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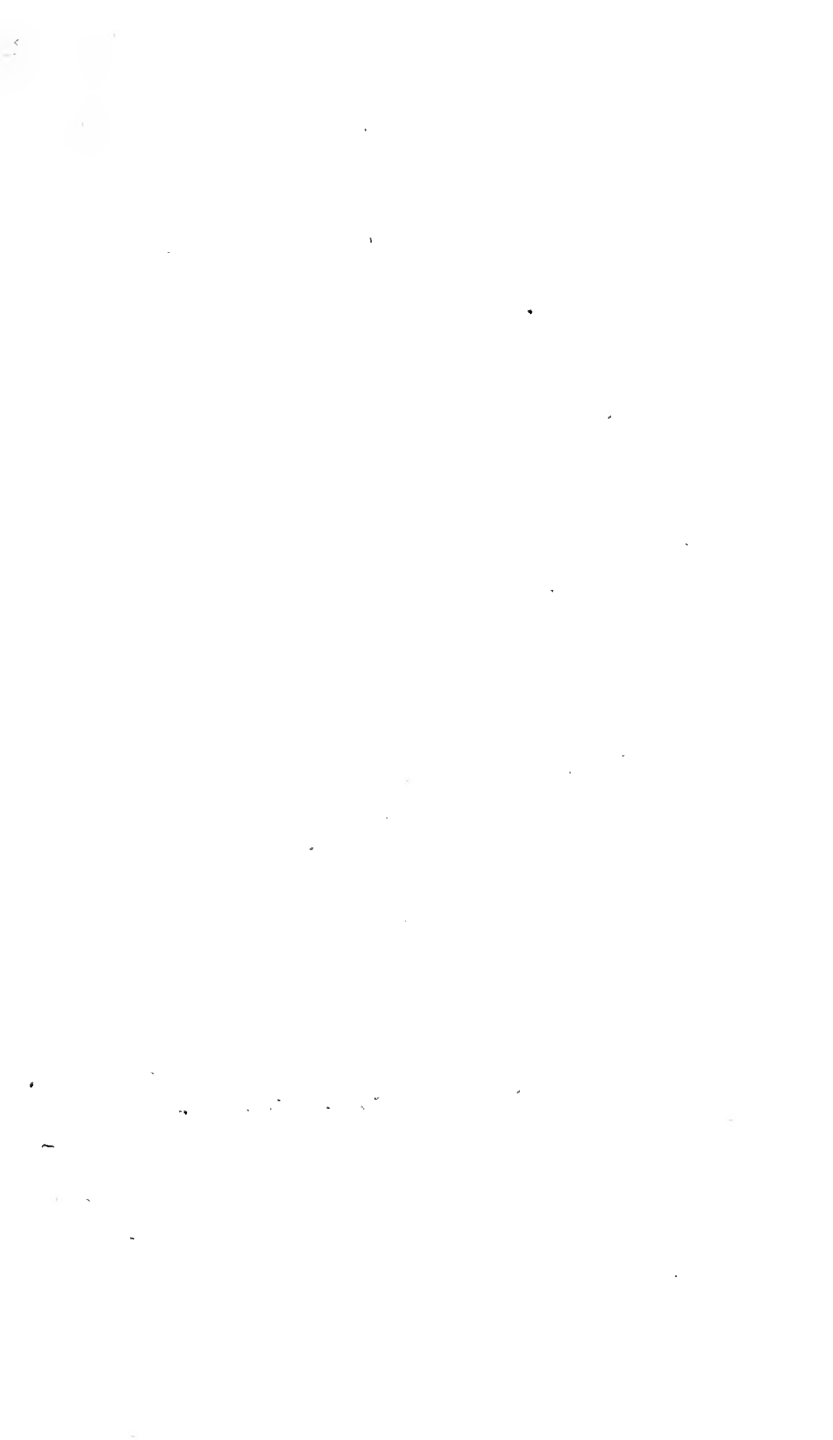
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S E R M O N S

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V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S.



# S E R M O N S

O N

## V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S.

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By the late Rev.

Mr. J O H N D O W N E S,

Formerly Rector of St. MICHAEL, WOOD-STREET,

And Lecturer of St. MARY-LE-BOW.

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V O L. II.

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S E R A

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# SERMON I.

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I. COR. xi. 18.

*I hear that there be Divisions among you.*

**S**AINT Paul, whose address is always to be admired, begins this Chapter with *Commendation* the better to usher in this *Reproof* that follows.

In the 2d Verse, (which ought to be the 1st were the Chapters rightly divided) he says, *Now I praise you Brethren, that you remember me in all Things, and keep the Ordinance as I delivered them to you.* But in the Text and the Verse going before it, he changeth his Stile, and his *Eulogium* is succeeded by an *Amonition*. *Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not, that you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all when you come together in the Church I hear there be Divisions among you.*

I am persuaded there are very few who for some time past have either heard or read this

Passage of Scripture, that have not been more particularly affected with it, and wish'd they could only say with the Apostle, *and I partly believe it.* But alas who can be witness to the Distractions which have lately happen'd in some of the *Churches* of this *Metropolis* without *feeling* it also? Who that hath any regard for the honour of God must not shudder to think what Bickerings have arose, and Disorders been committed, in the very Places, and at the very Houses set apart for his worship? To think that Christians and Brethren should then and there have so often assembled together, not for *worship* but for *War*? To think that instead of Meeting to pay homage to their maker and common Saviour, and to strengthen that Bond of Love and Unity, which is the very Characteristic of their Christian Profession, they should meet only to *tear and devour one another*? In short to think that under those sacred Roofs they should turn *Religion* into *Riot*, *Prayer* into *Strife*, themselves into *Wolves and Tigers*, and the *Temple of the Lord* into a *Temple of Devils*? If any Man can reflect upon these things without being greatly mov'd, or (for once to make use of a Phrase I am not very fond of) *without an inward feeling,*

*feeling*, I cannot commend his moderation.

My design therefore is not to enter into those Divisions and Disturbances to which my Text alludes, and which had crept into the Church of *Corinth*, but to bring the Subject nearer home, and to consider those which of late have sprang up and are still subsisting amongst ourselves:—You will easily see where my Eye is fixed, and that I have in view the Quarrels and Animosities, the Tumults and Disorders, the Hurry and Confusion which have been occasioned by the choice of our afternoon Preachers.

It is much to be wished that the public had been favoured with the State of that unhappy Case, with proper advice and directions concerning it, by some *able Hand*, and it can only be ascribed to the long Indisposition of our most excellent *Diocesan*, that it hath not been done by one of the *ablest*. Great reason have the Clergy of this Diocese to regret a Misfortune, which in some measure deprives us of that wisdom and authority, which otherwise might probably have remedied the *present* and prevented all *future* Mischiefs of this and other kinds.

However as no Christian Minister can be supposed to act out of Character when he is

labouring to preserve or restore good order in the House of God, and peace, love and unity amongst Brethren, unless he therein out runs the proper bounds, or behaves dogmatically or magisterially, or in a manner unbecoming his private Character, I shall therefore beg leave to offer a few Hints, which I apprehend in the present Case may in some little degree be conducive to that good end.

And here I am naturally and necessarily led to say something of the rise or origin of our *Sunday Afternoon Sermons*, or rather *Lectures*, the Preachers of them being commonly called *Lecturers*.

Now these are no part of our ancient ecclesiastical Constitution, but are of more modern date ; and even of this Day may be said rather to be *permitted* than *appointed*. Introduced not to serve the necessities of the *Church*, but of the times.

There was indeed another sort of *Lecturers* of far *greater Antiquity*, and in the opinion of very wise and good Men of *greater Use*. I mean persons set apart or appointed to give *Catechetical Lectures* which they pronounced not from the *Pulpit*, but from the *Desk*. And wherever our Canons speak of *Lecturers*, these I presume are intended.

This



This Institution is as old as Christianity itself, and the Design of it was to instruct those adult persons who were born of heathen Parents, and were Candidates for Baptism, in the nature of baptismal Covenant. A most excellent Institution, proper for all times and persons; the propriety and excellency whereof would be a pleasing consideration, only that it wou'd carry me out too far, from my present purpose. I must however observe that the use of it hath been kept up and preserv'd in our Church from the time of the Reformation, till about a century ago, when afternoon Sermons in compliance with the Humours of the Age, were usher'd in, in their stead. But tho' the *Office* is alter'd, the *Name* is still retain'd the Preachers being stiled Lecturers, who have been usually chose by the Parishioners, with the concurrence of the Incumbent. That hence heats and animosities should frequently arise amongst the *Electors* themselves, must be expected; these being the natural consequence of all popular Elections: But the misfortune is, that it is sometimes the unhappy occasion of disputes and quarrels betwixt Minister and People; the one insisting upon the Right of the Pulpit, the other upon the privilege of choosing a

Preacher. Which disputes I apprehend, might in a great measure be avoided, would each candidly consider the nature of their several and respective Claims.

It seems a point too clear to admit of a Question, that every Rector, Vicar, or Incumbent hath the sole right to the Pulpit of that Church to which he is legally and canonically instituted. A right founded not only upon the *Words*, but also upon the very *reason and design* of his Institution ; in which is committed to him the care of Souls. One part of which solemn and weighty care consists in preaching to those over whom he is appointed, the pure and uncorrupt word of God ; and in grafting in them the true principles of Christianity, which are there only to be found.— But now so far that Design wou'd be defeated and all our care avail but little, had we not an exclusive right in our own Pulpits. It would signify nothing how faithfully and properly we employ'd *these* ourselves, if we had not a power to exclude others. Or that we sow'd good seed in the *Morning*, if we were obliged to permit an Enemy to sow Tares in the *Afternoon*.—Hence it appears that the right of the Pulpit, is in the very reason and nature of the thing, solely in the Incumbent

Incumbent. And that no Man, or Body of Men, can have any Pretension or Claim to the use of it, without his Approbation and Consent.—Neither doth the Bishop's License to a Lecturer make any difference in the case. Which I thought proper to mention, because it is a point, in which I have observed many to be mistaken. Who are very apt to imagine that such License renders the consent of the Incumbent unnecessary.

An Error easily to be removed, only by considering the true nature, intent and meaning of a License ; and that as far as concerns Lecturers, it is no more than the leave and permission of the Ordinary, granted to them, to preach in his Diocese : Without which they would in so doing infringe upon his Episcopal Jurisdiction, and be liable to ecclesiastical Censures. So the Bishop's License, you see, doth not affect the *Right* of the *Pulpit*, but the *Security* of the *Preacher*, who is thereby indemnified against a penalty, which otherwise he would incur.—

And as the Incumbents right in such cases, is not subject to the *power* of the *Ordinary*, so is it much less to the *Will* of the *People*. This also is a point in which some have been strangely deceived, and which therefore deserves

deserves our attention.—Their mistake is chiefly founded upon that Circumstance, that Lecturers in general are supported at the Expence not of the *Incumbent* but of the *Parishioners*: Whence they infer that since they furnish out the stipend or recompence to the *Preacher*, they are at least in Equity intitled to the Privilege or use of the *Pulpit*.—And it must be confess'd that under proper restrictions and limitations their reasoning would be right, and their pretensions fair and equitable.—Since *Sunday-afternoon Sermons*, in the place of *catechitecal Lectures*, were (as I already observed) introduced long ago into this Kingdom, in accomodation to the necessities of the times; and have ever since been continued, especially in this City and Suburbs; there can be no good reason (as I apprehend) for abolishing the one, until there is a Prospect of reviving the other. In the mean time was an Incumbent resolutely to shut all such Preachers out of his Pulpit, it would be an exertion or stretch of Power, which however strictly *lawful*, would perhaps by no means be *expedient*. On the other Hand, was he to admit all into it without distinction, it would be running into the contrary extrem. In this as in every thing else, a Medium should be

be observed. It is not reasonable he should open it to whatsoever Preacher the Parishioners shall choose ; neither is it reasonable that he should arbitrarily impose a Preacher upon them. Of this the reasonableness will be seen at once ; but of the *other* I doubt it will not be so easily discerned. “ For what “ (some will be ready to say) can be more “ just and equal than they who pay the Preach “ er should choose him ? ” I answer, if by choosing, they mean such a *Choice* as is not under the *controul* of the Incumbent ; nothing can be more unjust or unequal : Because it is very possible they may appoint one whom he may think himself bound in Duty and Conscience to oppose ; one whose principles, or preaching may be suborsive of that foundation which he himself hath been *piously* and *painfully* laying. And is it to be expected he should acquiesce in such an Appointment ? If he was thoroughly persuaded or convinced that his own Doctrine were right, could it be expected of him to lend his Pulpit to another, who would inculcate quite contrary Doctrines ? Or if he should be so over courteous, must not every one see plainly what would be the consequence ? Suppose, for instance, that *he* in the *fore-part* of  
the

the Day was to insist upon the necessity of good Works, as the practice of moral Duties, and the other in the *latter* should maintain or suggest, that they are altogether unnecessary, and that whatever is said about them is nothing more than mere heathen Philosophy? Would not such contradictory preaching naturally tend to unsettle the Minds of their Hearers, or this contention of their Preachers work rather the *confusion*, than the *conviction* of the People? Undoubtedly. And yet it is obvious that this would sometimes be the Result of the popular choice of a Lecturer, if it was not in the power of the Incumbent to put a Negative upon it.

How easy it is for the People to be deceived in their Choice, experience hath taught us. And tis well that the same wise Mistress hath convinced some of *them* of their Error: Who after having with great precipitation and impetuosity forced some *into* our Pulpits, have with *equal Zeal* laboured to thrust them out again. I cannot say with *equal Success*, tho' neither hath their labour been altogether in vain.

To shew why the People are so liable to be mistaken in the election of a Preacher, many plain and evident reasons may be assigned.

I. Because they cannot without barefaced Flattery be supposed to be competent Judges whether or no he is possess'd of the proper and necessary Qualifications, especially of that very essential one, whether his principles are right, or his doctrines sound. A piece of knowledge at this time of Day particularly useful and requisite. And there is no more reflection in supposing of the Bulk of the People, that their Judgment is incompetent in these Points, than in supposing of the Body of the Clergy that they want skill sufficient to discern betwixt true and false wares, or to judge of the proper and necessary Qualifications, of a good Painter, or Statuary, or Architect. And that *those* are as capable of being impos'd upon in the one case, as *these* in the other. Scripture is the Rule by which all Doctrines are to be try'd ; but that Rule may be easily perverted, though every Man cannot so easily discover where that perversion lies : And he who cannot, is in Danger of deception, and is often deceived.

II. The People are liable to be mistaken in the choice of a Preacher for want of due care and caution. They are apt to be too precipitate, or to form a Judgment of him from one single Performance : In which if  
they

they are pleased with his *manner*, and in his *matter* find no notions or opinions contrary to their own, they determine at once without any further Examination.—This is the high road to Delusion. For is it a new thing for Men to exhibit false Samples? “No, (say you) in *secular* Commerce this is too common.” But pray have you never met with any who carry on a sort of *spiritual* Traffick by the same insidious cunning? Or who seek to recommend themselves and to make way for their doctrines by *sham* specimens of their Preaching? Cast your Eye then upon one of our modern Declaimers, the only Gospel Preachers; attend to his Discourses, when pushing for a Pulpit, and when fixed, or established *in* one, observe the Difference; take notice how he accomodates himself to those different Circumstances.—In the one you may observe him studiously suppressing the strange and mad Divinity of his Sect, and endeavouring to keep clear of every thing that may be shocking or offensive to such as are not initiated into its Mysteries. You may hear an excellent Sermon, and delivered greatly to *its* Advantage. In short in the *one* he acquits himself with modesty and decency, and in a manner not unwor-  
thy



thy of Imitation.—But in the other he pulls off the mask, appears with open face, resumes his true and proper shape scatters his wild Notions and cruel Conceits without *measure*, and sometimes without *meaning*, quitting the well trod track, in which every Preacher is most useful, and taking his meandering course thro' the Labyrinths of Ignorance and Error. You now see and hear *another Man* and *another Method*. You see the weak Enthusiast; you hear, (without the Apostle's Irony) *the Foolishness of preaching*. You see his religious Frenzy flashing from his Eyes, and his resistless Inspiration bursting from his Breast; you hear him amazing his gaping Crowd with childish Tales of Dreams and Visions and Letters from the Mansions above. In a Word. In all his Preachments to the illuminated and elect, you see (as it were) the *Effigy*, and hear the *Eccho* of his great Master, the *Patriarch of the Tabernacle*.—How dangerous therefore is it for any People to judge of the fitness of the Lecturer, from one or more select Discourses, calculated merely to catch their Ears, and to captivate their Hearts?

III. The People are apt to be mistaken in the choice of their Lecturer or Preacher,  
for

for want of distinguishing betwixt *primary* and *secondary* Qualifications, and from a Propensity to give the latter the Preference, that is to prefer a *Stentorophonick* Voice, retentive memory, &c. to all the powers of reason, understanding and judgment.—For instance, suppose two Candidates. The one found and sober in his Doctrine, plain and unaffected in his Style, regular and connected in his Discourse, grave and decent in his Delivery, and in every thing so behaving as if he had truly at Heart the profit of his Hearers. The other the very reverse in all Points. His Doctrine novel and groundless; his Style stiff and conceited, his Discourse a *Rhapsody*, his Delivery a *Rant*, and his apparent End and Aim *to be admired*. Or to draw the Parallel closer, suppose one a *Tillotson*, the other a *Whitfield*. I need not say upon whom the Lot would be most likely to fall.

And now from what hath been said the following Conclusions seem pretty clear and evident, viz. That every Incumbent hath an entire and exculsive Right to his own Pulpit.—That the Authority of the Ordinary doth not, nor ever meant to supersede, or abridge him in his Right.—That consequently to the Appointment of a Lecturer his approbation

tion and consent is necessary.—That since the Bulk of the people are so subject to choose injudicially, or improperly. tis but reasonable that their choice should be under the check, or controul of the Incumbent.—That tho' they pay the *Wages* he ought to take care of the *Work*, to which end it is requisite that he approve of the *Workman*.—That was he to neglect this Duty, he would justly deserve that censure which of late hath been so liberally bestow'd upon the whole Body of the Clergy “that they care not for their Flocks, except for the Fleece.”—And therefore that as it is their *Province* to nominate the *Preacher*, so is it his to judge of the fitness of the *Person*. Was it otherwise, how could we be said to *watch over your Souls as they that must give an Account* ?

I hope it will not be suspected that I am seeking to raise the *Power* of the *Priest*, upon the *Ruins* of that of the *People*. I am far from having any such Intention. On the contrary my hearty Desire is, that each may have his due ; that for the preventing Discords and preserving Harmony in the Church, those several Powers may be confin'd within their just and proper Limits, and not suffer'd to encroach the one upon the other.

I propose therefore in my next Discourse to shew wherein Encroachments are apt to be made on both sides, with respect to the Affair now under Consideration; to the *Prejudice* of the common cause of Christianity, to the *dishonour* of the Christian Church, to the *Reproach and Disgrace* of our own, to the great *Grief and Concern* of every sober and serious Christian, and to the no less *Joy and Triumph* of all those, who wish neither the *Peace of Jerusalem*, nor the *Prosperity of Sion*.—In which further Animadversions, shall endeavour to be as fair and equitable as I can; to observe that medium *myself* which I recommended to *others*.

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# SERMON II.

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I. COR. xi. 18.

*I hear that there be Divisions among you.*

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## P A R T II.

**I**Took occasion from these Words in a former Discourse to say something of the Quarrels and Animofities which have lately arofe in this City and Suburbs touching the choice or appointment of *Lecturers*.—I obferved that as thefe are ufually chofen by the parifhioners, it is no wonder that difcord and divifions fhould thence frequently arife amongst the *Electors* themfelves, fuch being the natural confequence of all popular Elections: But the worft of it is, it is fometimes the unhappy occafion of much strife and contention betwixt Minifter and People; the *one* tenacious of his *Right* of the *Pulpit*, the *other* of their customary *privilege* of choofing a *Preacher*.—I hinted that this evil might eafily be

cured or prevented, would they each duly consider the nature of their several and respective Claims : For want of which they are too apt to encroach the one upon the other : Of which encroachments on both sides, I am now by promise to give you some account.—I shall begin with those of the People. Precedents I doubt not may be found of Lecturers being appointed by the Parishioners, sometimes without the *Knowledge* ; sometimes without the *Consent*, and sometimes again contrary to the approbation of the Incumbent; and of their Intrusion into his Pulpit by *force*, or by *fraud*, by *strength* or by *stratagem*.—I am charitable enough to believe such trespasses are often involuntary; the effect of Ignorance or Inadvertency. Many, I'm satisfied, there are, who imagine an Incumbent hath nothing to do in the Choice of a Lecturer, and look upon him as impertinently officious if he concerns himself about it : Few I'm afraid are sensible how deeply he is interested in it ; or, that it is his indispensable Duty to be attentive to it. But a very little reflection upon the nature and importance of his office would be sufficient to inform them better, and to convince them, that was he to be indifferent and unconcerned

cerned in such Choice; he would forget the great and awful Trust he had taken upon him. For is it not the care of Souls? Is he not the guide, the instructor of the people committed to his charge? Is not his Pulpit the place from whence they are to receive their Instructions? And doth it not then behove him cautiously to guard that sacred Inclosure against all Impostors and Deceivers, and to beware that no Preacher be fixed or established in it, in whose principles and morals he may not reasonably confide? No Man surely who ever thought on these things, can suppose the Incumbent to be the only Person in his Parish, who hath no Business at all with the appointment of a Lecturer; but must rather conclude, that it is an Affair, in which he is principally *concerned*, and in which he ought in the first place to be *consulted*.

However, let Men conceive as they please (and of this matter they have for the most part very wrong conceptions) the Fact is so. On all such occasions Recourse should be first had to him. A proper account of the Candidates who offer themselves shou'd be laid before him, to the End he may examine and judge of their fitness or Qualifications. If he hath no objection to any,

then indeed it seems most prudent, because most conducive to the preserving a good understanding with his Parishioners, to interfere no further, but to leave the rest to them : But if he hath, 'tis no more than decent that his objections be calmly heard and allowed their due weight, and not to be contemptuously rejected, without being consider'd, or overuled by popular clamour ; especially if they are such as he holds himself bound in conscience to propose to them, much less should the people proceed rashly to elect any person so objected to, and endeavour to support their choice in opposition to their Minister, by a violent or fraudulent Seizure of his Pulpit.—The instances of this kind are but *few*. 'Tis pity there should be *any* : Yet some there have been ; which every true friend to decency and order in the Church of Christ, and Peace Love and Unity amongst Christian Brethren, must wish may never be drawn into *Precedent*.

But tho' it is but rarely that Men run such extravagant Lengths, or are hurried on to such a bold Invasion of the property of their Pastor, yet they frequently go too far, for want of right notions of the connexion there is betwixt the Incumbent and the Lecturer,  
how



how much the vigilance and circumspection of the one is necessary in the appointment of the other.—I'm verily persuaded it is for want of knowing or considering this, that the Churchwardens and Parishioners are apt to exceed their Boundaries, by taking such appointment wholly upon themselves, in leaving the Minister out of the account, or setting him aside as a Cypher. But from whatever cause it springs, whether it is an Error of the *Will* or of the *Judgment*, an *Error* it is; it is a Trespass, an infringement upon that Right, which Law, Religion, and Reason have rested in him.

And now I wish the complaint was wholly on one side, and that there was no room for censure on the other. But it cannot be denied that an Incumbent is also capable of transgressing his Limits, and in the affair of Lectureships, of encroaching upon his Parishioners; and that various ways. As

I. When he seeks to force whatever Lecturer he pleaseth upon them, or insists that they shall accept of one of his appointing or none at all; but that instead of a *Sermon* they shall be served with a *Catechetical Lecture*, or *Homily*.

This appears to me such an arbitrary Step

as nothing can justify, except their Resolution to choose only such, as he is bound in Duty as resolutely to oppose; otherwise it is an excessive and unchristian-like Extension of Power, and carrying the Right of the Pulpit to an excellent height. It seems to be forgetting that his property therein is not of a *temporal*, but *spiritual* nature; given him as in *general* for the good of those committed to his charge, so in *particular* for protecting them from false Doctrine, or dangerous Errors in Religion. Whilst he maintains his Right, and defends his Property upon those kind and pastoral Principles, he cannot be too tenacious of it, nor too jealous of any Encroachment upon it; he then acts in Character, he behaves as a *careful Shepherd*, a *faithful Steward*, a *vigilant Watchman*, and a *good Minister of Jesus Christ*, ought to do:—But if in asserting it he means only to shew his Authority or pride himself in his Prerogative; if without regard to the Considerations just mentioned, he admits into his Pulpit some Preachers who are exceptionable, and rejects others who are not, purely for his own humour, prejudice, interest or conveniency, he then gives up the very reasons, on which that Right is founded, and abstracted from which

a really good Man would scarcely think it worth contending for.

It is highly fit and requisite, that the Parishioners should consult and advise with the Incumbent, about the Election of a Lecturer. Nay perhaps it might be more expedient, upon the whole, that they should nominate the Candidates, and submit the Choice to him, especially in these times of imposture and sedition. Since besides that for the reasons alledged in my last Discourse, *he* might generally be suppos'd to choose more judiciously for *them*, than *they* for *themselves*, it would prevent those discords and dissentions, which such Elections naturally produce, (and which are more easily *prevented* than *cured*) and be the happy means of preserving that mutual Agreement and good Harmony amongst them, which the pious Psalmist could not speak of without Rapture. *Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for Brethren to live together in Unity.*—But if they are unwilling to repose that Confidence in him, or to resign a Province they have so long enjoy'd; compulsion, in my poor and humble Opinion, should not be *used*, or ever *thought* of, nor any harsh or rigorous Measures pursued for wresting it out of their Hands. Much bet-

ter is it that they should be obliged and humour'd in their Choice, provided they fix upon a Person no way obnoxious, or whose Character is in every respect unexceptionable.

But I need not dwell longer upon this Point, because were we arbitrarily and imperiously to impose a Lecturer upon our Parishioners, we should consequently be forced to support him at our own Expence, which consequence will be no bad Security against that Imposition.—And as to tying them down to *Catechetical Lectures*, or *Homilies*, tho' these are in themselves, a very proper and wholesome Provision, yet since our People in general are not easily brought to think so; since the affection for preaching seems to be as prevalent now as it was when it was substituted instead of the other; since it is so much more agreeable to the taste and temper of the majority; and time, or long usage hath given it so great a sanction, methinks it would hardly be worth while to *disturb* the *Peace* of the Church, for the sake of restoring that *part* of it's *Discipline*. However, this I presume must be granted, that if any private *Pastor* without the direction or advice of his *Diocesan*, was to attempt the Revival of it in his own particular Parish, it would be assuming too much, and if not tyrannizing *over*  
would

would at least be trespassing *upon* his Parishioners, in depriving them of a *Privilege*, confirmed to them by a *custom*, which by length of time, hath acquired, as it were, the force of a *Law*. And which, as it is innocent in itself, a Man of a right Disposition wou'd not *oppose*.

II. An Incumbent may be said to encroach upon his Parishioners, when he mixeth, or intermeddles in their Contest, about the *Choice* of a *Lecturer*. Except (as before excepted) where some of them sanguinely espouse, and violently contend for a Person, whose *Principles*, or *Morals* render his opposition necessary. In all other Cases a strict *Neutrality*, might be justly expected of him. Not that *Neutrality* which is too often observed in political Affairs, by those who *cautiously* or *cunningly*, avoid declaring for *either side*, till time hath discovered of whether they shall be most likely to avail themselves; but that which hath none other but pure and disinterested Views; that which springs from an honest and good Heart, and a sincere regard to the *Peace* and *Tranquillity* of his Parish.—Which *Peace* will always be more or less interrupted and annoy'd by the contests we are speaking of.—It is a  
melancholy

melancholy consideration to reflect that it must be so. One might hope, that however Men are subject to let loose their angry Passions in *other* Elections, (such I mean as are of a secular kind) they would strive to curb and restrain them in *this*; and proceed with a truly Christian Moderation: But Experience tells us the quite contrary; that *this* is usually carried on with more Heat and Passion than *others*; that there is the *least* calmness and candor where there ought to be the *greatest*; and (and what is most surprising) that they who treat our publick worship as master of indifference, and visit their Parish Churches so sparingly that without a *Guide* they would not easily find the way to their *Pews*, are yet often the *fiercest Sticklers* in the Choice of a Preacher.

This being the case, surely every prudent and peaceable Incumbent would be glad to keep at a distance from such *turbulent* and *tempestuous* scenes; would (as far as is consistent with duty) studiously avoid such *peevish* and *perverse* Disputes, and never interpose or concern himself in them, unless he thought by his interposition he might be able to hush the storm, and appease the tempest.—This indeed would be a *strong* and *stimulative* motive

tive, a sufficient inducement to break loose for a while from his easy retirement, to join himself to his Parish, and to exert all his *zeal* and all his *rhetoric* for keeping things quiet, or reconciling the angry Disputants. And yet even here, tho' one could not help commending his *piety*, one would nevertheless be apt to suspect his *prudence*, in hoping for success: For as well might the *bodily* Physician hope to talk the *vein* into *temper*, or by reasoning to *cool* the *calenture* of a fever; as the *spiritual* by all the *powers* of *argument*, or *charms* of *eloquence* to compose the *wrath*, or still the *rage* of popular Elections.

And 'tis much the same whatever is the *subject*, or whoever the *object* of Contention: Whether the first *Magistrate* in this great City, or the lowest *Officer* in his Train; whether a *Representative* in Parliament, or the *Lecturer* of a Parish. With respect to the last, where an Incumbent is *unavoidably* drawn into the contest, (which may happen to the most peaceable man, who at the same time makes a conscience of his duty) he is greatly to be *pitied*; but if he *unnecessarily* embroils himself in it, he is as much to be *blamed*; For as on the one hand there is little or no  
prospect

prospect of his asswaging the *Torrent*, so on the other there is great danger of his being carried down by its *rapidity*. Wherefore in all disputes about the choice of a Lecturer, where neither principles nor morals are concerned in the question, it seems the safest and the wisest for the Incumbent to sit still, or in the Language of *Solomon*, to *leave off Contention before it be meddled with*; for which he assigns this excellent Reason, viz. *The beginning of Strife is, as when one letteth out Water*. Insinuating that as Water, when the sluice is opened, is impatient of restraint, and with difficulty kept within its banks, so Strife, when once begun, is alike headstrong and impetuous. But if, notwithstanding, he will voluntarily, or officiously enter into such Contests, if, at least, led by prejudice, or self-interest, or whatever ungenerous and unworthy instigation, instead of a *Moderator*, he makes himself a *Party* in them, he then becomes *eccentric* in his motions, he breaks out of his *Sphere*, he invades the *Province* of his Parishioners; who have a *prescriptive* and as *exclusive* a right in those struggles, as he in his *Pulpit*. But

III. The greatest and worst encroachment upon them is, his making or proposing



sing Terms and Conditions to them and the Candidates, and insisting that whosoever shall be chose Lecturer, shall also in some measure take upon him the Office of Curate; shall be charged with a share of *his* duty as well as his *own*; or to speak more plainly, shall *read* for *him*, as well as *preach* for *himself*. These are strange terms and conditions indeed! This I call the *greatest and worst Encroachment*: But I think I may be allowed to say further, that it is also a *sad and shameful Imposition*. An *Imposition*, which barely to *mention* is sufficient to *expose* it. Without dwelling longer therefore on this disagreeable point, let each of us, in our several stations and callings, seek the *Peace* of the *City*, and submit one to another, and strive which shall excel most in Love and Good Works.



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# S E R M O N III.

JONAH i. 17.

*Now the Lord had prepared a great Fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the Fish three days and three nights.*

I Shall not endeavour to amuse or entertain you, with a philosophical Dissertation upon this surprising event, or go into a particular discussion, or solution of these, or the like curious questions, or enquiries, what sort of *Fish* it must be, that was capable of taking down *Jonah* into it's stomach? Or what sort of man *Jonah* was, who was able to keep so long residence in that close apartment? Questions, about which much learning and criticism have been employed; but in my humble opinion employed to little purpose. Enquiries, which one would think the Text had sufficiently obviated, by telling us expressly, that *the Lord had prepared a great Fish*. From whence it is evident, that  
 this

this was a supernatural Work; and *that*, therefore a ridiculous attempt, the striving to account for it in a natural way.

I am sensible, this hath been sometimes attempted, with an honest and good design. I'm sensible, that this, and other Essays of the like nature have had no worse an intention, than that of answering the objections or cavils of Infidelity. But it seems a wrong and wretched way of answering them, the giving up miracles to that end, or endeavouring to reconcile such Events to the ordinary *Laws of Nature*, as ought properly to be resolv'd into the *divine omnipotence*. St. *Paul*, by his own Example, hath taught us a better method. *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you*, said he to the Infidels of his Day, *that God should raise the dead?* And why should not we in like manner, ask our modern *Scepticks*, why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should preserve a Man in the Belly of a Fish? Doth this imply a greater power than was exerted in Man's first Formation? If he created him originally, by means infinitely beyond our conception, why may we not believe, nay how can we but conclude, that he can *preserve* him so too? Or how can it be  
doubted

doubted, that he who by his Almighty *Fiat* gave being to every species of living Creatures, should be able to produce one, of any kind, of an unusual size, or magnitude? This appears to me to be the surest and the shortest way with the *Deist* or *Infidel*: Far more so, than fetching *Precedents* from *natural History*, or from the fabulous accounts of Travellers of huge Whales, or other Sea-monsters fit for the purpose; or evincing or illustrating the possibility of *Jonab's* abiding three Days and three Nights in the Belly of a Fish, by instances of Birds, in the cold Season of the year, living in Clefts of Rocks and hollow Trees, or of Creatures, some living under Ground others at the bottom of deep Waters; or of the *Fœtus* in the Womb.—For besides that every the least defect, or error in *those* historical Evidences, is a matter of great triumph to the adversary, why is so much pains to be taken to reduce this Case of *Jonab* to the known and establish'd Laws of Nature? Is it, because nothing is to be believ'd, but what is thus naturally to be accounted for? Then 'tis to be fear'd, the solving so dextriously the Case of *Jonab* will create us abundance of fresh trouble; will draw upon us further demands from such Cavillers or Doubters;

will lay us under a sort of necessity of accounting in the same manner, for the deliverance of *Daniel* from the *Lions*, of the *three Children* from the *Furnace*, and for every other strange Occurrence we meet with in the Scriptures. So that, at this rate, we are to *unmiracle* every thing, that is *miraculous*, and if we require their *Faith*, oblige them first with *Demonstration*.—Without pretending therefore to shew how *Jonah's* preservation might *naturally* be effected, let us sit down with the Relation the sacred Writer has given us of it, who speaks of it, if not as a *supernatural* at least as an *extraordinary* Providence, that

The Lord had prepar'd, &c.

The Story of *Jonah*, tho' a fruitful and favourite Topick of ridicule with Unbelievers, will afford ample matter of useful speculation to the well dispos'd and serious Christian. Let us try, whether we may not improve it to our Advantage and Edification.

The Story is briefly this.—*Jonah* was commanded by God to go to *Nineveh* and cry against it; that is to awake the People to *Duty*, by setting before them their *Danger*. He disobey'd the Injunction; and instead of *Nineveh* bent his Course towards *Joppa*, taking the opportunity of a Ship bound for *Tarshish*  
—God

—God rais'd a Tempest.—The Vessel was in Danger.—The affrighted Passengers concluded it to be the effect of the divine displeasure.—Cast Lots, for the discovery of the particular Object of it. The Lot fell upon *Jonah*.—He was examined.—Confess'd his Crime.—Advis'd them to *appease* the Storm, by the Sacrifice of the Criminal.—They pursued his advice, but with great reluctance, and threw him into the Sea.—A Calm immediately followed.—A large Fish, by the divine appointment, swallowed him up.—After three Days disembogued him, and deliver'd him safe on shore.—God repeated his Commission to go preach at *Nineveh*.—He went.—He preach'd.—The people repent, and are reprieved.—He repines, and is reprov'd.

This is the short of *Jonah's* Story.—In whose conduct, as here represented, there appears an odd mixture of parts ; a remarkable contrast of good and bad ; of duty and disobedience, of cruelty and compassion, of steadiness and inconstancy ; all which deserve a more particular Consideration.

He sets off with crossing the divine command.

*Balaam* trifled and trick'd it, prevaricated and play'd double in the execution of *his* com-

mission. The young Prophet, who was sent to cry against the Altar at *Bethel*, was betray'd and cheated into the violation of *his*. But *Jonah* wilfully, deliberately, and with his Eyes open, rebelled against the commandment of God.—And why?—Take the reason from his own Mouth. *Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my own Country? Therefore I fled unto Tarshish, for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the Evil.* The generous Purposes of Heaven towards *Nineveh* seem to have been grievous to *Jonah*. The Heart of this Prophet appears to have been fully set upon the destruction of that *People* so that he could not bear to be made an instrument in God's hands of their preservation. *Balaam* was hurried on by *Avarice and Ambition*; the young Prophet before mentioned was overcome by an *easy credulity*, and *good nature*; but it looks as if *Jonah* disobey'd God, only for *his good Will* towards Men. How different a Spirit is this from what *Abraham* shew'd, upon the like occasion? With what an affectionate concern did he intercede for *Sodom*, when the wrath of God was kindled against it? *Wilt thou destroy the Righteous with*  
*the*



*the wicked? Peradventure there shall be fifty righteous within the City; wilt thou also destroy and not spare the Place for the fifty righteous, that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous shall be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right? One can hardly read the good old Patriarch's Intercession without being anxious for the Intercessor; without expecting the Lord would answer him, as he did Job, shall he, that contendeth with the Almighty, instruct him? He that reprovet God, let him answer it.—Wilt thou disannul my Judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou may'st be righteous? But then to hear him go on with his Suit, still rising in in his Petitions, and asking the more, the more was granted him, till at last he had reduc'd the fifty righteous to ten, who can be other then in pain for him, lest his Love should transport him beyond his Duty; lest in his superabundant Pity for Man he should affront the honour of his maker and pull down that vengeance upon himself, which he is so kindly endeavouring to avert from others? How is it possible to attend to his Pleadings, or Sollicitations, without being as*

impatient and uneasy for *his* Fate, as for the Fate of the *City*? or without rejoycing with a holy triumph, that whilst he thus bravely stood in the Gap, he was not consumed? But to return to *Jonah*. He alas! had none of *Abraham's* tenderness or *Philanthropy* about him *six score thousand Persons*, if not righteous, at least as innocent as Ignorance could render them, *not being able to discern between their right Hand and their left*, drew no compassion from *him*. Instead of *Favour* he wanted *Fire* to come down from Heaven upon the *Nenevites*, and peevishly, and perversely refus'd to preach to them as the Lord had appointed him, *lest they should hear with their Ears, and understand with their Hearts, and be converted*, and reprieved from the impending Wrath of Heaven. If sentence might have been executed speedily he wou'd gladly have gone to *Nineveh* to have pronounc'd it but as he had no *Mercy* at least for that People, he could not endure the Thoughts of an arrest of *Judgment*; but sullenly declin'd his *Embassy*, when he could not glut his *Envy*.

Many Reasons have been suppos'd for this unnatural Behaviour of *Jonah*, upon this Occasion, which shall be consider'd hereaf-

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ter. For the present pass we on from what I think we may be allowed to call the *wicked* to the *weak* part of his character and conduct.

As in contradicting God's good pleasure upon so malevolent a motive, he discover'd wrong affections, so in proposing to flee from his presence he betray'd as wrong a *Judgment*. "He flatter'd himself, (says an ingenious and learned Writer) that the spirit of Prophecy would not pursue him, after he was got out of the holy Land." But this was not all. He must have flatter'd himself further, that by this Escape not only his *Prophecy*, but his *Punishment* would also fail: That the *Eye* of the Lord would not follow him; or his *Hand* not overtake him; or that his anger would cease, when the object was out of Sight; or perhaps, that when the *Offender* was removed, the *Offence* would not be remembered. He was not at this time so well skill'd in the divine Nature and Attributes, as to say with holy David, *whither shall I go then from thy Spirit? Whether shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into Heaven thou art there: If I make my Bed in Hell; behold thou art there: If I take the Wings of the Morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the Sea, even there shall thy*

*Hand lead me and thy right Hand shall hold me,* “ Tho’ no Man (as the aforefaid Author observes) ever fo experimentally found this Divinity to be true, as did the Prophet afterwards, while he fojourn’d in the Deep, and took up his Habitation in the Whale’s Belly, at present he seem’d quite a stranger to it, and rather to have faid in his Heart, after the manner of the Heathen, *tush, God seeth it not, or careth not for it.*” But these false and unworthy Conceptions of the Deity, with which he set out for *Tarshish* were rectified at the time, when the *Storm* and the *Lot* fell upon him. Then he was convinc’d, that God was a *God not only at hand, but also a far off*: That he looketh from one end of the Earth to the other, and seeth under the whole Heavens, that *his Eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* And that there was no retreating either from his *Inspection*, or his *Justice*.

And here we begin to behold *Jonah* in a more favourable light; more like what one would expect to behold in a Prophet. He did not upon his surpris and disappointment in his intended Escape address to God, as *Abab* to *Elijah*, his messenger, *hast thou found me*

*me O mine Enemy?* But at once acknowledged the justice of divine providence in thus overtaking him, a Rebel, and a Fugitive For being asked by the affrighted Mariners, *tell us we pray thee (for whose cause thi evil is upon us,) what is thine Occupation? Whence comest thou? What is thy Country, and of what People art thou?* He frankly and ingeniously confessed both his Country and his Crime: Confessed without hesitation, or reserve that he was a Hebrew; and that he had fled from the presence of God; that their *Danger* was owing to his *disobedience*, and that their *deliverance* was not to be procured, but by his *punishment*. *Take me, and cast me forth into the Sea, so shall the Sea become calm unto you; I know that for my sake this great distress is come upon you.* In like manner, as the Prophet *David*, when he saw the sweeping Pestilence (the unhappy consequence of his numbring the people,) desired to stay it with his own blood, and the blood of his Family. *Lo. I have sinned and done wickedly, but what have these done? Let thy Hand, I pray thee, be upon me and upon my Father's House.*

*Jonah* did not hide his Iniquity in his Bosom; did not seek to excuse, or justify himself, by denying, or disguising, or suppressing

pressing the Truth : And no wonder, that he who had succeeded so ill from *flight*, should not hope for better success from *falsehood* : But he might have implored the mercy of his fellow Travellers, who seem'd well inclined to save him, by the reluctance and solemnity, with which they accepted his voluntary oblation ; *We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this Man's life and lay not upon us innocent Blood, for thou O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee* : So that, altho' he made a fair and faithful Confession of his Guilt, he might at the same time, have recommended himself to their pity and compassion ; and indeed his so generous a *Confession* was alone a *Recommendation*.

But instead of soliciting them to shew *him* mercy, he besought 'em to do *themselves* Justice, by committing him to the Deep, to which he was conscious Heaven had devoted him, and thereby stilling the *raging* of the *Sea*, and the *Wrath* of it's *Ruler*. He was as tender of *their* Lives, as they of *his*, as fearful of the charge of innocent Blood, as they, and with much greater reason ; he was aware of the expediency of one Man's dying for the rest, and that he was the Man ; he was aware, that the best Plank left both  
for

for them and him was lightening the Ship of his guilty weight; that in *sparing* him, they would *sink* themselves; but in consulting their *own* safety they might *possibly* secure *his*.

But now the dark side of the Prophet turns up to us again: Not as he lay imprisoned in the great deep, *where the Weeds were wrapt about his Head*; where he was under a double Guard of the *Fish* and of the *Flood*; no, there he acted, as such a Prisoner ought to do; *I cry'd, said he, by reason of mine Affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the Belly of Hell cry'd I, and thou heardst my Voice: I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I look again toward thy holy Temple.* All this was well, as could be wished. But notwithstanding his repentance and Affiance, his pious petitions under such his close and gloomy confinement, his devout Lauds and Thanksgivings, and Vows of his future obedience, after he was set at Liberty, he soon relaps'd into his former Error; and *Jonah* in the *Tempest*, and *Jonah* in the *Calm* were now again two different Persons. He did not indeed upon his *second*, as he did upon his *first* Commission, refuse to go to *Nineveh*; so far he performed the Commandment of the Lord; he went and preached, and the people repented

repented and found mercy. But gall'd and griev'd, and mortified, not with their *Repentance*, but the fear of their *Reprieve*, the Preacher again grew sour and fullen, and murmur'd against God; *it displeas'd Jonab exceedingly and he was very angry*: and said, *O Lord, I beseech thee take away my Life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live*. Monstrous Impiety! Inhumanity and Ingratitude: Who wou'd not have expected, that God would have taken him at his Word, and instead of that mildest, gentlest Rebuke, *dost thou well to be angry?* Have suffered his whole displeasure to arise and consume him in a moment. *Jonab* without giving any answer to this so kind and merciful exhortation went away chagrin'd and sorrowful, retir'd to the out skirts of the City, plac'd himself at a proper distance, with some faint hopes at least, of feasting his Eyes with the flames of *Nineveh*.—And yet this moody and morose, this impatient and cruel Man, who had conceived such an implacable hatred against Men like himself, was grown so passionately fond of a *Gourd*, that grew over his Head, and serv'd him as a shade, and which God had prepar'd one Day, and destroy'd another, on purpose to cure him of his uncharitableness



ritableness, repin'd and mourned and fainted away upon it's withering, and in his usual murmuring strain wanted to surrender up his Life, unable to survive the loss. As before he wish'd to *die*, since the *Ninevites* must *live*, so now he could not *live*, since his favourite *Gourd* must *die*. Whereupon God thus reproves him, *thou hast pity on the Gourd, for which thou hast not labour'd, neither made it to grow, which came up and perished in a Night, and should not I spare Nineveh that great City, wherein are more than six score thousand Persons,, that cannot discern betwixt their right hand and their left hand?* One cannot but be persuaded, that this must have the same happy effect upon *Jonah*; as *Nathan's* parable had upon *David*, must have open'd his Eyes, and struck him to the Heart, and let out all that leaven, that malignity, that foul matter of which the Sea, it seems, had not been able to purge him: But we can pronounce nothing with certainty about it, since here endeth the Prophet's Story.

Hitherto I have only given you a plain narrative of this wonderful and surprising Event, and made a few reflections, in going along, upon the several Circumstances attending

attending it.—But it would be doing great injustice to the Subject, to drop it here. Some cavils and objections are to be answer'd and some doctrines and uses to be rais'd before it can be said to have been treated in the manner it ought to be.—Reserving therefore what remains for a future Discourse ; let us learn from what we have already heard, to trust in God in our most pressing dangers and difficulties ; and never be tempted to think, that our case is desperate, however it may seem to be out of the reach of human help and assistance ; but with an holy and religious hope and confidence look up to that almighty Power and all gracious Providence, which watch'd over *Jonah*, and protected him from the devouring deep, by preparing him a Bed in the Whale's *Belly*.

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# S E R M O N IV.

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JONAH i. 17.

*Now the Lord had prepared a great Fish to swallow up Jonah ; and Jonah was in the Belly of the Fish three Days and three Nights.*

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## P A R T II.

**W**ITH *those* who dispute the Truth of every thing, which hath the appearance of Miracle, the Story of *Jonah*, we must expect, will meet with no kind reception. But for *others*, who profess to believe Miracles in *general*, they can have no reasonable objection to the belief of this, in *particular* ; which hath the same Authority with the rest, viz. the testimony of the Scriptures. With respect to the *possibility*, there is nothing more incredible in *Jonah's* being preserved in the Whale's *Belly*, than Daniel in the Lion's *Den*, or the three Children in the *fiery Furnace*.

nace. And as to the *probability*, all the facts stand upon the same scripture evidence. I may add—that the extraordinary event mentioned in my Text is to be met with in several *Heathen Historians* ; so far as relates to Jonah's lying three Days in the Belly of the Whale only under a different name.

But now the *Deists* or *Scepticks*, who object to *all* miracles for their *improbability* are particularly offended with *this*, for it's *absurdity*. The *character* of *Jonah* (which it must be confess'd is a very *odd* one) they think is alone sufficient to destroy the *credit* of the whole Story. Nothing can appear more ridiculous to them, than that God should appoint such a *Man*, for such a *Commission* : That he should think of saving Nineveh, by the preaching of Jonah, whose Heart he knew was set upon it's *destruction* : That he should exert a supernatural power in the Preservation of one, who had proudly and perversely disobey'd his express Injunction, and who after such a miracle of Mercy shewed to himself, could not bear that any compassion should be shewed to others.—Such objections (let it be admitted) are *plausible* and that's enough for those, who raise them. Were they as well dispos'd to *solve* difficulties,

tics, as to *form* them; yea, would they bestow half the pains upon the *one*, which they do upon the *other*, I am persuaded, they would be able to get over *this*. But tho' such labour is not to be expected from *them*, it may reasonably be demanded of *us*, lest they should impose upon *others*, as well as *themselves*, or hurt those, who tho' they do not deny the Faith, yet are weak in it.

In the first place, we are not to make those rules and maxims, by which we judge of the fitness or unfitness of *human* Schemes, our measure, by which to try the propriety of the *divine* Proceedings: For *God's* ways are not as *our* ways, nor *his* Thoughts, as *our* Thoughts. Had the conversion of the *Ninevites* been left to *human* prudence only, a man of *Jonah's* peevish and morose temper and disposition would have been rejected, as a very improper *Missionary*, and more likely to *frustrate* than to *forward* the pious undertaking: But God can bring about his all-wise purposes, by what Instruments he pleaseth; and frequently chooseth the weakest, and least promising, that his power may be thereby magnified. Agreeably to which, hear the great Apostle to the Corinthians, *For ye see your calling, Brethren, how that not many*

*wise men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the World to confound the wise, and the weak things of the World to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the World, and things that are despised, God hath chosen; yea and things which are not to bring to nought things that are, that no Flesh should glory in his Presence. Thus Elisha was called from the Plow, and Amos from the Herds, to be Prophets under the Law; and in like manner Andrew and Peter from their Nets, and Matthew from his Culloms, to be Apostles under the Gospel: To the end that our Faith might stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*—Besides: Even amongst men, like ourselves, we sometimes see things accomplished by means, which we should imagine would have a quite contrary effect. And 'tis thus, that the *Politician* keeps his *projects* out of sight, till he has brought them to *perfection*; oft times *securing* his Point by that very method, which would seem to others, to be the best calculated for it's *defeat*. And why is this, but because either they are not acquainted with the whole of his *Plan*, or else know not how the several *parts* of it are *connected*; from whence

it

it necessarily follows, that they are incompetent Judges of the prudence or imprudence of his measures. And shall we then pretend to fathom the deep Counsels of Heaven, or boldly charge the ways of God with error and absurdity, because they appear to be repugnant to the maxims of human Wisdom? —But further: *Jonah's froward Temper*, (as the Event shews) was so far from being a *Disqualification* for the Embassy, in which he was employed; that under the direction of that God, who knows how to bring good out of evil, and out of weakness to ordain strength, it render'd him a more fit and proper *Instrument* or *Agent* for the *purpose*: not only as his peevishness and perverseness laid the foundation of that *Miracle*, which added great weight to his *Mission*; but also for that his own wonderful Preservation, was such an instance of the Divine Patience and Forbearance, as would naturally provoke and encourage the Repentance and Reformation of those to whom he was sent.—'This was the main end of St. *Paul's* miraculous Conversion, and a main argument with him for the Conversion of others. *For this Cause*, says he, *I obtained mercy, that in me Christ Jesus might shew forth all Long-Suffe ring, for a Pattern*

them which shall hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. And just so might *Jonah* say, (who was the only *Prophet* as *St. Paul* was the only *Apostle* sent expressly to preach to the *Gentiles*;) for this cause I obtained mercy, that *my* Acceptance might be an assurance of *yours* ; an assurance that nothing more is wanting to put you into as happy a Situation as myself, than to *believe* and to *repent*. And what could be contrived more effectual for awakening, animating, encouraging and reforming those to whom he preached, than the setting forth the tender mercy of God, so signally and surprizingly exemplified and manifested in the Preacher himself.

“ But (says the *Deist*, or *Infidel*) the chief  
 “ difficulty remains yet unsolved. How is  
 it to be supposed, that *Jonah*, who to the last  
 “ wish’d and panted after the Destruction  
 “ of *Nineveh* should himself labour to pre-  
 “ vent it, by making use of proper argu-  
 “ ments and motives for exciting their Repen-  
 “ tance? ’Tis no new thing, for the *Will* to  
 “ contradict, or oppose the *Judgment*; but  
 “ it seems, it was at variance with itself.”

To which the Answer is easy and obvious. *Jonah*, it’s true, appears from all the circumstances of his Story, to have been very  
 evilly



evilly affected towards the people of *Nineveh*. And tho' the reason of his declining his journey thither, in disobedience to the Divine Command, hath occasioned various opinions yet the most probable seems to be such, his *Prejudice*, or *Disaffection*: or, which is the same thing, the *narrowness of his Mind*, or *partiality to his own Nation*. "To which, " (as one observes) he might conceive it " would be a sad reproach, should the *Nine-* " *vites* happen to repent at the preaching of " *one* Prophet, when the Jews had rejected " *so many*; beating *one*, and stoning *another*, " and killing *another*, and persecuting them " *all*." However that be, the Divine Displeasure, which pursued him so closely in his intended escape to *Tarsbush*, so far wrought upon him, that being enjoined by God the *second time* to go to *Nineveh*, with the like commission as before, he immediately obey'd. *Immediately*, but not *willingly*. For *fear of himself*, and not out of any *compassion to that people*. The judgment, which was inflicted upon him in the great deep, had filled him with *horror*, but not with *benevolence*. He durst not any longer trifle with the Almighty, nor refuse to execute the trust committed to him; but with what a *heart* he complied with

it,—with what *reluctancy* he entered upon the charitable office, is evident from that *sullen sorrow and concern* he shewed, provoked by the *success* of it: For when it pleased God to spare the devoted City, upon its Repentance in consequence of *Jonah's* preaching and admonitions, we read, that *it displeased him exceedingly; and he was very angry and prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this thy saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.*—And where now is the mighty *absurdity*, or *inconsistency* of all this? Or how doth it make it necessary to, suppose, that *Jonah's Will* was at variance with itself? His *Will* was, that *Nineveh* should be destroyed. This cruel inclination he cherished to the last, as far as he dar'd, and as far as we have any account of him; but then the terrors of the Lord over-ruled his prejudice, and aw'd him to obedience: The case of all those, who serve God for *fear*, rather than upon a principle of *holy Love*.

But

But perhaps it will be asked, “ How doth  
 “ this representation of *Jonah* agree with  
 “ the wisdom and sanctity of a Prophet?  
 “ Doth not the Scripture tell us, that they  
 “ were *good and holy Men, who of old spake*  
 “ *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?* And  
 “ how then doth that Prophet answer this  
 “ Character?

To this it may be answered, first, that St. *Peter* is there to be understood, as speaking in *general*. And in general the Prophets were good and holy men: But it follows not from thence that they *all* possessed the like eminent degrees of virtue and holiness; nor that *any* of them were without their failings; and if *some* of them were guilty of grosser errors, yet we should remember that there was a *Judas* amongst the twelve Apostles, whom nevertheless we are warranted by St. *John* for styling *holy*.

Again.—The Prophets tho’ *inspired*, were still but *men*. Inspiration did not alter their natures, or extinguish or stifle their passions, or put them out of the power of sinning.—  
 “ Supernatural gifts in *general* (says one on  
 “ this subject) and that of Prophecy, in  
 “ *particular*, tho’ they *enlightened the Minds*  
 “ of the Prophets, did not always *sanctify*  
 “ *their*

“ *their hearts and affections.*” Much less we may add, did they restrain them from doing evil, by *forcing their Wills*,, the *freedom* of which is essential to *Virtue* itself. Had the Prophets and Apostles, in consequence of their Inspiration been brought under an absolute necessity of behaving as they did, had their *supernatural Communications* destroyed, or superseded their *natural Liberty*, had they been deprived of all power of choosing, or refusing the good, or evil set before them, instead of *good and holy men*, we must have considered them, as *mere machines*, and as incapable of either virtuous, or vicious actions, as the wheels and springs of a clock, whose motions are altogether involuntary. So that the depravity or malignity of *Jonah's* heart is no objection to the truth of his story, unless we suppose the Gift of Prophecy to put the Person, to whom it is communicated, out of the reach of human infirmities; which would be a weak and groundless supposition.

And thus having endeavour'd to shew, that this remarkable piece of Scripture History, stands clear and unimpeach'd by all the usual Cavils and Pretences of Infidelity, I shall proceed

proceed to the Doctrines and Uses naturally deducible from it.

I. Then from *Jonab's* disobedience, and the Issue of it, we learn how vain a thing it is to attempt to *defeat*, or disappoint the *divine purposes*: And how easily an all powerful and an all wise God can convert those Projects and Contrivances, which are formed or meditated in *opposition* to his Will, into means, or instruments of it's *Completion and Establishment*. For thus it was, that *Jonab's* refusing at first to go to *Nineveh* as the Lord had commanded him, and warn it of it's Danger, and of the Judgment which hung over it, became afterwards the means of hast'ning their escape from it, by adding *Strength* to their *Faith*, and *Encouragement* to their *Repentance*: Both which must be greatly assisted. and encreased by that most marvellous Deliverance vouchsafed to *Jonab*, when in actual Rebellion against Heaven, and foolishly and wickedly seeking to flee from the presence of God, rather than obey his Voice. It would have been very easy to the Almighty, upon *Jonab's* evading the Embassy delegated to him, to have transferred his Commission to another Prophet, who would have executed it more speedily and  
faith-

faithfully : But God had determined to make *Jonah* the Instrument of relieving *Nineveh* ; and that not by *forcing his Will*, but by rendering the forwardness of *that Will* subservient to his *own*. In which procedure is illustrated and exemplified that Lesson of the wise Man ; *there are many Devices in Man's Heart ; nevertheless the Counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.*

II. From *Jonah's* stupid design of fleeing from the presence of God (whether we are thereby to understand the hiding himself from the sight, or sheltering himself from his Arm) we may infer the *infatuating Nature of Sin*.

It is well argued, by an ingenious Writer, that “ habitual Sin is a kind of Madness.” And his Argument will hold as well of every *wilful Act* as of the *Habit* of sinning ; with this only difference, that the *one* is a longer and more confirmed, the *other* a shorter and less rooted Madness.—“ The true Cause  
 “ (says he) of *Distraction* is, when the ani-  
 “ mal Spirits by some accident or other, are  
 “ so over-heated, that they become unfer-  
 “ viceable to cool and sedate reasoning,  
 “ which *Combustion* of the Spirits usually hap-  
 “ pens from the Rage and Violence of the  
 Passions :

“ Passions : A Man setting his Heart ve-  
 “ hemently upon some object, or other, the  
 “ Spirits are put into a Flame by the Rapidity  
 “ of their own Motion, and in that Rage are  
 “ not to be govern’d by Reason. This we  
 “ have sad examples of in *Love*, in *Grief*,  
 “ in *Jealousy*, in *Wrath*, and *Vexation* ; and  
 “ indeed, (says he) *Betlehem* is filled with  
 “ Instances.

Jonah doubtless was *disorder’d in his Mind*, when he thought of outrunning the Divine Vengeance. The mad Attempt cannot otherwise be accounted for. It could never be the result of cool and sober Reflection ; but must proceed from the *strength* of his *Prejudice* and the *Fierceness* of his *Anger*, which put his *Reason to shame*, and his *Conscience to silence*, or at least made him inattentive to the Remonstrances of the *one* and to the Reproaches of the *other*.

III. From Jonah’s averfeness to go to *Nineveh*, and the impatience and founess with which he received the Appointment, appears the great care we ought to use in guarding against a *sordid, selfish, and contracted Spirit*, which seems to have been the *Rock*, upon which he *founder’d*.—Some I know, ascribe his morose and fullen Behaviour to  
 another

another Cause ; and are inclined to think that his backwardness in complying with the Divine Command was owing to the *Danger* of the Undertaking, and *doubtfulness* of the Success. But this Opinion stands very ill with his own Words before cited: *Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my own Country ? Therefore I fled to Tarshish ; for I knew, that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and repentest thee of the evil.* The same as if he had said, “ did not I foresee their “ Repentance and Reprieve ? ” Which plainly shews that the *Danger*, of which he was apprehensive was not that of the *want of success*, but that of his *succeeding too well*. Others again suppose that, in consequence of *Nineveh's* not being destroy'd, he was afraid of being censur'd as a *false Prophet* : But we can hardly imagine him to have been ignorant, that his *commination* was *conditional*, and that therefore if *Nineveh repented*, *Nineveh* might be spared, consistently with his crying against it, which Phrase or Expression means no more than a *denuntiation* of the Divine Judgments upon the Heads of an *impenitent* People. So that the most probable reason of his peevishly and perversely crossing the divine Will seems to be what I once before mention'd



mention'd, his Fear left the *Repentance* of the *Ninevites* should reproach the *impenitency* of his *own Nation*. Or perhaps it might be the Effect of Pride, and Envy, to which the *Jews* were remarkably subject; and no Wonder, since it was a common notion amongst them, that they were the sole *favourites* of Heaven and that no other People whatsoever had any share in it's regard. Which consideration should be sufficient one would think, to mortify in us every *partial Affection*, and to inspire us with *universal Love*, Charity and Benevolence. A Principle which if universally cherish'd and indulged, would abundantly bring more glory to *God*, more credit to *Religion*, more Peace to *Earth*, and more Joy to *Heaven*, than the most *fervent and flaming Zeal* where *this* kind and affectionate, and charitable and *benevolent Principle* is wanting.

IV. From God's manner of rebuking *Jonah* we may gather, how we ought to deal with those, who are in error. *Jonah, dost thou well to be angry?* Angry at *what?* That God was pleas'd to have compassion upon a penitent People? Angry at *whom?* At that Being, who just before had by a miracle shew'd Compassion to *him?* To him, whose

whose crime had in it (I had almost said) every circumstance of aggravation? And was it for this provoking crime, that he was chastised with so mild and gentle a reproof, Jonah, *dost thou well to be angry?* Good God! Well might Jonah say, *I knew that thou art a merciful God, slow to anger, and of great kindness.* What a fine example have we here of that Temper which the Apostle recommends as requisite to the reducing those, who are gone out of the way? *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness.* Nor is there more beauty in the *reproof* than in the *method* God was pleased to make use of to silence Jonah's murmuring, and to bring him to a due sense of his wild and extravagant discontent. In raising him up a *Gourd* one day to engage his Affections, and destroying it the next, to awaken his *Pity*. I have not time to enlarge upon this delightful incident in Jonah's Story, but must refer you to the sacred Page, in which it is contained. There read it carefully, consider it attentively, and you will easily perceive, that nothing could be better calculated for instructing us in that lenity, which should be  
used

used for the restoring our weaker Brethren, and in that address which is necessary for reclaiming the most stubborn and refractory: *That they that err in Spirit, may come to Understanding, and they that murmur may learn Doctrine.*

Fifthly and lastly. In Jonah's Story we have a Type of our Saviour's Resurrection. We are very well authorized in applying the *one* to the *other*, since Christ himself hath taught us so to do. For, *as Jonah, saith he to the unbelieving Jews, was three days and three nights in the Whale's Belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the Heart of the Earth.* Which he told them was the only Sign he would indulge them with. *An evil and adulterous Generation seeketh after a Sign, and there shall no Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas.* Whether they understood him as *then* speaking prophetically of his Resurrection or no, one would imagine that *afterwards* by comparing the *Type* with the *Anti-type*, the *Prophecy* with the *Event*, they should have wanted no further Evidence. But alas! tho' *this alone* had been sufficient to convince any reasonable Inquirer, yet *this* was but *one of a Thousand Proofs* which were  
lost

lost upon them, who were unwilling to be convinced.

To conclude therefore: Let us take care lest we fall by the same Example of Unbelief. Let us not give way to any captious, or carping doubts, arising from the *strangeness* of the *Story*, which has been the subject of this Discourse, since our blessed Lord himself hath vouched for the *Truth* of it. But let us apply the Moral of it to ourselves, and improve it to the purposes of true Religion and Virtue. Let Jonah's part in it make us ashamed of our *Disobedience* towards *God*, and *Ill-will* towards *Men*, and work in us the reverse Principles; which is the sum and substance of all the uses I have been speaking to, and indeed of Christianity itself. And from the behaviour of the *Ninevites*, let us learn the Duty of a speedy Repentance and Reformation; or rather let us make *them our* Patterns in the practice of that duty. So shall we escape our Saviour's censure, pronounced upon the impenitent and incorrigible, *The Men of Nineveh shall rise up in Judgment with this Generation, and shall condemn it, for they repented at the Preaching of Jonah, and behold a greater than Jonah is here.*

S E R-

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# S E R M O N V.

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COLOS. iii. 5.

*And Covetousness, which is Idolatry.*

**S**T. Paul, in the foregoing Chapter, endeavours to confirm and strengthen the *Colossians* in the true Principles of that holy Religion, they had embrac'd, and to prevent their being seduced by the vain Philosophy of the *Gentiles*, or giving way to the carnal Ordinances of the *Jews*.

*As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the Faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with Thanksgiving. Beware lest any Man spoil you thro' Philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

He cautions them particularly against the supposed necessity of *Circumcision*: Tells them that they were *circumcis'd with the circumcision made without hands putting off the Body of the Sins of the Flesh by the*

*Circumcision of Christ.* That they were buried with him in Baptism; wherein also they were risen with him, thro' the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

From which Promises he draws this Conclusion, in the beginning of the Chapter, of which my Text is a part. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God.* If the Religion ye now are baptis'd into, is of a more sublime and spiritual Nature than that into which ye were heretofore initiated, by the Circumcision of the Flesh: see that your *Practice* be agreeable to your *Professions* since your Hopes are thus raised from Earth to Heaven, behave not as mere Sons of Earth, but *where your Treasure is*, there let your *Hearts* be also.

And because this *corruptible Body presseth down the Soul*, because bodily affections are a fore let and hindrance to her celestial Flight, —Oppose her ascent, and even hold her, or pull her back, as she is rising, he subjoins this further advice or admonition.

*Mortify therefore your Members that are upon the Earth, Fornication, Uncleanness, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness, which is Idolatry.*

Tis with that strange infatuating Vice, which concludes the verse, that I am concerned at present.

Now tho' Avarice hath its rank amongst those inordinate affections immediately beforementioned by the Apostle, yet he here distinguisheth it from the rest, by a particular mark of Infamy. And Covetousness *which is Idolatry*. He pronounceth of the former, not that it in some sort *resembles*, or bears some similitude to the *latter*, but that it *amounts* to the *very Thing* itself,

It's true, nothing is more useful in common speech, than to say of the popular Man, that he is the Idol of the multitude, or that the people adore him: By which is only meant, that he is much followed and courted and caress'd by them. But *St. Paul* is not so to be understood. His words are more strictly to be taken. He says plainly and without a Figure, that the Sin of Covetousness includes in it the Sin of Idolatry. And 'tis observable, that he hath expressly asserted the same thing, in the 5th ch. of his Epistle to the Ephes. *For this ye know that no Whoremonger, nor unclean Person, nor covetous Man (who is an Idolater) hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.*

This repeated Assertion therefore of the Apostle seems to require, that we should understand it, in a strict and literal sense : And in such I shall consider it in the following Discourse : And endeavour to shew, in what respect it may be truly and properly said, that *Covetousness is Idolatry*.

And because the censure is a very severe one, it becomes us to be extremely cautious how we apply it, and to examine with the utmost candor into the nature of that Covetousness, to which it is affixed, and who are the covetous who justly and deservedly fall under it.

*Avarice* then, in the Apostle's sense of it, is not barely an immoderate desire, or thirst after riches, but the pursuing and resting in them, as the chief or *supreme good*. The *one*, alas ! is a very prevailing and common Error ; the *other*, it is to be hoped, is the Fault but of a few. In general, the over-anxious and solicitous pursuit of Wealth, is directed to some further end ; such as the making a *figure* in the World, raising a *Family*, or enjoying a larger share of *sensual pleasures*, and Satisfactions. The Passion, however it is aimed, is doubtless blamable ; whatever is the *Motive*, the *Excess*, is *vicious*, yet is it not *the Vice*, the  
Covet-



Covetousness stigmatiz'd in my Text. To him alone is that to be imputed, who having no such views or motives as those, just now mentioned, no other, or further purpose to serve by being rich, no Heir, or Family that he regards ; no appetite, that he durst oblige, is notwithstanding insatiably avaritious : is ever with unwearied diligence and restless anxiety, *joining House to House, and Field to Field*, and enlarging his already overgrown *Exchequer*, out of which he has not the spirit to allow himself a *Pension*. This is Covetousness in the very abstract. This is the *Love of Mammon*, for it's own sake. This is making it the ultimate end of his Desires and Wishes. In short, this is setting his Heart entirely upon it ; and placing his whole happiness in the Possession of it. And this is that *Covetousness*, which the Apostle calls *Idolatry*.

But how is that ? Doth he mean, that the covetous person falls down to his *Mammon*, or pays it an external Homage or Adoration ? No. It is not the *outward Act*, but the *inward Affections*, of which he speaks : Not the Idolatry of the *Knee*, but of the *Heart*. The Miser is so far from prostrating himself at the Foot of his Idol, that in words he disowns it. Our *Saviour* quoting the Prophet

*Isaiab*, upbraids the *Pharisees* for drawing nigh to God with their Mouths, and honouring him with their lips, when their Hearts were far from him. And well would it be, and greatly to the interest and reputation of *Christianity*, had all such hypocrisy died with the *Pharisees*. Here however that case is quite revers'd. The covetous Man hugs his false God close to his *Heart*, tho' with his *Lips* he denies him. 'Tis no wonder, he should be unwilling to own, so impious and brutish an error. But should it appear (as I apprehend it will) upon inquiry, that his *Gold* is the sole object of his love, and trust, and obedience; then surely it must be allowed, that it stands with him in the place of *God*; and consequently, that the *Apostle* justly pronounceth him an *Idolater*.

I. Then I shall endeavour to shew that his *Gold* is the sole object of his *Love*: And of a love the most ardent; the most disinterested; and the most constant, that can well be conceived.

I. The most ardent.—And now, that object must be very dear to a Man which entirely engrosseth him, and shuts out all regard for any other. Such is our make and constitution, that our affections are naturally divided

ded, or shared amongst a variety of objects : And though we give the Preference to some, we preserve some esteem for *the rest*. And it is fit and right to do so. In this case, we may consistently, where two objects make their claim, *hold to the one* without *despising* the other : Yea we may love both, in a *proper*, though not in an *equal* degree. And be the competitors ever so many it alters not the case. If *one* hath the highest place in our affections, yet it hinders not, but we may have a due respect for *all*. We are not always so prudent as to assign to each *that* share of our regard, it deserves, but each hath *some* share, however improper, or unequal. Suppose the competition is betwixt Appetite and Health, Riches and Integrity, Popularity and Peace ; and that a Man is weak enough (as we daily see many are) to prefer the *former*, he still retains a good Will towards the *latter* : and before he determines, is perhaps at a loss, or in great suspense whether of them to oblige. But the *Miser* is under no such doubt, or difficulty. His affections all run up into one, the *love of Money* ; his Heart is undivided, (or as it is said in the Book of Jeremiah) *is but for his Covetousness*. Is so full of *this*, that there is no room for

*any thing else* ; except for ways and means to gratify it ; of which indeed a busy Crowd is daily and hourly pressing in, and lurking in every thievish Corner of it.

But not to condemn him in the gross, let us examine particularly and distinctly, what other object hath any, and what part in his Breast.

*Honours and Pleasures* we may pass over very lightly, since it is well known he hates every thing, that is expensive.—Loves he his *Appetite*? *Never* ; but when it *costs him nothing*. If it bids him indulge at his own charge, *Avarice* holds his hand ; yea even grudges him the refreshment of the coarsest meal ; *puts a Knife to his Throat*, if he hath any further cravings, and treats him as uncharitably, as he doth the Beggar at his Gate. His *wicked Eye* (as the Son of Sirach remarks) *envieth his own Bread, and he is a niggard at his Table*.

Loves he his *Ease*? How well, ask his *Forehead*, channel'd with the deep *Furrows* of care, and *Body*, emaciated with perpetual *watchings*. And why? Only that he may increase that Heap which is already an Incumbrance, and *lade himself* the Heavier *with thick Clay*.—Is *Honesty* a thing to which he is better affected? Alas! so small

a *Gain* as the poor Widow's *Mite* would be sufficient to kick up the scale against it.—

Need we enquire what rank *Charity* bears in his Favour, or what kindness he shews to the indigent and necessitous? The pious *Psalmist* will then inform us, that *he doth ravish the poor; when he getteth them into his Net.*

Well but you will say, there is an object, not yet mentioned, which certainly must have a larger share in his affections; and that is his *Family*. How much larger will appear, in another part of this Discourse, which will lead me to speak more fully to that point. At present, I shall only observe in justice to the Miser, that he loves his *Family* as himself; but *Mammon* beyond comparison *better* than both. He cares not how *well* it fares with either, at another's expence; nor how *ill* at his own.

Enough hath been said to shew the *Arden- cy* of his Love of Riches, since (as we have seen) he is willing to sacrifice his Ease, his Health, his Conscience, his Innocency, every Joy and comfort of Life, every present Satisfaction and future Hope, every thing that is dear and valuable to the Man, to the Acquisition of them.

Consider

Consider we 2dly. The *disinterestedness* of his Passion.—

And a more disinterested there cannot be, than that which carries us towards any object purely for it's own sake, which is apparently his Case.—It is, I own impossible to conceive what charms Gold hath in it to captivate his Heart so powerfully, or to excite and beget in him such a disinterested Love. It is not it's Colour, for he admires it not a whit the less for being tarnished. It is not it's *Impression*; for if it is but current, he troubles not himself, whether it bears any *Image or Superscription*. 'Tis not possible to *say*, tis in vain to *guess* what it is that allures him. But though we are not able to search out the *Cause*, we are sure of the *Effect*. We are convinced he prizeth it above all things; and for it's sake despiseth all things. And in as much as it is evident, that he hath no Views to serve by it, since it answers no purpose, either of Profit or Pleasure, but lies as useles to him, in his *Chest*, as if it had still lain in the *Mine* out of which it was dug: We can't but conclude, that he loves it merely on its *own Account*, and that his passion for it is simple and disinterested.

But

But perhaps it will be objected : How doth it appear, that he hath no end in view ? Why may we not suppose that he intends to make it subservient to his *Ambition*.

This objection hath in a great measure been already obviated, by a former remark, which probably you may recollect : (i. e.) that he *hateth* every thing *expensive*. And who can be ignorant, that the Price which the ambitious generally pay for their Honour would break the Miser's Heart ? It may however be proper further to observe, that tho' no Man is more proud in Heart than the rich and covetous worldling, yet the end he aims at in the heaping up Riches, is not the Gratification of his Vanity. Pride is rather the *consequence* of his *being* wealthy than his *Motive* to *become* so. Was his primary view in amassing Wealth the Indulgence of his Ambition, he would act a part quite contrary to what we see in him. Instead of brooding, and staring over his full Bags in a low and dirty Cottage, fordid *without*, and more fordid *within*, we should behold him feasting, under the high-arched Roof, and dealing his Hospitality all around him. Instead of a tremendous *Dog* at his *Door*, he would keep a kind *Almoner* at his *Gate*. In-  
stead

stead of cladding himself in the greasy Officials of his Wool, he would put on delicate Apparel and spare no costs to make a Figure. He would freely dispense his Gold in vying greatness, courting public Favour, purchasing titles, and in all the fine parade of outward Dignity and Grandeur. Could we see him thus circulating his Riches, it might with some colour be said, that his Aim in pursuing them so eagerly, was to serve and gratify his Ambition, which would be a proper Objection to that disinterested *Love of Mammon* we have ascribed to him. But till then such objection is of no Force.—

III. From the *disinterestedness*, pass we on to consider the *constancy* of his Affection.

Fickleness of temper is one of those childish things, which we rarely put away, when we become Men. In every Age and period of Life, we find in ourselves more or less of this Instability, this Truancy, this treachery of Heart. 'The same object seldom pleaseth long together. That, which was eagerly coveted, is when obtained, often, no more than the Favourite of a Day. Is afterwards so far from giving us *Joy*, that it can hardly keep us in *good Humour*. Our *liking*, and our *loathing*, our Desires and Aversions tread close



close upon the heels of each other; and what we *court one Hour*, we sometimes *contemn the next*. The *voluptuary* grows sick and giddy with running the same round of Pleasures, and therefore is ever and anon obliged to enlarge the Circle: And, was it possible for him to change the Scene to success, so long as he hath any taste, or relish for such enjoyments, yet the *evil Day is coming, and the years draw nigh, when he will have no Pleasure in them*. The *ambitious man* provoked by disappointments, or surfeited with popular Breath despiseth that thing called *Honour*, which he before so eagerly panted after, and seeks for Happiness in that *Retirement* which heretofore he dreaded.

How different is this from the Miser's Passion, which knows no change, excepting that of a perpetual Increase? He indeed, as well as the ambitious Man and the voluptuary, sometimes grows sick, but not like them surfeited with enjoyment, but *sick of Love*. His crowded Coffers are a Prospect, which never tires. *His Eye is not to be satisfied with seeing*: The more he gazeth, the greater is his Rapture; and the more impatient he is till tis repeated and renew'd. Tho' his *Bags wax old*, they, in his Eye, lose none of their Beauty.

*Beauty.* If *Thieves break* not thro' and *steal*, neither *Moth*, nor *rust* can diminish their *Charms*; any further than they lessen their *weight* or obstruct their *currency*.—And then, again, his affection is so far from feeling the usual languors of old age, that the *longer* he *lives*, the *fonder* he *grows*. As his strength *decays*, his *Passion increaseth*. When his *Body* is bow'd with *Years*, and his *Flesh*, *dry'd up and withered*, his *love of Mammon* is more passionate and violent. And even in his last *Hours*, when *Death* (for, tho' he *lives* only like *himself*, he must *die*, like *other Men*) when *Death* then lays his cold *Hand* upon him, and bids him leave or resign the beloved *Hoard*, how tenderly doth his *Soul* still hover over it? How closely doth he cling to it? How loth to quit his hold? And when he finds the *Resignation* unavoidable, and that he must no longer keep it himself, how reluctantly doth he make it the *Property* of another? *The hand writing upon the Wall* was scarcely more terrible to *Belthazar*, than a testamentary one to *him*. For which reason some such *Earth-worms* there have been, who have chose to make the *Law* their *Executor*, to avoid the mortifying task. Others, who by much *Importunity* have been persuaded

suaded, or rather compelled, to dispose of that Fortune which must be no longer theirs, have done it with the like awkward Grace with him, who makes a *Deed of Gift*, only to elude or evade an *Execution*. And others, since they must give away those riches, with a few strokes of their Pen, spitefully and enviously as it were, keep the future Inheritors as far out of their sight, as the law will allow, or their Lawyers can contrive, leaving the *Inheritance* to the *Children* of Children yet unborn. Mocking or tantalizing the next, and all intermediate Possessors with the Name of an Estate without the use or Enjoyment; which it must be confess'd, is treating them no worse, than they did themselves.

Thus constant doth the *Miser* continue to his *Mammon*. His Love is strong and steady to the last; triumphs over the *chillness* of old age and glows even in the *embraces* of death.

From what has been said, we may reasonably conclude, that Gold is the sole object of his affection. And of an affection the most ardent, the most disinterested, and the most constant, that can be conceived. Which is the first Point I attempted to prove.

I am next to shew, if I can, as a further reason for the Apostles pronouncing him an  
 Idolater,

**I**dolater, that in *Gold* also he placeth his *Confidence*. *For lo! this is the Man, who taketh not God for his strength, but trusted in the multitude of his Riches.*

But this must be reserv'd for my next Discourse. In the mean time I shall conclude with our blessed Saviour's Advice. *Take heed and beware of Covetousness; for a Man's Life* (by which he means the true enjoyment of it) *consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

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# S E R M O N VI.

COLOS. iii. 5.

*And Covetousness, which is Idolatry.*

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## P A R T II.

I Endeavoured, in my last Discourse, to shew the nature of that *Covetousness*, which is thus stigmatized, and condemned by the Apostle. And, building upon this *Hypothesis*, or supposition, that the covetous, he means, are not such, as are in some degree over anxious, or solicitous, in the pursuit of riches, or rate them beyond their true and real worth, but such only, as are generally distinguished by the name of *Misers*; I attempted to prove, that all persons of that denomination justly incur the charge of *Idolatry*, inasmuch as they put *Mammon* into the place of *God*, by making it the sole object of their love, and trust, and obedience.

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That Gold is the alone object of the Miser's Love, and of a love (the most ardent, disinterested, and constant, that can well be conceived, hath been shewn at large.

I proceed now to prove, that in *Mammon* also he rests his whole Trust and Confidence. *Lo! this is the Man, who makes not God his strength, but trusteth in the Multitude of his Riches.*

But perhaps it will be asked, What is it he trusts, they shall do for him? *Trust* necessarily implies an expectation of some assistance, or succour from the object of it. He, who trusts in God, believes, he is able and willing to supply his wants, and gratify his wishes: And must not he consequently, who trusts in *Mammon*, ground his confidence upon the same Faith? But how can this be the case of the Miser, who (*modestly* I must not say, but) *timorously* refuseth all those aids and comforts, it would otherwise afford him: Or, as an ingenious Writer observes, “ Who has more respect for his wealth, than to take those freedoms: Who salutes it, at an humble distance, and dares not be too familiar with an object of worship.”— Besides. Were it to be allowed,

allowed, that he had any selfish views, any expectation of *Reward* from the service of his *Idol*, what would become of that generous, that disinterested *love*, which was contended for, in my former Discourse? Here then are two difficulties to be got over.—1st. That it seems a contradiction in terms, to suppose, a man to place his *confidence* in an *object*, from which at the same time he will accept of no *help*.—2dly. That to suppose the Miser's trust in his Riches to be connected with any regards to *self*, any prospect of advantage from it, is contrary to my former Doctrine of the disinterestedness of his affection.

Now one answer will serve for both these Objections.

Had it been said, that the covetous man trusted in riches, as being the means or instruments of procuring him honours, or pleasures, or any of those, either sensual, or rational satisfactions, which all but the covetous, are more or less desirous of, this indeed would have contradicted the Doctrine before advanced. But this is not said, or intended: His confidence is of another sort. He trusts not in riches as a *Means*, but rests in them, as an *End*, as his *supreme good*, as

the final object of his Happiness. Which is consistent with the most disinterested Love, that can be imagined.

I hope, I shall not be ask'd wherein that *happiness* consists, or of what it is constituted. Was I to be pos'd with that puzzling *question*, I should be forced to refer you to the *Miser himself*. 'Tis a *mystery* I pretend not to explain. It is not to be expected, that I should take you up into *his Heaven*, and make that *glory pass before you*, which so dazzles his Eyes, and ravishes *his Heart*. 'Tis sufficient for my purpose, that he is verily persuaded, there is something in *Mammon* which will in the end compleat and perfect his Felicity; and that he therefore confides in it, and builds all his hopes upon it.

But now here ariseth another difficulty. If Riches are the sole object of his affections, why is he not happy in the Possession of them already? For that he is not so, his very name imports: And common observation tells us, that he is as *miserable*, as that Name speaks him to be.

The *Solution* of this *Ænigma* is not so hard, as at first it may seem. For tho' he loves riches, without *measure*, and possesseth them in *abundance*, yet what signifies *abundance*



*dance* to a love, that is *boundless* ? The Miser (says the beforemention'd Author) *enlargeth his desires as Hell*. He is a Gulph without a bottom. All the success in the World will never fill him. But this evident as it is to every one else, is hid from himself. He is ignorant, that the vessel, he labours to fill, is bottomless ; and therefore he goes vigorously on with his work, not doubting, but that he shall one Day see it finished, and that he shall then be the happiest Man living. This, however unattainable, is the point he drives at. With him it is not enough to be *rich* : Before he can sit down easy, he must be *rich enough*. And what is that ? Why it is no more than a fleeting shadow, which he vainly *hopes* to catch, and in that silly *Hope* lies all his *happiness*. Not to trouble our selves any further with the objections or difficulties, which may seem to stand in our way, when we assert the Miser's whole trust and confidence to be placed in *Riches*, let us examine a few of those marks or tokens, which evidence a good Man's trust in the true God ; and then see whether the covetous Man's trust in his false one doth not wear the same Characters.

The first I shall mention is a *contempt of the World.*

*Who* (saith the one) *will shew me any good? Lord! lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon me,* and “ I require no more. I  
 “ envy not the great their Pomp and Plea-  
 “ sures, whilst I enjoythy Favour, *the Earth*  
 “ *and the Fulness thereof, the round World, and*  
 “ *allthat istherein,* would be nothing unto me.”  
 And doth not the other hold every earthly Thing, as light, except his *Mammon*? Doth he covet any other Good, than that the *brightness* of his *Gold* may still *beam* upon him? Doth he envy the soft *Delicacies* of *Luxury*, or the *Parade* and *Pageantry* of *Honours*? The sumptuous *Repast*, or the gay *Cloathing*? Or doth not the very sight of such empty and expensive *Baubles* give him *pain*? He would not have thought the worfe of *Dives* for being *uncharitable*, but for being *unthrifty*; not for his want of *Pity*, but for his luxurious *Fare*, and gorgeous apparel.—But why do I dwell upon this point, it having been shew’d before, that his Heart is so staid upon *Pelf*, that he counts not only the costly *Indulgences*, but also the common *Comforts* and *Conveniences* of Life, *as Loss and Dung*, so as he may increase and multiply his *possessions.*  
 Secondly

Secondly.—Another Sign or Token of a good Man's trust in God, is a *patient bearing of Evils*, such as bodily ails and infirmities; loss of Friends; Reproaches, Contumelies, and the like.

And herein, who can boast greater Fortitude than the Miser?

Is he *sick*? This he suffers with temper, so long as his Bags are whole. The Sight of which will assuage his *Pains*, and inspire his *patience*. If indeed it so happens (as it frequently doth) that some over kind and officious Friend, or Relative, without his consent or Knowledge calls in a *Physician* to his aid, then both his *Patience* and his Spirits *fail* at once, (and I had almost said) his most dangerous *Disease* is the *Doctor*. That is, unless he comes prepar'd with *eleemosynary medicines*, and will charitably administer to the *Man*, without laying one sacrilegious Finger upon the *Mammon*. That *Idol*, which grows as close to *his* Heart, as *Micah's* did to his, who when spoil'd of it, cry'd out, *ye have taken away my Gods, &c. and what have I more?* That *Idol*, which soothes and solaceth him, in *Sickness*, and in the midst of *beaviness* maketh him full of Joy with his Countenance.

Again.—Hath he lost any of his friends, or family, or kindred? Is he bereaved of his Children; or of her that bare them? Is his Son, his only Son snatch'd away from him? these are severe Tryals. The last especially hath proved fatal to thousands. But yet, had we an exact account of them, we should hardly find one *Miser* upon the *list*. Whilst the over fond and affectionate *Parent* is beating his Breast, tearing his Hair, and venting himself, in all the woful and wild expressions of Grief, this wiser *worldling*, instead of afflicting himself for what is *lost*, rejoiceth in what is *left*. It is a great Satisfaction to him to consider, that tho' his *Son* is gone down to the Grave, his *substance* is not buried with him. Nay he carries his Philosophy still further, and reflects within himself, that had he liv'd he might have prov'd a Spend-thrift, or a Prodigal; or at the best, that he would have had such necessary Demands upon him as might have obliged him to *break* the *Bulk* and *lessen* the *Capital*. This single Reflection would be alone sufficient to calm and quiet his Sorrows; or should he still; grieve it would not be so much for the *loss* of his *heir*, as for the *expence* of his *funeral*.—Left, I should be thought to  
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be giving the reins to Satyr and Invective, or to be indulging a Levity of *Fancy* without regard to *truth*: Look only upon his unnatural Behaviour to his Children, whilst in *being*, and you can no longer doubt his being easily comforted when they *are not*. Hath it never fallen within the compass of your own observation, that he can see them *starve* without *remorse*? Why then should we wonder, that he can *bury* them without a *Tear*? In short, where Avarice bears sway all the softer Passions are banished and the Man is brutaliz'd. Agreeably to that of the *Son of Sirach*, *there is not a more wicked thing than a covetous Man, for he setteth his own Soul to sale, because whilst he liveth he casteth away his Bowels*. And therefore should all his Family and Friends (if it is possible for such a Wretch to have a *Friend*) be swept away, or cut off at a stroke, let only his *Mammon* be spar'd and he can very well sustain himself under that dreadful Devastation, *saying to his Gold, thou art my Hope, and to his fine Gold thou art my Confidence*.

Again.—Is he despis'd, derided, detested, calumniated, expos'd, disgrac'd? It cannot be otherwise. But what is all this to him? How should he be sensible of *Shame* in whose  
Breast

Breast every more generous Passion, is stifled and extinguished? The only glory or reputation he seeks is that of being thought rich. Was you to undervalue him, in that respect, or to set him down of less worth than he is, you would cut him more deeply, than with the keenest Satyr; and he would think that a sorer Abuse, than if you were to say, he had enriched himself, by *Wrong and Robbery*.—*Solomon* indeed pronounceth of a good name, that it is *better than great riches*; and compares an ill Tongue to a *Sword* and a *sharp Arrow*. But this Man laughs at an estimate in which *empty air* is prefer'd to *solid Gold*. And as to the Tongue, he is proof against all it's shafts however pointed or poison'd. Let the World say the worst it can of him, if it stops there, he is easy and unconcern'd. He can endure it's *Prate*, if he can but escape it's *Plunder*. Let no impious or rapacious Hand be stretched out against the sacred Hoard; let this only be safe from violence and rudeness; let none dare to break in or intrude into his *sanctum sanctorum* the repository of his Idol; and then, tho' *Men speak all manner of evil against him, for it's sake*, or for whatever cause; yea, tho' besides letting loose their Tongues upon him, they

*shake*

*shake their Heads at him, and even spare not to spit in his Face*; all these and the like Insults and Indignities he can bear with great calmness and composure.

From the plain and evident marks or characters I have pointed out to you, it appears beyond all doubt what is the strength of the Miser's confidence, and who is the *God* in whom he trusteth.

And now having evinced that Mammon is the sole object of his love and trust; I am in the next place to shew

Thirdly. That it is also the object of his obedience.

This is the natural consequence of his Love; and keeps equal Pace with it. The *one* is cheerful and uniform in the same proportion that the other was sincere and constant. As that therefore (as we have seen) was perfect and compleat, so is this too.—

The reason why good Men are apt to *halve* their obedience to the one true God, and why even the best of Men may sometimes, not so properly be said to *obey*, as to *comply with* his Will, is the contrariety of their affections. Were their *Hearts* whole  
with

with him, their *obedience* would be the same. But when it happens (as too oft it doth) that those are divided betwixt two Claimants, or Competitors, whose commands cross, or interfere with each other; neither of them can be obeyed cheerfully or without Reluctance; or, (as the Apostle speaks) *with singleness of Heart*: But both will be *serv'd* and *slighted* by turns.

*No man* (saith our blessed Saviour) *can serve two masters*. That is, whose aims and interests and laws are repugnant betwixt themselves; for otherwise two or twenty may be served as well as one. The difficulty, or rather the impossibility, is that of *obeying both*, when their Orders are contrary and inconsistent. In which case, tho' he might love the one better than the other; yet he would be apt to make his approbation, or disapprobation of the command, the measure of his obedience; or to close with him, (at least in some Instances) whose will was most agreeable to his own.

The young man in the Gospel, thus seems to have wavered, or *halted* betwixt *two masters*. As far as abstaining from murder, adultery,



adultery, theft, and false witness went, he was punctually obedient to God: But when he was commanded to sell all that he had, and give it to the poor, then *Mammon* drew him over to his side. *His heart was not whole* with either, and therefore he divided his obedience betwixt both, as best suited his temper and inclination. Or, strictly speaking, he *obeyed neither, but obliged himself*.—Suppose even that he had complied with the injunction of selling and distributing his all; yet inasmuch as he did it not *willingly, but went away sorrowful*, his obedience would have been very lame and imperfect.—Tho' obedience and submission are generally used as *synonymous terms*, they mean very *different Things*. *That* is free and unrestrained; *this*, involuntary and forced. *Balaam* submitted to the will of God in blessing *Israel*, but it went forely against the grain. He trifled with the Almighty as long as he dared. And had not the *dumb Ass, speaking with Man's voice, forbid the madness of the Prophet*, he would probably have at last gratified *Balak*, and instead of  *blessing that People, have cursed them altogether*. This his unwilling compliance was not so bad, as

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an obstinate refusal; but still, as it proceeded merely from a principle of fear, it ought not to be called obedience, which can only spring from the Heart.

It is this hearty and sincere, this undissembled and genuine obedience, which the Miser yields to his Idol. To whom he submits, not for *wrath*, or fear, but out of pure *Love* and Affection. Inspired and excited by which, he doth not give himself time to pause and deliberate, to weigh dangers, and count difficulties; but enters upon his duty without scruple, or suspense; engageth with alacrity and speed, and executes with spirit and resolution. In short, his heart knows no other object, his will no other influence, himself no other master besides *Mammon*. For whose sake he thinks every *yoke is easy*, and every *burthen light*; and whose service, in his esteem, is *perfect freedom*.

And now, if Idolatry consists in the worship of false Gods. Or in adoring that, as God, which is not so.—And if none can give stronger proof of their adoring any Being, as God, than their making him the sole object of their love, and trust, and obedience.

dience. And if all these are paid in the strictest manner by the *Miser* to his *Mammon*; which several propositions seem too clear to be denied or doubted; then consequently the Apostle's assertion is true, that *Covetousness is Idolatry*.



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# S E R M O N VII.

MAT. ii. 1. 2.

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the Days of Herod the King, behold there came wise-Men from the East to Jerusalem,*

*Saying, where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him.*

**T**HES E words afford a large field for the inquisitive *Genius* and learned *Critic* to range in : a Field *spacious*, but not *plain* : wide enough to tire the Researches of the *one* and knotty enough to turn the Edge of the *other*.

The character of these *wisemen*—, Their Country,—The time, when they came to *Jerusalem*,—The nature of the *Star* they saw,—When it first appear'd to them,—Whether it was their Guide all the way to *Judea*,—What key they had by which to interpret it's true meaning.—And what was

the Worship they paid to the child *Jesus*. — These are Points about which *great* men have been *greatly* divided, fathers against fathers *in most*, Critics against Critics, *in all*. And no wonder : since whether the *Magi* had *special* Revelation or no, for explaining the meaning of the Star, which also is matter of dispute : Tis indisputably certain that for the determining such questions, we have *no Revelation at all*. — St. *Matthew*, in whose Gospel alone, this piece of Sacred History is recorded, is silent, as to all such circumstances. Nor is there any thing in his account, in *particular* ; or, in these Scriptures in *general*, which will warrant any clear or positive conclusion concerning them one way or the other.

And yet there is no harm in our inquiries, so long as they are conducted with modesty and sobriety ; nor *impertinence*, except where instead of arguments are offered weak and rash conjectures raised by a warm imagination, or foolish traditions, supported merely by blind and superstitious Credulity. Where *certainty* is not to be had, the greatest *probability* is next to be sought for ; and bold and trifling, and groundless Conceits only to be avoided in the quest.

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We are not to imagine, that the holy Spirit, who dictated the account given us in the Text, was less circumstantial, or explicit on purpose to prevent our Search. No; the proper inference rather is, that the Circumstances omitted are not necessary to be known; are such, as we may safely be ignorant of, but not such as preclude our examination. We may farther infer from such omission, that Men ought not to *contend* over anxiously, about them; much less to *dogmatize* in points so dark and uncertain; and least of all to urge them, as Articles of Faith, or essential to Christianity.

Of the questions arising from the Words of my Text, and which I have particularly mentioned, some seem to have a more *curious* and *disputatious*, others a more *pious* and *religious* Intention. To these therefore I shall confine myself, without taking notice of the other, except where their connexion with these renders such Notice unavoidable.

I. Then for the Character of the wise Men.

The Word *Magoi*, which is here translated *wise Men* hath two different Acceptations. Sometimes it is taken in a bad sense for Magicians, Sorcerers, Necromancers, and all

such as are addicted to wicked and diabolical Arts: And sometimes, in a good one, to signify Persons of studious and contemplative Minds, excelling in wisdom and understanding, in the knowledge of things divine and human; skilled above others in religious Mysteries, in the laws of nature, and in the arts of government. That *Pagan* Writers have us'd the Word in both these Senses, and have apply'd it differently to different Nations, to the Eastern people, and especially the *Persians*, as a title of honour and reputation; to others, and particularly the *Egyptians* and *Grecians*, as a term of Infamy and Reproach, is what never was disputed: But in what Sense it was here us'd by the Evangelist is a dispute which perhaps will never be ended. This is a point about which much learned labour hath been employed, and which hath occasioned not a little jarring amongst criticks and commentators.—With the ancients the bad Sense of the Word seems to have prevailed.

“ So many of the Fathers, (saith a certain  
 “ writer of a superior Class) have affirmed,  
 “ that the *Magi*, or wisemen, before this ex-  
 “ traordinary Event, had addicted them-  
 “ selves to wicked, and magical Arts, that  
 “ one can hardly, without temerity, be of a  
 “ contrary



“ contrary opinion. But the stream of modern Authorities runs the other way. These espouse the honest and honourable sense of the word; the same sense in which our translators considered it, when they cautiously rendered it wise Men in contra-distinction to *Magicians*.”—Indeed the Appellation of wise Men is now also become infamous, by being ascribed to those deceivers and impostors, who taking advantage of the ignorance and superstition of the many, pretend by their skill in *judiciary Astrology* to make strange and surprizing discoveries, and to foretell future Events. These also are vulgarly called *wise Men*; but 'tis by a wretched abuse of the word; for their only pretension to be call'd *wise* is their having subtilty and cunning enough to impose upon such as are far otherwise.—

But to return from this digression. They who contend for the evil sense of the Word *Magoi*, and that St. *Matthew* thereby meant *Magicians* seem to have been drawn into that opinion, by no worse a principle, than a zeal for the honour of Christ whose Power and Goodness by the acknowledgement and adoration of such sort of persons would be rendered more illustrious.—And so far it

must be allowed, that granting their *Hypothesis* to be *right* the *Consequence* could not be *wrong*. But the truth of the Hypothesis is first to be proved; and till that is done, the consequence, however true, is not to the purpose. Was it true and certain; or had the sacred Historian plainly told us, that the *Magi* were really such persons, as they suppose, viz. Sorcerers, Magicians or the like, then indeed to have rescued them from the power of darkness, to have brought them to the marvellous light of the Gospel, and to have appointed them the *first*, amongst the *Gentiles*, to confess and adore its divine Author, would doubtless so far have redounded more to the glory of Christ than had they been Men of a quite different complexion or disposition: Because the *greater* the *Sinner*, the more *glorious* the *conversion*; the less *probable* the *Instrument*, the more *wonderful* the *Operation*: But to infer from thence, that therefore they were such Disciples of Satan or children of darkness, would be a very harsh, unwarrantable conclusion, and a manifest injury to their character. Which, hath (not to mention any more, than these) two very material circumstances in it's favour, the manner of their calling; and the  
quarter

quarter from whence they came. They were called by a *Star*, which shews their skill in Astronomy, or in the Motions of the heavenly bodies: and they came from the *East*, where, (as hath before been observ'd) the term *Magi* was then a title of honour, and the Persons so called famous for their wisdom and distinguished for their superior abilities and perfections. Which should make us cautious of entertaining an unworthy, much more a base and infamous opinion of the wise Men in the Text.

II. As to the nature of the Star, which first drew the Eyes and Attention of these Magi. This also hath been a question much agitated, and spun out into a great variety of Opinions.

That it was not what some have supposed it to be, is pretty clear; but what it really was is matter of mere uncertainty. And all that hath been said upon it amounts to no more than to some ingenious, and some trifling conjectures.

It hath been disputed, whether this Star was of the number of those which were *originally* created, or one *specially* form'd for the purpose. But this question might, I apprehend, have been spar'd, since it seems evi-

dently impossible in the nature of things, that it should be either the one or the other; or any thing more than a new *Phænomenon*, or appearance of a *Star*: Not one of those celestial Luminaries commonly so call'd, nor one of the *same kind*, but only of the *same similitude*. Had it been of the same kind, it could not have answered the Purpose for which it was intended: Because whilst it kept its own Orb, to be suspended over this or that particular House, or town, or even Country, would have been inconsistent with its height or elevation; and to have descended so as to point out the very House itself would have been equally inconsistent with its dimensions, or magnitude. To get clear of which difficulty, there have been those, who instead of a *Star* have imagin'd it might be a *Ray* only darted from *one*.

Again. Some have conjectur'd, that this *Phænomenon* was the *holy Spirit*, who, as he assum'd the form of *cloven Tongues*, on the day of *Pentecost*, and of a *Dove* at *Christ's Baptism*; so here the *appearance* of a *Star* at his *Birth*.—Others, that it was an *Angel*, who put on that likeness: which, they infer from that passage in the *Apocalypse*, where *the seven Stars*, are said to be the *seven Angels*

*gels*

*gels of the Churches.* But these notions have very *little credit*, and the reasons brought to support them, as *little weight*.—Wherefore others (and this is now the most prevailing opinion) suppose with far greater probability, that this *Phænomenon* was a small *body of light* occasionally formed, and arbitrarily mov'd, by the power and providence of God, for the designation of this extraordinary Event, and for the direction of the *Magi* to the very place of our Lord's Nativity. In like manner, as the same power and providence had in time past conducted the *Israelites* by a cloudy and fiery pillar, in their departure out of *Egypt*. Whether it was the same light, which having first shone upon the *Bethlehem* Shepherds was afterwards exalted and formed into the likeness of a Star (which some are inclin'd to think) is no more than a specious conjecture; and therefore no stress is to be laid upon it. All that we are permitted to know is, that whatever the Light was, it was a Guide to these Eastern Sages, and directed them, after a long and tedious Journey, to the divine object of their contemplation and inquiry.

III. It

III. It is ask'd what *Key* the *Magi* had for interpreting the meaning of this Star? Or whence arose their knowledge and assurance that it indicated the Birth of a King? Nay more, much more than that, *of the King of the Jews*? For 'tis remarkable, that upon their coming to *Jerusalem*, they enquire of him not privately, doubtfully, or with reserve, but openly and with as much confidence, as if his Birth had been formally notified to all the Courts or Princes of the East.

Now some have pretended, that the Star carried it's meaning in the Face of it, there being (as it were) impressed upon it the representation of a Child, bearing a Cross, who reveal'd or explain'd to them this mysterious affair. But this is a Tale fit only for the amusement of Children.—Others suppose them to have had their Information from evil Spirits, and think our reading in the Gospel, that such Spirits afterwards confessed Christ, countenances such surmise. In favour of which they say further, that there is an apparent fitness or congruity in the two several methods by which our Saviour was manifested to the Shepherds, and to the wise Men: To the one, who were ever viewing and surveying the *Heavens*, by *Angels from Heaven*; to the other

other, who drew their Science from *Hell*, by *Dæmons from thence*. But these are only the suggestions of such, as adher'd to the evil Sense of the Word *Magoi*, and held, that the wise Men were no other, than men having Commerce with the Spirits of darkness; which opinion at this time of day hath but few Patrons.—Others suppose them to have gather'd their Intelligence from that famous Prophecy of *Balaam*, *there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel. &c.* But this is very improbable. For either they understood that prophecy, or they did not. If they did, they could not but know, that the Star there mentioned had no relation to the birth of the *Messiah*, but was metaphorically expressive of the *glory of his Kingdom*. If they did not understand it, then the Star they saw could not possibly be explained or decyphered by it.—Others are willing to ascribe their explication of the Star to the notices which might be given by the Prophet *Daniel* to the *Magi*, his cotemporaries, (in whose Schools he was educated,) concerning the *Messiah*, and which might be transmitted to their posterity.—And others again, to the like intimations, which might be disseminated by the *Jews* in all the  
Eastern

Eastern Countries, through which they were dispersed.

But granting all and every one of these to have been more or less instrumental, or aiding to the knowledge of the wise Men in the present case ; yea allowing further, that it was a common notion with the *Gentiles*, that a new Star portended some surprising, or extraordinary Event, and that all Nativities of that date would be great and glorious ; and moreover, that not only the *Jews* at that time expected the coming of the *Messiah*, but also that an opinion prevailed throughout the East, that a Prince was then about to be born in *Judea*, who should have universal Dominion ; yet others think, that all these circumstances put together amount not to such a full and clear interpretation of the Star, as to be a proper ground for that confidence with which they applied it to our Saviour, *saying where is he that is born King of the Jews ? For we have seen his Star in the East.* And therefore they conceive, and with good reason, that to all those sources of natural light, a supernatural was added : and that the *author* and *interpreter* of that *Phænomenon* was the same. Agreeably to which it was observ'd  
by



by St. *Chrysoſtom*, “ that beſides theſplen-  
 “ dor of that Star, which attracted their  
 “ Eyes, a brighter ray of truth illuminated  
 “ their Hearts.” And this ſeems to be a  
 fair and juſt concluſion from that part of  
 their Story, which tells us *that they were*  
*warn'd by God in a dream*, (one of thoſe me-  
 thods of communicating himſelf to mankind  
 in the earlier ages of the world) *that they*  
*ſhould not return to Herod*. Wherefore it  
 may reaſonably be inferred, that as God was  
 pleaſed miraculoſly to direct them in their  
*return*; ſo alſo in their *Journey*, and to vouch-  
 ſafe them a ſpecial Revelation for the *one*,  
 as well as for the *other*. And if this concluſion  
 be right, then it ſeems, as if the fourth and  
 laſt queſtion, which remains to be con-  
 ſidered, viz. what kind of *worſhip* the wiſe  
 men paid to our Saviour, may be determined  
 without much difficulty.

For what could it be but religious or  
 divine? To ſuppoſe it any other, would be  
 to ſuppoſe God to unfold to them the myſte-  
 ry of the Star, to ſhew them that it was  
 ſignificant of the nativity of Chriſt, and at  
 the ſame time to conceal from them that,  
 which was of the higheſt Importance, his  
 Divinity. But this tho' alone ſufficient for  
 thoſe

those who believe, and acknowledge that fundamental Article of our Faith, is indeed no argument to others, who deny it. With regard to such, it is necessary to offer arguments or reasons of a different sort, for the wise men's adoration of our blessed Lord.

And here notto mention the consent of the principal antient Interpreters, that the *Magi* or wise Men worshipped Christ with Religious Worship, I will produce only such reasons, as seem to arise from the Text itself, and circumstances of it.

The Text plainly informs us, *they came to worship him*; and the Context, that *they fell down and worshipped him*. So far the Way is clear. The only question is, what was the nature of their worship? Whether it was a civil or of a *religious* kind? Now it is not reasonable to think it was the former, on many Accounts.—First, Because the object they found at *Bethlehem*, and the poor and mean condition of his appearance, were such, as would be the most unlikely to put them upon paying him any outward homage, or respect.—Secondly, Because we read that *Herod* also signified his Intentions to worship him. And tho' herein he only dissembled; yet doubtless he meant to be understood of  
the

the wise Men, as speaking of a religious adoration. For they could hardly suppose, that he intended to do homage to any earthly King, much less *the King of the Jews*. Thirdly. Because it doth not appear, that the wise men paid any civil or external worship even to *Herod* himself, notwithstanding his outward Grandeur, and regal Dignity might seem to claim it of them. And therefore it is highly improbable, they would shew greater reverence to a *new born Infant*, who had none of the *Insignia* of Royalty about him, nor any other signs than those of Poverty and Distress, had they only consider'd him as a royal Babe; whatever Notions they might entertain of his future greatness.—Fourthly. Because had their Conceptions of him rose no higher than earthly Sovereignty, their acknowledging him with a profound humility and veneration would answer no end, nor could they propose any sort of Advantage, or Benefit from it. For what had they, who came from the remotest parts of the East, to do with the Birth of the King of the Jews? It hath been weakly pretended indeed, that they might do this out of Policy, from an apprehension, that he would one day subdue the *East*. But now whatever foresight they  
might

might have of such his future conquest, yet if they only conceiv'd of him as of a temporal Prince, or Conqueror, where was the Policy of prostrating themselves at his Feet at that time, and in that his situation, when upon their own principles they must conclude him altogether insensible of the adoration paid him; nor could they hope from the circumstances, in which they beheld him, that the same would ever afterwards be remembered in their Favour. Had they found him in a Palace, lying upon a Bed of State, surrounded with a Circle of the great and noble, and attended by a numerous retinue, then indeed they might have flattered themselves, that some good might arise from paying their Court to him, even in that infant State: But instead of that, when they perceived that a *Stable* was his *Apartment*, a *Cratch* his *Cradle*, and *brute Beasts* his *Attendants*, nothing can be more absurd than to imagine they adored him only as a Prince of this world, in whom, from the expectation they were under of his universal empire, they sought to secure an early Interest—For these several reasons it seems more than probable, that the worship paid by the *Magi*, or *Wise Men* to the *holy Child Jesus*, was not a  
civil

civil Worship, or that Homage which is usually paid to Princes: and consequently that it could be no other than Divine, or Religious adoration; which was the point in question.

And now, tho' the Scripture account of the *Epiphany*, (by reason of the brevity of the Sacred Historian) affords us not sufficient evidence for answering all the queries which may be rais'd from it, by the adversaries of Christianity; (some of which queries are bold and presumptuous, and others trifling and impertinent) yet, to as many as believe the Gospel, there is enough in it to awaken their attention and inspire their gratitude.

Whatever obscurities we meet with in St. *Matthew's* narrative of this fact, so far is plain and obvious, that the wise Men, who were the first fruits of the *Gentiles*; were led by a Star, to the knowledge and confession of *Christ*; and that their behaviour, under those extrardinary means of Grace, was recorded for our imitation; that we, following them in their *Faith* and *Constancy*, and *Perseverance*, may, after knowing *Him* in this life, be admitted to the *fruition of Him and his Glory* in the next: which God grant, thro' the merits of the same *Jesus Christ* our Saviour. *Amen.*



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# SERMON VIII.

MAT. ii. 3. 6.

*When Herod the King had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

*And when he had gathered all the chief Priests and Scribes of the people together, he demanded of them, where Christ should be born?*

*And they said unto him, in Bethlehem of Judea: For thus it is written by the Prophet; And thou, Bethlehem, in the Land of Juda, art not the least among the Princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my People Israel.*

**W**HAT those things were, that occasioned this alarm, you read in the two foregoing verses; Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the King, behold! there came wisemen out of the East to Jerusalem, saying, where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship Him.—This was the subject of

my last discourse, on the great Festival we now commemorate.—In consequence of which, my present is to consider the issue of that report of the Wisemen, concerning the portentous Star, and of their pursuing it to *Jerusalem*, in quest of the Prince whose Birth it pointed to. Now the effects of such their intelligence and inquiry, you have in the text, which were these :

I. *A general Consternation. And when Herod had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

II. *A Consultation. He gathered all the chief Priests and Scribes together, and demanded of them, where Christ should be born?*

III. *The Solution of that Question, with the authority on which it was founded; and they said unto him, in Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the Prophet, &c.*

To each of which particulars, I intend to speak as fully as I can, so as not to crowd my matter, or encroach upon *your* patience.

Ist. The appearance of the *Magi*, the report they brought with them, and the errand on which they came to *Jerusalem*, caused a *general Consternation* both in King and People.

The



The text hath it, they were troubled. But the Greek word *Etaraktbe*, which is here translated *troubled*, may as well be render'd *disturb'd*, agitated, alarm'd, or put into a commotion. And indeed *troubled* sometimes signifies no more; as where it is said, the People of the Land shall be *troubled*,—the waters were *troubled*, &c. Yet, as it is frequently us'd for *Sorrow*, or Grief, or Concern, 'tis necessary in this place that we make the distinction. For though 'tis natural to suppose yea, tho' 'tis to be admitted for certain, that *Herod* was troubled, even in the last sense of the word, *i. e.* that he was *grieved* and afflicted, and tormented with the account received from the Wisemen; yet that was not likely to have been the case with the People. Circumstances differed widely betwixt the one and the other.—*Herod* himself, was at this time, *King of the Jews*: Proud, imperious, impious; and therefore, doubtless, was stung to the heart at his hearing the Royal Title, with which he was invested, bestow'd upon another; or a Pretender to his *own Crown*, proclaim'd at his *own Court*. *Herod* was also a *Tyrant*, and as such was hated; and as such was jealous: And thence again we may conclude

him to have been under terrible Apprehensions, lest those over whom he presided, and whom he had provok'd by his cruel and arbitrary Rule, should now take occasion to renounce *him*, and acknowledge his *Competitor*; or at least, encouraged or animated by this rumour of a new-born Prince, should rise up against him, oppose his Government, strip him of his Sovereignty, and in some shape or other, bring about a Revolution: And if we further add, that the news reported by the *Magi* exactly coincided, or fell in with the general expectation of the *Jews*, *Of a King to be born about this very time, who should reign over Judea, and subdue all the Nations under them*; all these things laid together, there can be no room to doubt, but *Herod himself* was troubled, and perplex'd on every Side; that *within were Fightings, and without were Fears*. But then for the same reasons, it is highly probable, that what was the *King's Confusion*, was the *People's Comfort*; that they rejoiced in so fair a prospect, of a full completion of their wishes, or of having a Prince who would at once not only release them from *Herod's Tyranny*, but also enable them to shake off the *Roman Yoke*, with which their Necks had long been gall'd.

gall'd. And therefore, tho' it is said that King *Herod* was troubled, and all *Jerusalem* with him, yet is it not to be conceived, that *they* were alike affected? but that *his* Trouble was real Grief and Anxiety of Mind and Conscience; *theirs* only Surprise and Consternation; that *his* proceeded from the Danger,—*theirs*, from the Novelty, or Strangeness of the Thing. However pleas'd they might be with the New Star, and the *wisemen's* interpretation of it, we may easily conceive, that upon such an astonishing Report, *Jerusalem* would be troubled, or in an uproar: Yea, that it should be troubled even to Anxiety; but not as *Herod* was, for fear it should prove true: but rather solicitous for the Success of so important and interesting an Event. What the *People* did, or whether they did any thing further on the Occasion, than admire and wonder at what had happened, the Evangelist hath not inform'd us. How the *King* behav'd under his Perplexity and Disquietude, he hath particularly recorded; and that is what next falls under our Consideration, *viz.*

2dly. He call'd a Council. *He conven'd* or got together *the chief Priests and Scribes, and demanded where Christ should be born.* He

assembled the whole *Sanhedrim*, the principal Rulers of the Jewish Religion, (for such were the chief Priests) and the most eminent Doctors of the Law of *Moses*, and best skill'd in the prophetic Writings, (for such were the Scribes) and of these he enquir'd the Place assign'd by the Prophets for the Nativity of the *Messiah*.

As it does not appear that he made any Sort of Preface, but entered immediately upon the Question, *Where Christ was to be born?* Some have inferred from thence, that he industriously suppress'd, or smother'd the Cause of his Enquiry, the Coming of the *Magi*, that so he might execute his base and barbarous Purpose, with greater Secrecy and Security. But surely, they who make this Inference, must not at *that* Time have consider'd, what we at *this* have just been considering, *viz.* that the Coming of the wise-Men to *Jesus*, and the Account they gave of themselves, of what they had seen, and what they sought, had not only struck *Herod* with a Panic, but had also fill'd *the whole City* with Amazement. How, therefore, is it to be imagin'd, That what was then in every Mouth,—the Subject-matter of Wonder to the *People in general*, should  
 escape

escape the Notice of the *chief Priests and Scribes in particular*? Or how was it possible for *Herod* to conceive, that they *alone* were Strangers to it? Tho' St. *Matthew* is silent, yet we may reasonably suppose, that the King open'd to his Council, the Cause of his calling them together; would mention the Occasion that had so awakened the Attention of the Public; or if he did, without any such Introduction, shortly and abruptly propose the Question,—the natural, and indeed the only Conclusion should be, That he was eager and impatient for an Answer.

But now for the Question itself, *where Christ was to be born*. Here is something far more worthy our Observation, than the Manner in which it was propounded. *Herod* makes no enquiry about the Star, or the Import of it. Asks their Opinion neither of the Truth, nor of the Nature of the *Phænomenon*; neither what it was, nor what it portended:—Examines not, who these Men were, who reported it, who pretended to have seen it; whether they seem'd to be Persons of Skill—Men of Integrity, or how far they deserv'd Credit. Enquires not, whether the Books of the Law, or the

Writings

Writings of the Prophets, contain'd any Promise, any Prophecy concerning a *Messiah*? Whether there was any Tradition, any Notion, any Expectation of such an one then prevailing, and how it was founded? All these Questions he passes over; and at once asks, Where is Christ to be born? He had no Occasion to ask any more; he was very able to answer all the Rest to himself. He knew the Prophecy—the Promise—the general Expectation. He believ'd what the Wise-men had said of the Star, and knew how to interpret it as well as they. *One* Thing *he* knew not, neither did *they*: This they both wanted to know—the Place destin'd for the Birth of Christ. Of this they were alike inquisitive, but with quite contrary Views and Intentions; *they*, that they might adore him; *he*, that he might destroy him.—Some may think it odd, that this, too, was not an unnecessary Question to *Herod*, who was a Jew, and therefore might be suppos'd to be as well acquainted with *one* Part of the Prophecy concerning the *Messiah*, as with the *other*; or to have known *where* Christ should be born, for the same Reason that he knew he *was* to be born at all. But this will no longer appear strange, when

when it is considered, that *Herod*, though a *Jew*, was of the *Idumæan* Race ; a People, who were profelited rather by *Force*, than *Faith* ; and submitted to *Circumcision*, rather than to quit their *Country*. If it be considered further, that he was a *King* ; and crown'd Heads, whether Jewish or Christian, have not always been much crouded with Religious Knowledge, or perplex'd with Divine Truths. If it be consider'd, lastly, that he was a *very wicked* and *profligate King*, and therefore not likely to converse often with those Books which reproach'd his Crimes, and awaken'd his Conscience. So that, altho' he could not but learn, that the *Messiah was to come*, from the universal Consent of the Nation, or common Voice of the People, yet he might easily be ignorant of the *Place*, in which he was first to make his Appearance, without having Recourse to the Law and to the Testimony, or to the chief Priests and Scribes, to whom were committed those Oracles of God. To them therefore, he applies ; from their Lips he seeks this Knowledge, and from them he obtains the Satisfaction requir'd—which is the third and last Point arising from my

Text,

Text, and which I am now in due Course to consider.

3dly and lastly. *And they said unto him in Bethlehem of Judea: For thus it is written by the Prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, in the Land of Juda, art not the least among the Princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my People Israel.*

Here they give their Opinion, and produce their Authority. They speak out of the Mouth of the Prophet *Micah*, who had said, *But thou Bethlehem Ephrata, tho' thou be little among the thousands of Judea, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me, He that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose Goings forth have been of Old, from Everlasting.* That is, (as an ingenious and judicious Writer hath paraphras'd it) “ Thou, Bethlehem, though in  
 “ point of civil Rank and Dignity, thou  
 “ art small and of no Reputation, yet shall  
 “ this Defect hereafter be abundantly made  
 “ up to thee, by the Honour thou shalt  
 “ have, of giving Birth to One, that is to  
 “ be Ruler in Israel.” They did not cite the Prophet's Words exactly and literally, but precisely enough for the Purpose of the Question in hand; and to shew, in Answer to it, that Christ was to be born at *Bethlehem* in *Judea*.  
 But



But now hence a Difficulty may seem to arise. It may naturally be suggested, that since this Prophecy of *Micah* is so full and express, and determinate, it was hardly possible either for *Herod*, or the People, not to have been acquainted with it, or not to have understood it completely and perfectly. The Birth, and the Place of the Birth, or (which is the same Thing) *the Coming of the Messiah*, and the Place from whence he was to come, are here so clearly described, and so closely connected, that they could not well either mistake or separate them; or so much as think of the *one* without the other. And therefore 'tis strange, that when the Wise-men first publish'd the Cause of their Journey to *Jerusalem*, and enquir'd, *Where is He that is born King of the Jews?* that they did not, one and all, immediately answer, at *Bethlehem*. That they did not say one to another, in like Manner as the *Shepherds*, upon their receiving the same glad Tidings from the *Angel*, *Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this Thing that is come to pass*, which these Travellers have made known unto us. So that you see the former Objection returns upon us with greater Force; but not, I hope, with an irresistible one.

1st. 'Tis

ist. 'Tis to be observ'd, that tho' this Prophecy, when taken in Connection with all the rest that relate to the *Messiah*, is plainly descriptive of the Place of *his* Nativity; yet, consider'd singly and independently, 'tis not so clear. It is not said, that *in* Bethlehem shall be *born*, but *from* Bethlehem shall *come forth*, He that is to be Ruler in Israel; betwixt which, with respect to the *Jews*, at least, there is a mighty Difference. They expected, as hath before been hinted, that a glorious Prince would about this Time rise up to fight their Battles—scatter their Enemies, and lead them on to universal Conquest. And therefore, had the Women suited, or accommodated the Appearance of the Star to such their Expectations, and ask'd, Where is that great all conquering Hero, who shall bring all the whole World under Subjection to *Judea*, for we have seen his Star in the East: They then perhaps might have recollected, (if ever they had known) that out of *Bethlehem* he was to come forth. But when, instead of the *coming forth* of a Conqueror, they enquire after the *Birth* of an Infant, a Babe in *Swaddles*, not able to *help himself*, much less to *lead them*, or to gratify their vain and  
high-

high-rais'd Hopes, of becoming a victorious People, and making all Nations tributary. This was not, very likely, to put the *Jews* in mind of *Micah's* Prophecy, or to induce them to think, that now it was fulfilled.

And to shew that this is not a mere fancy or groundless imagination, one of the most learned of the modern *Jews* hath really made the distinction of which we have been speaking, betwixt the birth and coming of the Messiah; insisting, that the Prophets did not foretell the place of Christ's nativity.—And 'tis further to be remark'd, that the Impostors or false Messiah's, which appear'd in the World about the time of, and *since* our Saviours coming into it, (of which there was a very great number, and who were followed by multitudes of the *Jews* to their terrible destruction, as certain of their own *Rabbies* have attested) 'tis remarkable, I say that those Impostors were of mature age, fit to take the field, ready to head their armies, and such as their ardent and impatient thirst of glory and conquest required.—Under these circumstances why should we be surpris'd at their not applying the Prophet's prediction, *out of Bethlehem shall come forth a Ruler, to the birth of the Child*, even if they had been  
 ever

ever so well acquainted with that Prophecy? But it's probable, they knew but little of it; and that their sanguine hopes of a mighty deliverer and conqueror as at this time to rise up in their favour, were borrow'd rather from *common tradition* than *prophetic testimony*; not only for that they were a sottish, stupid people in themselves, but because it appears from our blessed Saviour's Woe, against their spiritual Rulers in his Day, for having taken away the Key of knowledge, that they had not the use, at least not the free use of their own Scriptures. Or if they had, still that those Oracles of truth were so abused and perverted by the false Glosses of their deceitful Guides, as to be little better to 'em than a seal'd Book.—All these things duly weigh'd and consider'd we have no reason to wonder, that when the wise Men, at their first coming to *Jerusalem*, enquir'd *where is he, that is born King of the Jews?* They should not have been immediately answer'd at *Bethlehem*.

But tho' neither the People, nor *Herod* of of himself thought of *Bethlehem*, yet the latter, it's plain, thought of the promis'd and expected *Messiah*. For, if he did not ask with the *Magi*, *where is he that is born King*

*King of the Jew?* He put the same Question in other Words, where is Christ to be born? This question was answered to him by the Jewish Rulers, and by him to the wise Men: Whom having called, he dispatches them to *Bethlehem* with his base and hypocritical Commission. What that Commission was, and how it was executed falls not within the limits of my present Subject, but will afford us proper matter for our reflections at the return of this Festival, if God permit. What now remains is to make what hath been said at this time as useful to us, as I can.

We have seen *Herod* (I must not say in *all* his troubles: For this, alas! Was but the *beginning* of his Sorrows) but in as much Trouble as Pride, and Fear, and Envy, and Jealousy could give him; each of which can create more than any reasonable man can bear. And why was he thus rack'd and tortur'd? From an apprehension, that his Kingdom was about to be taken from him, and to be given to another. Not to an *Adversary*, but to a *Superior*: Which, indeed, to a proud Man, is Adversary enough. And from whence did he apprehend this dreadful Change? Was it of *Heaven* or of *Men*, that

he feared would happen? From *Heaven*. But *that*, to a proud Man, makes no difference. From Heaven's special and immediate Appointment. But to a proud Man, nor Heaven, nor Earth, nor Hell can speak with any Authority, till too late he feels the Vengeance of the last.—How, then, should this caution us to beware of Pride, that accursed Sin, by which not only *Herod*, but *Adam*, but *Angels* fell! How should it teach us patiently and contentedly to submit ourselves to the Will of God, however contrary to our own! And, tho' we have not a *Star* to inform us, upon every Occasion, or even in the greatest Emergency what that Will is, yet we have the *Sun of Righteousness himself* (who surely is not a worse Guide) to instruct us: And he hath instructed us in the plainest Manner, that the Providence of God ruleth over all. And therefore should we be so weak, or so wilful, or so wanton, as to resist, or contradict it: However we may censure, or reproach, or condemn *Herod*, we therein *Sin after the Similitude of Herod's Transgression*.

2dly. We have heard how readily, and directly, and distinctly, the chief Priests and Scribes answer'd *Herod's* Enquiry, where  
Christ

Christ was to be born; and with what Facility, with what Ease, with what Promptness they cited the Prophecy, by which it was foretold. And must we not be astonish'd, that the same Persons, who gave that Answer, who supported it by such an Authority; who had the Care and Keeping of the prophetic Books or Records; who were perfectly acquainted with their sacred Contents; who knew as well all the other Marks or Characters of the promis'd *Messiah*, as they did that of the Place of his Birth; who could not but perceive, that all those Characters met and center'd so strongly and fully, and minutely in our blessed Lord, that if he was not that *Christ* who was to come into the World, 'twould be impossible ever to know him, when he did come. Must we not be astonish'd, I say, that notwithstanding all this, they should reject him, and look for another?—But what is it that Prejudice cannot do? Their Hearts were set upon a temporal Prince, upon the Restoration of *Israel* to worldly Greatness and Glory; and no other Deliverer, no other Redeemer would serve their Turn.—Hence we learn, that in order to keep the Judgment sound, the utmost Care is requisite, that the Will

be not corrupted; for where this is deprav'd, that of Course must be disorder'd. Wrong Affections cloud the Understanding, and turn Night into Day, and Light into Dark-ness.

For us, my Brethren, who are here assembled, not to enquire with *Herod* where Christ shall be born; but with the Wise-men, to worship and adore, and present ourselves before Him, and to bless and praise His holy Name, for that divine and gracious Light of the Gospel, which as at this Time began to dawn upon us; let us celebrate this happy Day, in the Words of *St. Chrysoftom* :  
 “ What a Conflux of Miracles waited on  
 “ our Saviour's Birth? The Holy Ghost  
 “ overshadoweth Flesh; a Virgin brings  
 “ forth—Angels proclaim Him; Stars de-  
 “ monstrate Him; Heathens adore Him,  
 “ and Heaven and Earth contend (as it  
 “ were) in Joy and Duty at the Incarnation  
 “ of the God of both.” But chiefly let us  
 praise Him by the Holiness of our Lives, by  
 our Obedience to His Precepts, and copying  
 His Example. After which, let us beseech  
 God, *that he will have Mercy upon all Jews,*  
*Turks, &c. and take from them all spiritual*  
*Ignorance and Blindness of Heart; and, for*  
 ourselves,



ourselves, that he will *take from us all Contempt of Christ's Holy Word and Commandment; that so at last we may become one Fold, and all Flesh may see the Salvation of God,*



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## SERMON IX.

I COR. XV. 20.

*Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept.*

**T**HE Design of this Chapter is to establish and confirm the *Corinthians* in the belief of a general resurrection. A doctrine, the truth of which some of them, it seems, disputed and denied: Corrupted very probably by the false and subtle reasonings of proud and vain Philosophers, of whom great Numbers usually resided at *Corinth*: And to whom (as we may infer from St. Paul's Question in his Defence before *Agrippa*) it appeared a *thing incredible, that God should raise the dead.*

The Apostle therefore, in order to confute this dangerous and destructive Error; and to cure those Christian converts, who were tainted with it; and to preserve others from the Infection; and to build up all in the Faith of that important and most essential Article of Religion, that the dead shall be raised,

lays the ground-work of his Arguments in the Resurrection of Christ—Reminds them of what he had heretofore preached to them, concerning the Nature and Circumstances of that Fact, and of the Evidence on which it stands. *I delivered to you, first of all, (says he) that which I also received; how that Christ died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third Day, according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas; then of the twelve; after that he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once, &c.; after that he was seen of James; then of all the Apostles; and last of all he was seen of me also, (alluding to that miraculous appearance vouchsaf'd him for his Conversion) as one born out of due time, or not called to be an Apostle, till after the Death of our Lord.*

The Foundation thus fixed, *St Paul* proceeds to the Building intended to be raised upon it. *Now, says he, if Christ be preached, that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no Resurrection of the dead?* That is, “ if you have heard and believe, (as “ you profess to do) our Doctrine of Christ’s “ Resurrection, *in particular*; how is it possible for any of you to doubt the truth and certainty

“ certainty of a Resurrection *in general*? In  
 “ this ye are strangely inconsistent with your  
 “ selves: For to pretend to have Faith in  
 “ the *one*, and to be incredulous as to the  
 “ *other* is absurd and ridiculous. Either both  
 “ should be *received*, or both *rejected*. Ei-  
 “ ther ye must allow that *all* Men shall rise,  
 “ or not allow, that *Christ* is risen. These  
 “ two Propositions must stand or fall toge-  
 “ ther. However therefore ye may make  
 “ Profession of believing that Christ rose  
 “ again from the Dead, ye contradict it, by  
 “ saying the dead rise not; for that is in  
 “ effect to say, that Christ is not risen. And  
 “ if this be granted, what follows? Why  
 then (continues the good and great Apostle)  
*our preaching is vain, and your Faith also is*  
*vain; yea, and we are found false Witnesses*  
*of God: Because we have testified of God, that*  
*he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if*  
*so be, that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise*  
*not then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not*  
*raised, your Faith is vain, ye are yet in your*  
*Sins. Then they also who are fallen asleep in*  
*Christ are perish'd. If in this Life only we*  
*have hope in Christ we are of all Men most*  
*miserable.*—As if he had said, “ If that  
 “ Opinion be true, which some of you es-  
 “ pouse,

“ poufe, that there will be no *general* Refur-  
 “ rection, obferve the melancholy and mi-  
 “ chievous Confequences. The Refurrecti-  
 “ on of *Chrift* is then no better than a Fable ;  
 “ the Christian Faith a cheat ; your Jufti-  
 “ fication a Dream ; the Martyrdom of Saints  
 “ a mere wafte of blood ; and the persecuted  
 “ Profefors of Christianity are then the moft  
 “ compleatly wretched of all Men living.  
 “ But thanks be to God, the Cafe is far  
 “ otherwife. That principle fo pregnant  
 “ with mischief and misery is falfe and  
 “ groundlefs ;” *for now is Chrift rifen from*  
*the dead, and become the firft-fruits of them*  
*that fleep.*

The Word *firft-fruits* is a metaphorical  
 term here made ufe of by the Apoftle in al-  
 lufion to the oblation of Firft-fruits, un-  
 der the *Levitical* Law. A Rite intituted,  
 partly as a means of *fanctifying* the reft of  
 the increafe to the *ufer* ; and partly as a grate-  
 ful *acknowledgement* to the bounteous *giver*.

“ Had not St. *Paul* (as the ingenious and  
 “ judicious Dr. *South* obferves) been a Man  
 “ of Learning and Skill in the Art and Me-  
 “ thods of Rhetorick, found Reafoning and  
 “ natural Eloquence, he could not have  
 “ futed fuch appofite Exhortations to fuch  
 “ different

“ different Sorts of Men, as he had to deal  
 “ with, with so much Dexterity.” We have  
 here, one of a thousand Instances, which  
 might be produced to illustrate and confirm  
 this Observation. All his Writings shew how  
 happy he was in his Manner of accommodat-  
 ing and suiting himself, both in his Rea-  
 sonings and in his Language, to the Taste  
 and Temper, the Genius and Customs of  
 the Persons to whom he address’d. When  
 preaching to the idolatrous and superstitious  
*Athenians*, and instructing them in the true  
 Nature of that God, (whom he perceiv’d  
 them ignorantly to worship) he speaks to  
 them out of the Mouth of one of their own  
*Poets*. *For in Him* (says he) *we live, move,*  
*and have our Being; as certain, also, of your*  
*own Poets, have said, For we are also his Off-*  
*spring.*

When exciting and encouraging the *Co-*  
*rinthians* to Diligence and Perseverance in  
 their Christian Calling, he borrows a Simile,  
 or Metaphor, from the *Græcian Games*:  
*Know ye not, that they, who run in a Race, run*  
*all; but one obtaineth the Prize? So run,*  
*that ye may obtain.*—Herein he adapts his  
 Language to the converted *Greeks*. And  
 again, in the Chapter whence I had my  
 Text

Text, where he is proving, A general Resurrection to be a natural and necessary Consequence from that of our Saviour's; he tells them, That Christ is risen from the Dead, and become the First Fruits of them that slept. Herein he suits his Phrase, or Stile, to the *Jewish Converts*; so that in his *Writings*, as well as in his *Behaviour*, to the *Jews*, he became a *Jew*, that he might gain the *Jews*: To the *Greeks*, it may be said, he became a *Greek*, that he might gain the *Greeks*; and he became all Things to all Men, that he might by all Means gain some. And this was that honest Craft, that prudent *Guile*, (as he himself calls it) by which he caught his Hearers, and won them over to Christianity.

But besides, that this Term *First Fruits* is agreeable to the Apostle's usual Manner of Adaption, or Accommodation; it is also in all other Respects, a well-chosen Metaphor, excellently fitted for the Purpose, for which it was used by him. It was not possible for him to describe, or express, the Dependence or Connection betwixt the Resurrection of *Christ*, and of *those that are his*, those that are baptiz'd into his Faith, and who govern themselves by his Laws, with  
greater



greater Propriety, than by stiling him the *First Fruits* of them that slept. For, as *First Fruits* necessarily imply an *After-Harvest*, so, when applied to the Resurrection of Christ, they as necessarily suppose the Resurrection of all true and faithful Christians. It is the same to all Intents, as if the Apostle had said—So certainly as the *Harvest* will succeed the *First Fruits*, so certainly will the Resurrection of *all the Members* succeed *that of their Head, Christ Jesus*.

It is here further necessary to be observed, that by *them that slept*, we are not to understand only such of the Faithful, as were then already dead, or gone down to *their Graves*, before our Saviour rose again from his. For tho' *slept*, as we have translated the Word *Kekoimemenón*, speaks strictly of the *Time past*; yet the Original is not so limited or restrain'd, but is an indefinite Expression of *all Time past, present, or to come*. And the same Latitude is frequently taken in our own Language.—For Instance: *Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord*. Here it is very obvious, that the Word *die*, is to be understood indefinitely, as relative to such, not only as *then had*, but also as *at any Time after should* so depart this Life. So again,  
when

when the Souls of them that *sleep* in the Lord *Jesus* enjoy perpetual Rest and Felicity. Here all happy Souls, without distinction of Time, are included. But instead of multiplying Examples, of which there would be no End, one single Reason may answer the Purpose as well; which is this: That the sometimes expressing *all* Parts of Time, by the Sign strictly peculiar to *one*, is not to be ascribed to this, or that particular *Idiom*, or Form of Speech, but is an universal and unavoidable Defect and Impropriety, arising from the Poverty and Imperfection of Language itself. Whence it follows, that notwithstanding it is here said, that *Christ is become the First Fruits of them that slept*; yet it cannot otherwise be construed, than as comprehending all those who were *then dead*, or *afterwards should die*, in the Faith and Fear of God.

Indeed, not only true and faithful *Christians*, but also those good and holy *Men*, who lived and died before the *Christian Æra*; yea, even the *bad* as well as *good*, of whatever Age or Period, or under whatever Dispensation, must rise again to give an Account of their Behaviour in this probationary State. But the Harvest St. *Paul* had in his Eye,  
when

when speaking of Christ's being the First-fruits, must of Course have been confin'd to *such as shall be Christ's at his second Advent.* To such as, at the Sound of the last Trump, shall awake to everlasting *Life and Glory.* All they, who shall arise to *Shame and Contempt,* are properly no other than the *Tares;* of which Christ cannot, with any Propriety, be called the *First-fruits.* They will, it's true, be gather'd, as well as the *Wheat;* they will undoubtedly make a Part of the great and general Harvest. So far our Saviour may be said to be the First-fruits even of *them;* but then *they* will be separated from the *other;* they will be gather'd only to be burnt; gather'd not for the Gardener, but for the Fire unquenchable. For these, well would it be, if they said true, who said, *There will be no Resurrection of the Dead.*

But an Objection naturally ariseth from our Subject, which is not unworthy of our Notice.

Are there not many Instances, some will be ready to say, in the holy Scriptures of Resurrections, previous to our blessed Lord's? How then can it be said, that he became the First-fruits of them that slept?

In answer to which it must indeed be confess'd, that he was not the first, who died and rose again from the dead. He by his own power had raised *several*, before he arose *himself*. But then it could not be affirm'd of the *one*, as it may be of the *other*; *Death had no more Dominion over them*. They when the short act of life was ended, and Death had drawn the Curtain, were, it is acknowledged, brought back upon the Stage; but for what? Why only (if I may be allowed so far) *to speak the Epilogue*: Which when done, *they* retir'd again behind the Scenes, to appear no more till finally summoned to give an Account how they have perform'd their Parts. But *he*, when *he* rose again from the Grave, in spite of all the care and contrivance of the Chief Priests and Elders of the *Jews* to keep him down, cast Death and Darkness under his Feet, and made the Clouds his Chariot to carry him to the highest Heaven, not to appear in *Judgment* but in *Glory*. *Their* Souls were united to their Bodies, after a short Embrace, to be parted again; but *his* never knew the Pain of a second Separation. *They* awak'd, to sleep again; but *He*, to live and reign for ever. *Their* renew'd Life was but as a *Thing*  
of

*of nought, so soon passed it away, and they were gone*; but the Life to which *He* was restor'd, was Life eternal.—So that, notwithstanding there were others who rose out of the Dust of Death, before Christ,—yet, as *He* was the first who rose from the Dead, never to die any more, *He* therefore is truly the First-born of the Resurrection; or, (as the Apostle speaks) *the First-fruits of them that slept*.

From the Apostle's Words thus explain'd, it appears beyond all Doubt, that from the Resurrection of *Christ*, he inferr'd the Certainty of a *general* Resurrection; an Inference, which to him seem'd so clear and obvious, that granting the *one*, he look'd upon it as no less than an Absurdity to doubt the *other*. The Whole of his Reasoning, from the 12th to the 20th Verse of the Chapter, whence I had my Text, was employ'd, (as hath been already noted) to expose that gross and ridiculous Error.

But the Words of *St. Paul*, on which I have been discoursing, may be carried still further; and will warrant me, as I apprehend, should I hereafter take Occasion, from them to insist, that in *Christ's* Resurrection we have not only an *Evidence*, but also an

*Earnest* and *Example* of our own.—This, therefore, I propose to do in my next Discourse.

For the present, I shall conclude with a Word of Exhortation :

Let us endeavour to possess our Souls with a proper and grateful Sense of the prodigious Mercy and Miracle of the Day, expressed in the former Part of the Text,—*Christ is risen from the Dead*. Let it be our Care, to be every Day more rooted and grounded in this fundamental Article of our Faith; and the rather, because against this it is, that the vain Philosophers and scoffing Infidels of our own Times, erect all their Batteries, and aim all their Shafts; which indeed are nothing more than Cavils often put to *Shame* and *Ridicule*, which never had *any*. They do not, it must be confess'd, like the Scepticks, the Apostle argued with, allow that Christ is risen, and yet deny a general Resurrection. So far they must be acquitted of false and absurd Reasoning: But they deny the *Premises* to avoid the *consequence*; because there is in them a *Heart of Unbelief*. I would not be understood, as if I thought this to be the Case of *all* Unbelievers, without Exception. Some may be found amongst them,  
whose

whose moral life and character induce us to hope their Error may proceed from a less criminal cause: Not so much from a *bad Heart*, as a *weak Head*; or from Prejudices, not of the *Affections*, but of the *Understanding*. But now, tho' such adversaries are more modest and decent in their opposition; yet are they for that reason so much the more dangerous to sober, but unsettled minds: Wherefore the necessity on that account becomes still greater of exciting all our intellectual Powers and Faculties for building ourselves up strongly in the Faith of that most essential and important Article of Christianity, *the Resurrection of Christ*.

In which being thoroughly established and confirmed, let us make it appear that we are so by walking agreeably to it. Let our Sense of it's importance shew itself in our Behaviour. Let it have the same influence upon our conduct, that it had upon the *Apostle's*, and *herein*, said he, *do I exercise myself, to have always a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men*. It's true, this his conscientious and inoffensive Conversation proceeded from the prospect of a *general Resurrection*. *I have hope towards God, that there shall be a Resurrection from the dead, both*

*the just and of unjust.* But then whence resulted this Hope? From the Resurrection of *Him*, who is the *First-fruits of them that sleep.*— Let the same lively Faith beget the like hope in us, and this hope the like piety, and purity of life and manners. That so at the last great and awful Day of Inquisition, when Christ who is not only the First-fruits, but Lord also of the Harvest, shall come again to judge the quick and dead, and to separate the Wheat from the Tares, we may be found acceptable in his Sight, and accounted worthy to be gather'd into his Garners. There with him our Head, to rest in Peace and Glory thro' eternal ages.



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# SERMON X.

I COR. XV. 20.

*Now is Christ risen from the dead and become  
the first-fruits of them that slept.*

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## P A R T II.

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**S**AIN**T** *Paul* in the beginning of this Chapter, which is a noble defence, and most sublime illustration of the resurrection of the Dead, about which some of the Christians at *Corinth* began to waver; shaken very probably by the subtle reasonings of the Pagan Philosopher there residing: In order to remove their doubts, and to settle and confirm them in the faith of that important article, argues with them upon their own principles, and lays the foundation of his discourse in the Resurrection of *Jesus*, which they profess to believe. Taking this point therefore for granted, he thus proceeds. *If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say*

K 3

*some*

*Some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. As if he had said, in denying that the dead shall be raised, you deny the resurrection of Christ, and therein plainly contradict yourselves; you sap and undermine the whole fabrick of Christianity, at the same time professing yourselves Christians. You accuse the Preachers of the Gospel of fraud and imposture in propagating a false religion, and yourselves of insincerity and hypocrisy in pretending to believe it true. To avoid all which mischievous and absurd consequences, if you are verily persuaded, that Christ is risen, you must also confess, that the dead also shall rise. But whatever is your persuasion, this I lay down as a sure and certain truth, that Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.*

From this view of the Text, and the verses going before and connected with it, we may observe, that the Apostle's principal design here was not to convince the sceptical members of the Corinthian Church of Christ's resurrection for (so far their doubts had not carried

carried them) but to satisfy them of the truth and certainty of a *general* resurrection, in consequence of *his*: Or, that *Christ being risen from the dead became the first-fruits of them that slept.*

This proposition therefore I shall now endeavour to establish, and to shew, that the Resurrection of Christ is a proof and evidence of our's.

1st. In the way of rational deduction.

2dly. In the way of token or pledge.

3dly. In the way of precedent or example.

1st. In the way of *rational deduction.*

That same Jesus, who raised *himself*, hath given us repeated assurances, that *we* also shall be raised. *The hour is coming*, saith he, *when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.* Again: *The hour is coming, in the which, all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of Damnation.* So that Christ's resurrection, even had he not foretold it, would tacitly, at least, have pointed to a *general* resurrection. But then Jesus not only rose again from the dead, but also *foretold*, that he would do so. And he,

K 4

who

who predicted his *own*, hath assured us of *our's*. And therefore the completion of the *Prophecy* leaves no room to doubt the fulfilling of the *Promise*. Without *that* indeed, *this* could not have been relied upon, nor any other promise received from him; because then he must have appeared to have been a cheat and an impostor. Without *that* all his former miracles had been invalidated and the credit of them totally destroyed. Without *that*, nothing he had done before could have proved his *Messiahship*. For, how could any one reasonably have looked upon him, as the true *Messiah*, who in the most material instance must have shewed himself a false Prophet? Or what less could have been expected, than that all Men would have been ready to cry out, with the chief Priests and Elders, *We remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.* The scoffer then with good authority might have asked, *Where now is the promise of his coming? For since he fell asleep all things continue as they were.* He lies still in the sepulchre where he was laid, *He raised others, himself he cannot raise,* would then have been derision not much to be wondered at. Had Christ after all his miraculous performances whilst living, not  
rose

rose from the dead according to his express word and engagement, a failure in this point had been a subject of raillery, on which the low genius of our modern scoffers might possibly have succeeded. Had that been the case one may easily imagine in what manner they would have exulted. They then might have drawn and brandished the weapon of ridicule without offence; and triumphed without opposition. For who would have been so hardy, as to take up the *gauntlet* for Christianity, if Christ had not risen? But as the case now stands, their triumph is as *vain*, as their jokes are *impious*. That crowning miracle hath quite ruined their *cause*, if not their *confidence*. The Chief-Priests and Elders of the Jews thought they made sure work of it, in sealing the stone, and setting a watch over our Saviour's sepulchre: And so they *did*: They thereby established the truth and certainty of the Christian Religion, and the Divinity of it's Author. They fixed such a seal to our most holy Faith, as can never be broken: They roll'd such a stone, as will be it's sure bulwark and defence against all the efforts of its enemies. They set such a watch, as will for ever bear honourable testimony

to it, notwithstanding the large sum of money they received to give an evidence as contrary to common sense, as to truth, viz. *Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.*

So that now we invert that Derisive Argument, *he raised others, himself he cannot raise*; and say, *he raised himself, and therefore he can raise others.* He prophesied of his own Resurrection and hath fulfilled it: He hath promised our's, and therefore he will perform it.

2dly. 'The Resurrection of Christ is a Proof of a general Resurrection in the Way of Token, or Pledge.

In the one we have not only a rational evidence, but also a sensible specimen and earnest of the other. We have no room to enquire with *Nicodemus, how can these Things be?* Since Christ hath demonstrated in his own Person that so they are.

'Tis strange indeed, that any one who believes a *creative* Power to be in God, should doubt the possibility of a *Resurrection*. For why should it be thought more difficult to *restore* life, than to *give* it; or to *renew*, than to *create* a Man? To omnipotence they are alike *easy*: To our apprehension alike *mysterious*

*sterious.* We can have no more conception how Man was formed out of the Dust at first, than how this Dust shall be animated again. The *Reunion* of Soul and Body after a separation is not more incomprehensible to us, than their first *Conjunction*. But now tho' the notion of God's being able to raise the dead is no other than what unprejudic'd reason would have dictated, had no similar effects of that Power been ever indulg'd mankind : Yet in condescension to human prejudices, he was pleas'd to make the possibility of a *Resurrection* as visible, as that of a *Creation* ; by shewing not *how* the dead were raised, but that they actually *were* so.—We read, that when a certain Philosopher had, in a Discourse upon *motion*, been endeavouring to persuade his Auditors that in reality there was no such thing, one of them without taking any other notice of his subtle reasonings immediately got up and *walk'd*. In like manner our blessed Saviour, instead of *arguments*, produced the *Example*, and rose himself in proof of the *possibility* of a Resurrection. Or rather I ought to have said, as a *pledge* or earnest of the certainty of it. For however *reason* alone sufficiently discovers to us, that the dead *may*  
be

be raised, yet *revelation* only can assure us, that they *shall* be so. And to that is added a further Evidence, or Token in the Resurrection of Christ.—

It may perhaps be said, that this was no new earnest, or evidence, since he had afforded the same before, in raising up *Lazarus* and others. But now these were by no means the same. In those, it's true we have so many instances of *a* Resurrection. But then (as was observed, in my last Discourse) they rose only to fall again: They were restored only to a second, short, and momentary Life. In him alone we have an earnest of that final Resurrection to life eternal, which is the glorious Hope of a Christian.—

3dly. The Resurrection of Jesus is a Proof of a general Resurrection in the Way of *Precedent*, or *Example*. By which I mean, that in his we have the Similitude, the Pattern of our own. He who taught us the Resurrection of the Body, himself rose with his Body, as an Explanation of his Doctrine.— A very great and celebrated Writer hath told us, that he could find no such express Words in the Scripture as that the *Body shall rise*, or *be raised*, or the *Resurrection of the Body*. Not that he questions (as he says) that the  
dead



dead shall be raised with *Bodies* ; but, that in matters of revelation, he thinks it not only safest, but our duty, as far as any one delivers it for revelation, to keep close to the Words of Scripture, unless he will assume to himself the Authority of one inspired, or make him wiser than the holy Spirit himself. —It must be allowed, that the *Resurrection of the Body* is no Scripture *Expression*, But it will at the same time be granted by every one, who hath not some prejudice to indulge, or some favourite Hypothesis to serve, by supposing the contrary, that it is a Scripture *Doctrine*; expressed tho' not in the same terms, yet in terms equivalent. And if so, surely we may deliver it for revelation, without assuming to ourselves the Authority of Persons inspired, or making ourselves wiser than the holy Spirit himself.—It is declared to us by our Saviour, that *all, that are in their Graves: shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth unto the Resurrection.*—What now is the plain and natural Import of these Words? Is it not all those *Bodies*, which upon their separation from the Soul by Death had been deposited or lodged in the *Grave*, shall be reanimated, or reunited to the Soul, and the persons of the dead both Soul and

*Body*

*Body*, upon his call arise to Judgment? Would not any Man of common understanding, unsophisticated with pride or prejudice, think, that he was thereby instructed by that divine Teacher, not that the dead shall rise with their Bodies, but that *the* dead Bodies of Men shall rise?—To the same purpose it is said in the *Apocalypse*, that the *Sea shall give up the dead, that are in it, and Death and the Grave shall deliver up the dead that are in them.* Are we not here, by necessary implication to understand the *Bodies* of the dead, since the *Soul* dieth not? Those *Bodies* too, of which the Sea and the Grave were the *Repositories*; for otherwise how could they be said with any propriety to deliver them up? From these and many other Authorities which might be cited, as well as from the very Term *Resurrection*, which is not only relative to the Body, but in a strict and literal sense confined only to that, we may conclude, without the least Presumption, or self-conceit, that the *Resurrection of the Body* is clearly and fully, tho' not in those identical Words, yet in Words, which can bear no other Sense, revealed to us in the holy Scriptures; and consequently that we may safely; yea, that it is our duty to deliver it as  
reve-

revelation, however we may therein deviate or depart a little from the Scripture-Phrase. When we are delivering the Doctrines of Scripture, doubtless we ought in general to keep close to the Words of Scripture: But are we therefore superstitiously and slavishly so to tie ourselves up to them, as to be afraid of making use of any other? Do the Scriptures never stand in need of Explication? But how, was that the Case, would it be possible to explain them? Are not the Scriptures a *Rule*? But a *Rule* implies that something is to be tried by it. By this Rule of Scripture all Doctrines are to be tried; and to be received, or rejected, as they agree *with* it, or differ *from* it. Apply this to the Point in Hand.

Our Church maintains *the Resurrection of the Body, or of the Flesh*. What say the *Scriptures*? They tell us, the *dead* shall rise, They do not indeed explicitly mention the *Bodies* of the dead, but it is of *these* only, that they can be understood to speak, except that may be said to *rise*, which never *fell*, for (as I argued before) 'tis the *body* alone, that falls by death. So that to avoid absurdity, when it is said the *dead* shall rise, we must necessarily understand by it the resurrection

rection of the *body*: which is agreeable to our Saviour's Doctrine, and also confirmed by his own example. "For (as the learned " Bishop *Pearson* observes) since Christ him- " self did raise his own Body, and declared " it to be his own, by saying, *Behold my " hands and my feet, that it is I myself*, it " follows, that we shall rise in the same " bodies, as our Saviour did, that every " particular person may speak the words " which Christ then spake, *Behold it is I " myself*."

About that *sameness* of body, or wherein it consists, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for us to form just and clear conceptions. Let us however be assured of this (for so far the holy Scriptures are our guide) that *our* bodies will be raised and quickened, as certainly as was *our Saviour's*.—That in the resurrection of *his*, *ours* is exemplified and prefigured.—That in this wonderful act he was both our *pledge* and our *pattern*.—And let us leave all those to St. *Paul's* correction, who proudly and conceitedly ask, *How are the dead raised up? And, with what Bodies do they come?*

To conclude. If we are throughly convinced and satisfied, that Christ is risen, and  
that

that in his Resurrection we have a proof,—an earnest,—a specimen of our own; such our conviction will necessarily discover itself in our behaviour. Whatever is our *profession*, this is the only Test of our *Sincerity*. 'Tis altogether hypocritical and absurd, to profess the belief of a Resurrection, and yet live, like those who assert there is none. How far any one, to whom is vouchsaf'd the Light of the Gospel, may be a sincere Infidel, is not for me to determine; but that it is impossible for a wicked or immoral Christian to be a sincere Believer, one may venture to pronounce without Reserve or Scruple: Because, as a *Tree is known by it's Fruits*, so is a Man's *Faith by his Works*.

By these, therefore, let each of us piously and impartially examine the Truth and Sincerity of his own Faith, in that essential and fundamental Doctrine of Christianity which hath been my Subject. If upon such Examination, our Lives and Manners shall be found happily to correspond with that Doctrine, then we may conclude our Faith in it is right, and as it ought to be, and need not fear being despoil'd of it thro' Philosophy or vain Deceit, or laugh'd out of it by Libertinism and Infidelity, but may boldly bid

Defiance to the grave Philosopher and impious Mocker. For however the one may pride himself in his Wisdom, and the other in his Wit, the wiser of them, in the Judgment of the Apostle, is but a *Fool*.

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# SERMON XI.

2 Acts, ver. i. ii. iii. iv.

*And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come,  
they were all with one accord in one place.*

*And suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven,  
as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled  
all the House where they were sitting.*

*And there appeared unto them cloven Tongues  
like as of Fire, and it sat upon each of them.*

*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost :  
and began to speak with Tongues, as the  
Spirit gave them Utterance.*

**L**AST Sunday put us in Mind of the  
*Ascent* of our blessed Lord into *Heaven* :  
This calls upon us to commemorate the *De-*  
*scend* of the Holy Ghost upon *Earth* : The  
*one*, the Consequence and Confirmation of  
the *other*. We then had the Apostle's *Word*  
only ; but now we may Believe them for  
their *Works* Sake. What they reported *be-*  
*fore*, was partly what they had seen *them-*  
*selves*, and partly what they had heard from

*others* : With their own Eyes they saw *Jesus* ascend, as far as their own Eyes could carry them : They followed their heaven-bound Lord till the cloud obstructed their further pursuit : And afterwards *they* depended upon the testimony of *Angels* ; and *we* upon *theirs*. But *now* both *theirs* and the testimony of *Angels* have received the fullest confirmation. We may be assured that in his flight he did not stop short of Heaven : The great and wonderful Influences he diffus'd from thence, are most infallible credentials of his arrival *there*. We cannot doubt his being ascended up on high, from the gifts he received *for*, and as on this Day, bestowed upon Men : From his sending the *Comforter* promised, so soon as he was return'd to his Father, and which *Comforter*, he told his Disciples, would not come till he, (our Saviour) should send him. But whose coming with the manner, circumstances, and effects of it, my Text hath particularly set forth and described.

The 1st Circumstance is,

The time when this miraculous descent happened, which was on the day of *Pentecost*. A high Day amongst the Jews, as well for that the Law was at that time given upon



upon Mount *Sinai*, as because it was the Feast of Harvest, or of first-fruits: A day consequently very proper to usher in the Harvest of the Gospel, and for the Dedication of the first-fruits of the christian church. A day highly suitable for the promulgation of the *new* Law which was to take place of the *old*, a day on which *Jerusalem* was filled with Strangers, from all parts met together to celebrate that grand Festival: And therefore the more proper because the more public.

The Persons on whom the Holy Ghost, as at this time descended, who they were is a point not absolutely to be determined. About this opinions differ. Some contend that they were the *twelve Apostles* only: Others, the *one hundred and twenty Disciples* mentioned in the former chapter. The Words of the sacred Writer are very far from warranting an assertion on either side; though much *may* be, and *both* been said on *both*. If there be any thing material in this controversy, it is this, that to suppose the Spirit to have fallen upon the *one hundred and twenty*, seems to be taking away all distinction or superiority betwixt *them* and the *twelve*. But now *that* I apprehend, would be no necessary conclusion: They might both be inspired, and yet a due subordination be preserved. They

might have a diversity of Gifts, by the same Spirit. *To one* (as St. Paul speaks) *might be given, by the Spirit, the word of Wisdom: To another the word of Knowledge, by the same Spirit: To another the Gift of Faith; to another Prophecy; to another, the discerning of Spirits; to another the gift of Healing; to another, Miracles; to another, yea to all on that occasion at least divers kinds of Tongues: And yet all would not by that means have become Apostles. Those* God was pleased to set first in the Church: *Those* he had made the Head of it, to govern it in his stead, in his Name and by his Authority. *They* were a distinct order from the rest of Christ's mystical body. An order which *was* to be, and I hope *will* be perpetual, and continue (to use our Saviour's own Words) *to the end of the World.* And if the case stands thus, no bad consequence, can arise from supposing the Holy Ghost, to have descended upon the one hundred and twenty Disciples: Which indeed is the more general opinion.

The next circumstance which demands our attention is the *manner* of that descent, it was usher'd in by *a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind:* It appeared in the form of *cloven Tongues.*—Of *cloven Tongues as of*  
*Fire*

*Fire.* We will begin with the *Sound*, which began *the Wonder*.

That the Apostles should be *endued with power from on high*, our Saviour had given them his promise, and had commanded them to *tarry at Jerusalem*, in expectation of it. But of the nature of that *power*, we may well suppose them to have had but very crude, imperfect notions. “Probably (says a  
 “learned Comentator) they might expect  
 “an army, or Host of Angels, by whose  
 “assistance they might be able to subdue  
 “the World, and make all nations converts  
 “to christianity.” When on a sudden, *a sound came from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind*.—This was no common, or usual Wind, for then, not only the place where they were assembled, but the whole City of *Jerusalem*, or perhaps the whole Region of *Judea* might have been affected with it: But it was a noise not unlike it; a preternatural *Phænomenon* appointed by the Almighty to be the Herald, or forerunner of the blessed Spirit, to prepare his Way, and proclaim his coming. For if Princes and Potentates give notice of *their* approach by Trumpets, and Cornets and Cannons loud report, that they may be received with greater solemnity

and magnificence, how much rather would the high and eternal majesty of Heaven by some more striking and awful signal, notify the Advent of the *Holy Ghost*. The *Law of Moses* was given with Thunderings and Lightnings and Tempests at *Mount Sinai*: *The Holy Spirit* was likewise given with the sound as of a rushing mighty Wind, at *Jerusalem*. In each such an extraordinary *Apparatus* fitly bespeaks an extraordinary Event. The Symbols alike denote the wonderful power and influence, as of the legal, so of the evangelical Dispensation. Holy *David* seems to have had the miracle of this Day particularly in view, when speaking prophetically of the Apostle's Doctrine, or preaching, he says, *their sound went out into all Lands*. And some suppose our Saviour's answer to *Nicodemus*, who doubted the possibility of regeneration, to have carried the same Allusion, *the wind bloweth, where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell, whence it cometh, and whether it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit*. But be that as it will, a rushing mighty Wind, seems to be a very natural and proper emblem the purpose of prefiguring, or representing the great force and prevalency of the Gospel, the

the success with which it should be preached, and the distance to which it should be carried, and that it should make it's way to the remotest climes, and break through the strongest opposition. And the sound being *sudden*, as well as *mighty*, fitly expresseth the *speedy* as well as *prevailing* Progress of christianity: That it should be eagerly embraced, where it was not in the least expected, upon the first sight of it's credentials, yea where the name of Christ had not been so much as whispered before.

Again. The Wind, or sound thereto compared, was succeeded by an appearance of *cloven, fiery Tongues*.—'Tis very obvious to every one how well adapted the appearance of Tongues was to the miraculous communication which accompanied it, the immediate Power of speaking new and strange Languages.—But why *cloven* Tongues?—Some think this implied the diversity of Languages with which the Apostles, or Disciples were then inspired. Others that the gift of Tongues conferr'd upon them was to be employed for the conversion both of the Jews and Gentiles. Each of which opinions is rational and probable; and very consistent the one with the other. There are, who have supposed

posed, that the Word here translated *cloven* should more properly be rendered *divided*, or *distributed*; as if each had his several and peculiar Tongue, as it were fitting upon him: But this interpretation is not warranted by the original; (\*) which signifies that *every* Tongue was divided or parted in the midst: And therefore *cloven* Tongues is the true and proper translation, which emblematical appearance (as I before observed) aptly and significantly denotes the conversion both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*. They who have indulged a great latitude of fancy have affix'd various other symbolical meanings to these cloven Tongues; but this seems most simple and natural.

But the Tongues which appeared were not only *cloven*, but *fiery*, or *as of Fire*. The congruity or propriety of which is self evident: Or however, upon the least reflection must be allowed: This emblem fitly betok'ning at once the quick and piercing efficacy of the Speech and Preaching of those first Herolds of the Gospel: The *light* and *heat* which should attend their Word and Doctrine, effectual at the same time to illuminate the *understandings*, and to melt down the *prejudices* of their hearers; to chase away

\* diamerezomenai

the dark clouds of ignorance and error, superstition and idolatry; and to lead such, as had been therein involved, into the knowledge of the one true God, and the manner in which he is truly to be worshipped. But by no means intimating that the zeal of the Apostles, or any others employed in preaching and propogating Christianity, should be hot and fiery, and blaze out to the destruction of all opposers. For notwithstanding the flame seem'd to rest upon their *Heads* (the Heads of the assembly,) yet was not one single *Hair* of them consumed, or even singed by it. It resembled fire in *colour*, *light*, and *motion*, like the Bush in which the Lord appeared unto *Moses* but was without *combustion*. And by *sitting* upon their Heads, it further signified, that the Holy Ghost would make his *Residence* with them; not *occasionally*, or at certain times, as heretofore with the prophets but *continually* and *constantly*: To strengthen their *Hands* to rule their *Hearts*, and to govern their *Actions*.

So much for the *manner and circumstances* of the Descent.—Let us now attend a while to its *Effects and Consequences*.

And here, *one Deep calleth another*; and the miraculous *Signs* are immediately succeeded

ceeded by the miraculous *Powers* which were shadowed out by them. *And they were filled with the Holy Ghost.* That is, they were blessed with a plentiful effusion of the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit.—For we are not to suppose that the fulness here spoken of, was such as shew'd itself outwardly in the *Flesh*, or that the spirit so filled their *Souls*, as to make any visible change or alteration in their *Bodies*, (as some Enthusiasts have imagined, and by the strength of that wild conceit, have worked themselves up into the most rightful distortion of Figure and Features) no, the plentitude the Apostles received was of a *spiritual* nature and discovered itself in *spiritual Influences and Operations*, such as Faith, Knowledge, Power Courage, and the like, which from this time they possessed in an eminent and extraordinary Degree.

Their *Heads* and *Hearts*, their *Minds* and *Tempers*, were *thoroughly* chang'd by this holy Inspiration; but their *outward* Frame was no way metamorphos'd or transform'd.—The Apostles, indeed, had in *some Measure* received the Gift of the Spirit before our Lord's *Ascension*; at the time when he breath'd on them, and said, *receive ye the Holy*

*Holy*



*Holy Ghost.* But the *Abundance*, or *Fulness* of that blessed Spirit, was reserv'd for the Day of *Pentecost*. Now it was that their Brook became a River; or that the Overflowings of the divine Grace, (if I may so speak) enriched their Souls, and furnished them with Qualifications proper and equal to the Character they sustain'd, or the Office delegated to them. So long as *Christ* was visible amongst them, they stood not in need of such strong and copious Emanations; but when the time came, that he was to leave the World, and to commit his Church to their Care; when their Master was to be taken from them, and they were to Act in his Place and Stead; to propagate the Gospel in the Absence of its Author, and to perfect and compleat the great Work he had began; then it was, that new and *further* Strength and Abilities became necessary; then that *larger* Communications of the Spirit were wanted. A *double* Portion to what they had before was not sufficient: To discharge the weighty and arduous Duty laid upon them, it was requisite that they should be *filled* with the Holy Ghost: And so they were, (as our Text inform us) and in Consequence thereof, *began to speak with Tongues, as the Spirit gave*

*gave them Utterance.* Began, as soon as an Occasion offered, of manifesting that most amazing Power. And an Opportunity could not be long wanting, of conversing with Persons of different Nations, and in different Languages, at this Juncture, when *Jerusalem* (as was observ'd in the Beginning of this Discourse) was filled with Strangers from all Parts, who were met together to celebrate the Feast of *Pentecost*. This therefore, was the most opportune and favourable Season that could have happen'd for the Publication of that extraordinary Miracle. But why did I say, Could have happen'd? The Hand of God is as conspicuous in the *Appointment of the Time*, as in the *Performance of the Wonder*; which did therefore soon spread itself thro' the City, and drew all the People therein assembled, after the Men on whom it was said to have been wrought. For, (says the Verse next following the Text) *When this was noised abroad, the Multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every Man heard them speak in his own Language.* And well might they be confounded, to hear so many poor, weak, illiterate Fishermen and Mechanicks, speaking those Languages instantaneously and untaught, which ordinarily  
are

are the Fruits of long and severe Study and Application: and speaking them with the same ease and fluency, as their own native, or mother tongue.

But perhaps some may here object, and say, Might not that have been acquired in the *ordinary* way, which is thus ascribed to a *supernatural* cause? Might not they have confederated together to deceive and impose upon the world, and have privately *learnt* with much pains and practice, what they pretended to have been bestowed upon them without *any learning or endeavours at all*? Might not this power have been the purchase of *labour*, which they obtruded upon the people as a miraculous *gift*?—This hath been suggested: And 'tis a suggestion worthy the *present* state of infidelity: But the Infidels of *old* would have blush'd at so mean an objection. Had those mockers and despisers, who imputed that marvellous effect to the strength of *new wine*, been so lucky as to have this upon *this* solution, the impostors, doubtless, had been detected and exposed.

And now from this view of the nature and effects of the descent of the Holy Ghost, as it was at this time upon the heads and hearts of the

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the Apostles, we may infer the vanity of some and the boldness of others, in pretending to the same extraordinary infusions or influences,

Of this sort are they who affect to sit in solemn silence in their religious assemblies; waiting for that same hour, in which it shall be told them what they are to speak, or in which the spirit shall give them utterance. Sometimes departing without ever *breaking* that silence, otherwise than in *groans*, thereby insinuating the want of a proper and powerful call, or as if they had not received the usual inspiration: And sometimes again tearing their lungs with the most frantick vehemence of speech, throwing themselves into the wildest disorder, yea even into convulsive agonies, pouring forth *big swelling words of vanity*, in which there is much *foam*, but little *matter*, and then fondly ascribing the extravagant flights and enthusiastic ardor to the workings of the Spirit. But alas! here is only the *rushing, mighty wind*, without the *tongues* which ought to accompany it. Had the Apostles, instead of speaking clearly in a *new* language, shew'd by the rudeness of their discourses, that they had not half learnt *their own*; had not their  
*heads*

Heads been filled with *Knowledge* as well as the *House* with *noise*; had the illumination rested *without*, and not diffused one ray of light *within*, instead of making *converts* to christianity, they would have brought it into *contempt*; and that blasphemous calumny, that they were not full of the Holy Ghost but of new Wine, would then have been a suspicion not very ill grounded.

But this was far from being the case of the Apostles. They were instantaneously enabled to preach in Languages they had never been taught; and to deliver Doctrines which till then they never understood. The same Spirit which gave them *Utterance* opened their *Understandings*. That divine Prompter who put *Words* into their Mouths furnished them also with *arguments*; which they urged with such strength and energy, such plainness and perspicuity, such judgment and solidity, that St. *Peter* at his first Sermon made no less than three thousand *Profelytes*, and those trained up in the *Jewish* Religion: Who notwithstanding the prejudices of birth and education, notwithstanding the heavy charge he brought against them, of *murdering that just one the Messiah*, the *Lord of Life*, were

perfectly convinced of the Truth of what he had said, and of the Spirit by which he spake.

Again.—*Others* there are who make bold claims to the extraordinary influences of the Spirit, but confine such their pretensions chiefly to the business of *praying*; which they affect to call the *Gift* of prayer. And which they would so call not improperly, if they meant no more by it, than those ordinary helps and assistances, which are vouchsafed to every humble and sincere Christian, when he is offering up his Prayers and Address to Heaven: But if by *Gift* they understand the *sudden* and *immediate* impulse of the Holy Ghost, dictating the *words* and forming the *work*, so as to make their Prayer the true and genuine Fruit of *Inspiration*, in the same sense in which that term is applyed to the Apostles, 'tis a fond conceit, a dangerous Error, and may sometimes lead those who are so unhappy as to cherish or entertain it, into blasphemous Rhapsodies.—To pretend to the Gift of *Prayer*, in that high and absolute sense, is as ridiculous as it would be to pretend to the Gift of *healing*. And yet there are many vain enough to depend upon such special aids and influxes, and to slight and neglect all preconception or premeditation in the performance

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ance of this duty ; in full assurance that such their unpreparedness will be supplied by the immediate dictates of the Holy Spirit. “ They rush into Prayer (says one who cannot be suspected of prejudice) as Peter at Christ’s command into the Water, hoping to be upheld and carried through all the duty, without their own forethought.” These are the very words of one of the most eminent *Dissenters* of our own times. To which remark of his, I will take the liberty of adding, that what in St. *Peter* was a proper and lively *Faith*, is in *those*, who “ so rush into Prayer,” (as he speaks an improper and daring *presumption*. And were they themselves sometimes to have the reading of their own Crude, indigested Petitions, they would hardly believe that the Spirit of God ever moved upon the Face of that dark and deep Abyss, from whence they sprang.

Again.—There are yet *others*, who make still prouder Boasts of Inspiration, and talk arrogantly and haughtily of *In-dwellings*, and *inward feelings*, sensations peculiar to themselves. Who look and speak as *Apostolically* as if they did not come one whit behind the greatest of the *Apostles*, in any spiritual Gifts or Graces. Who assume to have such a

plentitude of the divine presence that a stranger to them both would be apt to conclude that the *one* had only been permitted to see it's *back-Parts*, whilst the *other* had beheld *all it's glory* pass before them. But now what Proofs do they produce of such extraordinary Gifts, or Vouchsafements? Do the *Tongues* blaze over their Heads? No, all here again is gloom and tempest. They preach or rather vociferate, their own fanatical Doctrines indeed with all Confidence and boldness, but is their *word confirmed by signs following*? None appear, except those, which our Saviour hath annexed to those false Christs and false Prophets which he foretold would come into the world. Had the *Apostles* afforded no better, or truer Demonstrations of their being inspired, they would hardly have been able to baffle and defeat all the Malice and Envy of the *Jews*, all the learning and Philosophy of the *Gentiles*. Had they not given much surer Testimony of their being filled with the Holy Ghost to *Simon Magus* he would by no means have wish'd or attempted to become a purchaser.

Thus it is that many partly hurried on by a *blind Zeal*, and partly by a *foolish Ostentation*, will pretend to a similitude with the  
 Apostles



'Apostles, not only in their holy Lives, but also in their *miraculous Gifts and Endowments*. The unreasonableness and absurdity of which Pretences is sufficiently *exposed* by being barely *mentioned*.

But yet great care is necessary, that in avoiding *one* extream, Men run not into *another*; or conclude, that because the Spirit hath ceased to manifest himself *in us* as heretofore in the *Apostles*, that therefore he hath withdrawn himself *from us*. The Promise runs quite otherwise, *Lo! I am with you to the end of the world. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Man to profit withal.* That divine Comforter is still present with *us*: If not in his *wonderful* Operations, at least in his *ordinary* Grace and Assistance; if not in the *rushing mighty Wind* in the *still small voice*; if not in *miraculous showers*, in *kind refreshing Dews* sufficient to water every Grace and ripen every Virtue.

Let us then neither affront the Holy Spirit, by arrogating to ourselves *Gifts* we have *not*, nor despise the *Aids* we *have*. Let us endeavour to husband and improve *these* to the best advantage. Let us remember, that we are but Stewards, what ever are our *Gifts*; and that

it is and will *be expected of Stewards, that they be found faithful.*

Lastly let us consider, that if we are faithful in *little*, we shall be entrusted with *more*; and for our careful management of a few *Talents of Grace*, we shall be rewarded with an exceeding and eternal *weight of glory.*

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# SERMON XII.

PSALM XV. 3.

*And hath not slander'd his Neighbour.*

**W**ITHOUT entering upon the Design or Occasion of these Words, what I propose from them is to shew you the malignity and mischievous Consequences of Slander. And that

1st. With respect to God.

2dly. To the Person slander'd.

3dly. To Society.

4thly. To the Slanderer himself.

1st. With respect to *God*. It is flying in the face of his Authority and disobeying his positive express command, *Thou shalt not raise a false report, nor goup and down as a Tale-bearer among thy People*. Saith the Lord by his Prophet *Moses*. *Speak evil of no Man* by his Apostle *St. Paul*: which last injunction is general, and comprehends all the various Species of slanderers. It is a contempt of Laws both divine and human, 'Tis an aggregate or complicated offence, 'Tis the theft and murder of the Tongue; a rape upon repu-

tation, and very often a bearing false Witness  
 It is a transgression of that great and primary  
 Law, which is therefore called by St. James  
 the *Royal Law*, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour  
 as thyself*, against which (as the same Apostle  
 tells us) *whosoever offendeth in one point, is guilty  
 of all*. That is, (as the Bishop of *London*  
 excellently explains it) “ Whosoever in any  
 “ manner offends, injures or oppresses his  
 “ Brother, it matters not in what way, whe-  
 “ ther it be by undue and partial preference  
 “ of one to another, by contempt or slander,  
 “ by theft, adultery, or murder or in any  
 “ other instance, which is contrary to that  
 “ supreme Law of Love and Charity, where-  
 “ of all the several duties of Man to Man are  
 “ to be considered as so many points, will  
 “ be found to be a transgressor against  
 “ this great, this vital principle of Religion,  
 “ to which slanders are quite repugnant :”  
 For Charity is so far from *speaking*, that it  
*thinketh* no evil. In short, all our duties  
 whether as Men or as Christians, are com-  
 prised under these two Heads, the Love of  
 God, and our Neighbour ; but disobedience  
 is as inconsistent with the *one*, as injustice with  
 the *other*. And therefore slander being a vi-  
 olation of *both* these divine Precepts which  
 contain

contain the whole of Religion, must be highly offensive and provoking to God.

Again it is a further aggravation of this Sin, that it is an abuse of one of the choicest Gifts or Endowments bestowed upon Men; and with which they are particularly favoured above the rest of the animal Creation. I mean the rare and singular Gift of Speech. There are some indeed who hold that there is a language amongst Brutes. And so great is the affectation of new and surprising discoveries, that one would scarcely wonder, if others should attempt to digest that language into a regular and compleat Dictionary. But till we have better grounds for the contrary, than wild Conceits, or bold and wanton Conjectures, we must conclude that Speech, (as I said before) is the peculiar Privilege of the Human Race. But then at the same time little Reason have we to boast of that privilege, if, instead of using it (as it was intended) for our mutual Help and Comfort, we employ it in *biting and devouring one another*; and act the Brute, with that noble Faculty, which we received as a mark of distinction from them: Turning (as it were) our Tongues into Claws, and our Speech into Spears, for the destruction of  
our

our own Species. If Brute Animals could speak, such a Behaviour, (I had almost said) would provoke them to tell us, that *we* ought not to challenge the preheminance over *them*, whilst we are acting a more savage and unnatural part than *they*: Or however, unqualified to hold Conversation with *us*, could we suppose them capable of conversing amongst *themselves*, we should be apt to suspect, that they would censure and condemn us, for so cruelly treating each other. Be that as it will, such an abuse of Speech is most certainly very base, impious, and ungrateful, a dreadful Perverision of the Gift, and a daring Provocation of the Giver.

So much for the malignity of the Sin of slander with respect to God.—Let us next consider it's mischievous consequences with respect to the person slander'd.

And here the Injury is irreparable.—If one Man spoils another of his substance, he may restore the same, or recompence him in value, but if he robs him of his GOOD NAME, there's no such thing as either restitution, or satisfaction. Not the former, for it is not in his keeping. He may indeed *retract*, or (which is all that can properly be meant by it,) *contradict* what he hath said to the pre-  
 justice

judice of another, but he cannot unsay it : and to retract it is oft times little better than driving the Wolf from the door, when the Sheep are torn to pieces. Fame always flies fast, but never so swiftly as with the spoil of mangled characters. Let a good report pursue with its speediest wing, it can never come soon enough to their rescue. Or was it equal in *speed* it would be unequal in *strength* to snatch the prey out of the mouth of an *ill* one ; the world being always of her party, always leaning to the uncharitable side. 'Tis an ungrateful reflection, but 'tis nevertheless a true one, that Calumny to most people doth good like a Cordial ; and the blacker it is the more fondly they hug it. If their Neighbour is spoke well of, the Praise of him endureth but for a short time, yea perhaps shall die upon the Tongue of the speaker ; but if ill, the disgrace takes deeper root and sticks as close to their Heart, as Gold to the Miser's Fingers. So that Slander, when once it hath escaped the mouth of the Slanderer, is gone for ever out of his power ; it might have been stifled in the conception. or strangled in the birth, but it is the peculiar property of that spurious Issue, that it cannot be destroyed afterwards. No, if *he* will expose it, the *world* will adopt

it, and never be persuaded to give it him back how dearly he might be willing to purchase it. In short tho' a good Name may be puff'd away by a single Breath, yet no blast is strong enough to drive it home to it's owner.—*The Words of a Tale bearer, says the wise man, are as wounds which go down into the innermost parts of the Belly, and the Son of Sirach, The stroke of a Rod maketh wounds, but the stroke of the Tongue breaketh the bones.*

These are lively Similies, strong Paintings, but yet they do not come up to the life. Bodily wounds may be heal'd by Medicine; give them time and keep them close, and perhaps they may heal themselves. Or should time and care, and physick all be ineffectual to prevent a Gangrene, yet by the Excision of the unsound part you secure the rest of the Body. But now the wounds of the Tongue will not only *mortify* in spite of *art*, but *spread* also in spite of *amputation*. No Charity can cover them so close, but the Air will find way to them, the searching Air of Curiosity, or the more contagious Breath of Envy. No sooner hath one Tongue made the wound, but thousands gather about it, like the Eagles about the carcase, to blow, to vex, to rifle in it: And thus the sore is ever kept



kept open, ever running, ever mortifying, but never dying. No; such wounds of the Tongue frequently work a Corruption as it were, in the Blood, never to be eradicated, so long as there's one left of the Family to possess the hereditary Evil.—And as a good Name thus taken away cannot be *restor'd*, so neither is the spoil ever *satisfied*. *The Merchandize of it, is better than the Merchandize of Silver, and the gain thereof than fine Gold.* If we consider it in the merchandizing way, it is of inestimable value. How many are there who have raised their fortunes and their families upon this sole foundation? And how many more who, as it is, go on smoothly and happily, and make a handsome figure in life, was this foundation destroyed, would immediately sink, and be buried in it's ruins? Of such worth is Credit, and so irreparable the loss of it.

And I must observe, that the Credit I am now speaking of, is not that which a Man meets with from the World, in Confidence of his Circumstances or Ability, (tho' even in that Sense of the Word, the Slanderer frequently ruins what he is not able to repair) but in Confidence of his Honesty and Integrity, his Truth and righteous Dealing,  
his

his good Heart, rather than his found Bottom. A Credit by which thousands are supported, who are well known to be intitled to no other. 'Tis greatly to the Honour of the commercial World, and more especially of this great Metropolis, that a poor Man, so long as he preserves his Character, rarely wants a proper Encouragement; will be treated not according to what he *hath*, but what he *is*; if his Principles are thought just, however small his Substance, will be countenanc'd and credited; and from his right Use of *one* Talent, be intrusted with *five*. But now a single Breath of the slanderous Tongue is enough to demolish this fair Fabric of Credit, to the utter Destruction of those who have no other Dependence. —But not to weigh a *good Name* in the Balance of *Trade* only, or to compute it's Value when carried to Market, not only to estimate it, as it stands connected with Commerce, or as it is useful or subservient to outward Advantages or Acquisitions, it hath yet a superior Worth and Excellency, from that inward Joy and Complacency, which it yields to the Mind of the happy Possessor, in a Consciousness of it's procuring him the real Approbation and Esteem of good and virtu-

virtuous Men; that *loving Favour*, which *Solomon* hath told us, *is rather to be chosen than Silver or Gold*; not that Popularity which bubbles one Moment, and bursts the next; that unwholesome Air, which generally blasts the Man, who so eagerly sucks it in,—but that solid and stable Affection and Regard, which Virtue alone, or the Reputation of it, can either bestow or preserve. So that here the Stroke of the Tongue is more incurable than in the former Case. For where a Man values his Character, only because he's to live *by* it, if such Satisfaction is made him, that he can live *without* it, he is no great Loser; nay, sometimes is a Gainer by the exchange. And 'tis, God knows, no unusual Practice for Men, who *make too much haste to be rich*, to convert this Sort of Credit into Cash: But where he rates it in Proportion to the Love and Respect it obtains him from the Wise and Good, there Reparation is impossible; because it was not the *Man*, but the *Merit* which they respected; and therefore, when the Slanderer hath deflour'd the *one*, they can no longer be fond of the *other*. Here then the Injury can never be recompensed.—And the Case is much the same, where a Person, tho' he may not  
 have

have so exquisite a Taste of the inward Pleasure springing from a virtuous Character, yet hath something, instead of it, which endears it equally to him, and makes him as fore and sensible under the Lash of an ill Tongue, as the other ; and that is an innate Modesty which prevails so strongly and powerfully in some, that Innocency itself is not a sufficient Antidote against the Bite of that pois'nous Adder. Doth any false Tongue take up a Reproach against them ? They are immediately cover'd with that Shame and Confusion, which is due only to the foul Reproacher, and bear his Offences in their discolour'd Countenance. Hypocrisy, this, of an amiable Kind ; Guilt without, and Integrity within : But still this inward Integrity is not able to shield them from the torturing Apprehension of the outward Disgrace ; they look upon every one they see, as their Accuser ; and by those conscious Looks unhappily accuse themselves. With *them*, next to the anguish of a wounded Spirit, is that of a wounded reputation. To them the stroke of the Tongue is quite fatal ; it destroys all their future Peace and Comfort, makes them weary of themselves and the World, breaks not only the Bones but the Heart, and a  
broken

broken Heart can never be healed.—From all which it appears that slander is the worst kind of robberies, in no case admitting of *restitution*, and in many capable of no *recompence*.—Hitherto we have considered this evil in a *private* view, and have seen how mischievous it is even in this limited capacity. We are now,

3dly. To take more compass, enlarge our prospect, and consider it with regard to *Society*, and here we shall find it's mischiefs to be boundless.

As Peace and Unanimity are the strength as well as beauty of Society, so strife and discord are the very rot and bane of it. Our blessed Saviour hath left us this Maxim, that *a House, or a Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*. And it will hardly admit of any doubt, but that more Houses and Kingdoms have been ruined and destroyed by quarrels at *home*, than by invasions from *abroad*: as it is in the *natural*, so in the *political* body, it's worst and most dangerous Foes are those of his own Bosom. But now what hath ever sown more divisions in Families, in Communities, in States, than the slanderous Tongue? This sets a Man at variance against his Father, and the Daughter against her

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Mother, and the Daughter in Law, against her Mother in Law, and so in every other Relation, whether private or publick this separates chief Friends. No union so close, no alliance so strong, no Society so happy, that it hath not dissolved, and broken and brought to desolation. And indeed no wonder it should thus spread disorders all around it, since as the Apostle speaks, 'tis *full of deadly Poison*; no wonder it should set on fire the whole course of nature, itself being first *set on fire of Hell*. The wise King Solomon, than whom none ever knew or laid down better Rules for the well ordering of Societies, observes that wood is not more proper to kindle fire, than slander contention. *Where no wood is, saith he, there the Fire goeth out, so where there is no Tale-bearer the Strife ceaseth*: and the Son of Sirach, *curse the whisperer and double tongued for such have destroyed many that were at peace. A backbiting Tongue hath disquieted many, and driven them from Nation to Nation; strong Cities hath it pulled down and overthrown the Houses of great Men.*—Amongst the many reasons which might be assigned for the destructive consequences of this Crime, as we are now considering it in a social view, give me

me leave to touch upon a few which seem most natural and obvious.——

1st. There is no Injury whatever of which a Man hath so immediate and quick a feeling, as that which affects his good Name, or Character. By this Provocation the meekest are moved, and the most patient forget their usual Temper. Of every other property the injurious Person may freely take, but this sacred Inclosure is not to be violated with impunity. *The Day thou eatest thereof* said God to Adam, when tying him up from tasting the Tree in the midst of the Garden, *thou shalt surely die*: and so in this case they who are easy and indulgent enough on all *other* occasions, are rigorous and severe on *this*, and sometimes not to be satisfied with any less penalty than the death of the Spoiler, according to that of the Son of Sirach, *as the Vapour and Smoke of a furnace goeth before the fire, so reviling before blood*. But should not this wanton Liberty of the Tongue be attended with bloodshed, it will surely be followed with sharp contentions, and cruel recriminations, and not more to the Prejudice of the Parties at variance, than to the annoyance of the Public.—Which puts me in mind of another reason why only this Crime is more fruitful of Strifes and therefore more

hurtful to Society ; and that is, that the Injuries it doth are easily returned. There are many evil designs that one Man may form against another, which it may be never in his power to bring about ; or, if it is, perhaps before the intended mischief is ripe, he may think better of it, and reverse his Purpose. But now this is a mischief easily to be executed, the very moment it is conceived. The Tongue is an Arrow soon dipt and sharpened ; takes Wing in an Instant, and wounds at a distance ; and no sooner do we feel the smart but we return the poison. And thus characters are drawn on both sides, very black to be sure, since the Devil inspires the fancy, furnishes the colours, and guides the pencil. And if amidst the showers of dirt which fly betwixt the Assailants, they hit nobody but themselves, they must be very good marksmen.—which again furnishes us with a third reason why the Crime under consideration is so great a disturber of the publick peace, and such an enemy to it's Happiness, viz. because it is of a spreading nature, and cannot bear confinement, will not be content to run in a small or single stream. No ; that stream will soon form itself into a Brook ; that Brook become a River, and that River a Sea  
enough



enough to deluge the whole Community. Tho' at first the Quarrel may be, as it were a single Combat, by and by it will become a general war. Into which some will voluntarily enlist themselves, others be press'd into the Service. Of the *first* sort are the infamous Herd of Scandal-mongers; this Vermin of Society will worm themselves into the Contest, and widen the difference. Of the latter, are Acquaintance, well wishers, Companions, Friends, Confidants: these again will be drawn into it; their private conversation expos'd, their secrets betray'd; and the most sacred ties of Friendship violated and abus'd by this strife of Tongues.—These are some of the aggravating circumstances which wait the foul sin of detraction and render it so dangerous to Society. And therefore the old *Romans*, to shew their just abhorrence of it, oblig'd such Offenders to carry their fault in their Forehead by an infamous Brand of two Capital C's, signifying in their Language *Cave Calumniatorem*, but in our own *Beware the Slanderer*. Nay some of their Legislators thought this too mild a Penalty. The Emperor *Vespasian* carried it higher, and punish'd this Offence with scourging; and *Antoninus Pius* higher still, who would not suffer such

a Criminal to live. A plain indication what a horrid Opinion they had of the Crime, and of the pernicious Effects of it to the Common wealth.—

But we have yet one more View to take of it, which is,

4thly. To observe how injurious it is to the Slanderer himself. We have seen how naturally Calumny recoils, and how easy and quick, and certain is the revenge of the Tongue. He therefore who calumniates or reproaches another, invites and draws the same injury upon himself: Or as *Solomon* elegantly expresseth it, *his Mouth calleth for strokes*. And the Call is generally pretty well answered; and sometimes with strokes so thick and heavy, that he is not able to sustain himself under the weight of them. The Man who is loose in his *Tongue*, is rarely very chaste in his *Actions*; so that whilst he's taking aim at *another*, he becomes a much fairer mark *himself*; whilst he's wickedly or wantonly endeavouring to blemish his brother's reputation, he entirely blasts his own. Yea Providence sometimes so orders it, that he forfeits life, as well as character, by the mischievous attempt, by thus bringing to light those hidden scenes of darkness, which  
perhaps

perhaps might never have been expoſed, or canvassed, had not his own ill Tongue erected the fatal Inquisition. And this may ſerve to explain that ſaying of our bleſſed Saviour to the Jews, when they brought before him the Woman taken in Adultery, *let him who is without Sin caſt the firſt Stone.* Not that he hereby meant to countenance, or extenuate the Crime charged upon her, but to give them this neceſſary caution, that it becomes thoſe who accuſe *others*, to take good heed to *themſelves*. But what, tho' this Man, who is ſo ready to eclipse the Credit of his Neighbour, ſhould be free from every ſuch *great* offence, he muſt however have ſome *leſſer* failings, and infirmities, which he could wiſh to be ſhaded. The very beſt of Men are not ſo pure and perfect in their behaviour, as to want no charitable vail. But they have no right to expect it themſelves, whiſt they deny it to others ; or that their weakneſſes, or miſcarriages ſhall be buried under the thick cloud, whiſt they are induſtrious to bring their Brothers into open Day. So that the Slanderer is an enemy to *himſelf*, as well as to the *publick*, digs under his own Foundation, and *falls into the Pit he prepared for another.*

—But ſuppoſing he ſhould be out of the

reach of Reflection, (not from his Innocency but his Impudence) supposing him to have no *Character* to lose, and therefore to despise the lash of Tongues. Yet hath he no other *Property* that may be affected? Nothing that he can suffer in besides? If he is not afraid of the revilings of Men, there is also a Law for such Transgressors. Let him at least be *afraid of it's Terrors*. For it hath Plagues many and grievous in store for him; it's Wrath is cruel; it's Vengeance intolerable. Slander is oftentimes very expensive to the slanderer. He who will keep a lewd Tongue, must pay dear for his License. There must be a satisfaction to the *Party*; and when that is done, the *Law* is to be satisfied, which generally is the greater difficulty of the two. On which account it is to be wished the old *Roman* Discipline might be revived, and that the Offender might rather be *mark'd* than *mulct'd* for his Offence; yea that he should be punished with scourging, rather than his Family should be fleec'd, which is too often the Case, where the Head of it is subject to the evil we are now discoursing of. (Nay sometimes a Man not subject to it hath been ruined by one single mistake of this kind; so true is that of the Author before quoted  
 who

who abounds with Maxims equally just and beautiful, *better is it to slip upon the Pavement than to slip with the Tongue.*—But supposing further that the proud Defamer is here as much above *suffering*, as he is above *Shame*; suppose he is so *high* that Justice cannot reach him, or so *low* that it cannot harm him; tho' he must be shorn close indeed, where the Law can find no hold) yet let him remember that *hereafter* he shall not escape, whatever is his condition *here*; let him remember, he must appear before another Tribunal, that just and terrible Audit, where, as on *one* hand no false Witness shall rise up against him, to lay to his charge things that he knew not, so, on the other, none of his Slanders or Reproaches shall be smother'd or conceal'd for want of Evidence; but, however *privately* whisper'd, they shall be publish'd; however *artfully*, they shall be detected; however *mysteriously* they shall be decypher'd; however *silently* they shall be understood; and whatever was the motive, whether Envy, or hatred, or uncharitableness of any kind, or only the very itch of talking, or the desire of keeping up Conversation, will be most assuredly punished if not repented of, by that God who hath declared

clared that no Slanderer shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

To conclude therefore in the Words of that Apocryphal Author before quoted.

*He that can rule his Tongue shall live without strife, and he that hateth babbling shall have less Evil. Rehearse not to another that which is told unto thee, and thou shalt fare never the worse. Whether it be to a Friend or Foe, talk not of other Men's lives, and if thou can'st without Offence, reveal them not. If thou hast heard a Tale let it dye with thee, and be bold, it will not burst thee. A Fool travelleth with a Word as a Woman in labour of a Child. As an Arrow that sticketh in a Man's Thigh so is a Word within a Fool's Belly. Admonish a Friend, it may be he hath not done it, and if he hath done it, that he will do it no more.—Admonish a Friend, it may be he hath not said it; and if he hath, that he will speak it no more. Admonish a Friend, for many times it is a slander; and believe not every Tale.—*

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# SERMON XIII.

ACTS xxviii. 4.

*And when the Barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, tho' he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.*

**T**IS a very *cruel*, and yet a very *common* error, to read the wrath of Heaven in every severe providence, or unhappy event, or to look always upon a man's *sufferings*, as a designation of the *sinner*.—Hence it was that the Jews put that question to our blessed Saviour, *Did this man sin, or his parents, that he was born blind?* They concluded immediately that his blindness was a judicial punishment, and (as appears from the nature of the question) giving into the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, enquired, whether it was for his *own* sins, or *those of his parents*, that such judgment was inflicted upon him. That it was a *judgment* seem'd to them beyond all doubt. The only difficulty was, where to fix the guilt that call'd

it

it down: Whether in *himself*, in his pre-existent state, or in *those*, to whom, under God, he owed that body in which he then appeared.—From the same error it was, that Job's *Comforters* became his *accusers*; charging him home with uncharitableness, injustice, oppression, and what not. *Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their cloathing. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast with holden bread from the hungry. Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.*—And what proof was there to support this harsh and heavy charge? None other than the weight and severity of his sorrows. His wrinkles and his leanness which he complains to have been witnesses of his *sufferings*, were by them likewise made the witnesses of his *sinfulness*. The filthiness of his *body* was with them a sufficient evidence of the impurity of his *soul*. And thence they upbraidingly and unjustly cryed out, *Is not thy wickedness great? And thine iniquities are they not infinite?*—Hence also the *Barbarians* in the Text, when they beheld the venomous beast hanging on *St. Paul's hand*, said among themselves, *no doubt this man is a*  
*mur-*



*murderer, whom, tho' he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.*

Now because in the matter of the divine Judgments various are the opinions of men, *some* exploding the very notion of them, and *others* running into odd extreams *about* them, either fearful on the *one* hand of interpreting *any* calamity whether public or private, as judicial, or forward on the *other* to pronounce *every one* to be so: I propose in the following Discourse to bestow a few reflections upon the errors of each.

As to the first of these, who are for exploding the very notion of the divine judgments, upon what is their objection to them founded? Is it that in the nature of them they are incredible? But why? Is it incredible that God who made the world by his *power* should govern it by his *Providence*? That he should treat his creatures in a manner agreeable to what they are? That he should deal *with* moral agents *as* moral agents? That he should appoint them laws and statutes for his honour and glory, and that he should guard such laws by proper sanctions, and enforce an obedience to them by exemplary punishments;

ments; as well present as future? Is all this then incredible? It may be so to those who either dispute the *Being* of a God, or would strip him of his *Attributes*; and with such I mean not to contend: But leaving *them* to the conviction of their own Consciences, shall proceed to examine the objections of *others*, who tho' neither Atheists, nor Deists, yet are no friends to the doctrine I'm endeavouring to support: Who allowing all *those* to be divine judgments indeed, which the Scriptures have recorded as such, are faithless, or sceptical at least, as to *those*, which at this time of day pass under that denomination. The destruction of the World by the flood, of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* by fire from Heaven, of *Corah* and his company by the gaping earth, these and the like events they admit to have been the direful effects of God's displeasure, or ministers of his vengeance; because the same hand which sent such distresses affixed, as it were, a label to each to signify its Intention or explain its mission; but the evils or calamities which now happen in the world, either to private persons, or public bodies, societies, or countries, having no such explanatory, key, or clear expresses of their design, they are not willing to look upon as  
judg-

judgments, but chuse rather to consider them as *natural* and accidental, than *judicial* or penal: Rather as the mere result of *secondary causes* than *special providences*, rather as flowing from purely *mechanical principles*, than from *moral purposes*.

But wherefore do they choose to consider them in this Light? Is *God* less holy and righteous than heretofore, or less jealous of his Honour? Or is *Man* become so just and upright as to render the divine Corrections needless? On the contrary is not the Lord still a righteous Judge? And is he not provoked every Day? Why therefore should it seem strange that his anger should be stirred up and his Arm stretched out still? That he should sometimes let loose his Indignation against such Rebels as either dispute his Sovereignty, or despise his Laws? That by pouring out his Wrath upon the *Heads* of *some* he may awake Terrors in the *Hearts* of *others*.—And what tho' the Evils inflicted by the Almighty in these *latter times* upon the wicked and disobedient, do not speak their Errand so particularly and expressly as those *of old* did; what tho' Vengeance is not wrote or engrav'd upon them in the same plain and legible character, yet without seeing their *Name*, we  
 may

may generally understand their *Nature*. In *some* Cases we cannot well err. In *others* less certain, it becomes us to be cautious and modest. And as to *secondary Causes*, than which the Objectors are unwilling to look any further, we can indulge them so far as to allow that the Evils which we call *Judgments* may in general proceed from such; but yet that hinders not but that they may be *Judgments* still; interferes not in the least with their moral, or religious use or intention; since both Causes and Effects must be Ultimately resolv'd into the first unoriginated, universal Cause, the supreme Lord of all Things; and are subject to his sovereign Will and Wisdom.

Let this suffice as an Answer to those, who content to believe the Judgments of *former ages*, in *this our Day* would have them to be out of Date; ascribing those *Providences* we call by that name, to unmeaning, *secondary Causes*.

I am next to take Notice of some *others*, who being persuaded that the divine Judgments are still necessary to the Government of the moral World, and, as such, continue to be exercised upon Earth, yet are *over-timerous* or scrupulous in the Interpretation of them

And

And that for the reason given by the former Objector, viz. because they bring along with them no *explicit* declaration of their meaning, or for that the *sufferings*, do not immediately and directly charge the *sufferer*, or speak him an Object of Vengeance.

'Tis doubtless very good to be cautious in such matters, but yet caution may sometimes be carried too far : And that it is so here is agreeable to the opinion of a very learned and able Casuist. “ If, (says he,) the Person upon  
 “ whom the Judgment falls be habitually  
 “ vicious, or hath committed a Crime of a  
 “ clamorous Nature or deeper Tincture ; if  
 “ the Man Sin a Sin unto death, and either  
 “ meets with *it* or some *other* remarkable ca-  
 “ lamity, (provided we pass no further than  
 “ the Sentence we see then executed,) it is not  
 “ against Charity, or Prudence, to say this  
 “ calamity, in the Intention of God, is a  
 “ punishment and judgment. In the favour-  
 “ able Cases of honest and just persons our  
 “ Sentence and Opinion ought to be favour-  
 “ able ; to incline to the side of charitable  
 “ Construction, and to read other Ends of  
 “ God in the Accidents of our Neighbour  
 “ than revenge, or express Wrath. But  
 “ when the Impiety of a person is scandalous  
 “ and notorious, clamorous and violent, if  
 “ we find a sadness and calamity dwelling  
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“ with such a Sinner, we read the Sentence  
 “ of God wrote with his own hand, and it is  
 “ not fanciness of Opinion, or a pressing in-  
 “ to the Secrets of Providence to say the  
 “ same thing which God hath pub-  
 “ lished to all the World in the Expresses of  
 “ his Spirit. In such Cases we are to observe  
 “ the Severity of God (on them that fall se-  
 “ verity) and to use those Judgments as  
 “ Instruments of the Fear of God, and Ar-  
 “ guments to hate Sin, which we could not  
 “ well do without, looking on them as veri-  
 “ fications of God’s Threatnings against great  
 “ and impenitent Sinners.”——So is the  
 case stated by that judicious Author. And  
 indeed it would be altogether absurd to sup-  
 pose that when we see bold and presumptu-  
 ous offenders actually labouring under the  
 Weight of those Woes which Heaven hath  
 denounced against all such, we may not with-  
 out breach of charity or forfeiture of pru-  
 dence, esteem their Sufferings divine Judg-  
 ments. Yea ’tis in this View God himself  
 intends we should behold and consider them.  
 And one main end of his inflicting them was  
 that they might be exemplary as well as  
 penal.

Again

Again in many Instances we are secured by precedents from the Danger of rash judging with respect to the point under consideration.

For Example, *Sodom* (as I had occasion to note before) with all the Cities round about, for their heinous and crying Sins and Impieties, were laid in Ashes. If therefore *our own* or any other Nation, or People, should be guilty of the like Provocations, and lie under the same or the like calamities, the *one* surely is a safe Rule for the Interpretation of the *other*; and *both*, or *neither*, must be accounted as Punishments. And with respect to *private* or *single* Persons the argument holds equally true. In short, if the Scriptures were written for our Admonition, (as undoubtedly they were if they speak truly of themselves,) then we are sufficiently admonished by that great variety of Examples which they exhibit to us, that wherever we observe more remarkable Sins and Sufferings united in the same object, we are to look upon such Sufferings as the Scourge of an offended God.

Again we are safe from rash Judgment in all those cases where there is so great a Similitude or Correspondence between the Crime and the Punishment, that the *one* is plainly an

Indication of the *other*. Of this sort we have Instances in *Jezabel*, in *Haman*, in *Herod*, in *Judas*, and many more whose Transgressions and the reward of them so exactly agreed or tallyed together, (that as one handsomely observes) “ the Hand which struck the Sinner “ held up one Finger to point at the Sin.” If the blasphemous Tongue shall lose its use or faculty ; if the Arm stretched out against it’s maker shall be dry’d up and withered ; if the insidious Person shall perish in his own Snare, wants such Events any Interpreter ? And must he not be scrupulous even to superstition, who would be afraid to pronounce them *Judgments* ? But of such superstitious indeed there are but few, at least amongst those who profess to believe any *Judgments* at all. The Error with *them* lies generally in the *contrary* extreme. And they are as much too *precipitate and daring* as the *others* are too *cautious and reserved* in their Constructions of such Catastrophes.—Which mistake comes now in due course to be considered.

It is great weakness and oft times *worse* than weakness, to register every inauspicious Accident among the number of divine *Judgments*. And yet after this manner it is that many are very prone to swell the Roll. *Sometimes* this proceeds



proceeds from wrong and unworthy Idea's of God; *sometimes* from an unhappy Constitution, or a religious Gloom; but *for the most part* from envy, hatred, or uncharitableness. He who is evilly affected, or disposed towards others, is very apt to be harsh and hard in his Censures, and to espie the vengeful Arm of the Almighty in every cross accident or disaster that befalls them. But why? What evil have they *done*? Alas! this is a Question he stays not to ask; 'tis sufficient to his purpose that Evil they *suffer*; God hath *smitten* them, and therefore *he* will *condemn* them. Or perhaps there may have been a Fault perhaps they *may* have done him some slight Injury, *that* is enough; or, it may be, have only differed from him in *opinion*, still *that* is enough, in his esteem, to bring down Vengeance upon their Head. But well it is for them, that this is not the Sentence of *Heaven*, but his *own*; and that the Wrath of *God* attends not upon the Resentment or Prejudices of *Men*. But let Resentment be the Motive, or not, let it proceed from what it will, he who judges others not by their *Actions* but by their *sufferings* (to speak the most favourably of it,) judges very weakly, begins at the wrong End, concludes from the *Effect* to the *Cause*, which in this case, is inverting the order he ought to observe.

observe. Had we heard no more of *Jezebel*, than her shameful and miserable Exit, we should have had no right to infer that she was a wicked Woman, and that this was a *Judgment* upon her; but being first informed of her enormous *Crimes*, we can easily discern the Hand of God in the *Punishment* of the *Criminal*, and might have justly concluded that her Fall was a divine Sentence, had the Scripture been silent.

It may seem perhaps to some that our Saviour in that memorable Case of the Galileans, forbids, or at least discourages, this kind of judging in *all* Cases whatsoever; and would not that we should say of *any* calamitous accident, or event which happens even to persons notoriously wicked, that it is a *divine Judgment*. Suppose ye, that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffer'd such things? I tell you nay, &c. But now it is not here insinuated, that the Fate of those Galileans, who were slain and sacrific'd by *Pilate*, was not a *Judgment* upon them, or ought not to be so esteem'd. This was what Christ intended not to suggest, but that such Judgment was no Proof of their being *more* wicked than others whom God at that time was pleas'd to reprove:

*Bad*

*Bad they were; but the Survivors were no better, tho' Sentence was respited; to which it may be proper to add, for the clearing up the present difficulty, that our Saviour was well aware that the Jews were utter enemies to the Galileans; and as such, would be apt to exult and triumph in this fatal event; wherefore, without disputing the Cause, he guards only against the Consequences of it;— seeks to prevent that barbarous and brutish Joy they might conceive from the Fall of others, and the high and haughty opinion they might thence entertain of themselves, diverts their proud and envious thoughts from the Sufferings of the Galileans, by putting them in mind of their own Sins, which, without Repentance, would draw upon them the same, or the like Sufferings: Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish; which plainly implies, that the Galileans were destroy'd for their Wickedness, and that their Destruction was a divine and judicial Punishment.*

In a word, as on the *one* hand, where the Sin and the Suffering are of such a nature, that Vengeance seems to shew itself plainly, or the punishing arm of God is in a manner laid bare and open to our view, *then* not to

see the Judgment is *Folly and Stupidity*: so on the *other* hand, where there is no such evidence, to pass the same censure, is *uncharitableness and presumption*.

Let us endeavour, therefore, to keep clear of both extremes: neither making the judgments of God of none effect by our *Scrupulosity*, nor yet too cheap or common by our *Temerity*. But above all, let us take care how we make God the Executioner of our angry, malicious, or revengeful Sentences; or how we suffer *our passions* to give the tincture to *his Providences*; like the jaundic'd Eye, which strikes it's own colour upon every object it beholds. “ When God speaks  
 “ aloud, (to borrow another observation from  
 “ the before-quoted author) and gives us  
 “ notice what crimes he punishes in *others*,  
 “ that we may decline such rocks of offence  
 “ *ourselves*; when he marks the infected per-  
 “ sons; thereby declaring, as it were, the  
 “ malignity of the disease, and bidding us  
 “ beware of the unhappy cause of it; let  
 “ us then not turn away our *Ears* from his  
 “ *Voice*, nor our *Eyes* from his *Hand*, but  
 “ with a holy reverence, fix our regards  
 “ upon the examples to which we are di-  
 “ rected: But in all other cases, where cen-  
 sure

“ sure must be *doubtful*, let it be *dumb*; and  
 “ let Charity both speak and think as fa-  
 “ vourably as it can. And Charity, which  
 “ hopeth all things, will be sure neither to  
 “ *think* nor *speak* amiss.”—And however  
 we may be persuaded in our own minds, that  
 a Brother stricken of God, is plagued for  
 his offences, yet let us not treat him with  
 Cruelty and Contempt, lest we should con-  
 vert that into an *Evil*, which was meant for  
 an *Advantage*.—Much less let us conclude  
 a man to be a *Sinner*, merely from his being  
 a *Sufferer*; or judge of his *inward* State, by  
*outward* Circumstances, which is the error in  
 my text.

To shut up all.—With the spiritual State  
 of *others*, in general, we are very imper-  
 fectly acquainted, and therefore ought to in-  
 terpret the Dispensations of Heaven towards  
 them, with the utmost candour and charity.  
 But of *our own*, we are, or might be, more  
 certainly informed, and therefore may judge  
 ourselves more freely, or with greater bold-  
 ness. Let us, then, when Calamity over-  
 takes us, (I mean any striking, sudden, sig-  
 nal Calamity) be as liberal as we please in  
 our interpretation of it; when we behold  
 the Viper fastning upon our *hands*, let us  
 faithfully

faithfully consult our *hearts* for an explication; and if *they* condemn us of some very presumptuous and provoking impiety, let us conclude, that it sprang from the Fire of the divine Wrath, and immediately humble ourselves in dust and ashes. But if our hearts, upon a fair and honest appeal, condemn us not, let us not superstitiously reproach ourselves, or fix that Brand upon our Sufferings which Heaven never intended.—And as for *others*, whom we may see in the same suffering circumstances, let us not presume to judge them, except in such flagrant instances, where God himself (as hath been shew'd) seems plainly to have mark'd them out as examples, and to demand our notice.—And even when that is the case, let us not add sorrow to sorrow, by upbraiding, or unkind speeches, but rather endeavour to lighten the load, and pour oil into their wounds, by putting them in mind, that in the midst of *Judgment* there is *Mercy* with God, and diverting their eyes from the *Hand* that struck them, to the *Arm* that is open to receive them, upon their Repentance.

Lastly, whatever calamities may be inflicted upon *ourselves* or *others*, let us be  
 assur'd

assur'd that they have a merciful intention, and that our punishment in *this* life, (if we make a right use of it,) will be the means of procuring us Pardon and Peace in the World to come.





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# SERMON XIV.

ii. PETER, i. Ch. latter part of 5 Ver.

*And to Virtue Knowledge.*

The Context runs thus :

*Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*

**T**HIS Epistle was wrote by St. *Peter* to the Christians dispersed throughout *Lesser Asia*, a little before his martyrdom, in order to confirm them in the faith, and to excite them to the practice of those virtues which ought to be the fruits of it.

A very able Writer insists that there is a peculiar beauty, propriety, and design in the arrangement of the several virtues here enumerated; that St. *Peter* had his eye upon that spiritual edifice which was to be erected upon faith, and therefore with exquisite skill had placed the materials to be employed in  
it,

it, in that *Architectonic Order* we now behold them; Yea further, that the Apostle's judgment would not have been sufficient had not the Spirit of God; which directed the workmen of the old tabernacle, assisted him in the disposition of the materials of this new building.

This might be allowed to be an ingenious conjecture, but seems to be too much to be asserted.—However, let the materials here be thrown in by *accident*, or disposed by *art*, one thing must be granted, that the Asserter hath wrought them up very skilfully and judiciously, and raised out of them a fair and beautiful fabrick. But so, 'tis probable, he would have been able to have done had they been ranged in a different manner.

My subject takes in only two members of that supposed piece of spiritual architecture, *Virtue* and *Knowledge*. Nor these shall I consider as connected with the rest, but taking advantage of the order in which they stand, I shall endeavour to shew that *Virtue* is the best foundation for science to build upon.

For the better establishing which proposition, it will be requisite to take a view of  
science.

science.—1st, Where it *wants*.—2dly, Where it *hath* that foundation.

1st. Where it *wants* it.—Human Science at the very best, or when most stretch'd out and erect, is short or low in stature; but, except where virtue gives it shape and regularity, 'tis also ugly, distorted, and deformed, and as void of use as of beauty.—*Which of you* (saith our blessed Saviour) *intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the costs?* This omission he here insinuates would be great weakness. But much greater would it be was he to compute neither the cost nor the use; neither whether he was able to finish it, nor when finished whether it will reward his expence. And yet this weak man is he who neglects the rule proposed of founding knowledge upon virtue.—He sets out to build a tower of science, not upon *Wisdom's strong pillars*, but upon the airy *basis of Pride*, whose top he flatters himself shall reach up to Heaven. He counts not the *cost*, for if he did he would find that he was not equal to the work; nor the *use*, for then he would as easily perceive that the undertaking, if compleated, would be altogether worthless.

Man's knowledge in his present state must  
neces-

necessarily be very narrow and confined. His life is short: And that portion of it which is proper for the investigation of truth, much shorter. For besides the imbecility of infancy, the giddiness of youth, and the infirmities of old age, which fill up no small part of it, sickness, accidents, worldly cares, and the ordinary demands of nature, give great hindrance or interruption to the inquisitive mind. Add to these the further impediments of evil customs, unhappy prejudices, and wrong affections, which (as it were) fetter the soul, and spread darkness over the understanding. Of this we have a lively, yet lamentable description in the Book of Wisdom: *The corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind, which miseth upon many things: and hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth: And with labour do we find the things that are before us; but the things that are in Heaven who hath searched out?*

Our days so few, our avocations so many, and our intellectual powers and faculties so clogged and clouded, 'tis impossible that a large share of knowledge should fall to any one man's lot, even of those things that may be known by us, or that lie within the compass

pafs of the human understanding, which yet  
 are but trifling and inconfiderable, compar'd  
 to thofe which are placed far beyond it; fo  
 trifling, that one who had meafur'd it's ex-  
 tent as minutely and judiciously as perhaps  
 any one ever did, tells us, that " that part;  
 " whether of the intellectual, or fenfible  
 " world, which we *fee*, holds no proportion  
 " with what we *fee not*; and that whatever  
 " we can reach with our eyes, or with our  
 " thoughts, is but a point—almost nothing;  
 " in comparifon with the reft.—That the  
 " meaneft and moft obvious things that come  
 " in our way, have dark fides, that the  
 " quickeft fight cannot penetrate into:—  
 " That the cleareft and moft enlarg'd un-  
 " derftandings of thinking men find them-  
 " felves puzzled, and at a lofs in every par-  
 " ticle of Matter. And that we are fo far  
 " from being able to comprehend the whole  
 " nature of the univerfe, and all the things  
 " contain'd in it, that we are not capable of  
 " the philofophical knowledge of the bodies  
 " that are about us, and that make a part  
 " of us."—And indeed a man of vastly  
 lefs abftraction and penetration, than that  
 fagacious and acute inquirer, who hath ever  
 thought about the matter, cannot but be fen-

sible that the circle of human science is small, but the abyss of ignorance which surrounds it, infinite.—It was out of this abyss, that *Solomon* himself thus cry'd, *I said I will be wise, but it was far from me.* And yet he had a much more extensive, and more illumin'd understanding, than many of our modern pretenders to science, who say, *we are the people, and wisdom shall die with us,* for he was the wisest of all men. *What, therefore, must the man do, that cometh after the King?* What must that vain man do, whose proud, aspiring aims led us into these reflections? Why he must be forced to confess with shame, that he began to build what he is not able to finish.

And so he must, also, that he estimated the *use* of his superb structure as falsely as he did the *Charge*; or rather, that he made no estimate at all.—For suppose he could have given it sublimity and magnificence even to his wishes, and that he had treasur'd up such a fund of knowledge, as to be enabled not only with *Solomon*, to speak of *all trees from the Cedar to the Hyssop*, but also of all created nature, from the highest to the lowest productions of it's author; yea, not only to speak of, but fully to comprehend the universal

verfal system both of the natural and moral world ; yet what would all this profit him ? Alas ! had he the quick and piercing fight, or intelligence of an Arch-Angel, without Virtue it would avail him nothing. But to change this hypothesis for something less improbable ; suppose only that *he* in his day surpass'd others, as far as *Solomon* did in his : Here the wise man will count his profit for him. *In much wisdom is much grief ; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow : And why ?* Because a severe and intense application impairs the health, and vigour, and constitution ; *for much study is a weariness of the flesh.* And again, because the progress is not only laborious, but slow. He is oblig'd to travel much in the dark, and thereby is oft out of his way. And not only that, but the further he proceeds, the further he has to go ; every ascent conquer'd, shews him the Horizon shifted, and his journey lengthen'd : and for each shore of Science gain'd, he discovers still larger seas of ignorance before him ; so that *in making many books there is no end.*

But it may be said, that this his toil and labour is amply recompenced by the delight and satisfaction which he feels from the opening and enlarging of his mind, and by the

glory and reputation which his attainments will draw after them.—Knowledge, doubtless, is pleasant to the soul, and will be had in honour when temper'd with virtue; but without such happy mixture, this honour fadeth, and that pleasure poisons. *Knowledge puffeth up.* 'Tis a tree, whose fruit is proper to make man wise, but is also apt to make him vain. Good men experience this in some degree; they find it difficult altogether to keep down the unwholesome tumour. How then must he be bloated, who proposeth to himself no other end from his pursuit of knowledge, than the indulgence of his vanity? A poor end truly, and unworthy a rational creature. And yet, tho' he may literally be said to be labouring for the wind, he will very likely be disappointed even of that reward: his pride will undermine the fabric itself is raising; and men will allow him no sort of *Merit*, when he once discovers the want of *Modesty*.

But granting he had the art (which proud men rarely have) to hide that want, so as to preserve the full-blown breath of Praise to the last. How long, alas! will that be? Yet a little while, and he must be forced to resign it, together with his own. *And how dieth*



*dieth the wise Man, (or Man of Science, for so it is here to be understood). Ask the wisest, and he will tell you,—Even as the Fool. As it happeneth to the Fool, so it happeneth to me; Why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this is also vanity.*—This is a Truth indeed, which, had the Preacher been silent, the very walls of this solemn and sacred Building \* would have fully declar'd unto us. This is a truth, which the great and venerable dead, with whose tombs we stand surrounded, once famous for Arts or Arms,—tho' dead, yet speak with awful authority. Yea, this is a Truth quite safe and secure from the injuries even of monumental Flattery.

So that after a man hath all his life long been building up Knowledge, and by hard plodding and indefatigable pains hath rear'd the proud Pile as high as he is able, yet, if the only sure and solid Base, or Ground-work of Virtue be wanting, it will at last be no other than a Monument of his Folly. If amidst that variety of other Systems, which he hath crowded into his Head, Virtue hath found no place in his Heart, well may we ask, *Why was all this Waste?* Why hath he been

been wearying himself for that, which will not profit him at any time, much less in the Day of Wrath, when he must be severely accountable for such a wretched misapplication of time and talents, and for vainly preferring *showy Science*, to *saving Wisdom*?—Which puts me in mind of the more pleasing part of our Prospect, *viz.*

A View of Knowledge founded upon Virtue.

Now, tho' such is the imperfection of our nature, that Science, with all possible human helps and advantages, can never in this world raise it's head very high, yet will it be carried higher upon that foundation than any other; because, as it's strength on the one hand will be greater, and on the other, it's obstructions less.—As the Body, when healthful and vigorous, is the better able to perform it's offices, so is it also with the Mind, whose powers and faculties nothing enervates and weakens, as vicious habits; nor any-thing so strengthens and confirms, as habitual Virtue.

It cannot, indeed, be denied, that there are instances of some, who, strangers to her influence, have been fair proficient in the school of Knowledge; but it must, at the  
same

same time, be confess'd, that their Proficiency would have been greater, had they been under her discipline. And it is equally certain, that where one good Capacity hath surviv'd and surmounted the prejudices of bad Morals, a thousand have been ruined and sunk under them.—And so it is, whether those Prejudices proceed from carnal, or spiritual Vices. Pride and Envy are as pernicious to the searching Mind, as Intemperance and Debauch: If these retard it's Activity, those pervert it's Judgment; if Sensuality drowns good parts, Pride poisons the best. There is not a worse enemy to Science, than this passion indulg'd to excess. And yet it is a very difficult thing to restrain it, without checking, at the same time, that proper and laudable Ambition, or Emulation, which is a Friend both to Knowledge and Virtue. However, when it becomes excessive, it must do great Mischief to the one, without the kindly Interposition of the other. It makes a man stretch himself beyond his Measure, and forget how far his Line extends. “ It is certain, (says the ingenious Writer, quoted in the beginning of this Discourse) “ that men rais'd and treated in the “ pursuit of Knowledge, have been always

“ apt to run into the boundless Ocean of  
 “ Chimeras; where, tho’ lost and bewil-  
 “ der’d, yet, if of a warm imagination, in-  
 “ flam’d with the Ambition of Inventors,  
 “ they have taken more delight in those ob-  
 “ scure and shadowy Paths, than any sober  
 “ Follower of Truth, within the limits of  
 “ open Day and Nature. Which extrava-  
 “ gancies, (as he further observes) so taking  
 “ in themselves, and so mischievous in their  
 “ Consequences, proceed from a want of  
 “ Modesty, and the Consciousness of the  
 “ narrow Limits of the Human Under-  
 “ standing.”

But this is not the worst. Pride, besides  
 it’s putting a Man (such a Man as our Au-  
 thor hath handsomely described, of a warm  
 Imagination, inflamed with the Ambition of  
 an Inventor) upon poring and puzzling in  
 the dark after the shadow of Science, blocks  
 up, or greatly obstructs the Avenues of real  
 Knowledge, by making himself sufficient,  
 positive, obstinate—which puts him in the  
 high road to Error, and by frequently stir-  
 ring up in him such Emotions and Disorders,  
 as must hinder both his Pursuit and Percep-  
 tion of Truth.

Which

Which evils are cured or prevented by Virtue. She forbids those wild excursions of fancy, and keeps men in the plain and direct path to science, and thereby shortens their journey. She inspires them with modesty and humility, and thereby disposeth them to receive all possible aids and assistances in it. And she calms and composeth the mind, and thereby gives truth a free entrance into it. And what more can be wanting for teaching man knowledge, except the Divine Grace? And this likewise shall most assuredly be added to him, whose ear and whose heart are open to the instructions of virtue. *The path of the just is as a shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

And as Knowledge founded upon Virtue will be higher in its rise, so also happier in its uses.—We have seen that for want of such foundation it is altogether barren and fruitless; but now with it we shall find it pregnant and productive of the choicest and richest fruits. A few of which give me leave to set before you,

The first is *Joy*.—Notwithstanding that barrier by which Infinite Wisdom hath thought fit to bound the human mind during its imprisonment in the body, it hath scope  
enough

enough left for it's faculties to range in; a great deal more ground than they can possibly run over in so short a period. The gradual improvement of arts and sciences, the new discoveries which every age produces, sufficiently demonstrate, that as the *pursuit* is slow, so the *progression* is infinite. Let a man set out with ever so much resolution, and proceed with ever so great perseverance, he must at last stop short of perfection, even in that knowledge which lies on this side the boundaries beyond which all is wrapt up in darkness. On this side, the field is wide, and the chace is endless. And yet it is a pleasing chace when virtue leads the way: Otherwise 'tis mere vanity and vexation of spirit. For tho' there are some who eagerly and closely pursue the one, without the guidance of the other, and seem never so well pleased as when they are tracing out truth through it's various forms and mazes purely for the sake of the quest, yet is their pleasure an infatuation: And that increase of knowledge which inspires their joy, at the same time reproaches their folly. But now the joy of him who takes virtue along with him, is of a quite different sort; is not less transporting, but more rational: Ariseth not  
from

from the bare acquisition of science, but from the right application of it, to the glory of God, and the benefit of mankind. He rejoiceth in every step he gains in knowledge, because it gives him more worthy and elevated conceptions of the one, and greater opportunities of being beneficial to the other. And consequently the more his mind is improved, the higher will his joy be exalted.

Other fruits which are to be gathered from science grafted upon virtue, are reputation, and honours, and the love and esteem of the world. All which I here join together, because the time will not allow them a separate and distinct consideration.

Knowledge apart from virtue, be its shoots ever so spreading and flourishing, will not be able to produce any of these. It may indeed, get a man a name; but not a good one; it may raise wonder and admiration, but so will every monster in nature. It may open the mouth of fame; but not in his praises. All that it can truly say of him is, that he hath raised up a huge structure of science upon the ruins of common-sense; or, in other words, that he is brutish in knowledge. It may be the means of his promotion;

tion; but folly is sometimes set in great dignity; which, stand it ever so high, 'tis folly still; and the higher it stands, the more foolish it appears: It receives no more honour from it's elevation, than any of those prodigies exhibited to show. I must not say it may gain him the love and esteem of men; for great abilities, void of good principles, will work affrightment rather than affection. —But now virtuous science is a lovely character. When modesty hath pruned knowledge of every *vain*, and benevolence of every *vicious* excrescence; when it can be said of the man of learning, that his attainments are hid from himself alone, and that he feels them only, as it were, upon the rebound, or in the pleasure which is reflected back to him from the experience of their usefulness to others, then his reputation is glorious indeed; then he will be honoured as well as admired; then he will derive a lustre from his promotion, but add a greater to the post he fills; then his *good name* will be that which *is better than great riches*; and he shall enjoy that *loving favour* which is more to be desired *than silver and gold*.

With all the powers that we have, let us cultivate and improve our faculties in the  
best



best manner we are able; let us extend them to their utmost limits; only let us take care while we have science in our eye, to keep virtue by our side. So will it be productive of that Wisdom, the very thoughts of which, threw the wisest man into the highest raptures. *I loved her, says he, from my youth; I desired to make her my spouse; I was a lover of her beauty; I preferred her before sceptres and thrones, neither did I compare her unto any precious stone; all gold in respect of her I counted as a little sand, and silver only as clay before her.* And no wonder he should have so great an affection for her, since to be *allied to Wisdom is immortality.* If we hold her in the same favour, let us pray for her with the same fervency. Let us each of us beseech the Lord, and with our whole hearts say, *Give me Wisdom that sitteth by thy throne, and reject me not from amongst thy Children. Amen.*



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# SERMON XV.

PROVERBS xi. 26.

*He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him : But blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.*

**H**AD I left it to you my Brethren, to have pitched upon a Text for me, I am persuaded ye would, as many of you as recollected these words of *Solomon* have made them your choice. For certainly never was the Doctrine contained in them more proper to be insisted on than at this time of general Dearth. A Dearth not arising from a real want of Corn, but from its being iniquitously withheld from the people: Not from the poverty of the earth, but from the cruel avarice of its Inhabitants. Her produce would be sufficient for all, had she not produced such *Monsters* (I must not call them *Men*) as refuse to bring it out to the common relief. A grievance which, as the redress of it hath sometimes been graciously and earnestly recommended from the *Throne*, cannot be  
 thought

thought unfit for the animadversion of the *Pulpit*. Nor do I call to mind any Scripture which falls in so directly with the purpose of examining and exposing that vile abuse, that artificial scarcity, or so likely to ashame, affright, and reform the guilty Authors of it, as what I have read to you.

*He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: But blessing shall be upon the Head of him that selleth it.*

In discoursing upon which Words I will consider,

I. Wherein the Crime they point at consists, or what we are to understand by withholding Corn.

II. The Turpitude, or Malignity of it.

III. The two Motives here made use of by *Solomon* to dissuade Men from it.

*First* then for the Nature of the Crime; which consists, in general, in the stopping, or interrupting the due circulation of Corn: The methods of doing this are various, but all may be reduced to these two, *viz.* The not vending it at all: Or at such a Price as few, especially amongst the poorer sort, are able to pay. Both which are the case at present.

Some there are, who, tho' they bring it to Market, yet refuse to dispose of it but upon  
their

their own arbitrary, exorbitant terms. Others, who, though the price is already so great, that they are ashamed to ask for more, yet reserve it, in hopes that a little protracting of the time may largely increase their profit. And others again, who, though equally desirous of making the most of it, yet not willing to give any longer credit, but preferring the present advantage to the future prospect, send it abroad, be it ever so much wanted at home.

This is what is meant by with-holding of corn. These are the *methods* by which it is done, and the mercenary *views* of those who do it.

Of whom in this kingdom are great numbers, as well single as combined. Men, and confederate bodies of men, who thus seek to enrich themselves at the expence of the public, and more particularly of the Poor. In every town, in almost every village, some such selfish men may be found: Who secretly rejoice in the inclemency of the seasons.—Whose best prospect is that of a bad harvest.—Who fatten most, when the earth is most effete and barren.—And who, when she is more prolific or fruitful, know how, by a thousand mean artifices, to create that

scarcity which providence never intended. To which end, they narrowly watch all opportunities; *discern the face both of the skies and of the times*; take occasion from every unseasonable shower, from every unfavourable incident, to raise their extravagant, unconscionable demands. And, not content with their own full storehouses, the produce of former plentiful years, join those of others to the huge and hunger-mocking hoard. Amass together all the stocks they can come at; ingross into their own griping hands new magazines from every quarter; and lay out the greatest part, or perhaps the whole of their ill-gotten substance, in furnishing themselves with the most extensive and most detestable means of oppression.

Such are the *persons*, such the *practices* re-  
proved by the wise man in his times, and  
which now in our's are not less deserving of  
the severest censures. For were the people  
to spare their *curfes*, the mischievous conse-  
quences of that unnatural detention of Corn,  
stigmatized by *Solomon*, would be very legi-  
ble in the *visages* of the poor; whose cries,  
it is to be hoped, will reach the ears, and  
engage the attention of the legislature, and  
put them upon forming some new expedient  
for

for the remedy of this great and growing evil. There are, indeed, already, several Statutes in being, which have in some measure provided against it. But it is evident, that a further provision is necessary. It is commonly observed, that our Laws, though the most sagacious, are very apt to slumber; whereas avarice is always watchful to avail itself of their *drowsiness*, as well as subtle to elude their *force*. The Evil under consideration, it must be confessed, is of such a nature, that no legal provisions can effectually remove it. And I may add, that the world is of such a temper, that in vain would we expect ever to see it totally removed, A further mitigation or abatement, whatever more we may wish, is all we can hope for; and even to effect this, in a competent degree, requires the united strength of Laws, as well divine, as human. For as it lies chiefly in the hearts and consciences of men, over which the latter have no power or jurisdiction, it is requisite that the former should interpose their authority and influence, the better to curb and restrain it. Which brings me to the *second* thing proposed, *viz.*

To consider its moral turpitude and malignity.

Q 2

Now

Now here I am well aware how difficult a task he enters upon, who would endeavour to convince some people that there is, or can be, any sort of crime in making the most of their property; or, to use our blessed Saviour's phrase, *in doing what they will with their own*. “ For, (say they) if a man is not at liberty  
“ to keep or alienate, to reserve or vend, to  
“ increase or diminish what is really and  
“ solely *his*, and at such times, and in such  
“ manner, as will best answer his purposes,  
“ there is at once an end of all Property and  
“ all Commerce. Or if the law should lay  
“ him under some restrictions for the good  
“ of the community, yet, those excepted,  
“ surely he may be allowed a discretionary  
“ power over what he is honestly and law-  
“ fully possessed of; otherwise it is improperly and absurdly called *his*.” Thus will they be apt to argue in vindication of a practice too well approved of, and too profitable to be parted with at any rate. Thus will they take pains to cheat themselves into an opinion so flattering to their wishes. Could we possibly, for a few minutes, draw the love of money from their hearts, we then probably might be able to drive this mistake from their heads. For a great mistake it is; and seems to be owing



ing to their false notions of *Property*, *Commerce*, and *Justice*.—By *Property* they understand such a right, or interest in every thing they possess, as is subject to no check or controul whatsoever; or at least to none, save the will of the legislature.—*Commerce* they look upon as calculated for the private benefit and conveniency of every individual, separately from all the rest; forgetting that *tho' many members, yet we are but one body*.—And *Justice* they conceive to be no other than *legal honesty*; or, in all their dealing, the keeping within the limits the law hath prescribed them.—The correcting of which crude notions, is the first step towards convincing them of the crime under examination.

That there is such a thing as private property, and an exclusive right, by which every man's is distinguished and secured to him, is certain; and it is necessary to the peace and happiness of mankind that it should be so. It is too notorious to want proof, that there would be no living in the world without it. But tho' by such fences and inclosures, we are mutually protected from injuries and encroachments, yet we are not thence to conclude that we have the absolute

dominion, or that we are the sole and unaccountable proprietors of whatever is so inclosed to us. No; in that strict sense, we have no such thing as property, nor any thing we can truly or modestly call our own. For *what have we* (saith the Apostle) *that we did not receive?* that is, that we did not receive from God? The question implies, that we have nothing; or carries in it the force of an affirmation, the truth of which none but a fool, and no fool but an Atheist (and he only in his heart) will deny. God, who is the Author, is the Lord also, and Disposer of all Things. *Our* right, in every thing we claim, is subordinate to *his*. We are only his stewards, to whom *he dispenseth severally as he will*. To some more, to some fewer talents. To all *in trust*, to the intent they may be employed, *First*, to his Glory; *Secondly*, to the common Interest; and, *Thirdly*, to the private Emolument or Advantage of each Person so entrusted.—'Tis this the thing we call Property; this the tenure by which we hold it; this the order which ought to be observed in the employment of it. But this order we too often see inverted; the first becoming last, and the last first.

Again.

Again.—Every man, who engageth in commerce of any kind, may with the greatest reason expect, and endeavour to be a gainer by it; but not arbitrarily, or in what manner and measure he pleaseth; nor in any measure, nor by any means detrimental to the public, for the sake of which it was instituted, and man formed with faculties capable of it. The *public* utility should be the first and principal object; and *private* ought to be pursued no further, or otherwise, than is consistent with it. Which may serve as a comment upon that apostolical precept, *Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.* Not seek his own in preference to that of the public, but, whenever they stand in competition, prefer *that* to his own. And this principle is so far from being (as the objection suggested) the ruin of property and commerce, that it is the very pillar and support of both; which will always be less firm and stable, in proportion, as the selfish one prevails. It would indeed be the ruin of all *false* property, and *unfair* commerce; but the preservation of their contraries, which are the strength and ornament of every nation and society. So that traffic (though on other accounts the freer it is the better, yet)

necessarily requires some restrictions and limitations both in the manner and the matter of it, as a security against the little views of narrow spirits. And they who contend for an absolute and unrestrained liberty therein, are such only as want to abuse it.

Again.—To pay a due obedience to the laws appointed for the regulation of commerce, is so far right and just; and it would be a very great and happy reformation wrought, were all men persuaded even to be so just and righteous. But justice is not circumscribed within those short bounds: Nor hath he, whose honesty is confined to so small a circle, any reason to boast of it. There is space almost infinite beyond those limits, in which he may exercise himself in commercial craft and cruelty. To be truly honest, he must be so where the law cannot see, or, seeing, cannot reach him; where he may be dishonest with impunity, or without fear, or dread of any earthly tribunal. There is no virtue in constraint. *The horse and mule* (as the Psalmist observes) *are held by bit and bridle*. So is every one who is honest upon force. The one would fall upon you, if they could; the other would fleece you, if he dared.—And as we should not  
make

make laws the motive, so neither the measure of justice, or imagine that where they are *silent*, we are *free*. 'Tis true, *St. Paul* tells us, that *where there is no law, there is no transgression*. But how then? Doth he mean that every thing is lawful, which is not expressly prohibited? No; his meaning is, that a law cannot be transgressed by those to whom it never was given. The case of the *Gentiles*, to which the *Apostle* alludes. But then he elsewhere intimates, that if not a *law*, they had a *light* to direct them: And that as they followed, or forsook, that light, they would be self-condemned, or acquitted. Yea, that they were not without a *law* too; for *these*, says he, *having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts in the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.*—That light is universal. *This law* is written in every heart, by which to distinguish right and wrong, and is the true and only adequate measure of justice.

This heart-engraved, this natural, or in-born law, if carefully studied and attended to, will supply the defects, omissions, and silence of all others. Will teach us what is  
*property,*

*property*, and how it should be managed; what is *commerce*, and how it should be conducted.—Will form in us right and worthy sentiments of both, and prescribe proper methods for rendering them safe and salutary to ourselves, and beneficial to mankind.—Will caution us, in all our mutual dealings or intercourses, to keep close to that most excellent and equitable rule of *doing to others as we*, in the same circumstances, *would have them do to us*—To take no advantage of another's ignorance or necessity—To be content with a moderate and reasonable gain; and (which comes more directly and immediately to the point in hand) will inform us, that the detention of corn in time of scarcity or dearth, or (which amounts to the same thing) the so enhancing and inflaming its price, by hoarding, exporting, monopolizing, or any other scheme or contrivance, as that altho' there is enough in the kingdom to satisfy every mouth, yet many, very many, of the lower class must necessarily go without it, is highly unjust and unnatural; and that they who are capable of treating their fellow-creatures with such inhumanity, would not scruple, was it equally in their power, to ingross and inclose even the common air; per-  
mitting

mitting none to enjoy it, except thro' their hands, and upon their terms. But, happy for us, that best of earthly blessings is subject to no such ingrossers or retailers, but is free, as kind Heaven intended it, and that cruel men, with all their cunning, are not able to confine, or shut it out from one another.

I would not be understood as if I thought that either the reserving, or exporting, or ingrossing of corn, was in itself, or in it's own nature, evil. Each of these may, or may not be so, according to the use made of it, or the purpose for which it is done. On some occasions, or at some seasons, the practice is not only innocent, but laudable, and it would be very improvident and imprudent not to do it.—For instance, when the Lord *crowneth the year with his Goodness, and his clouds drop fatness. When he wate:eth the furrows of the earth, and blesteth the increase of it. When the little hills rejoice on every side; and the valleys also stand so thick with corn, that they laugh and sing.* When by means of such plenty, neither the farmer nor the factor, were they at that time to vend it, could make to themselves a reasonable profit; such a profit as would reimburse their expences, and reward their pains; then to send it where, or

to reserve it till when it would be of more value, would be no other than a proper œconomy. Nay, in that case, and with no worse a view than that of a fair and reasonable gain, a monopoly \* would be warrantable,

\* *Monopolia non omnia cum jure naturæ pugnant: nam possunt interdum a summa potestate permitti justa de causa et pretio constituto: cujus rei exemplum nobis illustre præbet Josephi historia cum is vice regia Ægypto præesset. Sic et sub Romanis Alexandrini Indicarum et Æthiopicarum mercium habebant (ut Strabo loquitur) monopoliam. Potest et a privatis institui, æquo duntaxat compendio. Qui autem de compacto id agunt ut res supra pretium id quod summum nunc est in communi pretio vendantur, aut vi aut fraude impediunt ne major copia importetur, aut ideo merces coemunt ut vendant pretio quod tempore venditionis iniquum sit, injuriam faciunt, atque eam reparare tenentur. Grot. lib. 2. ch. 12.*

“ Monopolies are not always repugnant to natural  
 “ right: for sometimes they may be allowed by the su-  
 “ preme Power for a just cause, and at a settled price;  
 “ of which we have an illustrious example in the his-  
 “ tory of *Joseph*, when vice-roy of *Egypt*. And so  
 “ under the *Romans*, the *Alexandrines* (as *Strabo* informs  
 “ us) had the monopoly of the *Indian* and *Ethiopic*  
 “ merchandize. It may also be instituted by private  
 “ persons, with a view only to a fair and equal profit.  
 “ But they who by contract so manage it, that things  
 “ may be sold for more than the highest price they now  
 “ in common bear, or by force or fraud prevent the  
 “ importation of greater plenty, are injurious, and  
 “ ought to repair the injury.”



able, and might be serviceable as well to the community as themselves. But at a time when the earth hath been less prodigal of her fruits, or dispensed them with a sparing or pinching hand—at a time when there is a sufficient demand for all her produce, and all their stores at home, where they may be disposed of upon terms reasonably advantagious both to the grower and the seller—then to send them abroad for the sake of a better price, or to withhold, or accumulate them, by adding hoard to hoard, in expectation of a greater dearth; or to exact more for them than (all allowances made) is fit and equal. These are practices which, however *custom* may seem to countenance, *reason* will always condemn, and fair *commerce* blush at.

Exaction of any kind is base; but this in the matter of corn, is of the basest kind. It falls heaviest upon the poor. It is robbing them, because they are so. It is oppressing them at a time when they are the greatest objects of compassion; and when they who do oppress them, are the properest persons to assist them. It is just reversing the behaviour of the good *Samaritan*. It is murdering *them* outright whom they find half dead, and plundering the wreck'd vessel. We have had instances

stances of public robbers, who have sometimes relieved the poor with the spoils of the rich, but these make depredations upon both; only with this difference, they extort from the one, and starve the other. These are they who may properly be said to grind, not the *faces*, but the very *bowels* of the indigent. This is the generation of which *Agar* complains, that *their teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.* These are the murderers accused by the son of *Sirach*, where he saith, *The bread of the needy is their life: He that defraudeth them thereof, is a man of blood.* For doth not he defraud them of it, who will neither distribute it to them for pity, nor sell it them for price, except that extravagant price they are not able to pay? Or he who, for a desire of gain, disposeth of the children's bread to strangers, and empties into a foreign, perhaps into an enemy's country, those full granaries, or magazines, for want of which so many thousands of poor wretches are starving in his own? Or he whose barns are ready to burst, whilst his brethren pine with hunger; and who, *in haste to be rich*, makes that dearth at which he hypocritically murmurs?

Justly

Justly may such oppressors be called *men of Blood*; and surely will the blood of those, who thus perish by their means, be required at their hands.

But, alas! they have more than this to account for. The Mischief extends further than to the bodies of the poor. It reaches their souls also; frequently pushing them into such measures as are extremely dangerous and may prove fatal to their future Welfare. It tempts them to have recourse to indirect and unlawful methods of helping themselves, when they despair of help from others. It instructs them in all the various arts of pilfering and thieving, deceit and couzenage; and these will be apt to survive that necessity, which was the Mother of such Inventions. It stirs them up to the most rash and desperate attempts; provokes them to enter into wicked Associations; to take up Arms; and commit all manner of Violence and Outrage. The worst consequence of which is not the spoiling and persecuting of those, by whom they themselves have been so cruelly treated, but the involving others in the same Calamity. They will begin, no doubt, with the first and immediate objects of their rage: They will first sacrifice to their resentment out of *their*  
Goods,

goods, not sparing, too probably, their persons. But when that is done, is there no more that they can do? or will they rest there? Their necessities being answered, and their fury appeased, will they then be satisfied, and disband at once? That must not be said, nor hardly supposed. When they have got the reins into their hands, there is no assigning them any bounds, or pretending to know to what height they will drive. But this we may well suppose, that they will not stop at the redress of those injuries which first put them in motion. They will now wantonly form to themselves imaginary wrongs. They will begin to think it hard, that they must spend their days in labour and sorrow, whilst others roll in affluence and ease; hard, that they shall be obliged to work, whilst they see *others standing idle*; hard, that they are to *bear the heat and burthen of the day*, whilst others are indulging in the shade, doing nothing; hard, not to *want*, (which was their original complaint) but to be forced to *earn their bread in the sweat of their brow*. These, and a thousand such visionary hardships, they will now be dreaming of; and very likely before their dream is out, (that is, before their riot is suppressed, which rarely happens

happens till much blood hath been shed) they will levy large Contributions, especially upon the great and Opulent, live at free quarters upon every family, and leave tokens of their own power in every place.—Power is a dangerous thing. Few, very few, are fit to be trusted with it. 'Tis apt to turn the heads of the wise and prudent. What then is to be expected from it, when it is got into the hands of the ignorant and foolish, but desolation and destruction, madness and misery?

Besides, in this, as in every kingdom, are evil-minded men, who are ready and waiting to take advantage of popular tumults and outcries, and to make them subservient to their own pernicious purposes and projects. Men, who ever hunting for prey, succeed best amidst storms and tempests, and would be glad to see our political vessel dashed in pieces, so as they could serve themselves by the wreck. An angry populace are the fittest tools, or engines for such base-designing miscreants to work with. And nothing can set a keener edge upon the one, or sharpen them more effectually for the service of the other, than the want of bread. Where an evil is not notorious and flagrant, it requires some skill or address to foment or inflame the

minds of the people, before they can be persuaded to arms and hostilities; but as no artifice is requisite to convince them that hunger and want are intolerable evils, so few arguments will serve to incense and exasperate them against those, by whose means they suffer them. In so specious a cause, and encouraged and animated by the flattering speeches of cunning and plausible incendiaries, no wonder if they rush headlong into the most furious and fatal measures, seek not only to redress, but to revenge their grievances, deal terror and confusion, ruin and devastation all around them; and having for some time disturbed the *public Peace*, at last fall victims to *public Justice*. Wherever this is the case, what a load must lie upon the hearts and consciences of the covetous and cruel authors of such complicated mischief!

But as a farther aggravation of the crime from whence this, and sometimes more dreadful effects flow, we must not forget it's ingratitude towards God.

It may indeed be said of all uncharitable men in general, that they are ungrateful to their Maker; but the ingratitude of those our subject is concerned with, hath something of a peculiar sort, to which I shall strictly confine myself. It

It was an extraordinary act of grace and favour shewed by *Pharaoh* to *Joseph*, the making him Ruler over all the land of *Egypt*; but the time when it was conferred, is a circumstance which added greatly to it. It was then when *Joseph*, in consequence of *Pharaoh's* dream, had predicted a very fore and grievous famine, and had cautioned and advised *Pharaoh* in what manner to provide against it. It was at that critical juncture, and appears to have been with a view to that particular event, that he was advanced to such dignity. As *Joseph* was a wise and good man, this high advancement, with all the pomp and pageantry attending it, would (on it's own account) be regarded and esteemed by him, as no other than what it was, mere and empty show. (And, by the by, they who thus rightly conceive of promotion, are the fittest, tho' the last persons to be promoted.) The King's putting his own *Ring upon his Hand, and a golden Chain about his Neck*, the appointing him his *second Chariot*, the raising him next to his Person, and *making him equal to himself, except upon the Throne*; these pledges of Royal Favour, however pleasing to weak minds, would give him little pleasure, But in delegating to him a

power of preserving *Egypt*, and not that only, but all the countries round about, from impending ruin : In appointing him the steward and dispenser of all those provisionary stores, which were laid up against the approaching penury of the earth : In commissioning him to supply such multitudes with that corn, without which they must all have famished : In short, in furnishing him with the means of being so prodigious a friend and benefactor to mankind ; in these he at once did him the greatest honour, and gave him, doubtless, the greatest joy.

Now every one in time of dearth and scarcity, whose granaries, whether by œconomy or accident, are full, when others in general are empty, should consider himself as another *Joseph*, appointed by providence for the relief of the public distress ; should think himself specially favoured and honoured by such appointment, and rejoice in so noble an opportunity of doing good ; should open his storehouses, and reserving a reasonable part of his provisions for the necessary support of his own household, apply the rest to the common necessity ; should distribute what may be well spared, upon honest, tho' hard terms, to such as are in need of it ; and to the poor especially,



efpecially, fhould make thofe terms as eafy as he can. Should fhew all poffible tendernefs and indulgence to thefe, when ready to perifh with hunger they ftand wifhfully *looking one upon another*, each fuing for that fuc-cour which none of them can give; fhould be *generous to all*, with proper diftinctions, but *charitable to thefe*, and in a particular manner diftinguifh them as his brethren.— It is not indeed expected, that, having filled their facks, he fhould return their money in the mouths of them; but that he fhould let them buy Corn for their money, and at a lower price than what may be required of perfons in better circumftances. Thus far he may help others, without hurting himfelf; and this is no more than what is requifite to the due difcharge of the trust which providence repoſeth in him. But now, if he proſtitutes that great and honourable trust to the love of *filthy lucre*; if, becaufe *other* repositories fail, he unmercifully fhuts up *his* too; if he cries out of ſcarcenefs when his garners are full and plenteous, and adds to that dearth he was defigned to have relieved; or, if *filling the rich* with his ftore, tho' upon conditions the moſt enormous, the poor, unable to comply with ſuch conditions, *he ſends*

*empty away*, not allowing them even so much as the very gleanings of his extortion, but *eating them up as it were bread*, instead of furnishing them with bread to eat; if this is his return to Heaven for it's special bounty to him, in not only supplying *him* with that great and indispenfible necessary of life, of which *others* are destitute, but also supplying him liberally, to the end that out of his abundance he might assist others; then surely we may, without rash judgment, pronounce of him, and every man of the same temper and behaviour, that he is not more unkind to his fellow-creature, than ungrateful to his God.

Thus have I endeavoured to set in a true and proper light, the nature of the crime condemned in my text, the Detention of Corn. And I think it sufficiently appears, from the view in which we have seen and examined it, that it is a complication of fraud, cruelty, murder, and ingratitude of the basest and ugliest kind; that it is extorting from the rich, and starving the poor; that, with respect to the latter, it tends to the destruction not only of their bodies, but their souls; that it corrupts their morals, and makes them dishonest by necessity; that it  
hardens

hardens them to the most daring and dangerous enterprizes, provokes them to insurrections, and gives those who are enemies to our constitution, the most wish'd for opportunity of carrying on their mischievous schemes and combinations for subverting it; and, in a word, that it is extremely injurious to *God*, to the *Poor*, and to the *Public*.

And therefore, to dissuade men from a practice so criminal in itself, and so fatal in it's consequences, let us consider,

*Thirdly*, the Arguments, or Motives proposed by *Solomon* to that end; which are two, *viz.*—The *Curses*, on the one hand, that will attend him who *with-holdeth Corn*.—The *Blessings*, on the other, which shall be upon the head of him that *selleth it*.

First then, *the People shall curse him*.—Now cursing signifies either *maleiiction* or *imprecation*. Of both which, the offender we are speaking of will have no small share.—Of the former, he will receive plentifully from every quarter. None can be dumb to his reproach. Each must talk of him as of a common nuisance; as a disgrace to society; as one of those wens of the political body which draw all the nourishment to themselves. They who are disposed to speak the most fa-

vourably of him, must say, that his breast is insensible to all impressions of pity and humanity; that he hath nothing social or benevolent within him; that he lives for himself only; and that he hath no regard, or feeling, or affection for any other.—But this consideration, it is to be feared, will have but little weight with the worldly-minded. With all such censure hath lost it's edge, and commendation it's efficacy. So long as the laws are a fence, by which their persons are protected from violence, and their property from plunder, let men talk till their tongues are tir'd, they are not *afraid of their revilings*. To such, therefore, Satan's argument seems best adapted, *Put forth thy Hand now, and touch all that he hath*. If any thing can move, or work upon their hearts, *which* (as the Prophet speaks) *are only for their Covetousness*, it must be this terror. They would do well then to reflect, that the poor, when pinched with hunger, will not only *whet their tongues*, but (as hath been already shewed) be urged also to *put forth their hands* against those whose avarice detains from them the means of appeasing it. There are recent instances, more than enough, to awake in them that reflection. To convince them that clamours are  
but

but the prelude to something worse: That the oppressed will be apt to force a way into those magazines, which compassion would not open to them; and at free charges to *eat, drink, and be merry* with those hoards which they had been *laying up for many years*. — But should not this evil happen to them; should not the *malediction* of the people proceed so far, yet there is another curse behind, which will go much further, that is, their *imprecation*. Wherefore, saith the son of *Sirach*, *Turn not away thine eye from the needy, and give him not occasion to curse thee; for if he curse thee in the bitterness of his soul, his Prayer shall be heard of him that made him. A Prayer out of a poor man's mouth reacheth the ears of God, and his Judgment cometh speedily.* And if they seek not to avenge themselves, undoubtedly they will cry to the Lord for vengeance: They will spread their complaints before him, and, perhaps, pray with *David*, *Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be vagabonds, and beg their bread; let them seek it also out of desolate places. Let the extortioner consume all that he hath, and let another spoil his labour, Let there be no man to pity him, nor to have compassion upon his fatherless children. And*  
*that*

*that because his mind was not to do good, but persecuted the poor helpless man, that he might slay him that is vexed at the heart.* And there can be no reasonable doubt, but that such prayers are frequently answered in the very judgments thus imprecated upon the heads of their adversaries. Not to indulge the anger, or revenge of the petitioners, (for every mixture of ire, or passion in our addresses to God, must be very offensive and provoking) but, by such exemplary punishments, the more effectually to deter men from the sins of oppression and uncharitableness; which, without some special and immediate marks of the divine displeasure upon them, would soon make an end of all society whatsoever. —But suppose *Judgment should not be executed speedily* upon these cruel men; suppose God should not make bare his arm in any present remarkable punishment; suppose the widow's tears, or the orphan's cries should not be immediately answered with blasting, or mildew, or any other temporal calamity; yet hereafter the Lord will most assuredly *plead their cause, and spoil the souls of those that spoiled them.* Then *they who shewed no mercy shall perish without mercy; and he who stopped his ears at the cry of the poor, shall cry himself,*  
and

*and not be heard.*—The consideration of which alone (one would hope) might be sufficient to affright the greediest worldlings from withholding corn in those scarce or dear times, when it is most wanted, or keeping it up at such a price, that they who stand in the greatest need of it, are not able to purchase it.

But my text, applying to their hopes as well as fears, tells them, that *Blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.* That is, of him who vends and circulates it upon fair and equitable terms; exacting no more for it, than (all things considered) it is in conscience worth.—Which is the second motive to be spoke to.

Blessing is in this put in opposition to cursing in the former part of the verse. And the sense of the whole taken together is, that as he who *withholdeth Corn* will be pursued with the *Maledictions and Imprecations*, so he who *selleth it*, with the *Benedictions and Prayers* of the People. For tho' the word *People* is not expressed in the latter part of the Antithesis in like manner as in the former, it is nevertheless necessarily implied.

*Benediction* is a term which is used in various senses; but here we are to understand

stand no more by it than *speaking well* of another, or mentioning him with honour and esteem.—Many are the qualities for which a man may be admired. But benevolence and generosity are those, without which he can never be thoroughly approved. Is he famous for his learning and fine parts? Is he remarkable for his justice and punctuality in his dealings? Is he distinguished for his chastity, sobriety and temperance? So far is very commendable and praise-worthy. But tho' these, and all, or any other gifts and graces conspicuous in him, will have their due weight, yet if he is not communicative as well as learned, generous as well as just, kind, compassionate and hospitable, as well as chaste, and sober, and temperate; in short, if benevolence alone is wanting, that will turn the scale against all the rest. And so, on the contrary, should his faults and foibles greatly exceed all other his virtues and reflections, *that* alone will, in the opinion of the world, make up the deficiency, and give the balance in his favour. When they remember his good heart, they will forget his bad properties; or, if they think of them, it will be only with pity and surprise, that he who wishes so well to all mankind, should

act



act so ill for himself.—But benevolence, which is always amiable, shines out with a peculiar lustre in the time of any national, or other publick calamity or distress; as *Plague, Sickness, Famine, Dearth*, or the like. If now at such a crisis we behold a man, who by his particular circumstances and situation might avail himself of the sufferings of others, instead of embracing the opportunity, seeking every occasion of doing them service; voluntarily exposing himself to dangers he might have avoided, to difficulties in which he was not involved, to hardships from which he was free; sacrificing his own safety, or ease, or interest, to their preservation, comfort, or assistance; despising every view of private gain or advantage, and losing all selfish regards in social affection, Is it possible not to speak well of such a man? or rather, is it not (I had almost said) impossible to speak so well of him as he deserves? But it is not often that we labour under this inconvenience. Instances of this sort are rare. The name of *Publick Spirit* is still preserved amongst us, but the thing seems to have been long since lost. It is what many claim, but what very few have a right to; and some who have made the  
proudest

proudest pretensions, have in the end proved to have the worst title. It is tossed about upon every tongue; but if you seek for it elsewhere, it is a lucky chance if you are not disappointed. It serves as a fine, tho' stale topic of declamation, in the senate, in the schools, in the pulpit, and where not: and a better there cannot be, for displaying or setting off the orator; nor was that all,—would there be a more innocent one? But we have seen it sometimes serve to such base and ungenerous purposes, we have discovered such private and fordid designs lurking under the mask of public spirit, that one can hardly forbear wishing for a change of a term, which by its abuse is almost become odious. For it is pity a *bad name* should disgrace the *best thing* in the world.

However, tho' but few, there are not wanting some, whose spirits are as large and liberal as they would seem to be. Who have goodness and generosity enough to forego and despise a considerable advantage to themselves, for the sake of doing much greater service to others. One there is especially \*,  
whom

\* *Longford, August 11th.* The Rev. Mr. BREDIN, near *Bally-Mahon*, in this county, having a remarkable  
early

whom was I to pass over in silence, I should injure both the person and the subject. One who doth honour, if not to our own, to a nation nearly allied to us. One who, in the present dear season, having been in a very particular manner favour'd by providence, not only with a *plentiful*, but also with an *early* harvest, did not, as too many would have done, immediately sit down and compute how he should make it the most gainful to himself, or whether he should save, or sell, or send it abroad, and which of them would be most profitable, or advantageous; but how he should in the properest manner express his gratitude to Heaven for its bounty. And it is not easy to say, whether is most to be applauded, his *prudence*, or his *charity*. To those who had Corn growing, but not ripe for gathering, he lent part of his rich produce to be paid him again in kind. What a gracious, and modest, and beautiful exchange

early crop of Corn, distributed a great part of it amongst his neighbours, and is satisfied to take Corn from them in return, when their's is fit for use. To the Poor (who will not have Corn to return him) he gave large quantities. He hath also sent great quantities of Corn to all the neighbouring markets, to be sold at half the market-price, which hath relieved great numbers of poor. *Daily Adv.*

exchange was this? To others who had none, he freely distributed another part, expecting no return at all. What could be more god-like or beneficent? And all the neighbouring markets round about him, he furnished with large quantities, to be disposed of at half the price it bore, for the relief and comfort of the indigent and necessitous. Here I am at a loss to speak; tho' I find the fire kindling, I can only muse upon his worth. It is not in the power of *every* tongue to rehearse his praises, nor of *any* honest heart not to record his piety.

But such arguments and examples (as I have had occasion to hint before) will have little or no effect upon the covetous, who regard neither the praises nor the reproaches of the world. If you would persuade them to acts of kindness and liberality, you must propose motives of another sort; you must point out to their view some lucrative bait; you must catch their eye with some prospect of interest, if you would hope to succeed with them.—Shall I then put them in mind, that the conduct I am recommending would be a means of procuring them not only the praise and good report, but also the true and hearty love and esteem of mankind. Why  
this

this, doubtless, is a very valuable consideration: But yet, that it *is rather to be chose than silver and gold*, even Solomon with all his wisdom, would find it hard to convince them; nor do they (we may well presume) think him the wiser for having told them that it is so. There is certainly a high satisfaction, yea, an exquisite pleasure in it; but a pleasure too pure and delicate for their taste, who *say to their Gold, Thou art my Hope, and to their fine Gold, Thou art my Confidence*. Let me therefore add, as a farther persuasive, that *these* likewise, this gold, yea this fine gold, and whatever else they call *theirs*, will be the most effectually guarded and secured by it: by that loving Favour which never fails to attend upon a generous and charitable disposition. *Laws*, it is true, are a defence, but a much stronger is *the love of the people*. A much surer protection of their persons from violence, and their properties from the spoil. Where wild and impetuous desires, or inclinations prevail, laws are a hedge which is easily broke thro'; but where love keeps the door, all is safe. Gratitude is natural to man, tho' it is oft-times extinguished, or suppressed by evil passions, or wrong affections. The very poorest and meanest are not without

this internal sense. And tho' they may not be so quick as others in *seeing* their obligations, yet where they *feel* them, none are more grateful. In that case it hath frequently been observed, (and it is an observation which ariseth from experience) they are a fit pattern for many of their superiors, men higher born and better taught. For a friend like him whom I have just now been mentioning, what is it they would not do? Rather than such a friend should be hurt, or injured, what is it they would not suffer? In his cause nothing would daunt or dismay them: Neither dangers, nor distresses, nor even death itself. In every accident, in every emergency they will fly to his assistance, and with an honest emulation, strive who shall be first in their good offices. For instance: Do the devouring flames threaten to consume his dwelling, or the sweeping floods to lay waste his grounds? they will eagerly run thro' both to snatch and save what they can from those proud ravagers. Whilst the Miser and Oppressor, unmerciful as them, might in the same distress be left to their fury unassisted, unpitied, and (what is still worse) perhaps plundered of all that the fire had not destroyed, or the torrent swept

fwept away. These are events which do not rarely happen, and which the *Withholders of Corn* should always keep in memory. Again: Is his full-ear'd harvest in danger of being lost or spoiled by the unseasonableness and uncertainty of the weather? This is a more usual case, and which many of them must have experienced. In this extremity, when *theirs* may lie and rot for want of help, *his* will have labourers neither few nor idle: For him every eye will be intent to catch the critical minute, and every hand at work till they have brought home his sheaves with joy.

Lo! thus shall the man be blessed, who selleth his corn. Who, in time of scarcity or dearth, selleth it to *all* at a *fair*, to the *Poor* at a *favourable* price. Every one will applaud him; every one will love him, every one will defend him. For all which Blessings the terms and conditions are so easy and modest, that it must be said, he well deserves to lose his ship, who grudges so reasonable an insurance.

But, as a further encouragement, I observed, that the word *Blessing*, in my text, signifies not only the benediction, but also the prayers of the people.

Such is the corruption, or depravity of our nature, that few are disposed to pray for their *Enemies*. This is a duty pressed upon us by our most holy Religion; and which, to unprejudiced *reason*, must ever appear to be one evidence of it's divinity. But to our *passions* it is a *hard saying*. From these it meets with an unwelcome reception. Or if men comply with the outward act, it is but seldom they join with the inward disposition; seldom that their hearts accompany their prayers. But for their *Friends* it is quite otherwise. Here at least their duty is their delight. For them they will lift up their hearts as well as hands to Heaven; and will sometimes (I had like to have said) even weary it with their importunity. The Poor, who are too oft forgetful to pray for *themselves*, will remember to pray for their *Benefactors*; especially those who relieve them under any present or immediate want or pressure. This tribute they generally pay for the smallest alms. How many warm petitions then will burst from their very souls, and pierce thro' the clouds in his favour, who supplies them with corn when they have no bread to eat, nor any thing else to substitute in the place of it? And if



if (as hath been before insisted) God heareth their prayers *against* those who oppress, or neglect them, we may reasonably conclude that he will be no less attentive to their intercessions *for* those who pity and assist them.

Indeed, had they no such intercessors, their own piety and good works would plead strongly for them; would make Providence itself their friend; would be one means at least, and a very hopeful and promising one, of prevailing with God to *pour down upon their heads the abundance of his blessings. To bless them in all their works, and all that they put their hands unto. To bless them in the city, and in the field. To bless the fruit of their body, the fruit of their ground, and the fruit of their cattle; the increase of their kine, and the flocks of their sheep. To bless their basket, and their store. To bless their goings out, and their comings in.* And, in a word, to bless them with all manner of comforts here, and with all the joys that shall be hereafter.

We have now seen the heinous nature and pernicious effects of the crime reprehended and reprobated by my text, and the

amiableness, and happy consequences of a contrary behaviour.

The conclusion will be very short.

Let all those over-thrifty and selfish dealers, who in this, or any other time of scarcity and dearth, shall think of growing rich at once by preying upon the public, and oppressing, and pinching, and starving the Poor, lay these things together, and make their choice at the foot of the account.—Cursing and Blessing are both set before them. If they shall be of opinion the former is eligible, then let them hoard up, or *withhold their Corn*: But if they would chuse the latter, then let them bring it out, and *sell it to the People*.

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# SERMON XVI.

EZEKIEL XXXIV. 12.

*As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is amongst the sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of their places, where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.*

**I**N the former part of this chapter God Almighty, by the mouth of his Prophet, brings a severe accusation against the Rulers of *Israel*, both spiritual and temporal (for so the word *Shepherd* is frequently used, as well by sacred as profane Writers) for their male-administration: He chargeth them with the heavy and complicated guilt of avarice and ambition, negligence and cruelty, oppression and tyranny, in the government of the people that were under them. *Wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves: should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool: Ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the*

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*flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.*

Indeed at the time when this wo was denounced, the *Israelites* were in a state of captivity; were subject to a foreign yoke, a reduced and a conquered people; and therefore could not possibly be under the care or superintendency of their own *Governors*; but then that unhappy revolution was owing to the misconduct of their rulers, whose pride and luxury and abuse of power, had quite dissolved the very frame of their government, and rendered them and their people an easy prey to the ambitious views of their enemies. Wherefore, tho' their dispersion was the effect of their being subdued, yet as their being subdued was the fault of their magistrates, the Prophet with good reason taxeth them with the consequences of it. What those consequences were we are told in the 5th and 6th verses of this chapter, *They were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they became meat to all the beasts of*

*of*

*of the field; they wandered thro' all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, they were scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.* From which hard and unhappy circumstances he here, in the words of my text, promiseth them a happy deliverance: gives them a comfortable hope that he would turn again their captivity, gather them into one place, and that they should *become one fold under one shepherd.* *As a shepherd seeketh, &c.*

And now, I doubt not, but you will be before-hand with me in applying these words to yourselves. And so I would have you, see only that you carry your application no farther than I intended it should be carried. 'Tis not my design to run the parallel betwixt your case and that represented in the context; or to bring the same charge against your shepherds, which the Prophet brought against the shepherds of *Israel*: But so far we may modestly venture to say, that you, as well as the *Israelites*, *have been scattered as sheep without a shepherd*, for want of a proper place in which to fold. A misfortune indeed greatly to belamented. And may all who hear me this day, instead of casting any odium or blame upon particular persons, thro' whose  
means

means they may apprehend themselves to have been all this while deprived of a place for public worship, demonstrate their sense of so great a loss, by the constant use of it now they have it. Let them shew that their former murmurings proceeded not rather from anger than from zeal, by taking all opportunities of assembling themselves together, and not forsaking the House of God, which his providence after a long series of disappointments, hath at last been graciously pleased to open to them.

In order to encourage and promote which wise and suitable behaviour, I shall in the sequel of this Discourse consider these two things.

1st. Your Dispersion.

2dly. Your Restoration.

And by giving you a sight of the one, endeavour to work in you a just sense of the other.

1st. Your Dispersion.

You have been scattered as were the children of *Israel*, not because you had no shepherd, but because you could not hear his voice. Because he was not able to watch over you, to feed you, to protect you, unless his fold had been enlarged.—Neither tho'

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scattered have you been conquered, and carried away captive into a strange land, and there forced to embrace a strange Religion. You have been subject to no harsh decree of a proud *Nebuchadnezzar*, nor have you at home or abroad been brought under the slavish yoke of modern *Babylon*. You have not lived to see what you have often *heard with your ears, and your fathers have declared unto you*, Episcopacy turned out of the Church, and Churches turned into Stables. No: Your misfortune hath not been the *profanation*, but the *want* of a sanctuary. Which, tho' a misfortune much more tolerable than any of the others before-mentioned, yet sad and deplorable enough: And that long course of years which you have laboured under it, may not improperly be called *The cloudy and dark Day*.

For the further illustration of which melancholy truth, give me leave to lay before you a few of the natural consequences of the want of a place for the Public Worship of Almighty God, and then appeal to yourselves whether such consequences have not verily and indeed happened in the present case.

First then, I shall begin with the violation

tion of the sabbath, and that of the most dangerous and impious kind. Not the omitting to dedicate it to the service of God, not the appropriating it to secular employments or concerns; not making it a day of rest or relaxation from all business spiritual as well as temporal; but a day of sporting and diversion, of luxury and intemperance, of rioting and wantonness; and in a word, in spending it in the drudgery of sin and Satan.

But some perhaps will say, that this cannot fairly be imputed to the want of a Church, and that the consequence is forc'd and unnatural. For what if men should be deprived of the means and opportunities of worshipping God in public, can they not do it in private? May not every man be a sort Priest in his own family? May he not read and pray, and instruct his children at home? Or if they refuse to serve God in any shape, either publickly or privately, yet may they not be kept in order, and restrained from irreverent and indecent practices? If there should be no Churches, are there no laws, no government, no magistrates? Or doth the want of the one dissolve their obligation to the other?

I answer, true it is, there are laws, there  
are



are penalties, there are persons too, who, in those cases, will, without the coercion of either, supply the want of public, by their private devotions; turn their own houses into chapels, call together their little congregation, and keep the sabbath religiously at home. Some such *Cornelius's*, some such families doubtless may be found, but they are few, and bear no proportion to those who thro' want of capacity or inclination behave in a quite different manner. Well, but then may not the magistrate interpose? Who if he cannot make them more wise, or more religious, may at least make them more civil, and decent, and orderly; may restrain them from open insults and immoralities: If he cannot oblige them to good works, may at least be a *terror to the evil*, otherwise *he beareth the sword in vain*.

I answer again, the civil power may indeed, and ought, to exert itself in such cases, and upon such occasions, to suppress all riotous and tumultous assemblies, all barefaced impieties and indecencies; but the misfortune is, the laws are generally ill executed where Religion affords little or no assistance, and in consequence thereof, the magistrate becomes as bad as the people. Or, if other-  
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wife, yet alas how weak and impotent is the word, or the staff of authority, to the quieting a head-strong rabble, whom *David* elegantly stiles *The brutish among the people*, and who by a long dilute of Public Worship, have lost all those checks and restraints, that awe and remorse, that modesty and shame, which the very outward profession of religion preserved to them!

Besides, tho' the magistrate wanted neither vigilance nor strength, to stifle or prevent all open profanation of the sabbath, yet how many lewd and vicious practices will escape his cognizance? How many enormities be committed in secret? How many ways will be found out of deceiving his eye, and eluding all his care and diligence in the scrutiny. He hath not power enough (nor is it fit he should in a free country) tho' they have no house of God to resort to, to confine them to their own; but then what a wretched use will be made of this liberty? What assignations? What cabals? What revellings will of course arise from it? And how will many set out upon the perpetration of the most horrid villanies, under the specious mask of repairing to neighbouring churches to perform their devotions.

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These things thus laid together give us this sum or produce: No church, no public worship; No public worship, No worship at all. No worship of God, the service of the Devil, who stands ready at all hours, to *hire* those who are not better employed, will not suffer them to be *idle*, or preserve a neutrality, but if they refuse to keep the sabbath unto the Lord, he will make himself *Lord of the sabbath*. Nor can the civil Power redress this evil: not only as the spirit of the Law riseth and falleth with religion, and generally as are the people so are the Magistrates, but also where men are at leisure to be wicked, and have no sense of God or their duty upon their minds, to curb and prevent them, not all the prudence and caution of the best laws, not all the watchfulness and industry of the best Magistrates will be able to do it.

Thus have I shewed you that one natural consequence of the want of a place for public worship, is the violation of the sabbath, the inverting the design of a kind and gracious God in that merciful institution, and turning what he meant for a public blessing into a public curse. For tho' without a sabbath we should not long preserve any traces  
of

of religion amongst us, yet should we lose them much sooner by having a sabbath without a sanctuary, as it would let men loose to their own unbridled wills, and lead them into those snares and temptations from which on other days their worldly affairs are their refuge and defence. But,

2dly, another bad consequence arising from the want of a place of public worship, is the debauching or corrupting of youth.

Advice from the pulpit, the solemnity of public worship, the example of devout christians, and the very habit of going to church, are an excellent preservative of youth and innocence, the only rampart indeed which many have to secure 'em from the powerful influence of a wicked world; their only bias to draw 'em to the contrary side of a depraved nature; and therefore, take these away, and they must almost necessarily yield to every temptation that offers itself, lie open and unguarded to all the assaults of vice and immorality, and be a chart blanche for the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, to write upon at pleasure. Yea, even the well tutor'd youth, if in a community where the sabbath and the sanctuary are both forgot, and in conse-  
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quence thereof; the proud waves of wickedness beat high, and meet with none, or however but an impotent and faint resistance from authority, if in such a community, I say, the best disciplined youth is not bore down by the torrent, and lost in the general deluge, it must not be ascribed to his education, or disposition; to the ingenuity of the culture, or the goodness of the soil; but to the special interposition of the Divine Providence.

3dly. Another bad consequence proceeding from the want of a Church is, that the more moderate and lukewarm Professors of Christianity, thence are apt to grow quite cold and dead in their religious affections, and lose all inclination to the worship of God. There are some, indeed too many, who tho' they have not much relish for divine ordinances, yet are willing to submit to an hour's penance, now and then, to avoid the censure of being irreligious, and who from coming to Church out of custom, are sometimes, from the good impressions they receive there, disposed afterwards to go thither out of choice. But now, where there is no Church to resort to, they are out of the way of all those awaking calls, those serious

and seasonable admonitions, and can without loss of reputation, sink into the downy bed of incogitancy, and be as wise, and as happy, and almost as religious as the beasts that perish.

Again 4thly. Another bad consequence arising from the want of a place of Worship is, that even the more zealous and sincere Christian, is thereby in greater danger of being *tossed to and fro, and carried away by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* This is the very time for tares: The time when all the adversaries of our Church will be forming their batteries against it, and playing their engines at it. *Rome* and *Geneva*, however seemingly irreconcilable on other occasions, will at so favourable a juncture, consent to join hand in hand, like *Herod* and *Pilate*: And even the *Deist*, who hath an equal aversion to them both, will take part with either, rather than lose so fair and promising an opportunity of wounding that church which is a common enemy to them all.

5thly. And to shut up this point, without any further enumeration of particulars, the consequence of the want of a place of public worship,

worship, is a general corruption both in faith and manners. For as nothing is more universally allowed, or more obvious to common sense, than that was it not for the observation of the Sabbath, or dedicating or setting apart one day in seven, to the business of religion, we should live as *without God in the world*; and since it evidently appears, from what hath been said, that a Sabbath could not be long preserved without public worship; then it follows, that without such worship, we should quickly forget the Lord who made us, and fall into an universal Apostacy, and be over-run with infidelity and irreligion.

These are the dreadful consequences of the want of a place for the public worship of the Almighty. Let us now inquire, whether they are not as true in practice, as they are in theory reasonable; and whether your own experience hath not sadly confirmed the truth of them.

Hath not then the Sabbath long, very long, been scandalously profaned and despised; and that authority which dar'd to avenge it's honour, been had in equal contempt? Tho' the name hath been retained, hath not it lost it's nature, and the seventh day been less hallowed than the other six?

Instead of being sacred to the Lord, hath it not been devoted to the Devil, and been employed in his immediate work and service? Instead of religious duties, spiritual exercises, and a more grave and solemn behaviour and deportment, hath it not been distinguished by sports and recreations, by noise and tumults, and all manner of indecencies, committed in the face of the sun, in the hours of prayer, in the presence of the magistrate; and that not with any appearance of shame, any seeming consciousness of guilt, or any other signs of grace, but audaciously and unconcernedly, as tho' such practices had been warranted by the law of God, or his law had been over-ruled by prescription? Was your youth ever known to be so forward or so froward, so rampant and ungovernable, so wicked and licentious? Were ever their heads more depraved, their hearts more vicious, or their tongues more blasphemous? Was ever there so great a coldness and deadness to the true interest of christianity in its professed friends? Was there ever so much virulence and rancour in its avow'd enemies? Did ever popery so flourish, or sectaries more abound, drawing away disciples to the right hand and to the left? And have not many,  
after



after veering about from one religion to another, at last sat down without any religion at all? In short, is there not a general defection both in faith and practice? And I appeal to yourselves, whether it is not chiefly to be imputed to the profanation of the Sabbath, and that again to the want of a sanctuary?

Thus it is, my brethren, that you have been dispersed: Thus it is, that you have been distressed; thus, for twenty years long, have you been grieved; been meat to all the beasts of the field; left to wander thro' all the mountains, and upon every high hill, and none did search or seek after you. But at last it hath pleased God to bring you home, and to deliver you out of the places where you have been scattered.

Let us, therefore, change the scene from that cloudy and dark day in which you have been so miserably envelop'd, to the glorious morning which hath now risen upon you, and reflect a little how God hath comforted you again now, after the time that he hath plagued you, and for the years wherein you have suffered adversity, which is the second head I propos'd to speak to.

And here you have much the advantage of those in my text: Their consolation was

only a *prophecy*, but yours an *event*; they rejoiced in *hope*, but you in  *fruition*: 'Theirs was a promised deliverance, but yours is already come. The night of your captivity is quite spent; the day of your redemption is at hand, shall I say? yea, rather hath dawn'd upon you, to be a light to lighten those that have long sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide their feet into the way of peace. You may now assemble together for the worship of your Creator, in a way which he himself approves in a church, not founded in disobedience to his laws, in the contempt of his authority, in the breach of solemn oaths, or in mean, and low, and wretched falvos and equivocations, far more detestable, as being far more ungenerous, than open rebellion; but in truth and equity, in obedience to the divine commands, and in a religious conformity to the rules and orders of our ecclesiastical constitution.—Here you may worship God with a holy worship, without mangling the liturgy to skreen yourselves from the law. That liturgy, which for it's antiquity and it's purity, the universality of it's use, and the fervency of it's piety, have justly the preference of all others in the christian world. That liturgy, which

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is not the less ancient because it is reformed, nor the less spiritual because it is composed. That liturgy, whose prayers and praises are so wisely intermix'd, and so affectionately expressed; the symmetry so just, the language so apt, and the sentiment so glowing, that they may not unfitly be compared to *Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver*; or may yet, with greater propriety, be said to resemble the church to which it belongs; which, as the Psalmist tells us, *is all-glorious within, her Cloathing is of wrought Gold*. That liturgy, which no sooner gains your attention, but it commands your approbation, insomuch, that some who have come to hear it with envy, have departed from it with praise; and their prejudices have been melted down into admiration. In a word, that liturgy, to which would both priest and people join proper and suitable affections of soul and body, they might be truly said to *worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness*. To that holy temple, to this holy worship you may now resort, you and your households. They have no longer an excuse for absenting themselves, nor you for not bringing them along with you, nor the magistrate for not supplying the defect of both. At your hands will the Lord require

it, if you do not take heed now that they keep his sabbaths, and reverence his sanctuaries. You may now retrieve the honour of that Great Holiday, restore it to it's primitive purity; and in regarding it, regard it unto the Lord. Not spend it as before, in wanton pastimes and beastly excesses; in strolling in the fields, or sitting in the alehouse, but in going to the house of God with the multitude that keep holiday, and there joining the chorus of divine praises. You may now hear the word of God constantly preached; and whatever other qualifications may be wanting in the preacher, (I speak of myself as one born out of time, and coming late into the vineyard) preached at least with sincerity of heart, and faith unfeigned. Tho' you may not hear it so judiciously or accurately divided by me, as those who have had more time and superior advantages; yet so much I dare promise you, never to handle the word of truth deceitfully, nor use flattering words as a cloak of covetousness; but as I am allow'd, unworthy as I am, to be put in trust of the gospel, so I am resolved, by manifestation of the truth, according to the ability which is given me, to commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of  
God.

God. And I hope the word preached, will not fail to profit, if mix'd with faith in them that hear it, will (all prejudices laid aside) be powerful and effectual enough to assist the weak, confirm the strong, satisfy the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, and set forward the salvation of you all. Will be a means to preserve you from the contagion of false doctrines, and the more fatal influence of bad examples. Will be your security from the papist and the sectarist, from idolatry and enthusiasm, from speculative and practical infidelity; and, in fine, (except ye are of those who hate to be reformed, and therefore cast my words behind you) will work in you a thorough reformation both in faith and manners.

I have now finished what I at first propos'd. I have set before your eyes your dispersion and your deliverance, the dark and the bright side of the prospect, the gloomy and the glorious day.

And now, tho' I have been already very tedious, yet I cannot dismiss you, without briefly running over two or three inferences, which naturally arise from what hath been said,

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The first of which is, that great debt of gratitude we owe to God Almighty, for this kind and gracious dispensation of his providence.

How many of your fathers earnestly desired to see the things that you now see, and have not seen 'em; and to hear the things that ye now hear, and have not heard 'em. To see this lovely pile raise up its grateful head to sing his praises, who hath rescued it from a long inglorious silence. To hear the gospel read, divine offices performed, and prayers and thanksgivings offered up under this roof, and the grateful roof echoing back the sound, to the glory of that God for whom it was framed. How gladly, how joyfully would they have join'd in the general chorus? And how, therefore, ought we to *praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men.* What great reason have we to cry out, *This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it;* or to break out into the same psalm of gratitude, which the Israelites sung by course, upon laying the foundation of the temple: *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, because his mercy endureth for ever.*

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Let this, then, my brethren, be our perpetual song. But let not our acclamations be the only expressions of our thankfulness. Let us praise our great Benefactor, *not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service*; by our constant and conscientious devotions to him, and our mutual love and charity among ourselves.

Let us set the same value and esteem upon the blessings we now enjoy, as we did before we were possessed of it. And then, sure I am, we cannot over-rate it. If our professions were then sincere, our joy now cannot be extravagant.

Whenever we find in ourselves a tardiness (from whatever cause it may proceed) to tread these courts, let us immediately call to mind our former zeal, before the door was open'd to us. Whenever we are disposed to be contentious, or to wrangle about every trifling inconveniency, let us look back to the greater troubles and distresses with which we were encompassed, before we arrived at this peaceful harbour. Let us consider how little and contemptible those difficulties would then have appear'd in our eye, which now seem to be so monstrous and formidable. And how contented we should have been, to  
have

have had only some few spots in our sun, when we were so wretchedly lost and bewilder'd in the cloudy and dark day. Such reflections as these, are proper to keep us in good temper: To prevent the surfeits of prosperity, and to inspire that gratitude, which is the best reward we can give unto the Lord for this inestimable favour, and the likeliest means to continue the possession to us.

And now, *O Lord*, we beseech thee *look down from Heaven; behold and visit this vine, and the place of the vineyard which thine own right hand hath planted.* Dig about it with thy providence, and water it with thy grace and holy spirit; and grant that this religious house, which hath so long sat solitary, may at last be filled with *a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* That it be no longer *a hissing and a bye-word amongst our neighbours,* nor make us *the scorn and derision of all those who are round about us;* but may, instead thereof, become a means, not only of restoring thy honour, but of taking away the reproach from thine heritage. *So we that are thy people, and sheep of thy pasture, shall ever be giving thee thanks from generation to generation.* *And let all the people say, Amen.*

F I N I S .







