us to form true notions of God and ourselves; and that we could never overcome our evil inclinations, and raise our minds to virtue and holiness, by mere strength of nature? He alone could teach how the lost condition of mankind was to be restored; how our shattered and distempered nature was to be healed; and by what methods we are again to be reinstated in the favour of God; how we are to recover the divine image we lost in our fall, and again become perfect, *as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

He alone could teach us the doctrine of the Trinity; that we are to be *baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; that *God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth*; that the inward rectitude of our minds is necessary to please him *who is the searcher of hearts*, and that he values no outward observances without it; that *he will have mercy, and not sacrifice*; and

and that faith and repentance are the only condition of remission of sins and salvation. SERM.  
XXXI.

Which of the Philosophers ever taught, that the happiness of Heaven is to be obtained by sorrow and lamentation; that *they are blessed who mourn, for they shall be comforted?* Which of them in all their laboured systems of morals ever equalled this, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them;* and for which the Roman Emperor raised to him a statue, and placed him among the number of the Gods? Or where shall we find any thing like that other saying; *What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? And what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* He only was able to speak it *who brought life and immortality to light,* and could say to the thief on the cross, *This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise;* thereby discovering to us the happiness of a pious soul in the state of separation.

He was the first that ever spoke plainly of the resurrection of the body; and confuted the Sadducees, by shewing them, how *God was not the God of the dead, but of the living.* No one before him ever so much as mentioned a general judgment of all the world at once: He doth not only do this, but he describes the very manner of it so particularly, that we shall scarce know more of it when we see it: That *before him shall be gathered all nations; that the angels shall separate the good from the bad; that sentence shall be pronounced on the wicked: That these*

SERM. *these shall go away into everlasting punishment,*  
 XXXI. *a lake of fire; but the righteous into life e-*  
 ternal.

He only hath discovered to us, that the happiness of another life is not sensual; that we shall not subsist then after the gross manner we do here, but that we shall be as the Angels in Heaven.

These, and such like wonderful things of God, were the subjects of his discourse; truths of so exalted a nature, that his hearers could not but be amazed and delighted with them: And what he thus plainly and with authority declared, none had ever before given the least intimation of. And, good God, what monstrous and absurd fancies did the wise men of the heathen world amuse and cheat mankind with, instead of these truths of God! They substituted such wild notions and extravagant dreams, instead of them, that we cannot sufficiently wonder at the times of that profound ignorance and delusion.

2. He always spoke of these things which were of the greatest concern and importance to mankind. Those who were most noted for eloquence, employed it generally for a party or faction, or to serve their own or some other person's private interest; but his discourse was ever of things of universal consequence to all degrees of men in every age: What he spoke was not in order to those little ends which mankind busy themselves so much about. *Sed quæ ad unum istud necessarium promovendum*



*dum spectant*; namely, the eternal well-being of soul and body in another life: Not to put men in the way of getting riches and honours, but to teach them to *be contented with food and raiment*; and that if they seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all other things that are necessary shall be added unto them. This was the great scope and design of all his discourses, and he never spoke any thing but what had a tendency that way. His doctrine was not like that of the Scribes and Pharisees, empty and cold, trifling about tything, mint, and cummin, washing of pots, and shaping of phylacteries; but about the weightier matters of the law, such as made men substantially good, reformed their minds, made them acceptable to God, and useful to men. They spent all their labour and pains in the very letter of the law, neglecting the plain signification of the words; but he explained and enforced that holiness and perfection of virtue which was signified by it.


The substance of his discourse was wonderful in this, that the things he treated of were all very agreeable to the best reason of men, and suitable to those sentiments that are natural to all men, though the things were beyond their reach to find out, all divine and spiritual; yet there is a wonderful condescension in all he said to the frailty of human understanding: he did not only discover what could not have entered into the heart of man to conceive, but made them plain and easy to every

SERM.  
XXXI.

SERM. every capacity, so that the true will of God is  
 XXXI. not now in Heaven, that we should say, *who*  
 } *shall go up for us to Heaven and bring it unto*  
*us, that we may hear and do it, for the word*  
*is nigh unto us in our mouths and in our hearts,*  
*life and good, death and evil are set before eve-*  
*ry man; infomuch that the meanest capacity,*  
*and the most illiterate person, knows more of*  
*those truths of God that are the great concern-*  
*ment of all mankind, than all the Philoso-*  
*phers of the heathen world did.*

The Scribes and Pharisees busied themselves in long and perplexed genealogies, and in finding out strange mysteries in the very letter of the law, where they never were designed; in reviving obscure traditions, and in dark enigmatical commentaries upon the text of Moses. And it was the custom of the heathens to wrap up all their knowledge, whether in nature or morality, in hieroglyphicks, in dark allusions and similitudes, in knotty sayings, and odd far-fetched inferences, and in all things they said, it seemed as if they took a pride in not being understood.

With what strange notion did Plato amuse the world with, concerning his *anima mundi*, and fivefold subordination of worlds, *de primo uno, & de circumvolutione omnium rerum circa deum, et in rebus quæ ad mores spectant qualia tradit aut potius symniatur communi hominum intellectui prorsus aliena. De reminiscencia, de pulchro & bono, de Κακο, δειμονια et Ευδαιμονια.* Some  
 few

few Philosophers may apprehend what he SERM.  
means, and hardly these, but of what use are XXXI.  
these things to the whole race of men? And   
much less can they apprehend what Pytha-  
goras means by his doctrine of numbers, by  
his odd number which he makes finite, and  
his even which he makes infinite, and the  
long series of philosophy he draws out of  
these, all mere cobwebs spun out of his own  
bowels, without any foundation in the truth  
of things: what odd and extravagant things  
has he taught concerning the transmigration of  
souls, and our affinity to beasts? And how did  
he take care by symbols that no body should  
understand what he thought every one ought  
to practise?

And thus most of the Philosophers rendered  
obscure what was in itself easy, as if they had  
a mind to cover the plainest things from the  
knowledge of others. But how much then  
to be admired is he, who though he knew all  
things, yet made no ostentation of his learn-  
ing or knowledge? Though he revealed those  
heavenly mysteries which none of them had  
the least glympse of, yet he made them so  
plain and easy, that none could be ignorant  
of the truth of them; so that all men might  
so far become divine Philosophers, as to un-  
derstand what should promote their welfare  
here, and procure them immortal happiness  
hereafter: and though he spoke often in pa-  
rables, yet they were plain to all who were  
not wilfully blind, and such only he design-  
ed

SERM. ed should not see, and therefore it was that he  
 XXXI. used them, *that seeing they might not see, and*  
 } *that hearing they might not understand.*

From whence we may see the error of those persons, who are at great pains in rendering these principles of christianity dark and obscure, which he hath delivered so plainly: he avoided all unnecessary niceties and abstractions, which served only to puzzle our understandings, but not to influence our lives; it had been happy for the church of Christ if all the preachers of the Gospel had laboured to imitate their great Lord and Master in this respect; but instead of recommending and enforcing the doctrines of the Gospel with that plainness and simplicity he delivered them, how have some spent all their lives in propagating empty and fruitless notions, and in raising difficulties that are not, on this side the grave at least, to be solved; and what a stir has been kept about trifles? How many questions have been proposed to be discussed in publick which are impious and prophane? And what a strange custom has prevailed of late, of mingling vain philosophy with our divinity, of solving all the methods of our redemption as well as of the creation by hypothesis, as if what Christ hath delivered us concerning this matter were not learned enough, and as if they were too mean for scholars, wherein I will be bold to say, that most of that which now is called learning, is but the dreams and fancies of men who let go the substance of religion,  
 and

and catch at a shadow?---And that the know-<sup>SERM.</sup> ledge of Christ, and him crucified is the no-<sup>XXXI.</sup> blest, as well as the most interesting and im-  
portant exercise of our understandings and af-  
fections.

Having now in some measure considered the sum and substance of what our Saviour spoke, I shall make a few observations on the style he used.

1st. And the 1st is, that it was natural, his expression was plain and easy, his words were such as were generally understood, and common in the conversation of the world, his similitudes and illustrations were taken from the most obvious things in nature, as from seed sown in the ground, a grain of mustard seed, a net, a husbandman, or from the known customs of the world, as that of an unjust steward, and the parable of the ten virgins, and many such like: he did not make use of any terms of particular arts and sciences, because the Gospel was designed for the illiterate as well as for the learned, and *that our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

This plainness and perspicuity is visible through the whole course of his preaching and conversation, and this was one thing that made the generality of the people admire his discourses, because he made every thing he spoke so plain and so easy; he did not spake in the language of a sect or party, but after such a  
manner

SERM. manner as was common and usual, so as to  
 XXXI. make what he said equally intelligible to all  
 } sorts of people.

Now in this the preachers of his Gospel should closely and industriously follow him, and the neglect of this may well be counted as one of the reasons, why preaching is generally attended with so little success. And there are two extreams which many run into, and thereby avoid the right path which has been marked out for us.

One is that of mean and sordid expression, which is the general style of people who have fallen into any degree of enthusiasm, they having neither learning nor inspiration, but by the help of spiritual pride and a warm imagination, or a heated fancy, they acquire a custom of heaping together a parcel of godly words and sentences, with numberless repetitions of God and Christ, calling election, reprobation; faith, regeneration; salvation, damnation; and other words of godly, important, and terrible sound, without any connexion, or reasonable, useful application or purpose; thus taking God's holy name in vain, prophaning his truths, and so terrifying some, and deceiving others, but never make any sober and steady profelytes to the doctrine of the Gospel; and then that they may appear to have greater intimacy with Heaven, and familiarity with God, they are apt to use many odious and indecent comparisons, bold and trifling expressions, sometimes even to  
 prophaneness

prophaneness and blasphemy, and this they call inspiration, and speaking by the spirit, which is the result of the greatest folly and ignorance, and a mere mockery of God and religion.

But 2dly, the other extreme, though it is not so bad, yet it is almost as useless, and that is when preachers neglecting the substance of what they are to speak, and the conditions of the people they are to speak to, they employ the strength of their mind in finding out witty allusions, in adorning their discourses with all the gaudy figures of rhetoric, and delight in round periods, or quaint sentences, and labour to be surprizing in every thing they say.

This is the common fault of young beginners, who coming newly from the exercises of the schools, imitate the same strain in divine things, which they used to admire in prophane, and where they are not made sensible of their error in time, it dissipates and breaks the strength of their minds, and they contract such a habit of turning every thing that way, that they carry on the humour to the last, and so continue to talk like boys when they are grey.

But we must remember that we are to preach and not to declaim, and that the mysteries of the Gospel and precept of Christianity, should be treated on and enforced, in a style like to that in which they were delivered; they are deprived of their force, by being thus disguised, and lose all their reverence in

SERM. such a light and gaudy garb. The word of  
 XXXI. God is of itself quick and powerful, and sharp  
 as a two edged sword, but this method of  
 preaching it, takes off all its edge, and pre-  
 vents its power and efficacy. St. Paul who  
 was well instructed in all the eloquence of his  
 time, yet says, that his speech and his presence  
 was not *with the enticing words of man's wis-  
 dom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of  
 power.* It is true, divine things should be  
 handled with as exact politeness of language  
 and style, as any worldly matters, and it re-  
 quires as much judgment to speak in the Church  
 as in the Court, but this does not consist in a  
 great variety of metaphors and figures of rhe-  
 torick, but in the purity, and plainness, and  
 significancy of our expression: that is not true  
 eloquence which dazzles, but that which  
 gives a useful light, and well proportioned to  
 the eyes of men's understanding; that is ever  
 the best expression which is most natural, and  
 which comes nearest to that used in common  
 conversation: our words are but the pictures  
 of our thoughts, and as that is always the best  
 picture which most exactly represents the  
 truth of the thing, and not that which is  
 painted in gaudy colours, so that expression is  
 best, which gives the best and the most lively  
 ideas of things as they are in themselves.

It is no easy thing to make our expressions  
 full and proper and significant; to make them  
 easy and intelligible, and the whole series of  
 our discourse clean and pure, not to wander in  
 genera-



generalities, but to represent all our notions SER M.  
clearly and distinctly, so as to have a fixed XXXI.  
and determinate sense in all we say, that all  
our meaning may be as clear as the light, so  
that other people shall easily apprehend us;  
so to adapt our expression to the nature of the  
things, that it keep pace with them, and rise  
and fall together with the subject.

These are the properties of a true style, and the shortest way to attain them all, is ever to be attentive to the matter we treat of, without being over sollicitous about our words; let us take care to think well and distinctly, and the expression will generally first offer itself which is most suitable to the nature of the thing, and we shall find that few of our thoughts are abortive in the expression but what were imperfect in the conception; if we observe this, our judgment will improve, and our style will become more polished every day; but if we apply our thoughts chiefly to the choice of words and sentences, our judgments will by degrees be corrupted and impaired, and all our discourses turned into froth and levity.

2. Another thing observable in our Saviour's style is, that it is strictly rational, and often closely argumentative, though the inferences are sometimes obscure to us, from the custom of the eastern nations, who spoke the substance of the premises, and left the application to be made by the hearers. And there

SERM. are very few things pathological in any of his dis-  
 XXXI. course; plain reason, and instruction, and  
 } propagating the truth was what he aimed at,  
 and he did not endeavour so much to move  
 men's affections as to inform their understand-  
 ings, and this was also what his Apostles had  
 chiefly in view in their writings.

Now from hence we may see plainly, how much both the preachers and people have been mistaken, who are apt to value every thing they hear or speak, only as it is more or less pathetick. But certainly, that eloquence which works upon the understanding, is more valuable than that which only moves the affections. There is no such triumph as a convicted mind, this receives a lasting impression: the reason of man is fixed and steady, and always the same, and does not easily change; but all our passions are fleeting and transient, they ebb and flow, and are then aptest to vanish when they are at the greatest height; and therefore, though we may move men's affections strongly, yet we may have but little influence upon their wills; the only way to do this effectually, is to make our way to it through the reason of men, and if we prevail on that, we need not be concerned about putting their passions into a tumult, for this often makes people think themselves very pious and holy when they are very wicked, and who are always very religious when their affections are warmed, and yet are very prone to commit sin in cold blood.

Certainly

Certainly this very mistake has done much harm in the world: I allow that we should try to sway the wills of men, by working on their passions as well as their reason, but then we must always begin with this latter, and when the understanding is fully informed, then we are to endeavour to stir the affections.

SERM.  
XXXI.

Nothing is more vain and foolish, than to strive as some men do, to be all pathetical, and who seem to expect to raise the minds of their hearers with their very first paragraph; but in this they must be disappointed, for you never move them less than when you openly appear most resolved to do so; but when a good foundation has been laid by convincing their understanding, then indeed you may hope to engage their passions and affections in the cause; but still this is to be attempted gradually, and when we have in some measure succeeded in it, when we have wrought them up to a good pitch, it will then be prudent, not to continue our endeavour too long, but leave off in time, and give them intermission, for the nature of men's affections requires it, and which will not bear to be strained too high.

II. I come now in the 2d place to consider some of those advantages our blessed Saviour had beyond all others, *to spake as never man spake*; and how far he is imitable by us, in those instances. And accordingly,

I. The first great advantage our blessed Saviour had towards speaking, was that autho-

SERM. rity with which he spoke; this was so pecu-  
 XXXI. liar to his discourses, and so remarkable in  
 his whole manner of teaching, that after his  
 sermon in the mount, St. Mathew says the  
*people were astonished at his doctrine.* ἐξεπλήσσοντο  
 they were struck with amazement for he  
 taught them as one having authority, and not  
 as the Scribes; by which we are to understand  
 these two things.

First, that he spoke immediately from him-  
 self, and not by commission only from ano-  
 ther, not from former writings and tradition,  
 but from an inherent power of prescribing and  
 making new laws. The Scribes and Pharisees  
 spoke altogether from tradition, and the writ-  
 ten law of Moses; the most they could pre-  
 tend to was to explain and confirm all they  
 said with great names and authorities; Christ  
 spoke like a lawgiver and not an interpreter,  
 the style of the Pharisees was *ye have heard  
 that it hath been said of old.* His form of  
 speech was, *But I say unto you.* He was *the  
 way, the truth, and the life,* the voice of God  
 himself, and therefore all he said flowed from  
 an eternal fountain of truth.


Now this form of speaking was altogether  
 new to the Jews, and it was the more surpri-  
 zing, because the spirit of prophecy had for a  
 long time quite ceased among them, insomuch  
 that from the time of Malachi, for about  
 400 years, there had been no Prophet in Is-  
 rael, and they were so sensible of this, that it  
 prevailed among them as a received æra, and  
 manner

manner of counting their years. Hitherto SERM.  
Prophets, *i. e.* to the time of Esdras, from XXXI.  
thence downward, only learned men; none  
but Scribes and Doctors of the Law, who  
could give no final determination of any con-  
troverſy in Religion, and could only back  
their opinions with reason and authorities; and  
to this refers that expreſſion in the firſt book  
of the Maccabees, where it is ſaid that *the af-  
ſtiction of the children of Iſrael was at that  
time greater than had befallen them, ſince the  
time they had no Prophet among them.* And  
accordingly if any matter of controverſy aroſe,  
as there did not a few, which could not be a-  
greed upon, they always left it undecided un-  
til God ſhould ſend them a Prophet, which  
they all lived in expectation of, and every ſect  
among them looked for with impatience, af-  
firming with much confidence and aſſurance,  
that he would decide the matter on their ſide,  
and this was the reaſon of *their glorifying God,*  
Luke vii. 16. and ſaying, *a great Prophet is  
riſen up amongſt us, and God hath viſited his  
people.* And for the ſame reaſon, the woman  
of Samaria propoſed to our Saviour, the great  
point of controverſy that had run to ſuch a  
mighty height between the Jews and the Sa-  
maritans.

But our bleſſed Saviour fell in with no ſect  
or party among them, they were all in the  
wrong, and he took every fair occaſion of let-  
ting them know it, without regard to the per-  
ſons of men. And this is the other thing ſig-

SERM. XXXI.   
 nified by his speaking with authority, he spoke the truth impartially, opened to them all their errors, and reprehended their vices; his business was to deliver the will of God, though it was contrary to the opinions and practices of every sort and degree of men among them; insomuch that he was most severe upon those who had the greatest reputation among the people for sanctity and holiness: this courage of his in reprehending all sorts of vice, and declaring the truth on all occasions, the people took great notice of, *Lo he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him.*

Now this authority with which he delivered himself, and the confirmation of what he said with miracles, gave his words a power and influence beyond all human eloquence, this was peculiar to him, and therefore inimitable. However, there is so much of that authority derived down upon us, as gives our preaching a virtue and efficacy beyond what is merely human; our commission is from God and not from man, *as my Father sent me, so send I you*; from these words we first derive our power and authority, from hence it is, that we are, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. viii. 23. *The messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.* This word glory, is used in scripture, to signify the divine presence in any place or person, and the meaning of it here is, that the presence of Christ is in us; his authority and power goes along with our ministry,

stry, and in this sense it is, that he himself SERM. says, *Lo, I am with you even to the end of the* XXXI. *world.* 

The Apostles when they were filled with the Holy Ghost, the effect of it was that *they spoke the word of God with boldness*, and St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians to *pray for him, that utterance might be given to him, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel.* We are to be followers of them, as they were of Christ, and put on the same courage and resolution, and deliver ourselves with that decent authority that becomes the dignity of our trust, not that imaginary semblance of authority put on by a haughty brow or threatening look, by violence or passion, or extravagance in the voice or gestures; these are the weaknesses of human nature, and have nothing of the power of Christ. This we must leave to enthusiasts, those awkward mimicks of true inspiration; we are not of that *manner of spirit.* The boldness and assurance I spake of is, that which proceeds from a firm persuasion of our divine commission, and the concurrence of that Holy Spirit which attends the execution of it; from a true zeal for the glory of God and his Church; from a consciousness of the sincerity of our own repentance, and of a regular piety and habitual holiness of life; these are the things that inspire a divine orator with decent courage and assurance; that raise him above all the terrors and the flatteries of the world, so that

SERM. that no prospect of worldly interest or grandeur can byass his mind, or give a wrong turn  
 XXXI. to his thoughts; that on all occasions that require it, he is ready to declare himself for the truths of God, to own and acknowledge them in the midst of dangers, to make publick confession of them, and never conceal any part of the truth for the advantage of religion, but leave the success to God, who best knows upon what foundations to establish his Church.

2. Another great advantage beyond all men living, which our Saviour was endued with towards speaking was, his divine knowledge, that excellent spirit of wisdom, by which he had a full comprehension of all the truths of God, and the hidden things of nature; he grew in wisdom as in stature, and was wise as he was good by nature, and this made people wonder so often, when he was a child disputing with the doctors; they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and again, *whence hath this man this wisdom? And how knoweth this man letters having never learned?* But the Spirit was upon him without measure, and consequently his knowledge infinite, it must have been the same with that of God, and therefore it is, that the Apostle St. Paul says, *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;* it was this that enabled him to speak things beyond the reach of all men, because he knew so much more than any other man, and particularly of the secret will of  
 God



God, which he came to reveal to us: he SERM. plainly declared that all things were delivered XXXI. to him of his Father, and *that no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father,* (i. e.) the true nature and the mind of God, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him, (a strong proof this text is, that we can have no dependence on any of our reasonings about the nature and will of God and his purposes relating to mankind, but what is grounded on the Gospel of his Son Christ Jesus). Now if the things themselves which he declared, had not been the result of wisdom and knowledge, the most happy expression could never have so powerfully enforced them on his hearers. Now this very thing in which our Saviour excelled by nature, is laid down by all who treat of rhetorick and oratory, as the main foundation of all true eloquence. Where there is not by nature a solid judgment and quickness of apprehension, a good invention and lively fancy, they are not to be had otherwise than by inspiration, which no man can now expect, they may be improved but never obtained by labour; they are the gift of God, not by inspiration but by a felicity of nature.

Nor is this sufficient to make a man divinely eloquent, unless these natural endowments are improved by education and learning, for we can no more be learned and knowing, than we can be virtuous by nature

SERM. as our Saviour was, and therefore we must acquire these by labour and industry, and furnish our minds with a stock of learning and knowledge by those methods, which are laid down for that purpose. *Nemo* says Cicero, *poterit esse omni laude cumulatus orator, nisi erit omnium magnarum rerum & artium scientiarum consecutus*, and what he says of Brutus, one of the most eloquent men of the age, is, *erat in Bruto natura admirabilis, exquisita doctrina & industria singularis*.

Now these are no less necessary to divine than human oratory, and the truths of the Gospel should be taught and enforced with some degree of that knowledge by which they were first revealed: from whence appears the folly and arrogance of those enthusiasts, who take upon them the performance of this most important and difficult work, without either parts or learning; for want of that good sense which is the life and soul of oratory, they are but as founding brass or a tinkling cymbal, and while they set up for a more immediate imitation of Christ and his Apostles, are beyond all others the farthest from them; little considering that fulness of sense there was in all he and they said, and that closeness of consequences, and wisdom of the application, which are things they never think of.

The one great fundamental rule of eloquence is, to consult good sense, and to be strictly rational in all we say, even when we are least argumentative; *dicere nemo bene potest*

*test nisi qui prudenter intelligit*, one grain of good sense and sound reason is more truly valuable, than all the flourishes of rhetorick; whosoever is rational and plain will be eloquent, and whosoever is not so, may amuse and surprize his hearers, but will never convince or perswade them. SERM.  
XXXI.


3. Another advantage peculiar to him that our Saviour was possessed of, was, that extraordinary concurrence of the Holy Spirit in all he said and did, which proceeded more immediately by emanation from himself. This wrought in the hearts of those he spoke to, in a secret and powerful manner, and gave his words an irresistible force in the minds and consciences of all that were rightly disposed to receive the truths of God; it was by this that he so frequently touched their hearts, and the Disciples who were going to Emmaus, felt the power of it when they found their hearts burn within them. Now though this be a perfection which no mere man can attain to, yet there are two ways of arriving at some degree of it.

1st. By a lively imagination, which does not only enable men to form clear and distinct ideas and perceptions of things, but gives them a strange power of conveying them with great strength and clearness into the minds of others, nay, it enables them even mechanically, to raise the like passions in others by which they themselves are actuated; we are all instruments of the same make and frame, and others

SERM. others being men of like passions with ourselves,  
 XXXI. when our fancy is disposed to receive vigorous  
 and strong expressions of things, by a secret  
 power in nature, we stamp the like on all about us; there is enchantment in it, and by the help of this alone, strange effects have been wrought: many things have been attributed to magick, which were effected by working up men's imaginations to a mighty pitch, so as to strike the minds and bodies with a secret and irresistible force.

We see it to be the constant practice on the stage for men to impregnate their minds strongly with those passions they would raise in others, they endeavour to forget themselves, and believe they are the very persons they represent; and by this means their passions move us, though we know them to be feigned. Now if the imagination has such an influence upon the hearts of men in things fictitious and imaginary, what may its power be in things real and serious, and of the most exalted and important nature? So that we should direct the whole force of our minds that way, if we hope to incline others to be affected as we would persuade them to be; we must plainly and strongly appear to have a quick and a feeling sense of those truths which we would persuade our hearers to believe.

But the 2d and most effectual way of supplying the want of that holy Spirit our Saviour had,

had, is by our earnest and incessant prayer to SERM.  
Almighty God, that his Spirit would lead us XXXI.  
into whatsoever shall be most for his glory.   
This is absolutely necessary, if we desire that  
our words should not fall to the ground but  
*be fruitful in the hearts of our hearers.*

But this and the further prosecution of  
this subject, I shall defer to another opportu-  
nity.

S E R M O N

## SERMON XXXII.

The divine eloquence of our Saviour  
considered.

This was preached before the convocation Ja-  
nuary the 30th, being Sunday, 1703.

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JOHN vii. 46.

*The officers answered, never man spake like  
this man.*

SERM. XXXII **I**N my former discourse upon these words, when I had shewn the occasion of them, and observed the transcendent excellency of the divine eloquence of our blessed Saviour beyond that of the most celebrated orators among the Heathen; I proposed to enter upon the consideration of this divine eloquence of our blessed Saviour; that through the assistance of that spirit that was upon him without measure, we may in some degree copy after him in this, which is the great privilege and glory of our order: And in doing this, I did, as I then proposed, in the first place, consider

consider the matter and substance of what he spoke, and the stile he used.

I then also, in the second, proposed to consider some of those advantages our blessed Saviour had beyond all others, to *spake as never man spake*, and how far he is imitable by us in these particulars. At which time I shewed you, that the first advantage he had was that peculiar authority with which he spoke.

The second was that excellent spirit of knowledge which he was endued with.

The third was that extraordinary concurrence of the holy spirit in all he said, and that too by a more immediate emanation from himself. There were two things I then observed were to supply this defect in us; the one was the power of the imagination, the use of which I then shewed.

2. And therefore I am now to proceed to the other thing, which is to supply the want of this in us; and that is, the same concurrence of the holy Spirit of God; which, because it cannot operate with us after the same manner by emanation from ourselves, is therefore to be obtained by earnest and incessant prayer to Almighty God. This is absolutely necessary in order to the forming our conceptions, and then giving them power in the hearts of men.

That concurrence of the Spirit is necessary to the right forming the conceptions of our mind, and the cloathing them with such expressions as shall make them conduce most to

SERM. the great ends of preaching, that the medita-  
 XXXII tions of our hearts, and the words of our  
 mouths, may be first acceptable to God, such  
 as are truly meet and proper for his own di-  
 vine purposes; and then his Spirit goes along  
 with them, giving them virtue and influence  
 upon the hearts and consciences of our hearers.  
 There is so great a variety in the frame of mens  
 hearts, in the inward make and dispositions of  
 their minds; and the conditions of mens souls  
 are so very different, that nothing less than in-  
 finite knowledge can contrive what shall be of  
 greatest efficacy. He only who is the searcher  
 of the heart, and knows all its times and sea-  
 sons; who sees perfectly how the dispositions  
 of men differ from one another, and the same  
 man from himself; and with all the secret and  
 insensible degrees of our spiritual growth and  
 improvement in holiness: He it is that can  
 direct and lead the mind into what shall be  
 most for his own glory, and for supplying the  
 various wants and necessities of those particular  
 souls that are to hear us. It doth not fall with-  
 in the compass of human understanding and  
 sagacity to see all this, and provide for it: It is  
 true, sound doctrine is good at all times, but  
 the secret is in the due dispensation of it, and  
 in the proper application of it to the present  
 condition of mens souls; to think and speak,  
 not only what is in itself good and commend-  
 able, but what will be of real benefit and advan-  
 tage, which lies far out of our sight, and for the  
 most part, to be discerned only by the all-see-  
 ing



ing eye of God. Persons who spoke formerly S E R M.  
by immediate inspiration, often knew not the XXXII  
main importance and full extent of what they  
said; the very same is in some degree true of  
those who are acted by the ordinary operations  
of his spirit, that they know not what power  
and efficacy their words may have, nor how  
far they are adapted to the purpose by the se-  
cret insensible direction and conduct of the ho-  
ly Spirit. But as this grace of God is necessa-  
ry to lead us into all seasonable truths, so must  
it go along with our words, and prepare the  
hearts of our hearers to be wrought upon, that  
they may not fall to the ground, but leave a  
lasting impression in their minds, so as to have  
a real effect in making them more virtuous and  
holy. By good natural endowments and ac-  
quired abilities we may answer all other ends  
of preaching, but this only can answer that of  
edification. And this is one great advantage  
that sacred oratory hath beyond prophane,  
the effects of which, and the whole drift and  
scope, were known and felt; whereas the ef-  
fect of preaching, that I mean which is pecu-  
liar to it, is as insensible as the growth and  
nourishment of our bodies; and yet at the  
same time it carries with it a persuasion above  
the strength of any thing in nature, and a  
force beyond the power of words. Though  
miracles are ceased, yet the power of faith re-  
mains strong and mighty, in order to the great  
and glorious ends of religion: And to this day  
thus much is sure, that the greater dependance

SERM.

XXXII

a man hath upon the Spirit for the illumination of his mind, and the more intire trust he hath in God for the necessary concurrence of his grace with his words, if he is not wanting in his own endeavours, so much the greater will be his success and his reward.

It is a very uncertain way of judging of the success of preaching, by the opinion of men; they are indeed, many of them proper judges of what is good in itself, and how far it is agreeable to them; but how far it hath a real efficacy and success in the minds of men, for their reformation and improvement, is no easy matter to distinguish even in a man's self, and much less in others. The effect of preaching, in the consciences of men, and the true influence it hath upon their souls to make them truly virtuous and holy, is not to be known in this life; its operations are as secret, as those of the spirit that goes along with it: So that many who might have been in much esteem, may find that all the while they sowed but chaff; and others, whose incessant prayers and lively faith in God brought down the dew of Heaven upon what they *sow* and *plant*, shall be surprized with a plentiful harvest.

This consideration should make us possess our minds with a firm belief that, whatever may appear to ourselves or others, yet that no endowments or qualifications whatsoever will give our words that unseen energy which none but God can give; we may indeed dazzle our admirers, but there may be still wanting that  
useful

useful light, and necessary warmth, which can come no way but from *the Father of lights.*

As Christ had this holy Spirit in himself, so we must have it by emanation from him. What we have to do then is, to put our minds into a posture to receive it, to give ourselves up to it, to consecrate our souls by due preparation for the descent of the Holy Ghost upon us; and to be earnest and incessant in our prayers to God for this blessed communication of his Spirit. There it not any thing in Scripture so particularly and expressly said to be the immediate reward of prayer, as this; *our Heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask it*: And again, James i. 5. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally.* If God gives liberally, why should we not ask it frequently and importunately? and ever pray that God would sanctify our conceptions, and form them all to virtue and holiness; that by a secret conduct he would lead us insensibly into what shall have the greatest fitness and tendency to promote the salvation of souls; and then give it life and power in the consciences of men. Let us use the best of our endeavours to *plant* and *water*, and when that is done, let us hope for the increase, not as we preach, but as we pray. If we take care to perform this with that fervour and constancy that becomes us, then let us leave the event to God, who knows how to make all things work together so as to promote his own ends;

SERM. XXXII who doth not judge of means as they appear to us; who loves to *make foolish the wisdom of this world*; and delights to bring about the greatest effects by the smallest instruments.

4. Another great advantage beyond all men living which our blessed Saviour was endued with towards speaking was, that insight he had into the hearts of men. As to that excellent spirit of knowledge that was in him in general, I have formerly spoke to it: This is but a part of it, and a more immediate qualification for divine eloquence and persuasion. St. John tells us, that *He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.* He was that *λογος*, that eternal Word of God by whom all things were made. *He spoke us into being. He saw our substance yet being imperfect, and in his book, the book of Nature, were all our members written.* And therefore, when this *Word was made flesh*, he needed not to comeat the heart of man by any search or conjecture; for he discerned the parts of this fearful contexture and wonderful frame of human body; he couldtraverse over all this labyrinth, and saw perfectly that numerous train of subtle complicated lines, the nearest instruments of the soul, which lie farout of the reach of all sense and human observation: He saw to the end of them all; where they receive the first impresson from the mind, the common source of all our reasonings, of all our passions and affections. He knew where to touch upon them with most advantage, and could  
unfold

unfold them all, though miserably perplexed and tangled by the grievous corruption of our nature. SERM.  
XXXII

This perfect knowledge of the hearts of men, gave him an unspeakable advantage over them, and enabled him to speak to their thoughts often, and not to their words; as particularly in Math. ix. 4, 5, where it is said that *Jesus knowing their thoughts, answers, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say arise and walk?* The thought of their heart was, that he blasphemed by that expression; and the force of his answer is this, that whether he used one or the other of those expressions, or any other, the miracle was never the less; words did not alter the nature of the thing, the fact was a sufficient proof of itself, of its proceeding from a divine power; and the reason of his choice of that expression was, that what he did might be a seasonable proof to them of his having it in his power to forgive sins. The word in the original is *ιδου*, *Jesus seeing* their thoughts; which well expresses the manner of this knowledge, being by a direct intuition, by a proper innate power in himself, and not by any supernatural information. And so again, John viii. 3, when the Scribes and Pharisees brought to him a woman taken in the act of adultery, with design to accuse him; for if he had acquitted her, then he had acted apparently against the law of Moses, and have been a justifier of sinners;

SERM. XXXII  
 } ners; if he had condemned her, then he assumed the power of the magistrate, they bringing her to him in a judicial way, as being one who took upon him to acquit and condemn sinners. He first declined answering, which made them more urgent, as being a snare from which he could not extricate himself; but he knowing the guilt of their souls, answered, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her*; by which he made the woman's case their own, and struck them with such a sense of their own guilt, that they withdrew with shame. It was a strange surprising judgment he passed, which acquitted the woman so far as to leave her room for repentance, and condemn the accusers, whose pride and obstinacy put them beyond all likelihood of it; and at the same time preserved a just veneration for the law of Moses, and left the power of sentence in the hands of the magistracy. This was such a complication of wisdom and knowledge, that no man else upon earth was capable of it; none but he who *knew what was in man*, who saw into the darkness of the heart, could pass over what men spoke, and direct his words to their most secret thoughts. By this means his hearers always found themselves, in what he said, not a tittle of it fell beside them, and when he foresaw that his speaking would not meet with success, he was always silent.

Now this it was that made him never open his mouth without effect, that gave him such  
 unheard

unheard-of power over the minds and con-  
sciences of men, for the conviction of their  
reason and moving their affections; infomuch  
that the most feared and hardened consciences  
felt impressions of remorse and shame; they  
found themselves struck dumb and confound-  
ed in every attempt upon him, and owned,  
*He spake as never man spake.* Envy allowed  
him this; she confessed, as the Devils did, in  
the midst of her rage and torment; and the  
most inveterate of his enemies suffered his  
speaking to gain every effect upon them, but  
that of their conversion. But on the other  
hand, where his words met with hearts right-  
ly disposed, as Solomon foretold of him, *his  
lips were like lillies dropping sweet-smelling  
myrrh. His mouth was most sweet:* In the  
Hebrew it is, *His throat was sweetnesses,* al-  
luding to the harmony of a charming voice:  
This it was that made his disciples forsake their  
worldly prospects, and follow after him with  
a call. His hearers *wondered at the gracious  
words that proceeded out of his mouth,* and  
found *their hearts burn within them while he  
was speaking.* By this wonderful knowledge  
of the heart of man, he hath so contrived all  
his discourses, that what he said to a few, was  
spoke to all mankind, and more need not be  
said to all generations of men; they will car-  
ry down with them the same efficacy to the end  
of the world, to prevail over the judgments  
of men, and never fail to sway their passions,  
whenever they are duly considered and applied.  
And

SERM.

XXXII

And now we must lower our thoughts, and descend from this stupendous height of eloquence, to consider what it is in ourselves, how this innate power of seeing directly into the hearts of men is to be supplied in us, and how we are by imitation to attain to a faint resemblance of this perfection. It is indeed a fall as low as from the Heaven to the Earth, and our eloquence to his is but as a shadow to the substance; however, it hath its virtue, though it be derived, therefore this knowledge of the heart, which we cannot have by intuition, we must acquire, in as great a degree as we are capable, by study and observation. Among the miraculous gifts afforded in the first times of the Gospel, one of them is said to be that of *discerning of spirits*; i. e. of judging of the sincerity of men's hearts, and of the qualifications of their minds for the reception of the Gospel, whether they were in a disposition to be wrought upon or no. This was necessary, that they might not *cast their pearls before swine*; and that since they had a great deal to do, they might not lose their time and their labour in fruitless endeavours. This gave the first preachers of the Gospel a mighty advantage, and enabled them to adapt their discourses to the several tempers of men, and led them into the use of such motives and arguments as were likeliest to succeed, and leave a lasting impression on their hearers. Now though there be nothing of this left in the Church, more than the ordinary direction and  
conduct



conduct of the holy Spirit of God, yet some persons are blessed with a peculiar strength of genius for the knowledge of men; they are very happy that way beyond others, and by a strange felicity of nature are let into this knowledge of the hearts of men: not of their present immediate thoughts, for that is miracle; but for a sharp discerning judgment, and a comprehensive understanding of the particular tempers and inclinations of men, so as to be able to apply themselves more closely, and bring all their discourses home to the present state and temper of men's minds; and this seems to be the distinguishing qualification of an orator. For men may have a good stock of knowledge both in words and things, and yet be very unhappy in the management and application of them, to the instruction or persuasion of others. *Nisi naturas hominum, vimque omnem humanitatis orator perspexerit, dicendo quod volet perficere non poterit.* (*Cicero de Orat: lib. 1.*) says Cicero, who studied mankind, and was therefore more eloquent than others, because he knew the strength and weaknesses of human nature. And another observes, *That men are no farther eloquent, than they are knowing in the heart of man.* The heart of man is a comprehensive word, and takes in all the powers of the mind, with the great variety of reasonings, of affections and inclinations to which it is subject; and their meaning is, that we should make ourselves acquainted with all its movements, and observe nicely all the mistakes

SERM. takes and errors of men ; their opinions and  
 XXXII prejudices ; their diffimulations and hypocri-  
 fies, with all the falſe colours by which they  
 are abuſed themſelves, and impoſe on others.  
 That we find out the true motives that ſway  
 men, and the real principle that acts them ;  
 and ſee how far the world is governed by hu-  
 mour, and paſſion, and intereſt ; that we con-  
 ſider all their vain hopes, and groundleſs fears ;  
 their real vices, and imaginary virtues ; the  
 weakneſs of their judgments, and the force of  
 their paſſions ; and above all, to weigh well the  
 great variety there is in men's tempers, and  
 the true cauſes of their differences and a-  
 greements ; how ſouls mingle or diſſent, have  
 a hidden attractive virtue to draw one another,  
 or elſe rebound at every approach ; what it is  
 that makes them meet, and then fly off again ;  
 what ſecret chains they are that link them into  
 parties, or divide them into factions ; and what  
 is the true nature of that diſcord or harmony  
 of the mind, that makes people friends or e-  
 nemies ; thus we ſhall be able to turn our  
 thoughts into all ſhapes, repreſent every one to  
 themſelves, and *become all things to all men.*

But there is no readier way to the knowledge  
 of other men's hearts, than by being well ac-  
 quainted with our own ; if we look inward,  
 obſerve nicely what is doing there, we ſhall  
 be able to give a good conjecture at what paſſes  
 in the minds of others ; for we are all men of  
 like paſſions, we are all liable to the ſame af-  
 fections and inclinations, and ſubject to the  
 ſame

same infirmities : So that by a diligent search SERM.  
and scrutiny into ourselves, so as to know one XXXII  
well, we go a great way towards the know-  
ledge of all mankind.

Now the great necessity and usefulness of this knowledge of men is, in order to the two great ends of sacred eloquence ; namely, for the information of men's understanding, and for the moving of their passions.

I, It conduces to the improvement of the understandings and reason of men, by enabling us to think and speak naturally, to express the truth of nature and religion, and give a just representation of all things as they are in themselves ; and not give the mind the liberty of transforming them into what shapes we please, and never bring them forth to view but in some strange disguise of our own. When men set themselves to express their thoughts to others, they of course fall into one of these two very different ways, either to look without themselves, with design to represent things as they are, and paint them from the life with all the advantage they will bear ; or, on the contrary, they frame to themselves conceptions without any strict regard to the justness and truth of things : So that from slight materials of knowledge, by various workings of the imagination, they raise to themselves feigned images, and labour to deck them with suitable ornaments, all the fancy of the speaker, and nothing of the likeness or true dress of nature ; and therefore, the impressions they make

SERM. on the hearers are none of her stamp. Now  
 XXXII according as men bend the strength of their  
 minds to think either one of these ways or the  
 other, and pursue it, so is their success either  
 a fictitious flash, or a substantial oratory. And  
 if a man have so great a diffidence of himself  
 as to venture on neither of these ways, but  
 think and speak altogether by imitation of o-  
 thers, then he follows the fortune of those he  
 copies after, and he is in the right or the  
 wrong way, as they chance to be who go be-  
 fore him.

It is a great misfortune, and a very unhappy  
 mistake, not to see this from the beginning of  
 a man's compositions, so as not to set out right  
 at first; because the success of his whole life  
 depends much upon it. *Respicere exemplar  
 vitæ, merumq;*, is one of the best rules that  
 can be given; ever to have an eye to the life  
 and manners of men, so as to make them  
 your model and pattern; *et veras hinc ducere  
 voces*; and employ the vigour of the mind in  
 fitting our expressions to the things, and not  
 in adapting of things to our expressions. This  
 is certainly the fundamental rule of all oratory  
 both sacred and prophane, *to think and speak  
 of every thing in nature and religion as it is.*  
 It is the most plain and simple rule in the  
 world, and therefore one would think the ea-  
 siest to be observed; and perhaps the reason  
 why it is so overlooked is, because it is so ob-  
 vious; so that by lying open to all men, it is  
 in truth become the great secret of eloquence.

Men

Men are apt to think it below them, they think every body can do that which so many thousands have attempted in vain; and in truth they will not descend so low as to be truly eloquent. SERM. I  
XXXII

It is true, this genuine oratory walks upon the ground, and yet at the same time *caput inter nubila condit*, it hath a divine power and efficacy. It is what every body is apt to think he could do when he sets about it; *quisq; sibi speret idem*, says the poet, *frustra; laborat, ausus idem*. He little knows the danger of the attempt, when he dares to describe original nature, to express the true life and spirit of religion, and paint out the beauty of holiness in its true and genuine colours. It requires some mastery of thought and expression to do this, a comprehensive mind, and a judgment enlarged and formed by reading and observation. There is danger in speaking plain, and following the simplicity of nature; because a man is then under a necessity of speaking good sense, and to the purpose; all his defects are visible and glaring; all his failings are more conspicuous and less pardonable when he doth not perform with some truth and exactness; so that a man without sufficient qualifications, may aim at it to his undoing, so as to appear very flat and insipid, who might have made some tolerable figure in any other way of oratory,

This is what is properly the chastity of eloquence, which carries with it a secret irresistible

SERM. **XXXII** ible power, and charms beyond the most exquisite artificial beauty : It makes its way to the heart, while the other only plays about the eyes and ears, and floats in the imaginations of men.

When you thus tread in the steps of nature, and neither lag too far behind, nor out-run her, you are sure not to wander, but that your discourses will at length come home to every man ; they will feel what is said ; there is something within them that echoes to your words, gives a tacit consent, acknowledges every thing that is spoke, and owns that it is so. Every thing that is spoke according to the truth of nature and religion, is soon understood, and finds an easy assent when it comes without any unnatural disguise, because it meets with faculties agreeable, and there is something congenial to it in the mind, founded in that connexion and correspondence there is between all truth ; and for that reason it is, that all abstractions on the one hand, and all mighty flights of oratory on the other, have little of solidity and real knowledge in them when they come to be unravelled, and put into plain words ; because such as affect them, are not describing nature or religion, but themselves, and labour to represent it, not as in reality, but what it is in their imaginations : They draw out their brains into curious webs, which discover much of admirable art and fineness of parts, which are only to be admired, and have neither solidity nor use ; by which means it too often happens that men  
are

are never more superficial than when they pretend to go to the bottom of things.

SERM.  
XXXII

This knowledge of the heart is in order to moving of the passions; but because the use and management of the passions in religion will not come within the compass of this discourse, I shall pass on to

5. Another great advantage towards speaking, which our blessed Saviour had peculiar to him, was his unspotted innocence, that divine purity and holiness that was in him. He was that *Lamb without blemish*, who had not the least stain of actual or original guilt, and remained all his life-time in such undefiled purity and holiness, that at his death *He offered himself up without spot to God*. This was the holiness of God; *for in him dwelt the fullness of the godhead bodily*: His humanity was partaker of the perfections of the divinity: And though he was *the son of David according to the flesh*, yet he was *the Son of God according to the spirit of holiness*, of that spirit that was upon him without measure. He had not the least error in his understanding, or corruption in his will, but had in himself the utmost perfection of all virtue and goodness; there lay their original characters; so that he could describe them all from his own breast, the source from whence all holiness is derived upon us: This gave his speaking an unknown influence and authority. In his discourse with the Jews, he appeals to his innocence; *Which of you convinceth me of sin? and if I say the truth, why do*

SERM. *ye not believe me?* He gives them the true reason why they believed him not, because he told them the truth; for had he been a wicked impostor, and told them a lye, they would have believed him upon slighter evidence and demonstration than he gave them; but that rendered their infidelity utterly inexcusable, when it was plain they had no just exception either to his person or his discourses. Nothing could render this joint evidence ineffectual, as he observes to them, but a seared and hardened conscience; for those who had ears to hear, this gave his discourses invincible power and efficacy. When he sat discoursing with the Doctors in the Temple, we read, that all that *heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.* They could not but be struck with that air of sweetness and innocence that his discourses at that time received, by their coming from the mouth of a child: He had the same innocence when he was past thirty years of age; and to such as considered, it must have been then more wonderful and surprizing, and have given his words inexpressible grace and energy.

Now this is a qualification of no small consequence to a christian orator; and though we can have no such inherent perfect holiness of our own, yet, as the Apostle speaks, we *may be made partakers of his holiness,* by a diligent and constant imitation of his virtue and innocence. Our preaching cannot have that authority and power, which is peculiar to unerring



ring obedience, and unstained innocence; but it may have that good degree of assurance on our part, and influence upon others, which proceeds from a consciousness in ourselves of an unfeigned repentance, and a sincere habitual endeavour of uprightnes and integrity of life. This virtuous good disposition of the mind is a qualification laid down by those Heathens who have given the best rules of oratory, as absolutely necessary to eloquence and persuasion. None can be a good orator, says Cicero, but he that is a good man, and adds, *virī probi sermo licet lenociniū desitutus sit, satis tamen naturā suā ornatur; nec quicquam non disertē quod honestē dicitur;* and in another place, *Qualis cujusq; animi affectus, talis est homo; qualis autem ipse homo est, talis ejus est oratio.* (Cicero, vol. ii. p. 397) and certainly if in the opinion of Heathens, no man could be truly eloquent and speak well without a good sense of moral honesty, we may well think it no less necessary in order to the effectual preaching of the Gospel; nay more, as much as the revelations of it are beyond the meer light of nature, so there is a sense of piety and holiness required in the mind of the speaker, in proportion to the height and excellence of evangelical graces, beyond virtues purely moral.

How much the habitual practice of a good life conduces to the efficacy and success of preaching, is very obvious from that advantage it gives us in the opinion of others, by disposing them to hear without prejudice or reluc-

SERM. XXXII tance ; it reconciles them to what is said, and gives it authority and weight ; and devout persons are but too apt to have men's persons in admiration : it is in itself no real disadvantage to the truth, to be spoke by those who have little of it in their own hearts, however, it is among the infirmities of human nature, that the best of people then are apt to nauseate and reject it, the mind shrinks at it, it closes itself and denies it admittance. But feared and incorrigible sinners find ease and comfort in the wickedness of the preacher ; it quiets the clamours of their consciences, and they value themselves upon open profaneness in opposition to that secret hypocrisy. But all true virtue and holiness carries on it a stamp of the Divinity ; it hath so much of the likeness of God, that it darts terrour into their Souls ; the words of a good man break in upon the most hardened consciences, and leave their goads behind them, and where they cannot dispossess men's vices, they extort a confession of the truth, and make them fear and tremble before it.

Now besides the advantage a virtuous and good Life gives us in the opinion of men, by reconciling them to what is said, and disposing them to be wrought upon, it hath a mighty influence upon ourselves in order to divine eloquence and persuasion ; it enables us to form just and lively conceptions of all things in Religion. By a hearty sincere endeavour of doing the will of God, we shall arrive to a good degree of knowledge in it, and be able  
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to think and speak of the nature of virtue and holiness after such a manner as is, not attainable any other way. No man can describe the true life of Religion but he that lives it: who can speak so exactly of all moral virtues and evangelical graces, as he that makes it the chief ambition of his Soul to practice and acquire them? Who can express the sorrows of a truly broken and contrite Heart, like him who hath felt that *sorrow which works a repentance never to be repented of?* Who can tell what that love of God is, that raises a man above the world and all things in it, like him whose breast is inflamed with a sense of his perfections, and of that intire dependance he hath upon him? And who can discover the pleasures of a good conscience, like that man who hath arrived to some good degree of joy in the Holy Ghost, who hath placed his rest in God, hath arrived to a full trust in his mercy through the ineffable almighty virtue and efficacy of the blood of Christ. Then it is that a man addresses himself feelingly to the consciences of others, when he speaks from his own experience, and hath run through that set of temptations with which the Devil is used to assault men in the whole course of a christian life: When he describes his own infirmities, and his conquests, his temptations and his victories; his fears and his hopes; his failings and recoveries; his own despondence, and his assurances; so true it is that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*

SERM. *discerned.* The mind must be set apart and  
 XXXII sanctified for this; it must be intirely given up  
 to it, and the main current of a man's  
 thoughts must run habitually that way; then  
 he will be able to bring all these things *out of  
 the treasure of his heart*, when it is thus en-  
 riched and become a choice repository of vir-  
 tue and holiness.

But besides that true piety enlarges our thoughts, it gives them an additional force and vigour beyond the strength of our reasons and the power of words; and it is sure that nothing makes its way so forcibly to the hearts of others, as that which comes from the bottom of our own. As the Devil when he assumes the form of an Angel of light, so is a wicked man when he goes about to recommend virtue and describe the power of Godliness. He is a strange unnatural mixture of the two most disagreeing things in the universe, and a monster made up of a resemblance of Heaven and Hell; a man conscious to himself of secret unrepented guilt, of unmortified passions, and appetites in their full natural strength, when his lips go without his heart, his words must turn upon himself and fly in his face, and he is, though otherwise of great abilities and endowments, at best but *as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal*, nothing but noise, without any sense or feeling of what is spoke. His speaking on divine Subjects is strained and unnatural, and no dissimulation or hypocrisy can come up to the genuine air of sincere piety. For as there is something in vice and wickedness that makes  
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a discovery of itself, and can hardly be concealed, so there is something in sincere religion that cannot be counterfeited. When the mind is strongly impregnated with a sense of God and goodness, and the breast warmed with religion, it affects the very lineaments of the face; it breaks through the eyes and looks, and gives an expressive passion to the countenance; when the *mouth thus, speaks out of the abundance of the heart*, it inspires others with its sentiments and affections, and the man breathes out his soul with his words.

But of all virtues, that which a preacher is immediately concerned to secure, is that of a pure intention; without this, whatever the success be to others, the reward is lost to ourselves; we sell it all for the breath of men; perhaps but of a few whose gust we have chanced to hit; we prostitute the noblest employment to the poorest ends; and those who are given to this vanity, make it much more to themselves than it really is; they think of it without those weaknesses that are visible to discerning judgments, who see all their faults; and of that alloy of envy which is never appeased but with the sacrifice of the object that troubles it, as it proved in the case of our Saviour; it was *for envy they delivered him*. And yet he had nothing to be envied but his life and his discourses, for no man envies a miracle; he never spoke but to do good, and declined the praise of men, as much as was consistent with the exercise of his ministry; insomuch that it was remarkable of him, that  
after



after his miracles and discourses, he withdrew himself from applause, betook himself to retirements and recesses to avoid it. He gave sufficient demonstration that he had eloquence enough to have brought about any worldly designs; that he had the hearts and passions of men at his command, and could work them up to what height he pleased, so as to turn and wind them irresistably to any thing but virtue and holiness. He could have prevailed on them to *make him a King*, and could have proceeded from thence to the empire of the world. The Devil saw this, and this was at the bottom of that temptation when he promised him all the kingdoms of the earth *if he would fall down and worship him*. But he answers him, *thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, and therefore he could make use of this irresistible power of perswasion no farther than it was for the service of God, and promoting of the great ends of religion. *His kingdom was not of this world*, and accordingly he was so far from serving any temporal designs by it, that *he had no where to lay his head*. Here is a glorious example before us! and O! that we could imitate our great master in this divine virtue, who says of himself, *I seek not my own glory, there is one that seeks and judgeth*, meaning the searcher of hearts, who sees whither we direct all our discourses, who alone can bless them with success here, and give them an eternal reward of glory hereafter.













