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TWELVE SERMONS,

UPON

The following SUBJECTS:

I. The Divinity of *Chriſt*.
II. *Jepthah*'s Vow.
III. The good *Samaritan*.
IV. A proper and an improper Conformity to the World.
V. Prayer—what it is, and what it is not.
VI. *Solomon*'s Requeſt.
VII. *Agur*'s Requeſt.
VIII. Plain Truth.
IX. Truth diſſembled.
X. The natural Deſire of long Life.
XI. The Folly and Danger of deſpiſing Religion.
XII. The Penitent upon the Croſs.

By the Rev. J. SMITH, M. A.

Chaplain in Ordinary to his MAJESTY.

LONDON:

PRINTED by M. HARRISON, No. 2, RED LYON COURT, FLEET STREET.

MDCCLXXVI.

PREFACE.

I WAS adviſed by many kind Friends to delay the Publication of theſe Diſcourſes a few Months longer; but the Opinion of ſome of my Subſcribers correſponding with my own Ideas of Delicacy in in a Matter of this Kind — I hope that I have not done wrong in publiſhing them now.

I conſidered it as a Duty — to be ſo far *particular* in the Acknowledgment of *Obligations* upon *this Occaſion*, as to print the Names of my Subſcribers,

Subſcribers, whoſe Candour *after* Publication, will, I doubt not, prove *equal* to their Civility and Generoſity *before*.

The firſt, eighth, and ninth Sermons, are partly taken from two eminent *French* Divines. They have, however, been preached before very diſtinguiſhed Congregations, and it was particularly recommended to me to give them a Place in this printed Collection.

I may ſay of the Sermon upon the Divinity of *Chriſt* (what a late Writer ſays of his own religious Treatiſe) that it is "an Abſtract only "— deſigned to raiſe a proper At- "tention, and to create a Deſire, in "young

"young or doubting Perſons, to "purſue the Subject — till the Mind "finds Reaſon to be ſatisfied in *that* "Certainty of Evidence the *whole* "produces," on which this eſſential Article of the chriſtian Faith is founded.

The Reſt of the Diſcourſes (except in Matters ſtrictly doctrinal) are taken from Life rather than from *Books*—from *Obſervation* rather than from *Reading*. I have *endeavoured* to repreſent the World as it *now* is —to make all poſſible *Allowance* for Error and Indiſcretion — to give every poſſible *Commendation* to Principles and Conduct, lovely and of good Report. In a Word; whatever

ever Imperfections may be diſcovered in the following ſlender Performance, when examined with a critical Attention — I hope it will appear — that I (at leaſt) *wiſh* Religion *well* — that I *wiſh* my Fellow-Mortals *well* — *wiſh* them to be happy *Here* — but at all Events to take Care that they become ſo *Hereafter*, through their *own beſt* Endeavours, *perfected* by the Merits and Mediation of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

LONDON, MAY 6, 1776.

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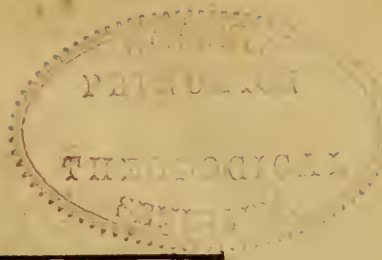
ERRATA.

Page 90, line 11, for *Serenity* read *Sincerity*.
108, — 19, for *Vine* read *Pine*.
152, — 15, for *desiresi* read *desiredst*.
174, — 6, for *Purity* read *Parity*.

SERMON I.

UPON THE

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.



SERMON I.

JOHN i. 1, 2.

In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The ſame was in the Beginning with God.

I Shall, with, I hope, a becoming Reverence to ſo ſacred a Subject, preſume, in the enſuing Sermon, to ſpeak of the Divinity of Jeſus Chriſt; wiſhing hereby to prove from the plain Authorities of Scripture, and from clear unprejudiced Reaſoning—that our Lord was, from the Glory, and the

very Spirit and Eſſence of his Miniſtry upon Earth, manifeſtly God.

The firſt ſhining Part of our Lord's Miniſtry is — that he was foretold and promiſed to Men almoſt ever ſince the World exiſted. Scarcely had *Adam* fallen, but is ſhewed him (tho' at a great Diſtance) this kind Recoverer. In ſucceeding Ages God appeared, as it were, to be unmindful of any Thing elſe, but to prepare Men for the Arrival of this Saviour. In ſhort our Lord was foretold by all People — declared for Four Thouſand Years by a long Chain of Prophets — figured out by all the Ceremonies of the Law — and wiſhed for by the Juſt of all Ages. Neither was all this for the Sake of ſome particular Event only: He was to be the Reſource of a condemned World — A Law-giver of divers People — the Light of Nations — the Salvation of *Iſrael*. But what a Snare for the Religion of all Times — if Preparations ſo great and important ſpecified

a Creature merely human — of thoſe Times eſpecially, when the Credulity of the World ſo eaſily ſuffered Men of uncommon Notions or uncommon Abilities — to rank as Gods.

John the Baptiſt — in Order to prevent Idolatry in his Nation — is ever heard to ſay — I am not he whom you expect. Our Lord, on the Contrary, whom Four Thouſand Years of Figures and Prophecies had acknowledged — at Length comes in great Virtue and Power. He performs Miracles which no other Perſon ever did before him, and inſtead of preventing the People from worſhipping him — he declares himſelf to be equal with God, and ſuffers the World to render divine Honours to him. If this was an idolatrous Worſhip, Mankind ſeem to be by no Means reſponſible for it.

In the Ages before the Coming of our Lord — there appeared many very extraordinary Men, whom the Almighty ſeemed to have made, as it were, Confidants of his

Virtue and his Power: And yet when we attend to this Matter closely, we find that all these extraordinary Men carried about them Marks of Dependence and Weakness: Our Lord, on the Contrary, performs the most surprising Miracles with a Facility all puissant — and with a Sovereignty wholly independent.

Again, how glorious are the Circumstances before unheard of in any one — which compose the Course of our Lord's mortal Life! Conceived by the Operation of the Holy Ghost, he is born of a pure Virgin. Scarcely is he born, but celestial Legions fill the Air with Songs of Triumph, and assure us that this Birth renders to God his Glory, and Peace to Men. A little afterwards, a new Star conducts to his Cradle wise Men from the East: A just and an holy Woman announces his future Glory: The Doctors being assembled together behold, with Astonishment, his Infancy more wise and understanding

ſtanding than the Wiſdom and Experience of old Age.

In Proportion as he advances in Years, his Glory diſcovers itſelf the more. *John* Baptiſt humbles himſelf before him—Heaven opens itſelf upon his Head — the affrighted Devils cannot abide his Preſence — the Father of Heaven declares that he is his well-beloved Son, and propoſes him as the living and eternal Law, in commanding Mankind to liſten to him.

If from *Tabor* we paſs over to *Mount Calvary* — the Place where all the Reproaches and Cruelties exerciſed upon our Lord exhauſted themſelves; all Nature in confuſion acknowledges him even here as it's Author, and confeſſes his Divinity. He ariſes from his Grave three Days after, not by Means of any foreign Help, or that he might die again; but by his own Power, and that he might be in Poſſeſſion henceforth of a Life immortal. To finally cloſe the

Scene, our Lord aſcendeth into Heaven. It is not a Chariot of Fire that conveys him thither, in the Twinkling of an Eye — he raiſes himſelf with Majeſty — the Angels come to meet him, and promiſe him a ſecond Appearance upon Earth, when he ſhall be encompaſſed with Glory and Immortality.

In Footſteps like theſe who ſhould not gladly trace out the God of Heaven? In him, who after having converſed with Men, in order to recover them from their Wanderings and their Miſery, left them and their World, and renewed the Poſſeſſion of his heavenly Glory. Surely, the exceedingly great Luſtre of our Lord's Miniſtry would unavoidably be to us an Occaſion of Idolatry, if he was not more than mere Man. As alſo would the very Spirit and Eſſence of his Miniſtry be an unavoidable Snare to our Innocence.

No one has ever yet denied that Jeſus Chriſt was an holy Man. What Man indeed

ever

ever appeared upon Earth, in whom all People remarked ſo ſtrong Characters of Innocence and Sanctity? I might ſay, ſo great Indifference for the World, ſo great Love for Virtue, ſo great Zeal for the Glory of God, ſo great Ardour for the Salvation of Mankind? We may add to all this, the total Exemption of thoſe Weakneſſes, which we know to be inſeparable from mere human Nature. Now if Jeſus Chriſt be thus holy, he muſt be God — He muſt needs be ſuch, as to the Doctrine which he bequeathed to us, whether we conſider it as regarding his almighty Father or ourſelves.

If Chriſt is nothing but a ſimple Embaſſador from God — he is not come but to ſhew to Nations an *idolatrous Unity* of the *divine Eſſence.* In the next Place, our Lord muſt have made uſe of evil Means for the Diſcharge of his Miniſtry. *Moſes* and the Prophets, charged with a ſimilar Miſſion, never ceaſed to publiſh that the Lord Almighty is

one,

one, without ever making a Compariſon between themſelves and the ſupreme Being: Whereas Chriſt ſeldom ceaſes to equal himſelf with his Father. — He ſays that he is deſcended from Heaven, and taken from the Boſom of God — that he exiſted before all Things — that the Father and himſelf are one. In every Thing indeed he compares himſelf with the great Sovereign of all Worlds. The *Jews* murmur and reproach him for theſe Expreſſions. So far from denying them, he confirms them all in the Midſt of Reproaches, and does this too in a Language affronting and impious, if his Equality and Compariſon with his Father do not inform and juſtify him. Our Lord ſurely is not come upon the Earth (if he is merely Man) but to offend the *Jews principally*, in giving them an Opportunity at leaſt of believing that he compares himſelf with the moſt High: He is not come but to ſeduce the *Nations*, in cauſing them to worſhip him

after

after his Death — He is not come but to diſperſe a freſh Darkneſs throughout the Univerſe. All thoſe great Advantages which the World has been promiſed to derive from the Miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt do, in this Caſe, center themſelves in ſeeing Mankind plunged into a new Kind of Idolatry, and all the future Magnificence of the Goſpel ſo ſtrongly foretold by the Prophets — muſt finally be ſeen to have only tended to form and encourage that dangerous Sect of *Socinians*. But ſeeing the Manner in which he ſpeaks of his Father, the Equality which he aſſumes upon moſt Occaſions with his Father — this neceſſarily eſtabliſhes the Glory of his eternal Original.

Suppoſe we next conſider our Lord's Doctrine, with Regard to Men. This too muſt needs eſtabliſh at leaſt the *Verity* of his *divine* Birth. What Wiſdom, what Sanctity, what plain Sublimity in ſuch his Doctrine! Every Thing there is worthy of Reaſon, and

of

of the moſt profound Philoſophy: Every Thing there is proportioned to the Miſery, and at the ſame Time to the Excellency, of Man. Remark thoſe Duties of Love and mutual Dependence which he requires of Men one towards another. He enjoins us alſo to love him — to ſeek in him our Happineſs — to refer to him ourſelves and our Actions in like Manner as he teaches us to refer to his Father. But if he be not God, his Doctrine ſo divine, ſo admired even by Heathens — is nothing more than an horrid Mixture of Impiety, of Pride, and Folly; ſeeing he himſelf, being nothing but a mere Man, is deſirous of uſurping the Place of God in our Hearts. Nay more — whilſt the true God appeared to be contented with the Sacrifices of Bulls and of Goats — Chriſt for himſelf is deſirous that we ſacrifice even our own Lives; that we give up ourſelves to Death and Martyrdom for the Glory of his Name. But if he be not the Author of our

Lives,

Lives, what Right can he have to require them at our Hands? His Religion is then a Religion of Blood and Barbarity only — the generous Martyrs of his Religion have then proved themſelves only Cowards and Fanatics; and the Defenders of Juſtice and of the Glory of Chriſt's Divinity, only Tyrants and Perſecutors. Can the Ear of Man liſten to theſe Blaſphemies without Horror?

I cannot cloſe this important Subject without begging your Attention a little longer, whilſt we conſider the Spirit of our Lord's Miniſtry in thoſe Graces and Bleſſings which the Univerſe has received from him. He declares that he is come to deliver all Men from eternal Death. He makes us from Enemies become the Children of God — He opens Heaven to us, and aſſures us, (upon eaſy Conditions) of a final, certain Poſſeſſion thereof: He nouriſhes us from his own Body — he waſhes us from our Sins, in applying to us the Price of his own Blood:

Blood: In a Word, he calls himſelf our Way, our Truth, our Life, our Redemption. But as a mere Man, can he poſſibly be the Source of ſo great Graces and Benefits to other Men? Or is it not to be feared that as a Man becoming ſo uſeful and neceſſary to Mankind, he is become, at Length, their Idol?

See then to what impious and dangerous Lengths Infidelity is capable of carrying us. I hope that this is a Character applicable to none amongſt us. And indeed mere Points of Faith ſhould, perhaps, conſtitute but a ſmall Part of Preaching; as every Preacher in a chriſtian Land may, with Reaſon, in general conclude — that he has no Hearers, but what are Believers. Sometimes, however, it may be both uſeful and ſeaſonable to treat of the Doctrines of Faith, eſpecially when, as in the preſent Diſcourſe, we can mix them with the equally important Doctrines of Love and Obedience. I will only

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beg Leave to add this Argument in Oppoſition to Incredulity — that if it is an Error to believe that Jeſus Chriſt is God, — it is an Error which was born with the Chriſtian Church — it is an Error which has raiſed the whole Edifice — it is an Error which has formed ſo many Martyrs — it is an Error which has, in a Manner, converted the whole Univerſe. And ever let us conclude, that Piety and Reverence towards this our Saviour both God and Man — is the deep Spirit of our Religion — that nothing is ſolid or permanent but what we build upon this Foundation: And the principal Homage which our Lord requires of us is — that his Way be the Model of our own, ſo that at Length being conformed to a Reſemblance of him here, we may finally be of the Number of thoſe who ſhall be Partakers of his eternal Glory, To whom with the Father and the holy Spirit — three Perſons but

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one God — be aſcribed all Honour and Power, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion — now and for evermore. Amen.

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SERMON II.

UPON

JEPTHAH's VOW.

PREACHED

Before the UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE,
on SUNDAY, MARCH, 20, 1774.

SERMON II.

JUDGES xi. 30. first Part.

And Jepthah *vowed a Vow unto the Lord.*

THE Words of his Vow were these. "If thou shalt without Fail—deliver the Children of *Ammon* into mine Hands; then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the Doors of my House to meet me when I return in Peace from the Children of *Ammon* shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a Burnt-Offering." On his Return, after the completest Victory to his own House at *Mizpeh*—behold, his Daughter came out to meet

him, and ſhe was his only Child. This is a Scene which muſt needs awaken our tender — humane Feelings, and prepare us for the Exerciſe of all imaginable Compaſſion towards the afflicted Parties.

Picture to yourſelves a Man returning on the Wings of Victory — having totally ſubdued an Enemy who had created ſo great Fear in thoſe who had ſent for this Deliverer from a Country — whither they had moſt unjuſtly baniſhed him. Fancy to yourſelves a Man thus returning not only with Victory in his Hands, but alſo with Gratitude in his Soul to that Almighty Arm which had wrought Succeſs. Suppoſe him too within Sight of his own Houſe, where he expected to receive the Congratulations of his neareſt Friends — to impart to them likewiſe in Return, ſome of his overflowing Joy: In particular you are to ſuppoſe that he had an amiable and a dutiful Daughter to meet on this Occaſion, the only Child of his

his fond, parental Boſom. Such was *Jephthah*'s Situation! And had it not been for that raſh and inconſiderate Vow which he made before his Conqueſt, we might have followed him into his Houſe, and have fancied every Thing that was joyful and happy. But through Means of this fatal Reſolution, we muſt make a Tranſition from a ſuppoſed Picture of perfect human Happineſs, to one of (in Reality) perfect human Wretchedneſs. This very *Jepthah*, tho' Conquerer in the Field, is now on a ſudden made a Coward, nay a Captive of, and by himſelf too. Lo! his Daughter came out firſt to meet him with Timbrels and with Dances. Here began his contraſt—Wretchedneſs. At the Sight of her he rent his Cloaths, and wrapped up in Victory and Joy as he before was, he breaks out into a truly mournful Alas—*Alas, my Daughter, thou haſt brought me very low*, and inſtead of viewing you as my firſt

Sharer of my Triumphs, *thou art even* one *of them who trouble me; for I have opened my Mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.* What ſuch a Man muſt feel on an Occaſion like this, would, I believe, be difficult to expreſs. The very Rehearſal of the Matter to us who were not concerned in the Hiſtory — is enough to melt Nature into all that can be ſuggeſted by a generous Pity, or a ſympathizing Heart. Thoſe may, probably, feel moſt, who bear the venerable Name of Parent, and the Story is not made the leſs affecting, by the ſurprizing Reſignation of the fair Victim. Her Duty to her Father — her Readineſs to be given up — was a ſingular Proof ſurely of her Goodneſs — but this is a Circumſtance which muſt needs affect our Tenderneſs more, than if ſhe had broken out into Invectives againſt a raſh Father, and had become an unwilling Sacrifice: Inſtead of which ſhe never once blames *Jepthah* for

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the Vow that he had made, but on the Contrary — urges the Fulfillment of it — ſo long as her Father was returned ſafe and ſucceſsful, ſhe was ready to ſuffer *according to what had proceeded out of his Mouth.*

This Hiſtory being thus far laid open — I ſhall now venture to proceed to that Part of it which moſt of all belongs to us — the Conſideration of the Vow itſelf: How far *Jepthah* may be blamed or excuſed both in the making or in the fulfilling of it, which will naturally inſtruct us with Regard to Vows and Reſolutions of our own.

In the Days of *Jepthah* Vows were conſidered as lawful and binding, and few Things of Conſequence were undertaken without ſome ſacred Reſolve. And when we read of the Slaughters and Troubles and Superſtitions of thoſe Days, and how deliberately Thouſands were taken and ſlain — we muſt ceaſe to judge of the Inſtance before us altogether as Chriſtians. Yet make what Allowances we will — *Jepthah* certainly

went beyond the Cuſtoms and Errors even of his own miſtaken Times. Sacrifices we know were wont to be made unto the Lord, and with very pious Intentions — but then it was the Incenſe of Rams or of Bullocks and of He-Goats, elſe of the tender and innocent Lamb. *Iſaac*, it is true, was deſtined to be offered up, and by a Command from Heaven too — and Faith's prevailing in this Inſtance was juſtly imputed unto *Abraham* as Righteouſneſs; yet the Trial ſeems to be thought too hard an one by the Lord for a *Man* to offer up his *only Son*: For when Faith had ſo far ſubdued the Powers of natural Affection as to bring *Abraham* with his Son to the Place where he was appointed to be ſlain — an Angel's Voice was heard from Heaven to cry out to *Abraham*, whoſe Hand was now ſtretched forth, and in Poſſeſſion of the Knife prepared for the Slaughter — *lay not thine Hand upon the Lad*. Nay, a Sacrifice of this Sort was not

not only ſuppoſed by the Lord to be moſt afflicting to a Parent, and indeed Injuſtice towards the Child — but we may collect I think — that as it was not permitted to be made in the Caſe of *Iſaac* — ſo in future Times it ſhould have been conſidered (independently of Nature) as an Act highly offenſive in the Sight of God. As a *Jew* was prevented, and by Heaven too prevented — from committing it — a *Jew* ſhould certainly have been taught, even *Jepthah*, to have kept back his raſh and inconſiderate Vow with Reſpect to a fellow Creature, and to have confined it to the Sacrifice of a Ram. And yet methinks our Candor is ſtrongly addreſſed on the Side of *Jepthah*. His Call to engage againſt the Children of *Ammon* was a very ſingular one. He was in Baniſhment, and invited to return even to fight for, and to rule over, thoſe who baniſhed him. Feel for a Man thus ſituated: And when he had actually received *the Spi-*

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rit of the Lord as his Encourager and Supporter, fancy his religious Gratitude ſo much excited, as to make him think himſelf acting with a Duty equal to the Greatneſs of the Occaſion, in offering up, in Caſe of Victory, one of his own Species, nay, one of his own Family — that he might have conſidered a common Sacrifice too ſmall a Token of ſo extraordinary an Honour — Gratitude too limited for ſo great a Share of Mercy. This I ſay not in Juſtification of the Vow itſelf — for it cannot, it muſt not be countenanced — I mean it only as ſome Excuſe for the unhappy Man who made it. Indeed *Jepthah* ſeems to be ſituated in this Matter much like St. *Paul* touching a miſtaken Conſcience. His Perſecutions no Chriſtian muſt attempt to juſtify, tho' many Arguments may be urged in Favour of the miſled Perſecutor. So with Regard to *Jepthah*, when we reflect upon what is recorded of his Diſpoſition and Behaviour

haviour and Principles in general — we cannot avoid in a great Meaſure excuſing him as to the intentional Part of his Vow. Had it been made through Cruelty and Wantonneſs — had he meant to ſport with the Life of a fellow Creature — he would doubtleſs have ſought for ſuch a Victim from Home — not at his own Houſe, which contained Servants who had, probably, by their Fidelity, gained his Eſteem — and beſides theſe a Daughter, an only Child, who being a Perſon ſo nearly concerned in her Father's Joys and Succeſſes was likelieſt too to come out firſt to meet him. And thus it even happened: A Circumſtance, which at the ſame Time that it convinces us of God's peculiar Diſapprobation of the Oath itſelf — increaſes likewiſe our Pity towards the afflicted Father — who ſuffered, I ſuppoſe, all that Man could ſuffer on this Side the Grave. How muſt all his Glory which he had juſt acquired

quired in the Field — be at once converted into Shame of the moſt tormenting Kind; and the Laurels of Victory — into a Crown of Thorns!

But leaving *Jepthah* as far as regards his making this Vow, let us briefly touch upon the Impropriety of his fulfilling it.

That Men ſhould pay a ſacred Attention to Vows or Oaths, in which Religion or the Happineſs of the World is concerned — is a Doctrine which every good and honeſt Man muſt needs inculcate: Nay, whatever we engage our Faith and Promiſe to, whether private Perſons or Society be concerned — provided that ſuch Engagement be founded on moral Virtue or moral Honeſty; they are the worſt of Men, who ſhrink back when it is in their Power to fulfil it. But when Men make Vows in themſelves ridiculous — injurious to Society, and contrary to the Laws of Religion and Morality — let ſuch Men, at the Time that they are about to

execute their Vow from a falſe Scruple of Conſcience, or from a falſe Notion of Honour—rather afflict themſelves that they had ever made ſuch Vow at all, and forbear from fulfilling it—than after they have fulfilled it, to carry about them the perpetual Senſe of Injury done to thoſe who have ſuffered by it.

What are our Thoughts of the Tetrarch *Herod*—who for paſſing a few Hours in lawful Diſſipation with *Herodias*'s Daughter—was led to offer her ſo far as the Half of his Kingdom. Doubtleſs, he expected that her Requeſt would have been a lucrative one, and when ſhe aſked the Baptiſt's Head in a Charger—he was ſorry; yet ſo idle were his Notions of Honour (for Conſcience could no Ways be here concerned) that he ſuffered his Humanity to fall ſo great a Sacrifice to it, as even to order that *John* ſhould be beheaded. Now if *Herod* had done wiſely, ſhould he not have reproved *Herodias*'s Daughter, at leaſt with ſaying, "*thou*

"*knoweſt*

"*knoweſt not what thou aſkeſt*," and have left himſelf to have reflected upon the Folly of Promiſes or Vows, which make Room for the Exerciſe of Cruelty and Wrong—without putting his own into Execution at the Expence of the Life of ſo good and valuable a Man as *John* the Baptiſt.

And let us inſtance next, on the Side of a ſcrupulous Conſcience—in the Caſe of *Jepthah*, who would ſurely have been a wiſer, a happier, and a better Man, if he had permitted his Conſcience to have diſpenſed with the *executive* Part of his Vow, and to have exerciſed it's *Stings* reſpecting the *making* of it *only*.

Vows and Reſolutions like *Jepthah*'s are indeed unknown to our Times of Revelation, and true Worſhip which admits of no Sacrifice but that of a broken and a contrite Heart: Yet it is a very diſpleaſing and a very faulty Cuſtom amongſt us to load our Conſciences with idle Vows and raſh Reſolutions

tions—ſo as to lay the greateſt Foundation of Unhappineſs. In Things that are lovely and of good Report we oftentimes teach our Conſciences to evade; but in Things trifling, wrong, or miſchievous to the common Good—we eaſily become Slaves to this miſguided Conſcience, 'till at laſt, when we have ſhewed ourſelves (as we think) Men of firm Principles and Reſolution by executing ſome mad Reſolve—we make *ourſelves* wretched, as well as *thoſe*, to whom we have proved ſo cruelly and fooliſhly reſolute. Vows and Reſolutions are always made in ſome *Exceſs of Paſſion*; but ſeldom as *Jepthah*'s was, in the *Spirit* of *Joy* and *Gratitude*. And beſides, he meant his as a *Duty*, and as an *acceptable Service* to God—but the Vows and Reſolutions of theſe Days *ſeldom* have a *good* Tendency: They are for the moſt Part founded on *Pique* and *Reſentment*; and even upon a Suppoſition that we have received *Injury*—they generally take Care to bring us in *Debtor* at *laſt* even to the very

very *Party* which *firſt* offended—A Mortification as well as an Injuſtice this—which muſt needs be very painful to a Mind the leaſt ſuſceptible of Friendſhip, or real Greatneſs of Diſpoſition; inſomuch that I doubt not but there are many, let their Wealth and Situation be never ſo great and flattering—who are now wretched, merely through a ſtrict Obſervance of ſome idle unguarded Reſolution.

In a Word—this Life neceſſarily affords ſo many and ſo unexpected Changes—and the Futurity even of an Hour may cauſe ſo ſurprizing and ſo ſtriking a Viciſſitude in human Affairs—that a truly wiſe Man will make no other Reſolution—than to be as juſt, as honeſt, as friendly, as religious, and as virtuous as he can. Vows of another Kind are oftentimes vicious—at beſt trifling and imprudent—and always to be diſcountenanced, as being naturally hurtful to Religion and Virtue and ſocial Life.

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Let us then endeavour to be careful of our Words as well as Works—to ſay and do what is moſt pleaſing in the Sight of Heaven—as we would wiſh to enjoy Peace on Earth, and Peace at God's right Hand for evermore—through the Merits and Interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord—to which two ſacred Perſons together with the Holy Spirit be aſcribed all Honour and Glory, World without End. Amen.

SERMON III.

UPON THE

GOOD SAMARITAN.

Preached at COURT,

On SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1775.

SERMON III.

LUKE x. 36, 37.

Which now of these three thinkest thou was Neighbour unto him who fell amongst the Thieves? And he said, he that shewed Mercy on him: Then said Jesus *unto him, go—and do thou likewise.*

WE are doubtless born into this World to discharge the Offices of Friendship and Society: The very first Lesson which we learn is—that (under the Providence of the Deity) we

owe our Exiſtence and Support to the Favour of others, and brought up as we *all* are in a State of Dependence—and unable to ſubſiſt alone—we ſee continually the Neceſſity which we are under of cultivating a reciprocal Kindneſs and good Will amongſt Men. Our neareſt Relations are certainly our firſt and ſtrongeſt Bonds of Endearment; yet this Union which begins with our neareſt Kindred does not end there—but extends itſelf far and wide, and connects us (in a certain Degree) with our Neighbours, our Country, and all Mankind.

It may be ſaid, perhaps, that the Conduct of the Prieſt and Levite (as recorded in this well known Narrative before us) exceeded the Practice of the moſt inhuman *Chriſtians*, thoſe only excepted who (as Murderers) delight in Blood; and that the Part of the Samaritan would be that of Chriſtians in general, ſo particularly called upon as he was. Let it be acknowledged, indeed, that the

the Caſe of a Traveller robbed, ſtripped, wounded, and, as it were, expiring for Want of ſome kind Friend to cloath him, and to pour Oil into his Wounds—is ſuch, as would affect even many *very wicked* Men. How candidly therefore ſhould we judge in this Matter of the *honeſt* and *benevolent* Part of Mankind? Surely there is no Doubt to be made, but that theſe, under the ſame Circumſtances, would, from natural human Feelings, as well as from Principles of Chriſtianity, diſcover a Sympathy, and relieve with Compaſſion and Care, equal to what the Samaritan ſhewed. Bad as the World is, we are not wanting in Thouſands of Inſtances, wherein the Samaritan has been fully equalled.

I cannot, it is true, avoid remarking, that there are to be found, I am afraid, but too many, who tho' they could not carry themſelves in ſo relentleſs a Manner as the Prieſt and Levite did; and tho' they

ſhould ſo far imitate the Samaritan, as to take a Fellow Creature, ſituated as the Traveller before us was, upon their own Beaſt to a Place which could afford him Comfort and Relief; yet I am afraid, I ſay, that we have but too many (even in this Chriſtian Land) through Notions too contracted, and from a criminal Love of Money, who would leave this deſtitute Man, unwilling to exerciſe upon him the Generoſity of a Samaritan in paying the *Expences* of *one Night* only, much leſs in ſpeaking that moſt liberal and humane Language which the Samaritan delivered in the Morning to the Maſter of the Houſe when he was obliged to leave the poor wounded Man: "Take Care "of him, and whatſoever thou ſpendeſt more, "when I come again I will repay thee." Hence we may learn, that the truly good Man, or he who wiſhes to imitate the good Samaritan, muſt exerciſe his Mercy (according to his Opportunities and Abilities) as well

well, when *Expences attend* ſuch Acts of Mercy, as when *they do not*.

But we have before obſerved, that no *Chriſtians* could act the Part of the Prieſt and Levite—thoſe only excepted, who (as Murderers) delight in Blood: And I really believe and hope that this Obſervation will ſtand good. Still, tho' *Chriſtians* would not ſuffer their Bigotry and Prejudices thus far to get the better of their natural Feelings even as *Men*, much more of their *indiſpenſible* Duty as *Chriſtians*; yet every Denomination amongſt us have Bigotry and Prejudices too weak and even too criminal, to render the Behaviour of the Prieſt and Levite wholly inapplicable to ourſelves. Every Nation, and every religious Profeſſion amongſt us—have hereditary Notions and contracted Opinions, which border but too much upon the Preſumption and Ignorance and Obſtinacy, always ſo conſpicuous in the *Jewiſh* Heart. It was doubtleſs the

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Deſign and Employment of our Divine Lord and Maſter to rectify all Diſorders—to remove every little narrow Prejudice which Humanity was prone to: For which Purpoſe he practiſed in his own Life—a Scheme of Benevolence as extenſive as the Globe: "This *univerſal* Benevolence our Lord "makes the *Perfection* of *Religion*, and "the *Perfection* of *Religion* muſt needs be "the *Perfection* of *human Nature*."

Should indeed two Objects (equally circumſtanced in Danger and Diſtreſs) preſent themſelves to our Mercy—the one a *good*—the other a *bad* Man; or the one our *Friend* or *Acquaintance*—the other our *Enemy* or *no Acquaintance*; (if Ability be not afforded us to aſſiſt both) it ſeems to be the Voice of Juſtice as well as of Nature, and by no Means contrary to a Spirit of *univerſal* Benevolence—that we (in this Caſe) beſtow our Succour and Aſſiſtance upon the *good* Man, or upon him whom we call our *Friend* or *Acquaintance*. We may, and ought to *wiſh* the

the other *well*; and if we do this, we act, I think, quite *equal* to the Samaritan. But when no ſuch *Choice* of miſerable Objects is preſented to our Mercy, and where no ſuch *Compariſon* of Characters or Connections can be made (as was the Caſe with the Samaritan reſpecting the poor wounded Traveller) our Buſineſs is not to regard the Country—the Religion—the Connections, or even the *Character* and *Morals* of the Object (ſuppoſing that his Wants are *urgent*, and the *Danger* of his Life *apparent*, as was alſo manifeſtly the Situation of this Traveller) but in Earneſt, and without Heſitation, haſten as the Samaritan did—to adminiſter every Relief in our Power which may be neceſſary to the Eaſe and Recovery of this Object of Compaſſion—whether known or unknown—our Friend or Enemy—a Jew, a Turk—or even an Infidel.

We ſhall do well to obſerve further, that no Station, however opulent or dignified, is

exempt

exempt from Danger and Diſtreſs. We none of us know what a Day may bring forth, and our Misfortunes *oftentimes* ariſe where we *leaſt expected* them. The Caſe of the poor Traveller in the Goſpel may become in a great Meaſure the Caſe of the moſt independent amongſt us. If ſo, what would the Dignity, or Fortune, or Friends of ſuch an one *elſewhere* afford him? Unleſs ſome kind Samaritan ſhould happen to paſs by, he muſt (equally with the pooreſt Man) lie upon the Road weltering in his Blood, and periſh and die alone. Reflect then that ſhould *our own* Situation *require* it, how freely *we* ſhould *receive* Mercy; and ſuch a Reflection ſhould forcibly inſtruct us, that ſhould the Situation *of others* ſtand in *Need* of Mercy—we ought (if in our Power) as freely to *beſtow* it. The very Notion that Man was made after the Image of God teaches that every Individual thus afflicted has a Right to be thus humanely dealt by;

and

and when this is not the Caſe "Contempt "is ſhewed both to the *Image* and to the "*divine Original.*"

But whilſt we thus inſiſt that Humanity obliges us to aſſiſt our Brethren in their *extreme* Neceſſities—let it not be ſuppoſed that the great Precept of *Chriſtian Charity* is *rigorous* but in this Caſe *only*: Beſides thoſe *extreme* Neceſſities, there are *Neceſſities grievous* and more *frequent*. I am unwilling to believe that there are any amongſt the Rich ſo void of Pity as to ſee a fellow Creature periſh before their Eyes—to ſee him reduced to the *laſt Diſtreſs*, and juſt ready to *expire*—without taking Pains to preſerve Life in him, and to relieve him from ſuch *Extremity*: And let me remark alſo—that it is a very rare Sight to behold amongſt the Poor any one in a Situation *altogether* ſo *miſerable* and *deſpairing*. We may therefore ſafely conclude that it is our Duty not only to attend to thoſe *extraordinary* Neceſſities, but

but likewiſe—to *others* which are more *common* and *familiar* to us: For the Chriſtian who forms a Reſolution never to do good but in the *laſt* Neceſſities of the Poor—ſhews a Diſpoſition in a moſt eſſential Point criminal, and directly oppoſite to the divine Law.

Again; *partial* Regards and *partial* Friendſhips may poſſibly become very faulty Errors. Let it be allowed thus far, that ſome are more linked to us as Brethren, and ſome of Neceſſity render themſelves more endearing to us, than others; and Friendſhips of this Kind properly founded and properly conducted—bring with them great Sweets, and are productive of much real Virtue: Yet as God is the Father, and the *Jeruſalem above* the Mother of us *all*—as we are all born of the ſame incorruptible Seed, and capable of being equal Partakers of the ſame divine Nature——as every Day makes ſome Separation amongſt us, and as

a few Years muſt make a total one—how reaſonable the Duty, how tender the Requeſt, that our Benevolence towards each other be extenſive—if poſſible, that it be univerſal! And tho' ſome ſhould prove unworthy of our Regard and Aſſiſtance, yet we may be aſſured that our Part is (agreeably to the Goodneſs of it) accepted with God. And indeed if we would wiſh to go and do as the wiſe Samaritan did, and as the Lawyer was commanded in the Text, we muſt effectually deſire the Good and Happineſs of the *whole* World, and do all in our Power *really* to promote it: We muſt be compaſſionate and friendly, not only in *Thought* and in *Word*, but as we have Opportunity—in *Deed* and in *Truth*: By Virtue of which godlike Diſpoſition, there will exiſt in us an Heart felt Sympathy, which will ſhew itſelf by rejoicing with thoſe that do rejoice, and mourning with them that mourn. This, in a Word, is that well inſtructed

inſtructed Character which completeth all Things: The Chriſtian Faith may ſupport, and other chriſtian Virtues may defend us during our earthly Pilgrimage—but this Conduct which ſo much reſembles that of the good Samaritan—is what muſt *finally perfect* us, and is therefore the beſt adorned Pledge and Repreſentation of eternal Glory.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

UPON

A PROPER and an IMPROPER CONFORMITY to the WORLD.

PREACHED AT

QUEEN-STREET CHAPEL,

on SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1775.

SERMON IV.

PROV. xxix. 25.

The Fear of Man bringeth a Snare.

IT muſt be allowed (with Solomon) that there is a Fear of Man which bringeth a Snare or Diſgrace; but it ſeems to be equally clear and certain that there is a Fear of Man alſo which does *not* bring a Snare or Diſgrace with it, but Honour and Happineſs. Now it will be proper to prove this, before we enlarge upon the Text; before indeed we can ſay any Thing in perfect Favour of the Proverb which it contains.

A Deſire to be ſpoken well of by the World in *general*—is both natural and laudable; therefore all *honourable* Methods to obtain *this* good Opinion are to be adopted and encouraged. Although the good Man, and the Man of Integrity is convinced that he has not deſerved either public or private Cenſure; ſtill, he cannot, ſhould not always be without the *Fear* of it: Becauſe this *prudent* Fear will teach him conſtantly to endeavour to keep off Slander from the *profeſſed* Backbiter, and to prevent harſh Speeches falling from the Lips of thoſe, who from a *weak* Head, and a Propenſity to much *idle* Talking, are apt to cauſe great Miſchief to their Friends and Acquaintance, as well as to Society in general. Unjuſt Cenſures can never make an *innocent* Man *truly* miſerable; yet they are, doubtleſs, a very *conſiderable* Abatement to his *temporal* Happineſs.

To

To comply ſeaſonably, and in Proportion to their Conſequence, with the *innocent* Cuſtoms and Faſhions of the World—is *alſo*, I think, highly commendable. Wholly to give up ourſelves to them—muſt be a *faulty Compliance*; and wholly to deſpiſe them—muſt be a *faulty Singularity*. The Infirmities of human Nature, and the Difficulties of human Life—ſeem ſtrongly to apologize for the World, in contriving and encouraging certain Pleaſures and Amuſements—intended merely as ſeaſonable, indeed *neceſſary* Reliefs to Care and Solitude. This Indulgence, (as we have before hinted) muſt have its *Bounds*, to render it either lawful or becoming; but, ſurely, when exerciſed with Prudence and Diſcretion—the beſt of Men will do right even to *countenance* ſuch occaſional Intermiſſions, whether of *fancied* or *real* Joys—thus authorized by the *World* and their *own Innocence*.

But let us now attend to ſtill higher Injunctions in Favour of a *proper Conformity* to the World, or of a *laudable Fear* of Man. Maſters, Parents, Princes, are to be *feared* or reverenced; and ſo is every Perſon (in a proportionable Degree) by thoſe to whom he is *ſuperiour*, or over whom he has any *juſt* and *lawful* Authority. However diſgracefully ſuch *Superiours* may fill their reſpective Characters—ſtill it will be dutiful and prudent in every connected or dependent *Inferiour* to do *his* Part—to ſhew *Honour* to their *Stations*, though he might *juſtly* cenſure and condemn—the Men.

But if we ſuppoſe a becoming Fear or Reverence to be wanting in a Servant towards a *good* Maſter; how criminal the Ingratitude of *ſuch* a Servant! And what are the Miſchiefs which may not ariſe from *ſuch* undutiful Conduct? If we ſuppoſe *this* Fear or Reverence to be wanting in a Child towards a *good* Parent; what is there that

is

is ſhameful which we may not expect from *ſuch* a Child? Or what of Unhappineſs which *ſuch* a Parent may not tenderly experience? If we ſuppoſe this Fear or Reverence to be wanting in a Subject towards a *good* Prince; it becomes a hurtful, a deſtructive Principle indeed. And laſtly, if we ſuppoſe *this* Fear or Reverence to be wanting towards a *good* Magiſtrate, or towards a *deſerving* Superiour of any Kind; *that* wiſe *Diſtinction* of Station and Power ſo neceſſary to the well-being of Society — is hereby in Danger of being unhappily converted into *criminal* Diſcord and Confuſion: In Time — the Fear of *God*, together with the *juſt* and *lawful* Fear of *Man*, will become equally exploded; and Men will act as if (literally ſpeaking) they neither feared *them* who can *legally* kill the *Body only*, nor *him* who is able to deſtroy *both Body and Soul* in Hell. I wiſh indeed that the Period of Time may not be already arrived, when the *moral* Ties

without the *legal* would lay but *little* Reſtraint upon the *Generality* of Mankind. Nay, can even Laws be formed *cloſe enough* to repel the bold Aſſailants of our Rights and Happineſs? Or do ſuch Offenders in in *general* diſcover the *leaſt* Senſe of *Shame* or *Fear* — tho' compelled to undergo all the Pain and Ignominy, which the ſevereſt Sentence (within the Power of the Laws) can pronounce againſt them.

I muſt here repeat the melancholy Suppoſition — that the ſacred Ties of Religion *alone* — would lay but *little* Reſtraint upon the Generality of Mankind! Happy, however, is that Man who conforms to the *excepted Few* — who thinks with *them*, that if the Chriſtian Religion be of the *leaſt* Importance, it is, doubtleſs, of the *greateſt* — that if it be *any Thing at all*, it is certainly the *one Thing eſpecially needful*. And thrice happy that Parent, or Maſter of a Family, who in this Reſpect both *feareth* and *imitateth* pious *Joſhua*; who like him thus dareth to determine: *If it ſeem evil unto*

unto the irreligious Multitude ſo to do; yet as for me and my Houſe—we will ſerve the Lord.

But let me haſten now to a Vindication of the Saying of *Solomon*—that the Fear of Man bringeth a Snare.

Altho' we have been ſo ſtrongly recommending a proper Conformity to the World, as in Things of manifeſt Importance, ſo likewiſe in Things, which, tho' in Reality trifling, Cuſtom and even Religion itſelf may (in a great Meaſure) authorize and recommend; yet if we purſue this Conformity to the World as an *ultimate* Part of our Duty and Happineſs—our Conduct becomes defective in it's *main Spring*, and our Innocence, with our Happineſs, is in certain Danger of being *finally* loſt. As there is a Power *above* Man, ſo *that* Power ſhould always be feared and reverenced in *Preference* to Man. Whenever the Commands of the *World* oppoſe the Commands of *God*; I ſhould hope ever to ſacrifice the *World* (and the Power and Happineſs of a *thouſand*

ſand ſuch Worlds) to my *ſuperiour* Attachments to my *God*, and to *that Life and Immortality* ſo manifeſtly brought to Light by the Goſpel of his bleſſed Son.

And yet how many has a criminal Fear of Men or of the World prevailed upon to ridicule ſacred Truths! But if to be impious is to be *faſhionable*; who in his Senſes will dare to *comply* with the *World*, in a Matter ſo affronting to his God and Saviour—ſo degrading to the human Nature—and withal ſo dangerous to his own eternal Safety?

Again, with Reſpect to Morals alſo—how many have been weak and ſinful enough to plead *Faſhion* or *Perſuaſion* in Favour of Fraud, Oppreſſion, Perjury, and indeed Vice in general. But, ſurely, to commit evil to *oblige others*—muſt be always making *that* Evil—*our own*; and to commit Evil becauſe *others commit* it—is to make *ourſelves*—*equally* guilty and reſponſible. *Few* Men (if *any*) have it in their Power, I fear, *wholly* to avoid the Contagion of the World where

where the *private* Vices are *concerned:* But *all* Men have it in their Power *wholly* to avoid *this Contagion of the World* where the *public* Vices are *concerned.* If we may not always be able to refrain from doing Injury to *ourſelves*; yet *no* Temptation (either of *Inclination* or *Perſuaſion*) can poſſibly juſtify us in doing Injury to *others:* In the former Caſe, *Principle may exiſt* even with *Guilt*; but in the latter, it *cannot:* Yet rather than *forfeit*—*real* Principle—every good and honeſt Man would *forfeit*—his *earthly all.*

But methinks I hear Flattery particularly vindicated—that it does not amount to a *Vice*, but is (at moſt) only a *faſhionable*, indeed a *neceſſary*—*Error*. If it be *faſhionable*, yet never let us ſink the human Underſtanding ſo low as to account it *neceſſary*. There is the greateſt Difference between Reſpect and Flattery: The one *may* be a Duty—the other *muſt* be a Fault. Rudely or unſeaſonably to tell Men of their Imperfections

Imperfections will ever deſerve Rebuke—but to aſcribe to Men Virtues or Merit which we know that they are not poſſeſſed of—is as mean as it is criminal. But however Flattery may *ſometimes* ſerve a *preſent* Purpoſe; yet upon the *whole* it ſeldom anſwers: Men who are *pleaſed* with it—*to Day*—may be *juſtly diguſted* at it—*to-Morrow*; and Men who exerciſe it with Succeſs *to Day*—may be *juſtly degraded* for it—*to Morrow:* Whether therefore Flattery be a *Vice* or an *Error only*—we may venture to pronounce *Sincerity* to be the *chief Glory* of every Man's Character—and the *Want of it* our greateſt *Shame* and *Diſhonour*; as we ſhall hope more fully to make appear in two ſubſequent Diſcourſes.

As a Concluſion of the Subject before us—let it be acknowledged that the Practice of *all* Vice and Error, whether of a *public* or *private* Nature—whether done to pleaſe *ourſelves* or *others*—is generally ſeen (ſooner or later) to bring a *Snare* with it: May none of

of us ever experience *this* in *both* Worlds! To ſpeak, however, nearly in the Words of the amiable Dr. *Rogers*—after we have uſed our utmoſt Precaution—after we have called in every imaginable Aſſiſtance—great is the Work of qualifying ourſelves for Heaven, and for the Characters of Saints. Let then neither the *Cuſtoms* of Mankind nor our own *ſelf-corrupted* Hearts—let neither Profit, Pleaſure, nor *Fear*, ſo far biaſs our Judgments, as to make us court the Honours or the Company—flatter the Foibles—or commend the Vices and Infidelity—of wicked and prophane Men. Religion and it's exalted Liſt of Virtues—Heaven and all it's glorious Pretenſions—are Things of *too great* Value—either to be parted with—in a *Compliment*—or ſacrificed to an *impious* and *diſſolute World*.

SERMON

SERMON V.

UPON

PRAYER — what it is, and what it is not.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE, 1773.

SERMON V.

PSALM V. 3.

I will *direct* my Prayer unto *Thee*.

PRAYER has ever been conſidered in all Ages and by all Nations however barbarous and unenlightened—as a Duty becoming—*incumbent upon* Man. Not the Neceſſity nor Importance of Prayer then—but the *Manner* in which it *ought* to be *performed*—is intended for the Subject of our preſent Reflection; which ſeems to be happily ſuggeſted to us in the Language of the Text: "I will *direct* my Prayer unto *Thee*."

That human Nature is capable of attending ſo long or ſo ſteadily to *inviſible* as it is to *viſible* Objects—all Philoſophers deny. God therefore (the Object of our Devotion) being an inviſible Object—even the moſt pious Men find ſome Difficulty entirely to bring the Mind over from attending to the Things which are ſeen—to ſuch a Direction of itſelf to the Deity, as is required in the great Duty of Prayer. Yet this very Cauſe of natural Wandering or Inattention in Prayer—marks out a natural Relief, tho' not, at all Times, an abſolute Cure for it. It is beyond Diſpute, that great Degrees of Perfection in the Act of Prayer are in our Power of attaining—if we could but be convinced of the Method of performing it aright—and ſecure Faith and Inclination in it's Favour.

And here I am ſorry to find myſelf (in Juſtice to my Subject) under the Neceſſity of introducing a Variety of Obſervations—

the

the Truth of which will, I truſt, ſufficiently apologize for the *ſeeming* Freedom with which they may be delivered.

" The Countenance of true Devotion tho' " not to conſiſt of any hypocritical Marks " —is, nevertheleſs, peculiar to itſelf, and " generally to be diſtinguiſhed from the " careleſs Worſhipper." I mean to paſs over private Devotion, and only to ſpeak of the Church. But if we look around our Churches; by how few does the Deity ſeem to be *truly* worſhipped? Few even amongſt the religious Part of our Congregations appear to have a juſt Idea of the Properties of Prayer. They fancy that they have been praying, when in Fact they may not have offered up a ſingle Petition: They are apt, I fear, to miſtake Meditation for Prayer—and *thinking* only of their Sins for *confeſſing* them. Now nothing can conſtitute a *real* Confeſſion of Sins, but a deep Contrition of the Spirit; and nothing can

conſtitute *real* Prayer but a *Direction* of the *Soul* to the divine Object of it. The Error of *good* Men in this Matter is more to be lamented as a Misfortune than as a Crime; yet for their own Happineſs as well as for the Honour of public Worſhip—how much is it to be wiſhed that they would find out and rectify ſo general a Miſtake! But what Excuſe can we make for thoſe of our Congregation, who ſeem to be entirely loſt to all Senſe of Prayer; as if they were not at all concerned in what was doing, nor even deſirous of becoming ſo? Again, what muſt we think of thoſe who hope to paſs for Devotioniſts, and to partake of the Benefits of public Worſhip—merely from the Aſſiſtance and Efficacy of the Word—*Amen?* "The Prayer offered up by "the Miniſter becomes the undoubted Prayer "of the Man, who with a *Direction* of his "*Heart* to *God* attends in every Part of it, "and at the End delivers his own, *So be it:*

"But

"But what can be the Efficacy of *that* Man's "*Amen*, who ſpeaks it only from a Kind of "*mechanical Liſten* to the Voice of the Miniſ-"ter at the Cloſe of a Prayer or Collect"—when he himſelf, perhaps, during the delivering of ſuch Prayer or Collect—has been engaged—either in telling his Gold—in envying or ſupplanting his Neighbour—in cheriſhing ſome ſinful Paſſion—elſe (which is to make the beſt of it) in an idle *Vacancy* of Thought?

Such is the Charge which the Clergy in too many Inſtances may juſtly lay to the People: A Charge too of a ſerious and affronting Nature. But have the People no Cauſe to complain of the Clergy in this Matter? Not that ſuch a Complaint, however great or juſt, can leſſen *their* Guilt, or excuſe *their* Irreverence towards God. Yet ſurely if *we* can with *Truth* be arraigned of *general* Negligence and Inattention in Prayer—our *own* Guilt and Irreverence towards

God ſhould ſtrike us with Concern and Remorſe. And I am afraid that upon true Speculation we ſhall find—that we have really leſſened ourſelves *more*, and have given greater Advantages to our *diſſenting* Brethren, by theſe Means, than by any other whatever. Their Objections to our Liturgy (great as they originally were and ſtill may be) ſeem to be manifeſtly exceeded by their Objections to the *Manner*, in which it is but too *generally* performed. This Opinion I gained ſome Years ago from the Mouth of one of their moſt eminent Divines; and I am concerned to add that my own Experience, ſince that Time, has too fully convinced me of the Juſtneſs of his Remark. We ſhould ever remember that *merely* to *read* a Form of Prayer cannot be *praying* in the Clergy, any more than ſinking into a *mere Formality* of Poſture and reſponding can *be praying* in the People. The Articles of our Faith and our Mode of

Church-

Church-Government—we ſhall, I hope, be always able to *defend*; but an irreverent Method of performing Divine Service—is (doubtleſs) *altogether indefenſible*. Do we boaſt of the *ſingular* Bleſſing of a *Form* of Prayer ſolemnly *adapted* to the *divine* Ear? The greater our Boaſt, the greater ſurely is our Reproach: And was ſuch *Form* even *more* perfect than it is—even *more* ſolemnly adapted to the divine Ear; yet if in the Uſe or Performance of it, we ſhould be *wilfully* deficient in that Attention—that *Direction* of the Soul which alone can conſtitute *true* Devotion—however we might admire it as a *Compoſition*; it's Beauties would ſoon become too familiar to us—and for Want of *Inclination* to perform the Service—we ſhould be as ready *then* as ſome of us may be *now*—to cry out—"the *Church* does *indeed* "take up *too much* of our *Time* in *Prayer*."

I wiſh that it may not be conſidered as a Misfortune, that the *dignified* amongſt us ſhould ſo *univerſally* confine themſelves to *preaching*, and that the ſtill *more important* Services of the Deſk ſhould be the *conſtant* Lot of the *inferiour* Clergy. This Cuſtom (tho' exerciſed with great Reaſon in the early Parts of the Reformation) has proved, perhaps, of no *ſmall* Diſſervice to public Worſhip—no *ſlender* Weapon of Defence to our *Liturgical* Adverſaries: It has, perhaps, been innocently inſtrumental towards *raiſing Preaching* (let me be juſtified in the Expreſſion) *above itſelf*, by *ſinking Prayer—infinitely below itſelf*—towards making too many of us (for the Sake of *ſuperiour* Fame and *ſuperiour* Dignity, and fearleſs *now* of the *unmeaning* Terms—*Hereſy* and *Schiſm*) become *extravagant Enthuſiaſts* (I had almoſt ſaid *Mountebanks*) in the *Pulpit*, and *irreverent—inſenſible Drones* in the *Deſk*. Far be it from me to degrade *rational*, nay

frequent

frequent preaching: It is a *noble and important Ordinance of the Church*, and cannot be cenſured but in a comparative View; as it appears to render us *wilfully* and *habitually* negligent in an *Ordinance ſtill more noble, ſtill more important:* And if this ſhould be found to be in *Reality* the Caſe; might we not with Reaſon complain that we have *too much of preaching* inſtead of *praying*—and contend, that if any Part of the *full* Service upon a *Sunday* Morning is *ever* to be *diſpenſed* with—let it be—the *Sermon.*

And pardon me for ſuggeſting that this Negligence and Inattention in the Deſk, ſo *generally*, and, I fear, ſo *juſtly* laid to our Charge—has *ſomewhat* of a Foundation even *earlier* than the Period of taking *holy Orders.* I will not, I need not explain myſelf any further. Advice in this Matter would come with more Gracefulneſs from an older and a wiſer Man; yet *Principiis obſta* we *all* know to be moſt excellent Admonition: We ſhall

find

find it ſo, reſpecting every *faulty* Step throughout the *whole* Journey of Life, and *eſpecially ſerviceable* towards preventing a Cuſtom or Habit in the Performance of religious Offices, which muſt needs reflect Diſhonour upon ourſelves and our Profeſſion. Whatever our Errors may be *out* of the Church; yet I ſhould hope that no one would wiſh to increaſe them *in* it. Our Paſſions, our Temptations, our Company, may, poſſibly, plead ſomewhat in our Favour for Tranſgreſſions *out* of the *Church* — but our Underſtandings as well as our Hearts muſt repreſent us as *wholly unpardonable* for any conſcious or habitual Irreverence *within it's* ſacred Walls.

If it ſhould be conjectured, that in this Sermon I have had a *partial* Reverence to a *certain modern* Controverſy; I will beg Leave to obſerve, that altho' too *ſtrict* an *Adherence* to *Tradition* was complained of by our Saviour in the

Jewiſh

Jewiſh Elders — yet that the *faulty Love* of *Novelty* in the *Athenian* ſeems to be as ſharply reprehended by St. *Paul.* Antiquity, *(merely as ſuch)* muſt never be conſidered by *Proteſtants* as the *Standard* of Religion: Neither muſt *Antiquity* (*becauſe ſuch)* be *neceſſarily objected to*, and *given up* at Random, in Compliment to every *new* religious Syſtem: At this Rate of Diſcretion (to ſpeak in the Words of one, who made a Study of the human Heart) "We may at Length grow weary "of the plain Truths of the Goſpel — ſuch "as Death and Judgement — Heaven and "Hell; and ſo (even before we are aware "of it) turn univerſal Sceptics, and throw "up every Thing that is worthy of the "Name of Religion."

To revert, however, more immediately to the Point in Queſtion; we know that in our Liturgy as it *now* ſtands — God is capable of being *greatly glorified*; and let

us

us ſuppoſe that had it undergone an Alteration *He* would have been *equally ſo:* Yet ſince this our Form of Prayer is not likely to undergo any Alteration — it ſeems to be both prudent and our *Duty* to hope that *no ſuch Alteration* was at all *neceſſary* — and to endeavour to ſupply the *ſeeming* Defects of it, by an *additional Zeal and Propriety* in the *Uſe* or *Performance* of it. An Experiment of this Sort will unavoidably be *ſome Relief* to the *preſent Complaint* — it will alſo greatly raiſe us in the Character of Devotioniſts — and in Time may, probably, *alter* — *poſſibly*, *amend* our Judgments as Critics; in ſoftening what we may *now* call — a *tedious Prolixity* — into an *intereſting Copiouſneſs*; or an *heavy* and *uſeleſs Tautology* — into a *pious* and *profitable Repetition*. Be this, however, as it may; what I have been *now* contending for — is a *Sincerity of Soul* in the Act of *Prayer* — a Sincerity which ſhall in nowiſe

loſe

loſe it's Reward; in nowiſe loſe it here upon Earth — in the Approbation of the Heart; in nowiſe loſe it in Eternity — in the perſonal Approbation of our God.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

ON

SOLOMON's REQUEST.

Preached at St. MARY LE BOW,
on SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 1771.

SERMON VI.

1 KINGS iii. 10.

And the Speech pleaſed the Lord that Solomon *had aſked this Thing.*

SOLOMON was *now* in the Beginning of his Reign, having but in the former Chapter buried his Father King *David.* At the fifth Verſe of the preſent Chapter we read that in *Gibeon* the Lord appeared to *Solomon* in a Dream by Night—and God ſaid, "Aſk what I ſhall give Thee." We are not to judge of the *Viſions* of thoſe Days by the *Dreams* of our own; becauſe

then it was very uſual for the Lord to make Diſcoveries to the Mind when the Senſes were aſleep and inactive. And indeed that God does this *ſometimes* even to *Us*, (tho' in a leſs important Way) I am very ready to believe: To ſay that He cannot—would be impious; to ſay that He has never done it—would, I ſuppoſe, be contradicting the certain Experience of many in every Age of the World. But to confine ourſelves to *Solomon*, whoſe Mind ſeems to have been quite as full of *regular* Thought at the Time of this Viſion—as we might have expected that it would have been, had not the Senſes been locked up in Sleep: We find no rambling Anſwer returned to the Lord; but ſuch an one as ſhewed the greateſt Power of accurate and conſiſtent ſpeaking, as well as a moſt ſtriking Diffidence, and Sublimity of Sentiment. And the Speech, we find, pleaſed the Lord. It could not do otherwiſe. Picture to yourſelves

ſelves ſo *young* a Man ſucceeding to the Crown of ſo *vaſt* a Kingdom: Think too of the natural Gaiety of *Solomon*'s Temper; and then let us wondering—revere him for his Choice, in aſking only for Wiſdom and Underſtanding, by which he might diſcern between good and Evil, and ſo judge his People righteouſly.

And here let me refer you to the liberal reply on God's Part. No Wonder that a Promiſe ſo much exceeding the Requeſt—cauſed the rapturous Heart of *Solomon* to wipe the drowſy Slumbers from his Eyes, and every other Senſe to ariſe into peculiar Activity. Yes, he awoke, and behold it was a Dream: Yet not doubting the Reality of the heavenly Viſion, "he came to "*Jeruſalem*, and ſtood before the Ark of "the Covenant of the Lord, and offered "up Burnt-Offerings, and Peace-Offerings."

Now as a Trial of his Wiſdom and righteous Judgment—there came two Wo-

men before him, bringing with them a *dead* and a *living* Child. The Conteſt before the King was— whoſe the *living* Child ſhould be—each declaring that it was hers. *Solomon*'s Method of ſearching out the Mother was every Thing that is juſt, wonderful, and affecting. Juſt indeed it could not well be to have taken away the Life of the innocent Babe: Yet as we are to ſuppoſe that *Solomon* knew how human Nature would work in this Matter—he in Appearance forgets that the Thing claimed had a *Being* valuable even to thoſe who claimed it; and therefore by ordering the Child to be divided, he ſuppoſes that he might pleaſe them both, and be thought by the Court to have paſſed a righteous Judgment. It may not be unintereſting, perhaps, to fancy this Scene now before us. *Solomon* upon his Throne—the Sword drawn in his Hand—and the poor little Innocent upon the Point of being ſacrificed. Behold the

real

real Mother ſwooning, as it were, at the Sight of the drawn Sword, juſt ready to fall upon, nay and to divide her Infant! How do her maternal Bowels *yearn* upon the little Victim—to ſave whom (tho' it be delivered up to a pretended Parent) mark her generous Reſignation: "O my Lord—give "*her* the *living* Child, and in no wiſe ſlay "it." Upon which, fancy the other *(unnatural)* Woman (loſing all Regard for the Babe, and filled with Revenge towards the agitated, humane Mother) exulting at the Sentence of the Judge, and anxious for the Execution of it—hear her own barbarous Expreſſion—let it be neither *mine* nor *thine*, but *divide* it. Then did the King's Diſcernment appear juſt both to himſelf and to thoſe preſent. The Difference of Countenance and Behaviour in the two Women—plainly pointed out the *real* Mother of the Child: And the King anſwered and ſaid—"Give *her* the *living* Child"—

her who aſked it's *Life*—" and in no wiſe " ſlay it—for *ſhe* is the *Mother* thereof. " And all *Iſrael* heard of the Judgment " which the King had judged, and they " feared the King, for they ſaw that the " Wiſdom of God was in him to do Judg- " ment."

The chief Uſe that I would wiſh to make of this Promiſe to *Solomon* and the Fulfillment of it is—that as *he* aſked of God the Bleſſing of a wiſe and underſtanding Heart to govern his People—ſo *we* ſhould learn to apply to the ſame all powerful Deity for the Enjoyment of every lawful and eligible Wiſh. It is poſſible for us to thirſt after Things, which tho' lawful—may not be expedient to our Happineſs. Now all the Pleaſures dependent upon Time or the World—are capable of being *thus* miſtaken by us; and therefore altho' we ſhould aſk any of them of God, or ſhould *wiſh* for them only, and he ſhould not permit

permit them to be given to us—yet if we ſearch diligently we ſhall find, by and by, upon Reflection and Experience—that ſuch Diſappointment has been profitable to us. So likewiſe if we (as it were) inſiſt upon being gratified—and God acquieſces in our random and ill-judged Petitions—Time and Circumſtances in Life, will, probably, ſoon convince us, that our Notions of Happineſs were falſly grounded; for that by the *Enjoyment* of our haſty and *poſitive* Wiſhes—we are become *wretched.* Where ſhall we meet with the Man, who in ſome *material* Inſtance or another—has not experienced the Truth of theſe Obſervations?

With Regard indeed to Bleſſings which owe not their Exiſtence or Support to the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life—for Bleſſings like theſe we cannot be too importunate. It never can be wrong to beſeech the Almighty to make us honeſt,

humane, juſt, and good. We may reſt aſſured that it never can be againſt the divine Will—that Mankind ſhould be poſſeſſed of Virtues like theſe: On the Contrary, that he is ever moſtly delighted with thoſe Diſpoſitions, in whom theſe Virtues are moſtly to be found. The more averſe we are by Nature from the Practice of what is right—the more importunate ſhould our Requeſts be. *Solomon*, it is true, received as ſoon as he aſked: Yet at the Time that we admire the Power and extraordinary Favour of the Deity reſpecting *Solomon*—let us take Care that we diſtruſt him not reſpecting *ourſelves*; tho' *we* ſeek *our* ſpiritual Bleſſings with Sighs and Tears—and tho' *we* wait *long* for *Enjoyment*. Never let us deſpair—never let us give over petitioning the Almighty for any Thing which tends to *his* Glory, and the good of the Chriſtian and moral World. Altho' Days of immediate Inſpiration as well as heavenly Viſions

—are

—are *now* Things not to be expected; yet what happened to our Forefathers ſhould be ſufficient to fix in *us* the ſame Confidence in the ſame God: Added to all this—*we* believe and preach for *our* happy Conviction in this Point—the Omnipotent himſelf riſen from the Dead.

As to the *exact* Nature of *Solomon*'s Requeſt (however meritorious, and however proper for *him*) it is of Concern but to *Few*. *Few* are born to govern over a great People! Thoſe indeed who act as Rulers in Life (tho' it be only over a private Family or a ſmall Community of Men) will do right to join in *Solomon*'s Petition. Let it be remembered, that to *govern well* is more difficult than to be *well governed*; more difficult, I mean, with Regard to pleaſing God: To wiſh to do this—is therefore certainly a moral Wiſh, and as ſuch muſt be always lawful and expedient. The *Wiſdom* of *Solomon*, as it is *never* to be

found

found in *any* Man, ſo it can *never* be *neceſſary* in *any* Man.—But as to a good Heart—this is *always neceſſary* in *every* Man, (eſpecially in him who governs)—and it ſhould be the Buſineſs of our Lives to obtain and to preſerve it. And an underſtanding Heart in this Senſe—to diſcern between good and evil—brings the Application of *Solomon* home—to Mankind in general. The Man who deſires to love his God with all poſſible ~~Serenity~~ *ſincerity* of Soul —to do to others as he would wiſh that they ſhould do to *him*—and to learn and labour to do his Duty in that State of Life unto which it ſhall have pleaſed God to call him; the Man, I ſay, who *wiſhes thus* cannot be without an underſtanding Heart to judge and well govern himſelf, and ſuch an one may reſt aſſured, that the Speech will ever pleaſe the Lord that he aſked this Thing.

And

And whilſt we *thus* apply for moral or ſpiritual Bleſſings *only*—we may, probably, procure temporal Bleſſings *alſo*. Promiſes indeed belong to Times of Inſpiration—we muſt not expect *them*; but it is the Property of divine Goodneſs to confer even *more* than we *deſire*. It was but too natural to ſuppoſe that *Solomon* would have aſked for Riches and Honours—or Succeſs in War—or long Life: Yet when he confined his Requeſt ſo intirely to the Mind—how gracious was the Promiſe on God's Part, touching every temporal Comfort and Advantage!

But let it be with great Serioufneſs conſidered—that our own *beſt* Endeavours are *abſolutely neceſſary*—that our Prayers and Confidence on God will not do *alone*. As the Proof of a good Heart cannot be given without a Temptation to evil or an Opportunity of acting well; ſo unleſs we uſe the natural Means to keep off an Evil, and allow

allow ourſelves Time for the Practice of Good—ſuch Proof of an underſtanding Heart muſt needs be wanting with Reſpect to the World, and as I ſhould think—it muſt be very imperfect in the Sight of God. *Solomon* himſelf, tho' his Knowledge was in a great Meaſure infuſed, did not neglect to cultivate ſuch Knowledge, thus by Application and Care perfecting the extraordinary Gifts which he had received of Heaven.

The chief Inſtruction, however, which the preſent Subject conveys to us—is manifeſtly confined to Petitions to the divine Throne. If then we wiſh for proſperous Fortune, or to eſcape an impending Affliction—always let us addreſs the Deity in theſe Words of our reſigned Saviour—"Father, if Thou art willing." This let us do, altho' we ſeek Proſperity with pleaſing Senſations—and back our Petitions to avoid Misfortunes, with ſtrong Crying and Tears.

Tears. But for ſpiritual Bleſſings—Bleſſings which intirely depend upon the Mind—for theſe (as we have before obſerved)—we cannot be too *poſitive* or too importunate: "The more earneſtly we cry—the "more lively Senſe do we diſcover of the "Worth of ſuch Bleſſings, and the better "Diſpoſition to receive them." And if we find (for ſome wiſe Purpoſes) that God witholds from us a *Goodneſs of Heart*; let us perſevere in aſking it—even in the Words of the Patriarch *Jacob*—"I will not let "Thee go, unleſs Thou bleſs me." To this divine Being, *who* is always more ready to *hear* than *we* to *pray*—and to give *more* than we deſire or deſerve—to Him (the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt) be everlaſting Praiſe—even from Generation to Generation—World without End. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

UPON

AGUR's REQUEST.

SERMON VII.

Preached at COURT on *Sunday, Oct.* 2, 1774.

PROVERBS XXX. 7, 8, 9.

Two Things have I required of Thee, deny me them not, before I die: Remove far from me Vanity and Lies; give me neither Riches nor Poverty; feed me with Food convenient for me: Leſt I be full and deny Thee, and ſay who is the Lord? or leſt I be poor and ſteal, and take the Name of my God in vain.

FROM the Text we are invited to draw the two Extremes—*Greatneſs* and *Obſcurity*—of Station—*Riches*, and *Poverty*: Afterwards, the *Medium* of

 theſe,

theſe, which according to wiſe *Agur* is the *Standard* of human Happineſs. But I ſhall, finally, have Occaſion to obſerve, that only the Nature of Things is here to be attended to, which Men may either improve or vitiate, as they are influenced by their Paſſions and Conduct.

" Proſperity then conſidered in the *beſt*
" Light is accompanied with many Incon-
" veniencies—conſidered in *any other* Light
" —it is, doubtleſs, a dangerous State."
The profuſe, giddy, diſſipating Man of Fortune has ever round him a thouſand ſervile Paraſites—a thouſand fawning Sycophants—ready to immortalize his few and, perhaps, but *little* Virtues; or if he be even devoid of *any* Virtues—to conſtrue into *Virtues*, the moſt glaring *Vices*. His Life, in ſhort, is a continued Deluſion; and when he comes to die, it is well for him if he does not experience, that he has not only been flattered out of his *Fortune*, but out of his *Happineſs alſo*.

Again,

Again, in our Acquiſition of Riches and Honours—we too generally neglect to ſacrifice to Contentment, the chief Spring of human Happineſs. "Some of this Stamp "are governed by the *Clue* of Ambition, "others by the *Lure* of Avarice." Ambition when it excites a Man to juſt and honourable Actions upon juſt and honourable Principles—ſuch as make him grateful for his preſent Situation, tho' willing to raiſe it—ſuch as render him delighted with no Popularity but what is ſeconded by the *Teſtimony* of his *own Heart*; this Man's Ambition is laudable, and muſt afford him real Satisfaction: But we are now ſpeaking of a Paſſion which prevails upon a Man to go into the World mindful of himſelf only; "who catches at the Applauſe of an "idle, impetuous, miſtaken Multitude, "without once caring whether he has de-"ſerved it or not—or what Uſe he ſhould "put it to." Now ſuch an one is neceſſa-

rily *diſquieted* both in his *Succeſſes* and in his *Diſappointments*: If Hundreds attend upon him to proclaim his Greatneſs—his Vanity wiſhes for Thouſands—and if Thouſands—then for Tens of Thouſands—and ſo on, till the whole Earth ſhould pay him Adoration: And even in this Caſe, he would be more apt with *Alexander* to wiſh for *other* Worlds which may afford his Vanity *freſh* Qualifications—than with the *ſatisfied Domitian* (after he had poſſeſſed himſelf of the *Roman* Empire) to turn his Deſires upon *catching Flies*. But ſhould the Man of this Turn be diſappointed in his Hopes and Expectations—totally unſucceſsful in any of his *favourite* Schemes—he henceforth leads a Life of Diſcouragement, and if I may ſo ſay—of *proud* Deſpair.

Next let us take a faint Survey of the Miſer, and ſee how far his Condition is to be *envied*—or rather *dreaded*. Avarice is

ſaid

ſaid to ſtick deeper into the Soul than any other Vice; and indeed very little of Obſervation will convince us of the Truth of this: In general, Avarice ſtrikes at the Root of every Thing great and becoming: It's Poſſeſſor (according to Mr. *Addiſon*) is neither happy *himſelf*, nor will he let thoſe *connected with him* be ſo: His Character is ſeldom other, than that of a peeviſh and cruel *Maſter*—a ſevere *Parent*—a gloomy, unaffectionate *Huſband*—a reſerved and a ſuſpecting *Friend*. Surely Avarice is a *ſingular* Curſe upon whomſoever it falls: For notwithſtanding every Argument in Favour of prudent Gain and prudent Management—the Opinion of a Miſer debaſes the very Being of a human Creature, "and cauſes "our valuable Paſſions, which might other-"wiſe have made us happy, to leave their "natural Bent, and expoſe us to the Hatred "of God and the World."

But to ſhift this Scene, and to ſuppoſe Wealth and Honours to exiſt without Avarice and Diſcontent: Still how naturally do theſe Situations lead Men on to Noiſe and Hurry, and a continued Round of idle Diſſipation. What great Command muſt theſe Men have over themſelves—to give the Mind *Leiſure* to think *ſeriouſly*; and how apt their Situations in Life are to make them ſo ſenſible of being able to help *themſelves*, as to *forget*, or even, I fear, ſometimes, to *diſown* the *All-ſufficiency* of *God*—or in the Words of *Agur*—to be full and deny Him, and ſay, who is the Lord?

To wiſh then for any of theſe Characters (if ſuch be the Effects of them) would be Folly, and hurtful to us, who have all the Reaſon in the World to wiſh to be removed far from them. Nor, as I am now to obſerve—will *extreme* Poverty or extreme Obſcurity of Station be found *deſirable*, or indeed, generally ſpeaking, conducive to

Religion

Religion and *Virtue*. As wretched as they are numerous are the Inconveniencies of *this* State. Even the very *Nature* of a Man may be *changed* by it. A Thouſand Things happen to him which the *World* do not, or will not *know* of—cannot, or will not *prevent*. Friendſhip he finds but an airy Sound: The rich and goodly Produce of the Earth is nothing to *him*; *he* enjoys theſe Things *no more* than the *irrational* Parts of the Creation: Nay, nor *ſo much*—becauſe Nouriſhment is dealt out to *them* agreeably to their reſpective Natures: He ſeems, in a Word, to be ſhut out from Society—to be denied every Privilege due to his Exiſtence. Now what Encouragement is to be expected in ſuch a Breaſt as this? Is it, can it be pleaſing thus to breathe, known only to Contempt, Solitude, and Want? Is it unlikely indeed that we may be led to charge God *fooliſhly* when ſuch a Scene of complicated Ills is

placed before us? To think that our Piety, our many humane Virtues, and withal an honeſt, inceſſant Induſtry—to think that all theſe are *ſometimes* inſufficient to keep us from the ſad School of Poverty—muſt be a Reflection, which none but very great Souls can poſſibly ſupport: The Chances, however, are ſo much againſt even the *beſt* of us, that if we have a Mind to be ſecure—we ſhall never *requeſt* to be put to the *Trial* of it. And if this be the Caſe with the Man of Poverty who is willing to make every poſſible Reſiſtance againſt the Evils ſo incident to his Situation; how much more dangerous muſt *his* Condition be, who at *once* falls into the Snare which pious *Agur* wiſhes to avoid—who at *once* is induced to *ſteal*, and to take the Name of his God in *vain?* How ſuch a Diſpoſition increaſes by Indulgence—I need not undertake to prove: The Man—who being expoſed to Want *thus readily* parts with his

his *Honeſty* to gain Relief—will very ſoon be prevailed upon to part with his *Religion too*; and having once given up theſe Valuables—he finds no *Inclination*—but if an *Inclination*, he ſeldom has *Power* to deſiſt from following this unjuſt and illegal Courſe, till he becomes a Sacrifice to the Laws of his Country.

Let not what I have urged againſt Affluence and Poverty—or againſt the moſt exalted and the moſt obſcure Situations—be received, as if I ſuppoſed that God by placing us in *either* puts it out of our *Power* to *pleaſe* Him: We may, doubtleſs, and it is expected that we *ſhall* be *good* Servants under *any* Circumſtances. What I have endeavoured to prove is—that *ſome* Situations require greater Fortitude, greater Perſeverance than *others*—that the rich or great Man's Life is far from a *ſecure*, and *ſhould* be as far from an *idle* one—that his Truſt is of an important Nature, and that he

he has the whole World to perſuade him to break and violate it. So on the other Hand, that a State of Poverty and extreme Obſcurity is alſo vaſtly intricate, and dangerous to our Virtue—that the poor Man's general Fate in the World is ſuch as muſt hurt a rational Creature, and that unleſs he puts on the whole Armour of God, he will have an hard Matter to withſtand ſo ſevere a Conflict. Yet if we were but to guard the Mind with Reaſon and Reflection enough to make us look upon ourſelves at all Times as under the Guidance of a God, who (if we aſk it with Sincerity) will give us Ability to overcome our Trials, (however great and numerous) and who (hereafter at leaſt) will reward us according to the Nature and Frequency of ſuch Victories; if, I ſay, we can but be convinced of this moſt happy Truth (which as Chriſtians we are bound to believe)—*then* may we be indifferent, as it were, in

our

our Choice of Situations: Or though (to avoid a greater Share of ſinful Temptation, and to enjoy the leſs diſturbed Mediocrity) we ſhould requeſt to be removed from Riches and Poverty—yet we ſhall be happy, becauſe we ſhall act becomingly and as God's Servants—let either the one or the other prove our appointed Lot.

But it may be Time now to introduce the *Eligibleneſs* of *that State* which *Agur* ſo much wiſhes to *enjoy*—the *Happineſs* of *that Man* whom *Agur* ſo much wiſhes to *be*—A Man whom Poverty does not afflict, nor Riches torment—A Man neither obnoxious to the *Envy* ſo peculiar to the *Great*, nor yet to the *Contempt* ſo often thrown upon the Man of *Poverty*—A Man who ſleeps ſound; undiſturbed either by the Bitterneſs of Diſtreſs, or by the Reſtleſſneſs of Luxury—A Man, who when he awakes—wants not *Means* to obtain his *daily Bread*, nor yet is filled with *trifling*

Care

Care how to paſs the *Day* in *expenſive* Diſſipation—A Man who thinks upon his God with Gratitude, and juſtly commends his Eſtate before him; which, though it forbids him the Pomp of a Monarch, amply fills up this Degree of *dangerous* Greatneſs, by placing him above the ſad Ills of the wretched Slave—A Man, who has it not in his Power to be ſo loſt in Senſuality and Independency—to be ſo full as to deny his God; nor has he any Inducement from the Feelings of Adverſity, either to ſteal, or to take the Name of his God in vain—A Man, in a Word, who has great Reaſon to be pleaſed and happy with his Lot, which is, doubtleſs, caſt upon the faireſt Ground—where he is not "liable to be trampled upon as the humble Shrub, nor expoſed to Winds like the lofty Pine."

If the *Eligibleneſs* of the *State* and the *Happineſs* of the *Man* were always *ſure* to be *thus* united; we might congratulate the

far

far greater Part of Mankind upon being happy, to whoſe Lot this middle Station manifeſtly falls. But this, I fear, is by no Means the Caſe. Perſons in the middle Station are too apt to behave tyrannically to their Inferiours, and inſolently to their Betters; and to adopt a Mode of *Living* in Imitation of their Superiours—as awkward as it is miſtaken—as abſurd and ridiculous, as it is *hurtful* to their *Fortunes* and *dangerous* to their *Reputations*. Nay, upon a ſtrict Obſervance it will be found perhaps—that Men thus placed in a Situation ſo calculated by Nature to render them *happieſt*—are the Characters in Life who make *themſelves more* wretched, and offend Religion and Society *more* than Men placed in the *extreme* Stations—of Greatneſs and Obſcurity—of Riches and Poverty. So that after all—it is not *this* or *that* Situation, but our *well* or *ill* behaving ourſelves in our own *reſpective* ones—which alone can

juſtly

juſtly gain us either Eſteem or Reproach, or juſtly conſtitute us either happy or miſerable. *Happy* did I ſay? It is eaſily pronounced, and the Word carries with it a moſt delightful Sound; but it is an Epithet of ſuch a Nature, that in order to prove it's Juſtneſs, a Man muſt ſpeak it of *himſelf*. Nay, ſo ſudden and ſo great are the Changes of the human Heart—that a Man may *think* himſelf and may *be*—*happy*—*to Day*—and *think* himſelf and may *be*—*deſervedly wretched*—*to Morrow*: Therefore no *juſt* Eſtimate of human Happineſs can be taken—till we come to die. This is the only Period, when Things are likely to appear ſtripped of all Diſguiſe—the only Period when we may be ſuppoſed incapable of deceiving—either ourſelves or others: No Room being *now* left for a Change of Sentiment and Conduct—we are likelieſt to arrive at an *almoſt certain* Knowledge of *what* we *are*—*what* we *have been*—*what*

we

we *ſhall be:* In order to gain this moſt important Secret—the grand Queſtion will be —not *what* Station we have *filled,* but *how* we have *filled* it? Notwithſtanding therefore the *Wiſdom* of *Agur*'s Requeſt—we ſhall do well to attend to the ſtill *wiſer* Conſideration—that the true Eſtimate of Man's Happineſs is not to be formed from *Station*—but from *Action*—Action founded upon this *great Chriſtian* Principle——that Vice in *any* Station—*muſt* be puniſhed ——Virtue in *any* Station—*muſt* be rewarded.

SERMON VIII.

UPON

PLAIN TRUTH.

SERMON VIII.

MATTHEW ii. 2.

Where is he that is born King of the Jews?

TRUTH (by which I mean eſpecially—*divine* Truth) is the *one* Thing here below—worthy of the Care and Reſearches of Man. It *alone* is the Source of ſolid Satisfaction; the Foundation of our *Hopes*, the Conſolation of our *Fears*—the Soother of our *Misfortunes*, the Remedy of all our *Pains:* It *alone* is the *Reſource* of a *good* Conſcience, the *Ter-*

ror of a *bad* one—the ſecret *Torture* of *Vice*, the inward *Recompence* of *Virtue:* It *alone* immortalizes thoſe who *love* it—renders glorious the *Chains* of thoſe who *ſuffer* for it—and reſpectable the *Poverty* of thoſe, who have quitted *all* for it's Sake.

There are, who love to make *Truth* the Subject of the Contention of *vain* Philoſophy. There are again, who wiſh (as it were) to know the *Truth*, but they ſearch not for it as they *ought*, becauſe (at the Bottom) they would be diſpleaſed to find it. And there are a third Sort of Men, who being ſomewhat more flexible—ſuffer themſelves to *ſtagger* at the Evidence of *divine* Truth; yet repulſed by the *Difficulties* which it *propoſes*, and the *Perſeverance* which it *requires*—they receive it not with *that* Joy and Knowledge which it inſpires, when Men have been *for ſome Time* acquainted with it.

How

How different *theſe* Diſpoſitions to *that* of the three eaſtern Sages! Accuſtomed as they had been by a *public* Profeſſion of Wiſdom and Philoſophy to have Recourſe to the Powers of *vain* human Reaſon, and to ſoar above *popular* Prejudices; yet in the preſent Caſe they did not ſo much as *attempt* to examine if this *new* Star could not find it's *Cauſes* in *Nature*: Inſtructed by the inſpired Prophets concerning this *new* Star of *Jacob*—that it *muſt* one Day appear—they ſuffer *it* at *once* to determine and to conduct them—knowing that divine *Grace* always leaves *ſome* Obſcurities in the Ways wherein it calls us, in order that it might not take from our Faith the *Merit* of a Submiſſion—and that when Men are ſo happy as to diſcover only one *Glimmering* of Truth, the Uprightneſs of the Heart ſhould ſupply what is *wanting* in the Evidence of the Light: "We have ſeen his

" Star, ſay the wiſe Men, and are come to " worſhip Him."

Theſe eaſtern Sages could not be ignorant that the News which they came to pronounce at *Jeruſalem* would be diſpleaſing to *Herod:* He was ever in Fear that ſome Heir of the Blood of the Kings of *Judah* would claim the Heritage of his Fathers, and ſit upon the Throne promiſed to their Poſterity: Upon which Account we muſt not wonder that he appears ſo little to reſpect Men, who declare in the Midſt of *Jeruſalem* that the *King* of the *Jews* is *born*, and declare him too to a People ſo zealous for the Blood of *David*, and ſo impatient of all foreign Dominion. And yet the wiſe Men conceal nothing of what they had ſeen in the Eaſt:—They do not cover this great Event over with Expreſſions at all calculated to ſuppreſs the Jealouſy of *Herod.* They might indeed have called the *Meſſiah*, whom they were

ſeeking

ſeeking, the *Embaſſador of Heaven*, or the *Deſire* of *Nations*: They might, it is true, have marked him out by Titles *even leſs odious* to the Ambition of *Herod:* But full of the *Truth* which had appeared to them —they know nothing of ſuch timid Management—concluding that thoſe who had not a Mind to receive the *Truth* but thro' the Channel of *Error*—were not *worthy* of it: They could not explain their Errand under *Reſerves* and *Diſguiſes unworthy* of it: They aſk without Heſitation—where is he who is born King of the *Jews?* They do not propoſe their Queſtion with a *ſoft Medium* likely to produce an Anſwer to *deceive* them—they wiſhed to be convinced —they ſought the *Truth* with *Sincerity*, and therefore it was that they ſo *happily found* it.

A Diſpoſition *this*, as rare and uncommon in *Degree*, as the great Event itſelf, which we are *here* contemplating. Men do

not find the *Truth*, becauſe they do not ſeek it with an Heart upright and ſincere: They diſperſe throughout all Points which lead to it—Clouds, which cauſe them to loſe their Way: We indeed conſult touching this Matter—but we cover our Paſſions over with Colours ſo *ſoft* and *ſo like* unto the *Truth*, that we force ourſelves, at Length, to anſwer—that ſuch *Deception*—is Truth itſelf: We have no Inclination to be *inſtructed*—we wiſh to be *deceived*; and to add to *the Paſſion* which thus *inſlaves* us—an *Authority*, which ſerves only to calm and ſtupify us. Such is the Illuſion of, I fear, the far greater Part of Mankind! Even the beſt of Men have, I fear, within them *ſome* ſecret and privileged Attachment, by Means of which they take but *Half* the Guide of Conſcience—ſome cheriſhed, ill-turned Paſſion (ſaved from the Aſhes of others) which prevents them from ſearching heartily for the Truth.

Again,

Again, there are always of our Neighbours and Acquaintance, whoſe Conduct betrays us. Our Friends are ſilent: Our Superiours, through Complaiſance, are very careful and tender of their Sentiments: Our Inferiours are perpetually upon their Guard, leſt they ſhould offend us: The World in general indeed ſpeak in ſuch ſoothing Accents, as only ſerve to draw a freſh Veil over our Affliction: The Hand which ſhould *kindly* mark out our Defects to us—ſo far from attempting to reclaim us—is *thus* too often uſed, only to ſtamp us with a *freſh* Blemiſh. Behold the contrary Conduct of the wiſe Men: Alone—without any Regard to their Friends and Neighbours—in Spite of all the *public* Speeches and Deriſions—whilſt the *Reſt* of the People either deſpiſe the miraculous Star, or conſider it only as the Obſervation and the Deſign of theſe three Sages—as an *affronting* Deſign, and a Weakneſs *unworthy* of them

them to receive and countenance.—Alone, I ſay, theſe good and wiſe Men declare againſt the common Sentiment: They alone obey the *new* Guide: They alone forſake their Country and their Children, and account as nothing impoſſible *that Singularity*, of which the heavenly Luminary diſcovers to them the *Neceſſity* and the *Wiſdom*.

And here I am led to another Inſtruction well worthy of our Attention. What oftentimes cauſes the *Truth* to be uſeleſs even to good inclined Men is—that they do not judge of it by the Lights of their *own* Mind, but by the Impreſſion which it makes upon *others*. In thoſe *happy* Moments, when we *ſeek* not the *Truth* but in our *own particular* Conſcience, we *neceſſarily* ſee our Errors, and condemn *ourſelves* in the Sight of God. We *inſtantly* propoſe to ourſelves a *new* Way. In a ſhort Time after, we enter again into the World, and not conſulting any longer *more* than

common

common Example—we begin to *juſtify* ourſelves—we reſtore to ourſelves *again* that *falſe* Peace, which *before*, in *private*, we had endeavoured to deſtroy. Hence we may *alſo* learn, that the *Perſeverance* which the Cauſe of *Truth* requires—makes *it* too often to become extinct within us: It affects us as it did the young Man in the Goſpel—not as it did the wiſe Men, when on their Return Home—the miraculous Star appeared to them again.

They had ſeen the Magnificence of *Jeruſalem*—the Pomp of it's Edifices—the Majeſty of it's Temple—the Grandeur of the Court of *Herod:* But the Goſpel does not remark that they were touched with this Spectacle of human Glory: They behold *all* theſe grand Objects without Attention—without Pleaſure—without any Mark of Approbation or Surprize: They do not once aſk for the Treaſury, and the Riches of the Temple; being *wholly* intent

tent upon the Light from Heaven which had ſhewed itſelf to them—they had no Eyes for what paſſed in the World: Their Hearts being thus detached from *every* Thing elſe—would find out nothing but *that Truth*, which ſo rejoiced, which ſo intereſted, which ſo comforted and refreſhed them.

But where ſhall we meet with Men, who, like theſe eaſtern Sages, after having known *the Truth*—will not henceforth look upon any Thing elſe but *it?* Who make *it* the Reſource of all their Labours—the Spur of their Inactivity—the Succour of their Temptations—the moſt ſolid and endearing Delight of their Soul? And yet we may reſt aſſured—that the World—that it's Pleaſures—that it's Hopes—that it's Greatneſs—muſt needs appear vain, puerile, diſguſtful—when compared with thoſe Pleaſures, thoſe Hopes, and that Greatneſs, which preſent themſelves to the

Man

Man who knows, and is known of God—to the Man, who regards not this lower Earth, but as a Country which *muſt*, one Day, be totally deſtroyed—to the Man, whom nothing can *ſubſtantially* pleaſe, but what in it's Nature muſt continue to pleaſe *for ever:* Finally, all the Objects of Vanity are nothing to ſuch a Man as *this*—but either as Embarraſſments in the Way of his Duty, or ſad Monuments, which force upon him the Remembrance of his Crimes.

Such are the happy Fruits of receiving *the Truth* (as the three eaſtern Sages did) with Submiſſion, with Sincerity, with Joy. May *all* Mankind experience theſe good Effects of an honeſt and an undiſſembling Heart, if it were only that we might live quiet and *peaceable* Lives *here*; but chiefly, as an Heart devoted to *the Truth* cannot fail of rendering us happy in another

and

and a better Life, through the Merits and Interceſſion of that divine Perſonage, who tho' *born King of the* Jews—came into the World, and died—for the Benefit and Salvation of all Kingdoms and Nations of the World.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

UPON

TRUTH DISSEMBLED.

SERMON IX.

MATTHEW ii. 5.

And they said unto him — in Bethlehem *of* Judea.

WE are here to point out the *Deformity* of Truth — when *dissembled* in the Manner that it was by the chief Priests and Scribes — in the Answer given to *Herod* in the Text.

Consulted by *Herod* upon the Place where the *Christ* should be born — they answer to the *Truth* — that *Bethlehem* was the Place marked out by the Prophets — wherein

would be accompliſhed this great Event: But they do not add—that the Star foretold in the inſpired Books having, at Length, appeared—that the Kings of *Saba* and *Arabia* being come with Preſents to adore the new-born Chief deſtined to rule over *Iſrael*—it ought to be no longer doubted but that the Clouds had *now* brought forth *this Juſt One:* They do not aſſemble the *People* together to declare to them theſe happy Tidings: They do not attend the wiſe Men to *Bethlehem*, that by theſe Means they might animate *Jeruſalem* by their Example: Repulſed by a *criminal* Timidity they obſerve a total Silence reſpecting *theſe* Matters—they *retain* the Truth in *Injuſtice*; and whilſt Strangers come from the Extremities of the Eaſt to publiſh aloud in *Jeruſalem*—that the King of the Jews is born—theſe Preachers—theſe Elders and Scribes—ſay nothing about this Event, but ſacrifice to the Ambition of *Herod*—the Intereſts

Intereſts of *Truth*——the *Hope* moſt dear to their Nation—and the Chief Honour of all their Miniſtry.

But this Defect, in certain Points, is but too prevailing in private Life: Even the beſt of us oftentimes render ourſelves culpable by this *ſilent* Diſſimulation towards our Brethren: We are apt to think that we have diſcharged our Duty to Truth, ſo long as we ſay nothing *againſt* it: We hear Virtue *decried*, the Doctrine of the World *maintained*—*it's* Abuſes and Maxims *juſtified*, and *thoſe* of the Goſpel *ridiculed* and *blaſphemed*: We hear *all* this, I ſay, without ſubmitting, perhaps, to ſuch Impiety *ourſelves*; and yet we have not Fortitude enough to diſavow it *openly*, but content ourſelves in not authoriſing it by our *own* Example. Now it appears to me *certain*—that as we are *all* charged *individually* with the Intereſts of *Truth*; to be *ſilent* when Men *attack* it openly *before us*—is, in a

criminal Degree, to become *ourſelves*—it's *Enemy* and *Deceiver*.

There is a ſecond Manner, by which Men *diſſemble* the Truth; in *ſoftening* it with Temperaments and a Complaiſance which *affront* and wound it. The Prieſts and the Scribes *forced* by the *Evidence* of the wiſe Men to give *Glory* to the *Truth*—*ſoften* the *Authority* of it, by Expreſſions of *Reſerve*. They attempt to leſſen the *Reſpect* which they owe to the *Truth*, by a *Complaiſance* which they wiſh to ſhew to *Herod*. They ſuppreſs the Title of *King*, which the wiſe Men came to *give*, and which the Prophets had ſo often *given* —to the *Meſſiah*: They mark *Him* out by *one* Quality *only*—*Him* who had *all* Knowledge and *all* Power at his own Diſpoſal: They chuſe rather to repreſent him as a Lawgiver eſtabliſhed to rule the Manners, than as a Saviour riſen up to deliver his People from Slavery: And altho' they themſelves

ſelves looked for a *Meſſiah*—a King and Conqueror—yet they *palliate* the Truth, which they have even a Mind to *avow*—and labour to blind the Prince, whoſe Ear they had ſo firmly obtained.

In this Particular the Deſtiny of great Men is really deplorable. It is ſeldom that they are *inſtructed*, becauſe it is ſeldom that thoſe about them will attempt to *inſtruct* them, but by *pleaſing* them. And yet methinks the Generality of them would love *Sincerity*, if they were but once to become *acquainted* with it. The Paſſions, and the Follies of the Age, aſſiſted by all the Pleaſures which naturally encompaſs the Dwellings of the *Great*—are able, I will allow, but too often to drag Them into Attention: But at the Bottom—I am willing to believe that *Sincerity* is *reſpected* by them. Such is the Faſhion of the World, that *Ignorance of Truth* cauſes *more Princes* and *great Men* to be cenſured and condemned

—than Perſons of the *meaneſt* State and Condition; and I am convinced, that *that* baſe Complaiſance which is too generally ſhewed towards the *Great*, both by State and *Church* Miniſters—diſhonour a *Country more*, and brings *more* Odium upon *Religion*—than the moſt glaring Scandals and Misfortunes which afflict either the *Church* or the State.

But are Princes and great Men *only—deceived?* And are thoſe *about* Princes and great Men the *only* Perſons who *flatter* and *deceive?* Look into *private* Life, and you will find that the Converſation, the Conduct, and Behaviour of Mankind—are but too often *Palliations* of the *Truth—Temperaments* intended to reconcile *it* with the Prejudices and Paſſions of thoſe with whom they live and are acquainted, or from whom they conceive Hopes and Expectations of Favours. How ſeldom do we ſhew them real Truths, but by Ways

which

which we know will *pleaſe* them? How ready are we to diſcover a fair Side even in their moſt glaring Imperfections? And as all the Paſſions bear a Reſemblance to ſome *Virtue*, how apt is miſtaken Man to ſeek to *know himſelf*, by the Aſſiſtance only of *ſuch Reſemblance!*

Thus it happens—that in the Preſence of a *too ambitious* Man, we ſpeak of the Love of Glory and of the Deſire of gaining it, as the *only* Thoughts becoming a *great* Mind: We flatter his Pride—we ſet Fire to his Wiſhes by Hope, and by flattering and chimerical Predictions: We nouriſh the Error of his Imagination, in bringing *near* to him *Phantoms*, with which he is *ever* feeding himſelf. We venture, *perhaps*, to complain in *general*—that Men ſhould be *ſo much* agitated about Things which *Hazard* diſtributes, and which Death *to Morrow* may ſnatch from us: But how *ſeldom* do we *venture* to blame

that *fooliſh* Friend, who ſacrifices to ſuch a mere *Vapour*—his Repoſe—his Life—and his Conſcience!

In the Preſence of a Man given to Revenge—we are apt to juſtify his Reſentment and his Choler: We juſtify his Crime in his *Spirit:* We gratify his Paſſion, in exaggerating the Rancour of his Enemy. We venture, perhaps, to ſay, that we ought to pardon one another; but how ſeldom do we venture to *add*—that the firſt Degree of a Pardon—is never more to ſpeak of an Injury which we have received!

In the Preſence of a Prodigal—his Profuſions ſtrike us only as an Air of *Generoſity* and *Elegance:* Before a Miſer—his hard-heartedneſs and ſordid Soul—are nothing more than *wiſe* Moderation, and *good* domeſtic Conduct: Nay, and before the *Great* themſelves—Men, whom at a *Diſtance*, we are ſo ready to find Fault with—

their

their Prejudices and *their* Errors—receive from us Apologies altogether *borrowed:* We ſeem to reſpect their Imperfections as we do their *Perſons*—and even to make *their* Prejudices become our *own*.

In ſhort, ſuch is the miſtaken Turn of Mankind in general—that they too readily borrow the Errors of thoſe, with whom they are connected. Few of us ſpeak our *own* Language: And this *unworthy* Breach of *Sincerity* we call—the *Science* of the *World*—the *great* Art of *pleaſing* and *proſpering*.

Think not that I mean to condemn the *Temperaments* of a wiſe and diſcreet *Prudence*, which does not appear to encourage Men in their *Prejudices*, but to fix them more *firmly* in the Ways of *Rule* and *Duty*. I know that *Sincerity* loves not that it's Defenders ſhould be indiſcreet and raſh: I know that the Paſſions of Men require Caution and Conſideration—that they are

Maladies

Maladies of ſuch a Nature—as to make it oftentimes neceſſary to cure the Patient in a Manner even *unknown* to *himſelf:* I am convinced that the grand Rule of *Zeal* in this important Matter—is Prudence and Charity. What we are *here* lamenting is —that ſo many Men ſhould make a *Science* and even an *Honour* of Artifice and Diſſimulation. Thus not knowing what Sincerity is *themſelves*—they know not how to ſuppoſe it to exiſt in *others:* It is *their* deep Corruption of Thought, which renders the Sincerity and the Reſolution of *good* Men *ſuſpected* by them: It is a Diſpoſition which appears to them romantic and ridiculous becauſe that it is ſo great a Novelty; and as they find in it ſo much *Singularity*—they chuſe to believe that it is Pride or Extravagance—and not *Virtue.*

Hence it happens, that we not only diſguiſe the Truth, but openly betray it. This is the laſt Kind of Diſſimulation exerciſed by

by the Scribes and Elders—a Diſſimulation of downright Falſhood.

They do not content themſelves in quoting the Prophets in Terms obſcure and equivocal: Not ſeeing the three eaſtern Sages to return to *Jeruſalem*—they add (without Doubt to quiet *Herod*) that theſe Aſtrologers aſhamed not to have found the new *King*, *dared* not to appear in *Jeruſalem* again—that they were Strangers but little verſed in the Knowledge of the Law and the Prophets—and that the Light from Heaven which they pretended to *obey*, was only a vulgar Illuſion, and the ſuperſtitious Prejudice of a groſs and credulous Nation. And it was very artful in the Scribes and Elders to maintain this Language to *Herod*; becauſe they themſelves acted agreeably to it, in not going to *Bethlehem* to ſeek their new born King, and in perſuading *Herod* that there was more of

Credulity

Credulity than of *Truth* in the ſuperſtitious Reſearch of the wiſe Men.

See then what we, at Length, arrive at! *Obliged*, as it were, to humour the Paſſions of Mankind, and to pleaſe them at the Expence of *Truth*—we at laſt *openly renounce* the Truth: As ſoon as *it* incommodes us—expoſes us—places us behind a Cloud—renders us diſagreeable to the World—*then* we *openly diſavow* it; we profeſs to know nothing at all of it—we give it up to Oppreſſion and Injuſtice. Thus we form for *ourſelves* an *Heart* cowardly and ſervile, to which the *uſeful Lie* is henceforth a *Virtue*—an Heart *artificial* and *pliant*, which aſſumes *all* Forms, and which is never fixed to any *one* Point—an Heart ſo corrupted and ſelfiſh, as to make to ſerve it's *own Purpoſes*—Religion, Integrity, Juſtice, and every Thing holden ſacred amongſt Men. Happy *that* People, amongſt whom, Men

of

of this Character and Complexion are ſeldom to be found.

I have only to obſerve by Way of Application—that it behoves us to take Care, that in attempting to defend the *Truth* and to prove ourſelves Men of *Integrity*—we do not *defend* the *Illuſions* of our own *peculiar* Temper. Pride, Ignorance, Infatuation, have *ever* been ſeen to give to *Error*—Champions as *intrepid* and as *reſolute*—as *thoſe* whom the Chriſtian Faith ſo much and ſo juſtly glories in. The only Point of Integrity worthy of our Love, of our Zeal, and of our Fortitude—is that which Chriſtianity *plainly* marks out to us: It is for *that alone* which we ought to ſuffer the Loſs of *all* Things: In other Caſes, we are Martyrs *only* to our own Obſtinacy and Vanity. Let us then endeavour to honour this *eternal Truth* by a Sanctity of Manners: Let us *ever oppoſe* it—to Error and Vanity: Let us ſtrive to annihilate in our

Hearts

Hearts thoſe worldly Fears, which reſpect *Vice* equally with the *Perſon* who *commits it:* Let us *ever* be *aſhamed* to become a *feeble* Reed which is *turned* by *every Wind* that blows—but *never* be known to *bluſh* in carrying *Integrity* written upon our *Foreheads*, as a *Title* the moſt *exalted*, and as a *Mark* the moſt *expreſſive*, by which we can glorify *God*, and regard and benefit *Mankind*.

SERMON X.

UPON

The natural DESIRE of LONG LIFE.

PREACHED AT

ST. MARY LE BOW, on SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 29, 1769.

SERMON X.

Job xlii. 16.

After this lived Job *an hundred and forty Years, and ſaw his Sons and his Sons' Sons, even four Generations.*

NATURAL is the Deſire of long Life. *Job* indeed may at firſt Sight appear as an Inſtance to the contrary, who often wiſhed for Death but it came not—who digged for it more than for hidden Treaſures. Many others likewiſe have done the ſame I ſuppoſe; but upon Examination we ſhall generally find

that ſuch Wiſhes have been iſſued forth in the Spirit of *Paſſion*, not in the *cooler* Moments of Reflection. At *beſt* this Conduct is but *Cowardice*, and in *general* it is *ſinful*. Cowardice it certainly was even in *Job*, ſevere as his Trials were; but as to the *Reſt* of Mankind, their *Cauſe* of Complaint is, for the moſt Part, ſo *inadequate* to the Complaint *itſelf*, that when Men *thus* wiſh to die on Account of their *Troubles* and *Diſappointments*—they doubtleſs ſin greatly, and may juſtly expect as a Puniſhment for their Raſhneſs—an Addition to their Misfortunes and Sorrow.

We ſeldom deſire to die, when Life goes on agreeably; only when our Expectations are fruſtrated, and when Trouble is nigh at Hand. We never hear *even a Job* crying out, "my Soul is weary of my Life"—after the Lord was pleaſed to turn his Captivity, and to give him twice as much as he had before.

To

To what then ſhall we impute this ſtrong Deſire of living to be old? To the general Pleaſures of human Life? Or to the *peculiar* Pleaſures which old Age brings along with it? To it's ſuperiour Virtue—Dignity, and Experience? That it diſqualifies us for the idle and vicious Entertainments of younger Life, and teaches us (in order to conſult our own Mortality) to viſit the Tombs of thoſe of our Friends and Acquaintance, who have long ſince ſuffered Corruption? Do we *wiſh* to live *long* from a pleaſing Attention to a riſing Progeny? Or laſtly, does not the natural *Deſire* of *living*—proceed principally from the natural *Fear* of *dying?* This *Fear* I think equally *natural*, with this *Deſire*—inſomuch that I never wiſh to recommend or experience (as a mortal Being) a *philoſophical Contempt* of Death. In *this* World I own that *Death has* its *Sting*, the *Grave* it's *Victory*. When indeed we have ſhot the

Gulph and finiſhed *well*, the triumphant Exclamations—O Death where is thy Sting! O Grave where is thy Victory! will happily become us—but not *before*. I have been *here* ſpeaking as *a Man*—yet, I truſt, not *fooliſhly*.

But ſuppoſe we now make brief Inquiry into the Nature of old Age, and mark out Means by which it may become light and eaſy to be borne, and reverenced alſo by the generous Part of Mankind.

The juſt Creator of all Things—though he ſuffered Man to fall, and to be ever *capable* of falling during his Exiſtence in this World; though he has ordained that Man ſhall be *born* in *Sorrow* and permits the Commiſſion of ſo much Evil, that without great Care he may *live and die alſo* in Sorrow; has, nevertheleſs, amply provided Man with Inſtruments of Defence againſt all the Miſchiefs which can poſſibly happen to him. In *every Part* of Life this is apparently

parently the Caſe, yea, in the *extremeſt* old Age the Reflection is infallibly true. But would it not be cenſuring the Deity to imagine otherwiſe? To imagine that he has given us Powers to *combat* againſt *other* Parts of Life, and yet leaves us *defenceleſs* in the laſt Act of it? It cannot be. Let not aged Perſons expect the Strength, nor thirſt after the Pleaſures of their younger Days: Age is to be regarded for, and to be made eaſy and comfortable by Means of it's ſuperior Virtue—Dignity—and Experience. Indolence and Inſenſibility are, I will allow, often to be found in aged Minds, but old Age *itſelf* muſt never be conſidered as *neceſſarily* inactive. Let us reflect (with *Cicero)* that Buſineſs of the higheſt Concern to Society—is not tranſacted by bodily Velocity, or Power of Conſtitution, but by Counſel and experimental Judgment: Upon which Account, Age is moſt fit to adviſe. In younger Perſons there is confeſſedly an

unlimitted Desire of Novelty—a Desire of altering (at all Events) what has been done before; which Propensity too frequently begets Rashness: Whereas *Age* being no longer subject to the headstrong Passions of *Youth*—is less liable to have it's Judgment or it's Reason *perverted*. How many Instances have we in History—within our own Knowledge indeed—of those who have passed a quiet—an useful—an *engaging* old Age?

Happy and highly to be honoured surely are those venerable Characters who are free from Moroseness and Peevishness—but especially from *Avarice*. How common these Imperfections are to this Æra of Man's Life—need not be observed: It may be necessary indeed to *insist*—that where they are to be found *predominant*, it is owing to the Consequences of Habit and indulged Custom, not to the *unavoidable* Consequences of the State *itself*. As to a *small Degree* of

Moroseness

Moroſeneſs and Peeviſhneſs, we muſt, in ſome Meaſure, excuſe it: Old Age, conſcious of it's own Decay, is apt to be ſuſpicious. Where there is any Fortune to leave behind, it imagines (and often with too much Reaſon) that it's Heirs ſhew an *improper* Anxiouſneſs for the *Inheritance*; and where there is nothing to bequeath — being unavoidably the Cauſe of ſome Trouble, and of Courſe in the Way—it concludes that it is conſidered as an Incumbrance, and that the final Period of it's Exiſtence is *impatiently* expected. Now to a Mind the leaſt ſuſceptible of Generoſity or even common Tenderneſs — theſe Reflections muſt needs be exceedingly hurtful; nor ſhould the World be too ſevere, if in this Caſe old Age betrays *ſometimes* a Want of Chearfulneſs, and ſhews itſelf ſomewhat peeviſh and moroſe. As to *Avarice* in aged Perſons, it is ſurely *altogether* without Excuſe. What? When we have but a *little*

Way to go, ſhall we upon this Account become the *more* careful to procure the Luxuries of a *long Journey?* Or becauſe we have but *little Breath* within us, ſhall we exerciſe this in a greedy Anxiouſneſs for the laviſh Proviſion of a whole Life?

Here then let us conſider our Subject in a religious Light, and diſcourſe old Age upon the *moral* Act of dying. Methinks I ſee grey Hairs with all the Infirmities of Age —ſtartling at the Sound of Death. Yet why art thou ſo terrified, *good* old Man? Does he anſwer, "why calleſt thou me *good?* I am *not* good?" Nay, but thou deſireſt long Life, and God has been pleaſed to grant it thee: Thou didſt not ſurely *wiſh* for this, *merely* to fill up a greater Meaſure of *Iniquity* againſt the Hour of thy *Departure?* "No; but I am unwilling to die "—unwilling to believe that the Warning "given to me by my trembling Nerves—

will

"will prove so very short." But why? Thy very *Entrance* upon *old Age* was a kind and pressing Invitation to thee to provide for the Grave; and every Day since should have been considered by thee as a still further Indulgence of Nature; insomuch that come Death when it will—thou shouldest be ready to depart. * Young Men appear indeed to die, as when the Violence of a Flame is suppressed by the superiour Force of Water; but as to *old Age* like *thine*—*it* drops, as it were, *spontaneously* into the Grave: Nor should such an aged Person murmur, any more than the Husbandman after a plentiful Harvest—at the Approach or Arrival of Autumn. But continues the hoary Character before us—"the Truth is—I am afraid to die." Yet whence arises this Fear? from *Nature* or from Sin? "From *both*." Unhappy old

* Cicero de Senectute.

Man!

Man! How abſurd have been thy Wiſhes for long Life! What Advantage has it been to thee to ſee thy Sons, and thy Sons Sons —even four Generations, perhaps, *go* before thee, ſince thou thyſelf *now ſhuddereſt* at the Sight of Death? What has been thy Employment? Where — thy Reaſon? — that in *ſo many* Years thou haſt made *no Defence* againſt this King of Terrors. In a Moment—unable to reply—he dies—looking as if he heard the Voice of his angry Judge proclaiming it through Heaven and Earth—"he dies, and let his aged Name for ever periſh."

Suppoſe we fancy next another hoary Character in View, *chriſtianly* expecting his Departure, *merely* from *extreme* old Age. Hear him then before he retires, to be no more ſeen. "I confeſs myſelf to have been "one of thoſe who *wiſh* for *long* Life: "God has graciouſly given it to me, and "I truſt that I have made a *real* Bleſſing "of

" of it. But to effect this, I always knew
" that it was neceſſary to *bring* the *Means*
" of Happineſs *with* me *into* the State, not
" to expect that the *State itſelf* would in-
" fallibly furniſh me with them. On the
" Contrary, I muſt have ſeen in *others* the
" *Wretchedneſs* of old Age, when they have
" entered upon it without *one* Defence
" againſt it's Inconveniencies: I ever con-
" ſidered that a regular and upright *Youth*
" could alone qualify me for an happy *old*
" *Age*: I have far exceeded my threeſcore
" Years and ten, yet believe that if I had
" lived much longer than I have—I ſhould
" never have *repented me* of mine old Age:
" My *approaching* Diſſolution *troubleth* me
" as a *Man*—yet as a *Chriſtian* I am *more*
" than *comforted*: The *intervening* Paſſage
" has it's *natural* Horrors—*it* is a *bitter*
" Cup, and I *muſt* drink thereof; yet in
" undergoing this *ſpecial Exigency* of Na-
" ture I feel myſelf *more* than *Conqueror*.

" O

"O happy Hour, when I hope to be uni-
"ted to that divine Company, who are
"enjoying perfect Bliss in the eternal Hea-
"vens! To those especially of my own
"Friends and Kindred—nay of mine own
"pious Offspring, whom even to the fourth
"Generation I have lived to see descend
"into their Graves." Having thus spoken
—let us suppose this venerable and christian Father to expire with all the Prospects of the happiest Immortality: Fancy him received into the Arms of his Saviour, and the Angels administering to him the transcendent Joys of Heaven.

Our Subject being of so tender and so interesting a Nature, I hope that a short Application more *immediately* to *ourselves* will prove both useful and agreeable.

What then are *our* Thoughts of long Life? Do we join the *Generality* of Mankind in *wishing* to *arrive* at it? If we do; that we may never repent of our Choice—

let

let us be influenced by the Example laſt repreſented—to go as early as we can, and do likewiſe. But the Arguments on both Sides *duly* conſidered; he is the *wiſer* Man, perhaps, who *wiſhes to retire*—before Nature *leads him Home*. I can conceive it to be very poſſible for us to be *richly fraught* with *Virtue* and worldly Proſperity when we enter upon *old Age*, and yet to *ſuffer greatly* even from a Tenderneſs of Diſpoſition. As *Thought* and *Reflection* are the *proper* Entertainments of *this* State, how may an Affection for our deceaſed Friends *break in* upon our *Chearfulneſs!* Again; altho' our *own* Lives may bear reflecting upon—yet it will almoſt *neceſſarily* happen, that *ſome* amongſt the Number of thoſe whom we loved *beſt*—were unfortunate—either in their moral Conduct—in their Commerce and Engagements with the World—or in the *untimely* Manner of their Death. It is not unlikely that

that *Job himſelf*, bleſſed as he was with ſo *remarkable* an old Age, and however *qualified* for it his *great Perfection* of Character had made him; it is not unlikely, I ſay, that *even Job himſelf* was ſometimes *wholly unmindful* of the Bleſſings of *this* Seaſon of his Life, by taking into *tender* Conſideration the *unhappy* Fate of his *former* Children.

And after all—tho' *long* Life ſhould prove a natural Deſire—let it be remembered—that *ſuch Wiſh* is granted but to *few*. Our *infant* State is attended with a Variety of Circumſtances which continually *threaten* Diſſolution; and when we are grown to *Maturity*, we are oftentimes ſeized *ſo violently*, and cured with *ſo much Difficulty*—that it appears a Wonder almoſt—that *any* of us ſhould live to be *old*. Let us then learn not to *deſire* it—at leaſt, not to *expect* it. And indeed—if we even ſet aſide the Precarioufneſs of the T enure by

which

which we hold all temporal Advantages; yet our Hopes as Chriſtians after Death, and the Difficulties which we unavoidably meet with Here being ſeriouſly weighed and conſidered —there ſeems to be no *real* Foundation for the *Deſire* of living *long*. Nor do I think a Man juſtified in his *Deſire* of *dying*, eſpecially when he makes Troubles and Diſappointments, or even *Pain itſelf*—the *Cauſe* of *ſuch* Deſire. When the Mind is heavily oppreſſed, or the Body racked with Pain—the Soul is apt, I will allow, to cry out for the Wings of a Dove, that it might flee away and be at Reſt: Still, it is the Duty of the *Chriſtian* to inform the *Man* —that he errs in *thus* wiſhing to forſake his Standard, till God thinks fit to ſend the Summons, and order his Diſmiſſion. And it may here be very proper to remark, that when a murmuring Spirit has once taken poſſeſſion of us—we are diſpoſed to ſee

all

all Objects in a *disagreeable* Light—to be out of Humour with human Nature *in general* from our own *particular* Feelings and Sufferings—and to insist as Madmen and Brutes rather than as Christians—that "the Day of Death is better than the Day "of one's Birth."

The true Spirit of Christianity respecting the Matter in Question is clearly this ——Neither to wish for *Life* nor for *Death*—to be *grateful* for Life whilst we *can* enjoy or preserve it; and to be ready with *equal Gratitude* to deliver it up—when Nature shall become *irreparable*, or when the God of Nature manifestly calleth for it. This Disposition happily implies a moral *Preparation* for *old Age*, if God should be pleased to bestow upon us *such* Length of Days: Or should he ordain *otherwise*—that we be cut off *sooner*, even in the *Prime* of Life; yet I will hope that from *this christian* Readiness to *depart*, we should be found

found *equally preparing* for an *happy Eternity*. And upon Reflection, we could not be injured ſurely—in being made *ſo early* —meet Partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven.

SERMON XI.

UPON

The Folly and Danger of deſpiſing RELIGION.

PREACHED

Before their MAJESTIES, on SUNDAY, MAY 31, 1772.

SERMON XI.

1 THESS. iv. 8.

He therefore that deſpiſeth—deſpiſeth not Man—but God.

THE Apoſtle, in his uſual—*affectionate* Manner, is here exhorting the *Theſſalonians* to proceed in the Ways of Godlineſs—that they live holily and juſtly, and in chriſtian Love and Charity one with another; informing them, that he who deſpiſeth in theſe eſſential Points, deſpiſeth not *Man*—but *God*—God, the confeſſed Author and Patron of

all true *Religion*, and ſolid, ſubſtantial *Virtue*.

But as it will ever be right, perhaps, to apply a Diſcourſe of this Kind as ſoon as we can—I ſhall now take Leave of the *Theſſalonians*, and addreſs myſelf to the Chriſtians of *later* Ages in the Language of the Text—He that deſpiſeth—deſpiſeth not *Man*—but *God*.

" One would be almoſt led to imagine, " that ſome Men objected to Chriſtianity, " becauſe it has confirmed every *Hope*, " every *Expectation* of *Nature*," and made *ſecure* to us—the *warmeſt* Wiſhes of the *human* Heart. " *Nature*, with *unutterable* " Groans, *pants* after *Immortality: Weep-* " *ing* ſhe ſees her Children drop into their " Graves;" becauſe all *beyond* the Grave appears to *her*—*puzzling* and *uncertain*—a Land too *extenſive* for *her* Knowledge—too *deep* for *her* Reſearches: When her Thoughts attempt to traverſe *Eternity* through

thro' all it's *variegated* Paths—"*now* ſhe "*hopes*—*now again*—ſhe *fears*;" and *thus* agitated by the *Viciſſitude* of theſe *oppoſite* Paſſions—ſhe finds no *firm*, no *ſolid* Ground whereon to *reſt* herſelf—languid, and wearied out by *vain* and *fruitleſs* Wanderings. How *different* the Proſpect which the Goſpel affords! *Here* we may view the *heavenly Canaan*—the *new Jeruſalem*—*that* Place of *many* happy Manſions, prepared for wiſe and obedient Souls, departed in the Lord. Nay, *ſo great* a Friend is Chriſtianity to *human* Nature—that it's Concern reaches even to our more *ignoble* Part—the *Body*; and not only during this Life, but to it's Recovery from all the *Diſhonours* of the Grave—to Glory, and Honour, and Immortality.

"Whoever therefore can *profeſs* to vilify "theſe *happy* and *important* Truths, and "to repreſent them in a *ridiculous* Light—"he not only fixes certain Reproach and

" Infamy upon *himſelf*—he not only ſhews " himſelf to be a *ſlight* and *careleſs* Ob- " ſerver—but is in *Fact* (whatever his *In-* " *tentions* may be; whether to gratify a " *trifling* Humour—to diſplay the *Archneſs* " of his Genius—or *deſignedly* to corrupt " the Morals of the *Age*.) Such an one is " in *Fact* and of *Neceſſity*—an *Enemy* to " *Society*, and the *general* Happineſs of " Mankind."

That Men are but too apt to indulge a *Propenſity at leaſt*—to a *Taſte* of this Kind, nay and to conduct their Lives *accordingly* —you will, I dare ſay, with *me*, be ready to acknowledge. But that we may not appear moroſe and cynical—let us allow, that even *Levity itſelf*, in *ſome* Caſes, may be *ſeaſonable*, and *ſafely* exerciſed by the *wiſeſt* and the *beſt* of Men: Still, altho' human Nature cannot at *all* Times attend to the Contemplation of *ſerious* Things—ſuch as *God* and *Eternity*; let every Man be wiſe

and

and prudent enough *never* to make *Sport* of theſe *awful* Conſiderations, ſo indeed as *intirely* to loſe Sight of them in his *Practice*. Again, *Chearfulneſs* has *always* been eſteemed a *ſocial* Virtue; and even *Raillery* is *ſometimes* a pleaſant Entertainment to *moſt* of us: Yet it behoves every man to chuſe Subjects proper for Raillery; elſe he ſhews a *wrong Judgment*—and makes his *Wit* and *Cleverneſs*—Folly and Impertinence: This is as *offenſive* to Men of *Reaſon*, as the Converſation of one who thinks it a Crime to *ſmile*—is (for the moſt Part) *dull* and *diſagreeable*: However fond any Man may be of a *Joke*—he ſhould take Care, even to be commended as a *Companion*—that ſuch Joke be well *founded* and well *timed*; and as a *Chriſtian* and *good* Member of Society—*never* to give Way to Jeſting upon *ſolemn* Matters, or upon *ſolemn* Occaſions.

But

But what muſt we think of a Man, whoſe *Reaſon* is employed as a public *Advocate* for Vice and Irreligion? "Who "*profeſſedly* endeavours to ſet off the *Shame* "and *Miſery* of human Nature with falſe and *deluſive Charms?*" Not only to be an *Infidel himſelf*, but to *labour* to make the *Reſt* of Mankind become *Infidels* alſo.—Not only to practice Vice *himſelf*, but to *approve* it *afterwards*, and to *recommend* it to the *World.*——O is it *poſſible*, that the Mind of Man, ſo capable of Exaltation, ſhould ever *thus* have ſunk itſelf!

As much, however, as Men of this Stamp may diſturb the Quiet of the Community in which they live by their *open Profeſſion* of Vice and Irreligion—yet the *Contempt* of the Matter, in which the *Pleaſure* and the *Wit* are ſuppoſed *chiefly* to conſiſt—the *Contempt*, I ſay, is levelled at *God:* He that *thus* deſpiſeth—deſpiſeth not *Man*, but God. And let us conſider, that if the

Principles

Principles of Chriſtianity ſhould *happen* to be *true*; "the Man, who has ſo groſſly "abuſed his Reaſon, as to employ it againſt "his *Maker*, and *all* that is amiable and "uſeful in human Life"—muſt ſurely expect to be finally treated with inconceivable Rigour and Severity. Let ſuch an one ſuppoſe the inſulted Redeemer of the World to direct a *ſecret* Arrow to his Heart whilſt he is pouring forth Blaſphemy; or let him only ſuppoſe thoſe of his own flattering Community to attend him upon a dying Bed, "and to endeavour to baniſh his "*Fears* by the Relation of ſome *luaicrous* and "prophane Story;" yet how does he fancy that he ſhould be *able* to *receive* it? Perhaps, inſtead of liſtening to theſe vile Deceivers, and in Spite of all his former Infidelity—he will *now* cry out, in a Kind of Delirium—what ſhall I *do* to be *ſaved?* And *deſpairing* of Salvation, extend *this*

Cry

Cry—to the Mountains to *fall* upon him, and to the Hills to *cover* him.

I will hope to be indulged with your ſtill further Attention.

Far be it from me to recommend a *Wildneſs* in Religion—or to contend for Refinements *above* this World, or human Nature. The Chriſtian Religion even *enjoineth* us to *uſe* this World, ſo that we do but always ſhew by our Belief and Conduct, that we have ſomething *more noble*, ſomething *more excellent*, which engages our *principal* Attention: The Chriſtian Religion by no Means conſiſts of one continued Courſe of Severities and Hardſhips, thus excluding Men from *all* the Comforts of Life, and dooming them, as it were, to an abſurd and perpetual *Melancholy*: No; the Chriſtian Religion is of a *chearful* Nature, and *embelliſhes* and *improves* the Bleſſings of *Proſperity*—whilſt it affords a never-failing

Comfort

Comfort—adequate to the *ſevereſt* Diſpenſations.

To ſee then ſuch a Religion as this—neglected and *deſpiſed*—muſt needs be *painful* to every one, who calleth himſelf a *Chriſtian*—to every one indeed, who calleth himſelf a *Man*. We may be fully aſſured that the Chriſtian Religion ought to be our happieſt Conſideration: "*It* is certainly our "*chief* Honour and Dignity — the *only* "Source of *inward* Satisfaction, and the Ba-"ſis and Support of *ſocial Good:*" Added to *all* this—it affords us the moſt tranſcendent Proſpects in *another* Life. To ſubmit therefore to the *Tenets* of *this* Religion as far as we are able—is not only meet and right, but the Height of Prudence alſo: On the other Hand, to profeſs an *open* Rebellion againſt *all* it's Precepts, is ſurely not only *inconceivably* criminal, but alſo *inconceivable* Folly: For we are here to be informed, that it is *God* who *promiſeth all* the Bleſſings of Reli-

gion

gion, and not Man, who (at beſt) is only God's *Embaſſadour* in this Caſe: It is *God too*, who *alone* can fulfil *ſuch Promiſes*. Since then to *God* ſhould be given *Thanks* for theſe *noble* Privileges of our *Nature*; ſo by Parity of Reaſoning, if we turn a *deaf Ear* to them, and *deſpiſe* them—let us not think that we hereby *degrade* a *Fellow-Creature* who may have been our *friendly Monitor*—— for the *Contempt* is *(ſtrictly ſpeaking)* thrown upon God. On this Account it behoves us to be always very *cautious* of giving *hard Names* to *good Inſtructions*; and ſeeing the Chriſtian Religion *in particular* ſo manifeſtly wiſheth us *well*—what *ſerious* Man would *venture*, and what *wiſe* Man would even *wiſh* to *repreſent it*—as "the Effect of *Prieſtcraft*, combined "with the Cunning of *Stateſmen* and *Poli-*"*ticians*—with a View to *enſlave* and *impoveriſh* the Reſt of Mankind.

When

When Men are inclined to give Way to a *ludicrous* Turn of *ſpeaking* or *writing*—there are *Subjects enough* to be found in the *World*, without engaging in *Religion*. It is really ſo ſhocking to make *this* the Matter of *ridicule*, that I could conceive a Man to be guilty of *almoſt every* Vice under the Sun, and yet *ſhudder* at the *Thought only* of *ridiculing*—a *God*—*Eternity*—*Salvation*.

As *great Sinners* as Men may be—yet let them (at leaſt) confeſs that they are doing *wrong*: As *little* as they may *believe* that they ſhould be made *happy Hereafter* by a *contrary* Conduct; yet let them (at leaſt) forbear from *deſpiſing* or treating with *unbecoming* Levity—the divine and benevolent Hand, which profeſſes to offer *this Happineſs* to them.

We, I truſt, *have* taken Care to keep at the *utmoſt Diſtance* from a Crime ſo very hurtful to *cool Reaſoning*—and to the Nature and Expectations of our *better* Part—

the

the *Soul*. I will hope that *our* Conduct in Life has *alſo* been (upon the Whole) *becoming thoſe* who are *perſuaded* that they ſhall live in a *future State*, and who *fully* believe in *future Rewards and Puniſhments*; and that even with Regard to thoſe Vices and Imperfections to which we may be *ſeverally* addicted—let me *hope likewiſe*, that we are always ſerious and *generous* enough to *own*—that we *wiſh* we were *without* them; and that the *yielding* to them—requires ſome Conceſſion to *that God*, if not to *that World*, againſt whom they are committed.

And when *Religion* is the Subject of *our Converſation* or *Correſpondence*—I am willing to think that we *faithfully* defend *all* Points " which deſcribe *Virtue* in it's *pro-*
" *per* Beauty and Luſtre, and ſtrip *Vice* of
" thoſe *artificial* Ornaments which hide it's
" *natural* Horror and Infamy: That we
" *ſtrongly* recommend the Exerciſe of Juſtice,

" tice, Truth, and Benevolence—and *in-*
" *genuouſly* expoſe the *Miſchiefs* of looſe and
" ungoverned *Paſſions:* That we can, in a
" Word, at all Times trace the Footſteps
" of God's ſtupendous Wiſdom and un-
" bounded Goodneſs—in the Works of his
" Creation—in the Conduct of his Provi-
" dence—and in the wonderful Scheme of
" our Redemption."

Theſe are, doubtleſs, refined and exalted Speculations—the nobleſt Entertainment to our rational Faculties: And whilſt we engage *thus* on the Side of *Religion*, we ſhall never ſuffer ourſelves to be *bantered* out of our *Duty*; but ſhall always have Security *at Hand* againſt the moſt dangerous *Deluſions*, which could *eſſentially* affect our *Happneſs*—and may in our Lord's own Senſe of the Expreſſion, be *hereby* ſaid to have choſen that *good* Part—which ſhall *never* be taken from us.

SERMON XII.

UPON

The PENITENT upon the CROSS.

PREACHED AT

St. LUKE'S, OLD STREET, on SUNDAY,
JULY 3, 1774.

SERMON XII.

LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

And he ſaid unto Jeſus—*Lord, remember me when thou comeſt into thy Kingdom: And* Jeſus *ſaid, Verily I ſay unto thee*—to Day *ſhalt thou be with me—in Paradiſe.*

I HAVE choſen for our preſent Meditation—the ſtriking Example of the Penitent upon the Croſs. A pleaſing—a truly comfortable Scene this—to every ſincere, *practical Believer:* But what a Misfortune is it—that Men ſhould build ſuch a Confidence on the Acceptance of this Penitent—as appears manifeſtly incon-

ſiſtent with the Word of God, and the immutable Conditions of Salvation! I muſt therefore deſire your *particular* Attention, whilſt I ſtate this Matter to you in a clear and reaſonable Light.

To grant at once the Whole that can be contended for with Regard to the Penitent himſelf—we will allow that his Salvation was *begun* and *completed* at the *Croſs*. Still, how much more equitable was *his* Plea of Acceptance, than any which the *Chriſtian of theſe Days* can make, who cries out for Salvation *only* at the very Gate of Eternity! How juſtly might *he* have lamented (as, probably, he *did* lament) the Unhappineſs of a whole Life ſpent in the dark Mazes of Ignorance and Error — deſtitute of a Guide to direct him — and without the ſlighteſt Conception of a Chriſt or his Goſpel! Nay, might he not, with ſome Degree of Reaſon, *modeſtly* have aſked of God, why ſuch Bleſſings had been *denied* him?

Not

Not indeed to *cenſure* the *Almighty*, but to make *his own Caſe* the *more affecting:* Not indeed to *command* Acceptance, but by *thus* addreſſing the Compaſſion of God—*earneſtly* to *beg* it. And could divine Mercy do leſs than receive him? We will ſuppoſe that he was a *Stranger* even to the *Name* of *Jeſus*, till he met *Him* at the Croſs: Did he not then *believe*—as ſoon as he knew what was required of him *to* believe? Did he not *repent*—as ſoon as he knew what the Nature of *Chriſtian* Repentance *was?*

But if we ſuppoſe otherwiſe, and that divine Mercy was exerciſed with *manifeſt Partiality* towards this repenting Malefactor: Yet even in this Caſe, no Encouragement can be given to the Reſt of Mankind from ſuch an Example. Infinite Holineſs and a condemned Criminal were going to be crucified *together:* This was an Event which never happened *before*, nor ever is to

happen *again:* The *Singularity* therefore of the Occaſion puts *the Reſt of Mankind* entirely out of the Queſtion; and the *Greatneſs* of the Occaſion *even more* than pleaded for the *Acceptance* of this *repenting Malefactor:* For what could be ſo ſtriking an Interceſſion in his Favour — "as for him to "leave the World — with the God and Sa-"viour of it?"

Do Men, however, ſtill inſiſt — that a like Acceptance of the Penitent before us is offered to *every* expiring penetential *Chriſtian?* For a Moment we will ſuppoſe this, and even ſet aſide the Poſſibility of *ſudden* Death. Yet here let Mankind recall to their Memories the mournful Example of the *impenitent* Thief. This Man had all the Advantages which his Companion *had*; and yet wanted even the Inclination to accept them: And how many Inſtances of this perverſe and relentleſs Kind muſt we have heard of — amongſt thoſe unhappy

Wretches

Wretches, who have ſuffered at the fatal Tree! I am afraid too, that in the Courſe of my own Miniſtry—I have ſeen ſome of my Fellow Creatures ſo *hardened* and ſo *impenitent* upon a *dying Bed*—as to be *reſolved* not to ſue for a *Pardon*—by only crying out—Lord, Lord.

Again, how apt are *all* Men (however aged, however infirm, however afflicted with Pain and Diſeaſe) to flatter themſelves with the Thought of a *Recovery*, or that Nature will hold out *a little longer*. Now upon our preſent *ſuppoſed* Plan of Salvation, how likely will *bad* Men be to take ſuch an Advantage of it, as to poſtpone the *ſhort* and *eaſy* Work of their intended Converſion, till it be even *too late* to put it into Execution! The penitent Thief (ignominious as his Mode of dying was) became happy in this *great Particular*—that the *Certainty* of his *Death* made his *Repentance* alſo *ſure*—allowed him no *idle*

Evaſions

Evaſions—no *deluding* Proſpects of a *more convenient* Seaſon.

But I have an Argument to introduce next, which I think muſt very powerfully alarm the more wicked and ſinful Part of an Audience. I would wiſh you then to reflect—that this repenting Malefactor brought with him to his Croſs or Death-Bed—Senſes perfect—Reaſon calm and ſober—and withal a Body free from Pain and Sickneſs: Whereas how often do *other* dying Perſons labour under Pains and Diſeaſes ſo acute and ſo ſevere—that what pronounces them *human*—is their *Shape only*. Now inſtead of knowing, inſtead of being able to become *reconciled* to their *Redeemer* at ſuch a Time as this—their own neareſt Family Friend, perhaps, may be ſtanding by their Bed-Side as a Figure *ſtrange* and *indifferent*—if not *ghaſtly* and *perplexing* to them.

Suppoſe

Suppoſe then that the wicked Man is allowed every Advantage conceivable either from *Nature* or the Example of the *penitent* Thief; ſtill, his Situation, when he comes to die, may prove an unhappy, becauſe a dangerous, one. If he ſhould be *hardened* — (inſenſible of his Crimes, and careleſs of what may happen to him hereafter) — then he will be ſure to die like the *impenitent* upon the Croſs: And if he ſhould have the Power and the *Inclination* to reflect — yet he will perceive it a difficult Taſk, in a dying State, ſo to employ and manage his Thoughts, as to render himſelf *fit* either for *this* World or the *next*.

But, ſurely, the Caſe of the penitent Thief, and *that* of any other dying Perſon, born and educated under the chriſtian Diſpenſation, are ſo *vaſtly different* — that it is Impiety itſelf to ſuppoſe that their final Acceptance *can* (upon any Terms) ever prove the *ſame*. The Means of Happineſs *ſo long*

denied

denied to the *one*, have been *offered* to the *other* from the *Moment* that he was capable of diſtinguiſhing *Right* from *Wrong:* As ſoon as the Door of Mercy was open to receive the *one*—he piouſly and gratefully ſought Admiſſion: Whereas the Door of Mercy was *always* open to receive the *other*—till by his own impious Preſumption he ſhut it againſt *himſelf*. Nothing, I fear, but *extraordinary Grace* can ſave ſuch a Man as *this*; and whether he who has throughout Life called himſelf a Chriſtian without having the *Faith* of a Chriſtian—or who in *Profeſſion* has been a Diſciple of *Chriſt*, and in his *Conduct* the manifeſt Diſciple of a *different Maſter*; whether, I ſay, this Man, becoming a true Believer and a ſincere Penitent even at the *Cloſe* of the eleventh Hour—can be thought an Object *deſerving* of extraordinary Interpoſition——let any one in his Senſes determine. I will only venture to add—that if it ſhould be

the

the Deſign of God *finally* to reſtore the *moſt flagrant* Sinners after *this Manner*; the Goſpel Injunctions are but of *little Uſe*, and the Virtues and conſiſtent Piety of good Chriſtians but of *ſmall Advantage:* But, beloved, be not deceived, for God will not *thus* be mocked.

Happieſt of Reflections ſurely — that *Chriſt* came into the World and died for Sinners—and that he now ſitteth at the right Hand of his Father as Mediator between God and fallen Man! Upon this kind Redeemer of ours let us *all* depend, as Salvation cometh from none other. The beſt Men upon Earth cannot *claim* Forgiveneſs or eternal Happineſs upon the Score of their own Merit: But altho' they cannot *demand* this, as having offered to God *perfect* Innocence, or Things of *equal Value*; yet it is but reaſonable to expect that a juſt Creator will accept their *good Works*, and reward them *accordingly*. Indeed the very

Term

Term Mediation implies *ſome Merit*, at leaſt *ſome extenuating Circumſtances* in the Conduct of the Perſon or Perſons pleaded for; and likewiſe a *Doubt* of Acceptance. Unleſs therefore we can furniſh *Chriſt* our divine Interceſſor with *ſome Merit*, or ſome extenuating Circumſtances, on which he may *found* an *Interceſſion*—— preſumptious, I think, is the Reſolve to *aſk* it of him; nor do I ſee that *Chriſt* would deviate from *his Character*—if he *refuſed* to *mediate* in ſuch a Caſe as *this*; nor God from *his*—was he even to *reject* the *Mediation*.

Here then let me mention the ſtrange Inconſiſtency of ſome even of the worſt of Men—in ſending for their Miniſters juſt at the *Cloſe* of Life; only to make us Witneſſes of their *mock Faith* and *mock Converſion*, and to implore the Sanction of the Church for Hopes of a final Acceptance with God, as *happy* as *that* of the Penitent upon

upon the Croſs. There is, doubtleſs, no Care more deeply incumbent upon God's Miniſters—than to deal *charitably* with Souls upon the Wing for Eternity: But we are to *remember*—that we muſt deal *faithfully alſo*; muſt *ſo* order our *Counſels* and *Expreſſions*—as to cauſe *no* ſick Man to *depart*—either in a *vain Hope*, or in a *flattering* and *deluſive Peace*. Would Men indeed live—at leaſt in a *Kind* of *Preparation* for another and a *better* World—*we* ſhould *then* be *pleaſed* to attend their Death Beds; and our *Viſits*, inſtead of ſtriking *them* with *Horror*, and *painfully affecting* our own *Tenderneſs*, would *comfort* their departing Souls: And ſurely you muſt think—that *ſatisfactory* is the Taſk—when we *can* from the *general* Rectitude of the ſick Man's *paſt Life*, (and *conſequently* from the *Word* of *God*) with Safety *pronounce* his Peace *ſolid*—and his Hope of Happineſs *certain*.

I hope

I truſt that you ſee the Force of this Manner of Reaſoning. To preach — and not to preach to the *Underſtandings* as well as to the *Paſſions* of Mankind — muſt *ever* be preaching to *no* Purpoſe — or what is ſtill *worſe* — to a *bad* Purpoſe. I ſhall therefore cloſe the whole, with this ſalutary and *friendly* Advice.

Lay not the *leaſt* Streſs upon the Acceptance of the Penitent upon the Croſs: It cannot poſſibly afford any of *us* the *leaſt* happy Protection. If you really mean to partake of chriſtian Salvation — be mindful of it — whilſt it may be called — to Day. Remember that the Night advanceth *apace*, when it may be *too late* either for *you* to *aſk*, or for divine Mercy *itſelf* to *beſtow* — *Forgiveneſs*. The Change — the irreſiſtible Change of Death — will ſoon take the youngeſt and the ſtrongeſt of us from our *favourite* Earth — will ſoon hurry us to the Judgment Seat of *Chriſt*

Chriſt: *There* — will the Sinner (on *Earth*, perhaps, *inflexible*) beſtow the *voluntary* Bend: *There* — will Pride (on *Earth*, perhaps, *exulting*) level *itſelf* with the *very* Duſt. Nor would I have you deem *theſe* the wild Suggeſtions of *Frenzy* or *Enthuſiaſm* — but believe *them* to be — what they really are — the Words of *Truth* and *Soberneſs*. May they *ſo* operate upon the Minds of *every one* of us — *ſo* influence our Lives and Converſation — as to induce the dear Redeemer (upon his own obvious and *general* Plan of Salvation) to whiſper in our dying Ear — "let not thy Soul — let not thy Soul be diſ-"quieted within Thee — *to Day* ſhalt thou "be with *me* — in *Paradiſe*."

FINIS.