



36-8
14

Princeton Theol. Seminary

Part of a donation from
Mess^{rs} R. L. and A. Stuart,
N. Y. 1834.

LIBRARY	
OF THE	
Theological Seminary,	
PRINCETON, N. J.	
Case,	Division
Shelf,	Section
Book,	No.

SCC
2819

T W E N T Y 27

S E R M O N S.

The first NINE of them

P R E A C H E D

Before the KING in L E N T.

Of Superstition.
Of contending for the Faith.
Of Judging one Another.
Of the true Use of the World.
Of the Love of Pleasure.
St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.
Of Consistency in Religion.
No continuing City here.
Christ's Yoke Easy.
Of Persecution.
Of Zeal not according to
Knowledge.
The Impossibility of serving
God and Mammon.

The Ambition of Christ's
Disciples reprov'd.
The different Characters of
John Baptist and Jesus Christ.
The Extremes of Riches and
Poverty.
The Good Samaritan.
Of our Duty under Afflictions:
The Christian Race.
The Best Christians unprofi-
table Servants.
The Nature of Christ's Bless-
ing.

Hoodler
By BENJAMIN, Lord Bishop of *Winchester*.

L O N D O N,

Printed for JOHN and PAUL KNAPTON, at the
Crown in Ludgate-Street. MDCCLV.





CONTENTS.

S E R M O N I.

Of SUPERSTITION.

Preached before the KING, *March 23, 1717-18.*

A C T S XVII. 22.

Then Paul stood in the mids of Mars-hill, and said, Ye Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things Ye are too Superstitious. pag. 1.

S E R M O N II.

Of contending for the FAITH.

Preached before the KING, *March 13, 1719-20.*

Epistle of JUDE, Verse 3. latter Part.

It was needful for Me to write unto You, and exhort You, that Ye should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints. pag. 21.

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N III.

Of Judging One Another.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 18, 1721-2.

R O M A N S xiv. 4.

*Who art thou that judgest another Man's Ser-
vant? To his own Master he standeth, or
falleth.* pag. 47.

S E R M O N IV.

Of the true Use of this World.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 21, 1724-5.

I C O R I N T H I A N S vii. 31.

*And They that use this World, as not abusing it :
For the Fashion of this World passeth away.* p. 65.

S E R M O N V.

Of the Love of Pleasure.

Preached before the KING, *March* 10, 1727-8.

2 T I M O T H Y iii. 4.

Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God.
pag. 85.

S E R-

S E R M O N VI.

St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.

Preached before the KING, *Febr* 15, 1729-30.ACTS xxiv. part of 24th and 25th Verses.

He sent for Paul, and heard Him concerning the Faith in Christ: And as He reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled. pag. 103.

S E R M O N VII.

Of Consistency in all our Arguments about Religion.

Preached before the KING, *March* 5, 1731-2.

GALATIANS ii. ver. 18.

For if I build again the Things which I destroyed, I make myself a Transgressor. pag. 125.

S E R M O N VIII.

No continuing City here.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 23, 1734-5.

HEBREWS xiii. 14.

For here have We no continuing City; but We seek one to come. pag. 14.

S E R M O N IX.

Christ's Yoke, Easy; and Burthen, Light.

Preached before the KING, *Febr. 27, 1736-7.*

MATTHEW xi. 30.

For my Yoke is Easy, and my Burthen is Light.
pag. 167.

S E R M O N X.

Of Persecution on Account of Religion.

R O M. xiv. 4.

*Who art Thou that Judgest Another Man's Ser-
vant? To his own Master, He standeth or
falleth.* pag. 187.

S E R M O N XI.

Of Zeal not according to Knowledge.

R O M. x. 2.

*I bear them record, that they have a Zeal of
GOD, but not according to Knowledge.*
pag. 207.

S E R-

S E R M O N XII.

The Impossibility of serving God and Mammon.

LUKE xvi. 13.

No Servant can serve two Masters: for either He will hate the one, and love the other; or else He will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve GOD and MAMMON. pag. 227.

S E R M O N XIII.

The Ambition of Christ's Disciples reprov'd.

MATTHEW xx. 26, 27.

But it shall not be so amongst you: but whosoever will be Great amongst you, let him be your Minister: and whosoever will be Chief amongst you, let him be your Servant. p. 249.

S E R M O N XIV.

The Different Characters of John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ.

LUKE vii. 33, 34.

John the Baptist came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine, and ye say, He hath a Devil. The Son of man is come, eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners. pag. 27¹

S E R M O N XV.

The Extremes of Riches and Poverty.

PROVERBS xxx. 8, 9.

Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches; 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. pag. 295.

S E R M O N XVI.

The Good Samaritan.

LUKE x. 37.

Then said Jesus unto Him, Go, and do Thou likewise. pag. 317.

S E R M O N XVII.

Of the Duty of Christians under Afflictions.

HEBREWS xii. 11.

Now, no Chastening for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceful Fruit of Righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby. pag. 339.

S E R M O N XVIII.

The Christian Race.

I CORINTHIANS ix. 24. 25.

Know ye not, that they which run in a Race, run all, but One receiveth the Prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every Man that striveth for the Mastery is temperate in all Things. Now They do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but We an incorruptible.

pag. 361.

S E R M O N XIX.

The Best Christians, unprofitable Servants.

LUKE xvii. ver. 10.

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you, say, We are Unprofitable Servants, We have done that which was our Duty to do.

pag. 383.

S E R M O N XX.

The Nature of Christ's Blessing.

ACTS iii. ver. 26.

God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless You, in turning every one of you from his Iniquities.

pag. 409.

E R R A T A.

<i>Pag.</i>	<i>lin</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>read</i>
4.	10.	ever,	still.
26.	11.	fuch,	<i>Persecution.</i>
30.	18.		but that.
31.	6.	<i>dele</i> what.	
44.	13.	<i>dele</i> is.	
75.	3.		feem.
132.	9.	<i>dele</i> rather.	
152.	23.	uneasy,	frequent.
197.	24.	ufe in a fuch,	treat in fuch a.
198.	17.	which,	as.
209.	last,	<i>after</i> when, <i>add</i>	it.
211,	4, 5.	<i>for</i> and the ftrong	<i>Lines of moral Duty,</i> to which
		it always tends,	<i>read,</i> or the <i>moral Duties,</i> which it always
		commands.	
224.	12.	Society,	their Synagogues.
Ib.	13.	They.	the <i>Jews.</i>
226.	8.	<i>after</i> Perfections ; <i>add</i>	and the <i>Gospel</i> of his Son.
301.	8.	Conduct of,	change made in.
329.	12.	<i>after</i> Things, <i>add</i>	by.
331.	9.	confists	confist.
346.	14.	Remorfe,	Regret.
373.	20.	Passage,	Chapter.
Ib.	23.	<i>after</i> Shame, <i>add,</i>	<i>Hebr. xii. 2.</i>
392.	19.	this very,	another.
Ib.	23.	<i>after</i> Lord, <i>add,</i>	<i>Matth. xxv. 21, 23.</i>

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON

THEOLOGICAL

LIBRARY.

Of SUPERSTITION.

S E R M O N I.

Preached before the KING, *March 23,*
1717-18.

A C T S XVII. 22.

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things Ye are too Superstitious.

SUPPOSING the Word *Superstitious* to answer exactly to the *Word* in the *Original*; yet, it does not seem rightly translated here by the Expression *too superstitious*: because this carries along with it an Implication that there is a Degree of *Superstition*, not at all blameable; and that *St. Paul* in this Passage allows it; contrary to the constant Use of that Word amongst Us, in a *bad* Sense. The *Greek Word* for that Temper of Mind, relating to Religion, from which the *Athenians* are in *our Translation* denominated *Superstitious*, signifies a *Dread* of some *Superior Being*, or *Beings*; and commonly, an *Unreasonable, Blind, and Gloomy, Dread* of such Beings, leading

S E R M.

I.

SERM.

I.

ing to great and various Absurdities, about the Methods of pleasing Them. And as the Word, used by St. Paul, implies in it a Comparison of the Athenians with Others; and therefore ought to have been translated, *more Superstitious than ordinary*; or the like: I think, the Apostle may be truly represented as speaking thus to Those around Him,—“ Ye Men of Athens, I perceive
 “ that you are more thoroughly possessed with
 “ the Fear of Invisible Beings Superior to Us,
 “ than I have found any Others to be. And
 “ this I conclude, from what I have observed
 “ of the public Marks of your *Worship* appear-
 “ ing in the City. For, besides your Altars to
 “ numberless *Deities* with Names to them, in
 “ which you agree with Others, all around
 “ you; I found an Altar inscribed to the Un-
 “ known God: which uncommon Appearance
 “ must be owing to a very extraordinary De-
 “ gree of a dark, and uncomfortable *Dread* of
 “ some Superior Being, though you know not
 “ what: Whom you fear you may otherwise
 “ be thought to have neglected,” &c.

But, as it is my present Design to take Occasion from the Words of the *Text*, as they stand in *Our Translation*, to speak in such a manner upon the Subject of *Superstition*, as may be of general Use, and Service, to All *Christians*, in the great Affair of True Religion; I shall not enter farther into any *Critical Enquiries*

ries about the precise Meaning of the Words in the *Original*; or the *whole Intention* of *St. Paul*, in this Discourse: but shall endeavour,

SERM.

I.



I. To say Something about the *Nature* of *Superstition*, considered as a Vice, to be avoided by All.

II. To point out the *True Remedy* of it. And,

III. To apply what I shall have said, to *Christians*, and to the present State of *Christianity* in the World.

I. I will endeavour to give you some Account of the *Nature* of *Superstition*, considered as a Vice, to be avoided by All.

And, this having been much the same, both amongst Those who have not lived under any express *Revelation* from God, and Those who have; the *General Account* of it must, I suppose, be given, entirely with Relation to that *Faith*, that *Worship*, and that *Practice*, to which, both these Sorts of Persons might see themselves to be truly and strictly obliged, as their *Religion*, and *Duty*.

With respect therefore, to *Heathens*, the best Account I can, at present, think of, is this; That the *Superstition* of *Heathens* consisted in every Particular, which either their *Fear*, or their *Folly*; either the Strength of their *Imagination*, or the Weakness of their *Judgment*; or the *De-*

SERM. *sign* and Artifice of their *Leaders*; taught them
 I. to embrace, in order to please any Being, or
 Beings, superior to themselves, whom they
 made the Objects of their Religious regards:
 Every thing, I say, of this Sort, whether relating
 to their *Faith*, or to the *Nature* or *Manner* of
 their *Worship*, or to the *Practise* of their *Lives*;
 which was contradictory or disagreeable to
 the just Notions in such important Matters,
 which were then, and ever are, and ever will
 be, the certain and plain Result of the Com-
 mon Reason of Mankind, exercised upon such
 Subjects. *This* it was, that was to be their
 Conductor in *Religious* Affairs; and therefore,
 it is by comparing it with what their *Reason*
 ought to have led them to make their *Religion*,
 that you must judge what it was that the *Super-*
stition of the *Heathens* consisted in.

And thus it was that St. *Paul* judged of
 the *Superstition* of the *Athenians*, with regard
 to their *Worship*: as is plain from his Dis-
 course to Them. He saw, amongst many
 others, an Altar dedicated to the *Unknown God*;
 and this he concluded to have been raised by
 their *superstitious* Fear, and blind *Dread*, of
 They knew not what: when, at the same
 time, They ought to have argued, from the
 Works of Nature, in every Year, and Season,
 and Day; That the Supreme God and Go-
 vernour of the World, had made Himself Suf-
 ficiently

ficiently *known* to Them, as the sole Object of Religious Worship, by these *Works* of his, which were always before their Eyes.

S. E. R. M.

I.

2. Agreeably to this, the *Superstition* of *Christians*, considered as *Christians*, the Followers of *Jesus Christ*, as a Teacher sent of GOD, must consist in every *Particular*, which any Persons, called *Christians*, have added, or may add, to the plain and express *Declarations* of their *Lord* and Master himself; under the Notion of something necessary to our pleasing and serving God: whether it respect the *Object* of our *Faith*; the *Object* or *Manner* of our *Worship*; or the *Conduct* and *Practice* of our *Lives*.

The Difference, in this case, with regard to *Heathens* and *Christians*, you will see, to be very small, in the End: because it was the Great Design of our *Lord's* appearing in the World, utterly to destroy the whole Fabric of *Superstition*; to restore the Dictates of *Uncorrupted Reason* to their *Force* and *Authority*; and, by calling the World to believe in *Him*, as sent by *God*, to replace the only Method of pleasing Him, upon that *True Foundation*, upon which it ought to have been placed, whether He had appeared amongst Men, or not.

So that the *Difference* between *True Religion*, and *Superstition*, seems to be this; that the *Former* is the *Argument* of the Judgment and

SERM. I. Understanding, collecting, from the just Notions of a GOD, enforced upon *Christians* by the plainest *Declarations* of their *Master*, the only possible Method of pleasing Him: and the *Latter* is the Result of ungoverned Passion; either the *Hope* of pleasing God with something entirely distinct from, and contrary to, those Notions; or the uneasy *Fear* that He will not be pleased, without the *Addition* of something which has no Relation to them.

We may therefore, as we pass, observe that *Superstition*, in some Respects, is *That* to *Religion*, which, in common Life, the *Flattery* of a false Tongue is, to the *Sincerity* of *Conversation* and *Friendship*. *Flattery* takes the Place, and often the very Aire and Mien, of sincere Profession. It puts itself instead of *Friendship*; and hopes to be taken for it. It is made up of pleasing Sounds, and Expressions: and the *Appearance* is of something good. But then, it is founded upon a Baseness of Soul; hoping to please, or fearing to displease, without any thing *within* answering to those Professions. And, in the End, the Evil is, That, when the *Masque* is, by some Accident, taken off; the Reproaches which are due only to the *Falseness* of such *Pretenses*, are cast, by such as are not able well to distinguish, upon the sincere Professions of *Friendship* itself, which it only imitated.

And,

And, in the same manner, *Superstition* hath thrust itself into the Place of *Religion*; and is become an *Idol*, to which the greater Part of the World hath long continued to bow down: And, having usurped, not only the *Place*, but the Garb and Language, of *Religion*; no great wonder that, in all Ages, both in the *Heathen* and *Christian* World, the *Scandals*, occasioned by the *Former* only, have been put to the Account of the *Latter*; and the *Evils* which the Madness of *Superstition* alone hath produced, have been *all*, in general, charged upon *Religion*, which in its true Nature tends to prevent them: nay, that the very Word *Religion* hath come to stand for that *System* of *Superstitions*, whatsoever it be, which has prevailed in any *Country*, or *Society*. But to return,

The principal thing to be regarded, under this *first* Head, is, That every Particular, embraced as something necessary to the pleasing of *GOD*, which is not plainly declared to be so, either by the Voice of *Reason*, or the *Words* of the *Gospel*, is the *Superstition* of *Men*, and of *Christians*; whether it relate to *Faith*, *Worship*, or *Practice*. But the *next* great Point is,

II. To point out the *true Remedy* of this immense and deplorable Evil: an Evil, so much the more difficult to be cured, as it is

S E R M.
I.

founded upon the Passions of Men; and flatters those Inclinations, which Custom and Education have made strong. This, it is plain, must be a *Remedy*, suitable to the Nature, and first Principle, of the *Evil*. And, the *Evil* consisting in departing from one certain steady Rule; the proper *Remedy* must consist in the reducing Men to that Rule, from which they ought not to have departed. I shall now, therefore, propose what the *Gospel*, as it is represented by *Christ* and his *Apostles*, professes and designs to do, in order to this. And then we shall judge whether any thing can be more reasonable in itself, more beneficial to Mankind, or, consequently, more honourable to the *Gospel* itself.

You may easily see what this is, even by *St. Paul's* Conduct in this *Chapter*. At the 22^d verse, he takes Notice of the Great *Superstition* of the *Athenians*; and, at the 23^d and following verses, he proposeth to them, as the only Cure for it, *first*, the Knowledge of that One God, whom alone they ought to worship: *Then*, the Nature of that *Worship* which is due to such a Being, not confined to, or dependent upon, particular Places, or Circumstances; but suitable to the Nature of a *Being*, always and every where present with us: *Then*, the Necessity of *Repentance*, that is, of altering whatsoever was bad in the Conduct of
their

their Lives; for which he urgeth this Argument, that the GOD, whom he preaches to Them, as *known* by his Works, is the same God, who will *judge the World, by Jesus Christ, whom he raised from the Dead*, as a sensible Assurance of this Truth. Here then St. Paul represents to them *Religion*, instead of their former *Superstition*, under the Notion of *knowing*, and *worshipping*, *One God*, the *Maker*, the *Governour*, the *Judge*, of the World; and of practising all that is good and praise-worthy.

You see, therefore, that *True Religion*, which is, in the Nature of Things, (and I wish I could say, in *Time*, a great deal) more antient than the *Corruption* of it, is, *Virtue* in all its Extent, regularly practised and pursued, under the Sense of the supreme Being, the *Creator*, *Governour*, and *Judge*, of the World. And this is That to which St. Paul, and his Fellow-Labourers, were constantly calling back the World of *Unbelievers*; and pressing upon *Believers* also.

And all this is perfectly agreeable to what our *Saviour* himself, in plain Words, proposed upon many Occasions, through his Life, with respect to *Faith*, to *Worship*, and to *Practice*. With regard to *Faith*; He declares, in *one* of his *Prayers* to God, his *Father*, that it was the Knowledge of Him, the *only true God*, which

He

S E R M.

I.

S E R M.
I.

He was endeavouring to bring the World to, by calling them to believe in Himself, sent by that *True God*. With Respect to *Worship*, He had an Occasion offered, in his Conversation with the Woman of *Samaria*, to declare, that this *Worship* was not to be confined to any such Circumstances, as particular *Places*, or the like; but must be agreeable to the Nature of the Being worshiped; that the *Father*, (for he speaks all along of *Him*) was then seeking such *Worshippers*, as would not worship what they knew nothing of; or, would not worship *Him* any otherwise, than in *Spirit and Truth*. And then, as to the Conduct of Life, and *Practice*; his *Declarations*, in general, are all referred to the *Nature*, and *Attributes*, of the *Supreme Father* of all Things; to the doing *his Will*; to the imitating *his Perfections*; and to the practising every thing recommended by that *Law of Reason*, which He sent our Lord to revive and enforce.

For, in this last Particular of *Practice*, it is evident, that neither our *Lord*, nor his *immediate Disciples*, have framed any *exact System* of *Morality*, explicitly mentioning every particular *Duty*, or *Sin*; but have thought it better to appeal, in most Instances, to the *Great and Universal Law* of *Reason*, which they send every *Christian* to consult, with Sincerity
and

and Uprightness of Heart, as he will answer S E R M.
it at the Great Day of Accounts.

But in the Case of *Worship*, in which the Inventions and Follies of Men had shewn themselves wantonly and infinitely various, to all the Degrees of *Superstition*; He took occasion to be a little more particular. In that *Prayer* which he taught his *Disciples*, He leads his Followers to the *Object* of their *Worship*, GOD, under the most easy, and the most intelligible, Notion of a *Father*: including every thing relating both to *Authority* and *Goodness*; and representing Him to us as our Great *Maker*, *Governour*, and *Benefactor*. He then goes on to the *Matter* of our *Prayers*, in a Manner so plain, and in Expressions so far removed from every Word, that either supposes any *Passion* within, or can be designed to raise one, that it is well worth while for Us all to consider, and imitate it, by speaking to God, agreeably to *his* Nature, and *our* Relation to Him; and expressing our Sentiments before Him, more with our *Understanding*, than with our *Passions*. And certainly, whatever is the Result of the *Understanding* is likely to last, and to have an Effect upon our Minds and Lives: But *Passion*, raised for a present Occasion, and then naturally ceasing, can hardly be thought to leave the Mind

more

SERM.

I.

more guarded, and better armed, for the Conduct of our *Practice*, than it was before. And this I mention, and press, in a very particular Manner, because I think it of the utmost Importance, that the Duty of *Prayer*, which is the Worship of the Great God, should not, by the Operation of *Superstition*, become, in the Opinion and Practice of any *Christians*, the Art of raising a present Passion, upon a present Occasion; instead of the most likely Method of forming the lasting Habit of a Disposition to all that is Good; and the Expression of Those Sentiments, which alone ought to be expressed before God. But, to return,

As *Worship*, and *Practice*, must depend upon *Faith*, and *Knowledge*; and, as the *Superstition* of *Worship* and *Practice* must depend upon the *Superstition* of *Faith*; so the Cure of this must begin at the *Foundation*. And accordingly, the Design of the *Gospel* is to reclaim Men from the *Superstition* of *Worship* and *Practice*, by recalling them to the *Belief* of the *One Supreme God*, whose Nature shews both how He is to be *worshipped*, and how He is to be *served*. But, as I have observed, with regard to *Practice* in general, that the *Gospel* doth not draw up a *Formal System* of the Bounds and Nature of every *Virtue* and *Vice*; but sends all Men to the original Univer-
sal

fal Law; and refers them to the Imitation of God: so, it may be remarked, that in those Cases of *Practice* itself, in which *Imagination* and *Passion* might be supposed to have most Scope, the greatest Care hath been taken to guard against the ill Effect of them. For Instance, the Love of GOD, and the Love of our Neighbour, which are spoken of, in the New Testament, as *Duties* to which all Men, of all Tempers and Dispositions, are *equally* obliged; are so plainly described, that every *Christian* may see, that Whosoever *keeps the Commandments* of GOD, (which always supposes the Belief and Knowledge of his amiable Perfections,) will be esteemed by his Judge to *love GOD* truly; and that He who *worketh no Evil* to his Neighbour, but all the Good in his Power, is truly possessed of that *Love* of his *Neighbour* which is the *fulfilling the Law*, as far as Social Life is concerned: and may from hence make himself easy, if he cannot boast of those extraordinary Emotions, or Practices, which some *Others* speak of; but which, at least, cannot be said to be made the *Duty* of *All*, by their great Law-giver. This seems to have been designed against the *Superstition* of *Practice*; as it was taking the Workings of the heated Imaginations of Men, as much as possible, out of the Religion

S E R M.

I.

SERM.

I.

gion of their Lives. It was removing, out of the Account, every Thing, which might create in *Some*, the *superstitious Hope* of pleasing God with something, which He has never insisted upon; and in *Others*, the *superstitious Fear* of displeasing him, for want of it: And founding *Religion* upon something which *All Men* can find their Part in; and not upon Any Point, which the differing *Tempers* and *Dispositions* of Men make impossible to *All*, in a Matter made equally the Duty of *All*. Nothing, indeed, in the *Dispensation* of *Christ*, relating to *Practice*, appears to be designed, or framed, to excite in the Soul, *within*, any Thought leading to *Practical Superstition*; but every Part of it conspires to form a regular Conduct of Life, *without*.

You see, then, how rational a *Remedy* the *Gospel*, in its Purity, proposeth, to cure the World of *Superstition*; by calling All Men to a *Worship*, and to a *Practice*, worthy of God, and worthy of Man: and to rid the Minds of Men of unconceivable Uneasinesses, by placing the Service of GOD upon Principles agreeable to the *Judgment* and *Conscience*, upon which alone inward *Peace* depends.

I know of nothing set up, in Opposition to this, but *Atheism*, or a *total Infidelity*. And this, if it be thoroughly imbibed, which is hardly

hardly possible to suppose, will indeed, rid the Mind of any *Superstitions* relating to the pleasing that Great Being, which it banishes out of the World. But then, there are two or three Considerations, which I have not time to enlarge upon, but which will be of great Force, at the bare Mention of them: *viz.* that *Atheism* is itself founded upon a *Contradiction* to all the Principles of *Science*, in the World: That, though it may rid the Mind of *some Superstitions*, yet, it gives no *Support* in the room of them: That it is, itself, where it is pretended to be, often seen to be accompanied with very odd and unaccountable *Superstitions*, of another sort; and some of them very uneasy ones: and, lastly, what is very material, That, in *most* Nations of the World, They, who seem to have Recourse to it for *themselves*, have so little Love to the Happiness of their *Fellow-creatures*, that they think Them fit for nothing but to be governed by the Tyranny of *Superstition*; and that, wherever it lies within their Reach, They are so far from any Willingness to enter into any Measures of abating the *Terrors* and *Dreads* of it, that they rather are induced the more to continue, and improve, the Force of those superstitious Terrors upon Others, by their own *Atheism* and *Infidelity*.

SERM.

I.



The

SERM.

I.



The *Gospel*, with a more generous and noble Spirit, labours with the *Lowest* as well as the *Highest*, the *Meanest* as well as the *Brightest*, Understandings, to bring Mankind, by a few plain, easy, general Principles, common to all, from the Oppression and Unhappiness of *Superstition*; both to know truly, and to practice constantly, what is necessary to their pleasing God. This is a Point, which it is evident, from the Experience of all Ages, and from the vast Variety of Inventions of Men upon this Head, of infinite Importance to the Ease and Quiet of their Lives here, as well as to their Happiness hereafter. And therefore, it was a Matter, worthy of the *Son of God's* Appearing in the World: and it is what He hath performed in a Manner agreeable to the Nature of God, and to the Frame of the Mind of Man. And now, as I propos'd in the last Place,

III. I come to the Application of what has been said, to *Christians*, and the present State of *Christianity*. And this is too plain, and obvious, to need many Words.

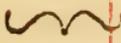
It is an easy Matter for Men to see, and complain of, *Superstition* in Others. It is easy for the *Church of Rome*, loaded with the *Foppery* of *Ceremonies* without Number; distracted with the Variety of *Objects of Worship*; full of

new-

new-invented Methods of pleasing God, by I know not what Bodily Austerities, instead of the one Austerity of Virtue; and guarded round about with all the *Allurements* of this World's Pomp and Dignity, on one Side, and all its *Terrors*, on the other: It is an easy Matter, I say, for a *Church*, so at ease within its own Fences, to sit and make great Outcries against the *Superstition* of the *Pagans*; and to send out their *Missionaries*, to disturb and molest Them, only to engage them to exchange *One* set of *Superstitions*, for *Another*, I greatly fear, as wicked and as destructive.

It is easy, again, for Those who have reformed from that *Church*, to spend their Time and Breath, in *Invectives* against *Romish Superstitions*; or, amongst Themselves, in complaining of one another. But the true *Point* of Thought, in which every *Christian*, and every distinct *Body* of *Christians*, should fix, is, what is their own Case? and what is their own Conduct, with respect to the *Three* great Points of *Faith*, *Worship*, and *Practice*?

If they set up any *Beings*, as *Objects* of the *same Faith*, but That proposed by *Christ* himself, The *One* only supreme God; They do by this lay the Ground-work of *Superstition*, in themselves, and others. If they pay the *same Worship* to any Being, distinct from that same

SERM. *One Supreme Being*; or, if they multiply the
 I. *invisible Objects* of any Degree of Religious Res-
 *pect*, beyond the Authority of what is written; leading Men to spend the Vigour of their Souls, due to the Worship of the One Supreme God, upon a Number of *Objects*, inferior to Him: This is the *Superstition of Worship*, from which their Master called the World. Or, if they confine the *Acceptableness* of the *Worship* of GOD, to any particular *Places*, or *Ceremonies*, or *Words*, or *Forms*; This is also a *Superstition*, contrary to the Nature of that *Worship*, the *Acceptableness* of which our Lord Himself placed upon *Spirit* and *Truth*.

And again, if They take upon them to make the *Favour of God* to depend upon any thing, besides what our Lord declared it to depend upon; representing GOD to be delighted with Trifles, or reconciled by Follies; encouraging Men to hope for his Favour, upon their Performance of something distinct from the keeping his Commandments; or leading Men to fear his Displeasure, for not having added an exact Observation of what Men have instituted in Religion, to what He himself hath declared to be sufficient to Salvation: This is the *Guilt of Superstition*, with regard to *Practice*; to be charged upon All, who have any hand in it.

It is apparent from the Nature of this Evil, That no Cure for it can be hoped for, till the *Kingdom of Christ* shall be established amongst *Christians*; and his own Subjects acknowledge *Him*, by their Practice, to be their *King*. And, When *Christ's* Authority is once suffered to settle the *Faith* and *Worship* of *Christians*; when Obedience to *His* Commands, under the Conduct of that Faith, is suffered to pass for *Religion*; when the Rule of every *Christian* Man's Conduct is universally allowed to be his sincere Attention to the Directions of *Christ*; and *Christians* are so upright as to take That for their Religion, which they find recommended by their Lord, and his immediate Followers: *Then*, and *Then* only, the *Faith*, and *Worship*, and *Practice*, of *Christians*, will justly be said to be all restored, and redeemed from the Follies of *Superstition*. But till this happy Time comes, How great and deplorable an Unhappiness must it be thought, that the very *Believing* in *Jesus Christ*, which was proposed to put a stop to all the *Superstition* in the World, should, by the crafty Designs of some, and the Weakness of others, be itself made the Inlet and Occasion to that *same Evil*, amongst *Any* that are called by that Holy Name; and to so shameful a Degree, as We see it to be, in many Nations round about us.

SERM. I. Nothing, I am persuaded, is wanting, but to uncover the Face of our most *Holy Religion*: and then, there can be little Doubt, but that It's most dangerous *Rival*, and powerful *Enemy*, must fly before it; and that *Christianity* will at length get the better of the *Superstition* of *Christians*, as it did at first of the *Superstition* of *Heathens*.

Of contending for the FAITH.

S E R M O N II.

Preached before the KING, *March 13,*
1719-20.

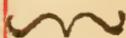
Epistle of JUDE, Verse 3. latter Part.

*It was needful for Me to write unto You, and
exhort You, that Ye should earnestly contend for
the Faith, which was once delivered unto the
Saints:*

IN order to find out the Nature of what is
very strongly recommended to *Christians*
in these Words, I propose,

S E R M .

II.



I. To explain the *Words* themselves.

II. To observe from thence by what Me-
thods we can most effectually answer the real
first Design of them. And,

III. From the Whole, to draw such Ob-
servations,

SERM.

II.



servations, as may convince Us of the Iniquity, and Folly, of pretending to answer their Design by other and contrary Methods.

I. The *Words* ought to be explained. And this Explanation ought to be taken from the plain Purport of the whole short *Epistle*, in which they are; from the *Time* when it was written; and from the *Circumstances* of *Christianity*, and of *Christians*, at that *Time*. The Duty, here recommended to *Christians*, is to *contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*; that is, in the Language of the *Apostles*, to all who professed themselves *Christians*: the *Title* of *Saints* not being, at that *Time*, appropriated to particular Persons; but, in common, given to All *Christians*, to put them in mind of their *Profession*, and what *Obligations* to *Holiness* it carried along with it. This *Faith*, here to be contended for, was the *Faith* taught and delivered, before this *Epistle* was written; being spoken of here, as already known and settled. The Expression of *contending earnestly*, *Ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι*, is taken from the *Contests*, *Games*, and *Races*, then in Use in the *Heathen* World; in which the *Contenders* for imaginary Glory strove, with all their Might, against their Adversaries. But, as amongst these *Contenders*, there were certain *Rules* and *Orders*,
by

by which They were all to be governed in their *Contests*; upon pain of forfeiting all Pretense to Victory or Reward, if they transgressed one of those *Rules*, which were the *fixed Laws* of those *Contests*: So, the *earnest Contention* of *Christians*, for the *Faith once delivered*, must be governed by those *Rules*, and kept within those *Bounds*, and directed by those *Laws*, which their Great Master, the *Judge* of the *Contest*, has declared and established.

If any one, who entered into the *Contests*, or *Games*, then common in the Heathen World, pretended to get the better, *i. e.* to overcome, hurt, or destroy, his Adversary, by any Method, contrary to the *Laws* fixed by the *Governours* or *Judges* of those *Contests*; He was not adjudged to have the *Glory* of *Conquest*, but the *Shame* of *Injustice*. And so, in the *Christian Contest*, if *Christian Methods* are not uniformly and constantly made use of; the *Earnestness* of the *Contention* is only a so much greater *Deviation* from the *Duty* of a *Christian*. One *Christian* may crush or oppress the Person of Another, against whom He contends, on Account of some Differences in Religion: But he cannot contend for *the Faith once delivered*, so as to reap any Fruit of such Contest, without con-

S E R M. tending in the *Methods* prescribed by *Christ*
 II. himself. This is in *general*.

But, in *particular*, If we consider this *earnest Contest for the Faith*, here recommended by *St. Jude*, in conjunction with the *Circumstances* with which *Christians* were then surrounded; the *Methods* of *Contest* could be none but such as were suitable to those *Circumstances*. They had not then in their hands the *Weapons* of this *World*, to lance at one another: And therefore, the *Weapons* of their *Warfare* could be *then* no other than *spiritual*. They were all surrounded with persecuting *Unbelievers*: and probably, one Part of this *earnest Contention* for their *Faith*, here recommended to them, (if not the main Part,) was the entering into that *Contest*, and *Strife*, of *Suffering* for this *Faith*, which Others, in this *Epistle* are described as willing to decline. This, I say, was *One* Instance of the *earnest Contest* here proposed; the enduring *Difficulties*, the running that *Race* of *Sufferings*, mentioned in the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews* (and styled there *Αγων*) the *Suffering* on Account of this *Faith*, and by the powerful *Assistance* of it: Not the *Fury* of *Zeal*, in bringing Others to *Corporal Sufferings*, for the *Sake* of what They believed; but the *Constancy* of *Patience* in suffering themselves for what They knew

knew to have been *delivered to them* by their Master and Saviour. And this Sense will not be at all disagreeable to the Word in the *Original*; or the *Circumstances of Christians* at that Time; or to the rest of the *Epistle*: in which some Men amongst *Christians* are described as Wicked Perverters of the Gospel; and ready to deny the *Faith* They professed.

But, if we take the Word as implying merely a Contest for the Faith against these *Primitive Adversaries*, here mentioned, as crept in amongst *Christians*; We cannot help observing how they are described all through this short *Epistle*: Not, as honest *Enquirers* after Truth, but as wicked *Perverters* of the whole Design of *Christianity*: Not, as Persons willing to receive that *Faith*, which had been *delivered to the Saints*; but, as wilful Opposers of what they might have known to have been so *delivered*: Not, as Persons ready to lay down their Lives, or suffer all worldly Inconveniences, for what, after their best Inquiries, appeared to them to have been the *true Faith* of *Christians*; but, as Persons ready to renounce what they would otherwise pretend to profess, for fear of Worldly Sufferings.

This Circumstance will likewise teach *Christians* the *Measure*, the *Temper*, and the *Bounds*, of their *Contests* about their mutual Differ-

SERM.

II.



ences in some Points of *Belief*, at this great Distance from the original Delivery of the *Christian Faith*: For, in what Men soever the *Marks* of unfeigned *Sincerity* are found, though but equal to Those which we may suppose in Others; and especially, if there be good ground to believe a Readiness and Resolution to suffer for what They apprehend to be Truth; and but as great a Probability of *their* suffering under the *Persecution* of *Unbelievers*, if any such should be, as there can be that any *Others* will have Constancy enough to do it: And, much more still, if they give Proof by the whole Tenor of their Lives, of their real *Faith* in *Jesus Christ*; and actually renounce, upon any just Occasion, many of the Comforts and Supports of this World, for the Sake of what they think to be His Will: I say, upon these Suppositions, the Characters and Descriptions in this *Epistle* are not adapted nor designed for such Men; nor are these the Persons against whom *Christians* are alarmed and forewarned in the *Text*.

But, granting that all such professed *Christians* are here comprehended, as do truly, or are supposed to, err in Points of *Faith*; what is the *Remedy*, or the Method proposed to *Christians*, in this Case? It is a plain one, and was very easy in those early Days: No other than,

than, in all their Contests about such Matters, SER M.
to keep themselves strictly to the *Faith*, which II.
had been, before this, *delivered to the Saints.* 
This leads us to the

II. *Second Enquiry* I proposed, *viz.* by what Methods we can most effectually answer the real original Design of these Words.

The *first* Observation which here naturally offers itself, is, That, in order to *contend earnestly* for the *Faith delivered to Christians*, before this Epistle was written, we must find out what that *Faith* was, which was then actually and compleatly delivered. And this will necessarily engage us to ask, where *We* shall seek for it, who live so many Ages from that Time? And what can we answer to this, but that we must seek for it in those Books, in which alone it is to be found; which were either writ *before* this Epistle; or by Persons of that Age, empowered to deliver this *Faith*; not to be suspected of Error in their Delivery of it, and enabled to prove their Commission to the World: who, therefore, must be allowed to *deliver the same Faith*, without any Variation or Contradiction. To this plain, and only satisfactory Method, I am sensible there are many *Adversaries*, and many *Objections* raised.

There are some *Christians*, (and a very numerous

S E R M.
II.

merous Body of Men they are,) who know no other Guides, but the living Guides of the present Church; and acknowledge no other *Faith*, for the Faith *once delivered to the Saints*, about *Seventeen Hundred Years* ago, but that which is *now* delivered to them by their *present Rulers*, as such. One Part of These, and much the greater, take a very short Method of establishing this Point; and That is, by first laying down the *Infallibility* of the *Present Church*, and of every Man of the past Ages, through whose Mouth, or by whose Hands, the present *Traditions of Faith* have all descended to them. And this, indeed, would be a very good Method, if that single Point of *Infallibility* could be proved.

But this is a *Point* so gross, and so utterly void of all Proof, that a great Body of the *Christian World* have broke loose from the Power of this Monster. And, in order to This, they had no other way but to declare for the *New Testament* itself, as the only *Guide*, or *Rule of Faith*; the only *Deliverer* of this *Faith* to *Us* of later Ages. And This is the very *Rule*, I have now laid down. But, when This comes to be put in Practice; too many of the same Persons who have set it up as the Only Guide, turn round on a sudden, and let us know that They mean by it, not those

those Sacred Original Writings themselves, but S E R M.
 the *Interpretations*, or *Sense*, put upon them II:
 by Our Spiritual *Superiors*, to which We are
 sometimes said to be obliged, and bound in
 Duty to submit; and sometimes are allowed a
Liberty of Examination: but in effect, put un-
 der an Obligation to find *That* to be *Truth*
 which is taught by these Leaders:

Upon *this* Head, there is again as great a
 Variety of Judgment, as there is amongst
 Others about the *Seat of Infallibility*. Some-
 times, we are asked, whether we ought not
 to pay a regard to Those whose Business, and
 probably sincere Study, it is, to find out the
 Truth; and to dispense it to Us? Yes, un-
 doubtedly; the Regard of serious Attention,
 and the Respect of a due Examination of
 what They affirm: but not the *Submission* due
 only to *Infallibility*. Shall we not submit *our*
 low Understandings to the higher Understand-
 ings of Others? or shall we pretend to oppose
 Our Judgments to Those of our *Superiors*, in
 Matters of this Kind? Let these, and the like,
 Questions be asked concerning the *Christian*
Laity, in *all the Popish*, and *many of the Pro-*
testant, Countries: and Those of *our* Church will
 unanimously answer, No: The Rule is quite
 otherwise. Nay, with regard to the *Refor-*
mation, it has been long ago, with one consent,
 said,

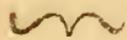
SERM.
II.

faid, that it was a glorious thing not to submit to the *Voice of Any Men*: but to reserve *that* Regard, for *God*, and for *Christ*, in Matters of *Faith* once delivered to the *Saints*.

And, again, It is asked by others, Is there not a surer way of knowing what was *delivered* about *Seventeen hundred Years* ago, than by going Ourselves to those Books which are acknowledged by All to have been *then* written? Shall we not take that *Original Faith* more securely from the *Councils of Grave and Good Men*, met together, perhaps *Hundreds*, of *Years* afterwards, for the settling that *Faith*; or from the Writings of particular ancient *Doctors*? To which it must be answered, That the Judgment of These ought to have its *due Weight* with All who can come to find out what that Judgment was: that but its *due Weight* is only such as it ought to have, after it shall be compared with the Declarations of the *first Writings*, to which it almost always professes to conform; and into which, at last, all the Weight must be resolved: That the Wisest and Greatest of these Men, supposing them uncapable of deceiving Others, yet were very capable of being deceived Themselves: That they very often differ from one another, and sometimes from themselves; and that They cannot give so good an Account of

the *Faith* contained in the *Original Books*, as SERM.
the *Books Themselves* which contain it. II.

The *Question* now before Us may be soon and effectually resolved by asking, Which is the best and securest Way of knowing exactly what the Doctrines of *any particular Church*, suppose the *Church of England*, delivered at the Time of the *Reformation*? Whether by consulting the Writings of particular Divines, many Years *after* that Period; or Any Assembly of them at this Distance; or from the *Authentic Acts*, and Declarations, and *Sermons*, made and recorded at the very Time We are enquiring after; and explained by all the Helps from *History* and *contemporary Writings*, which we can procure? For this *Instance* is very proper to clear up what I have been saying, as it will prove to Us, beyond all Contradiction, That the Doctrines, even of a particular Church; and a Doctrine recorded and set down in as accurate a Manner, as was thought necessary for the avoiding Diversity of Opinions; *That* even such a Doctrine may, in *Fifty Years* time, come to undergo some *Alterations*; and, in a few Years more, to be entirely changed, in the Writings and Discourses of most of the Members of the same Church. I mean particularly the Points of Doctrine, called the *Five Points*, relating to *Justification*, and God's Decrees,

SERM.
II.

Decrees, and the like: which were at first esteemed as *Fundamental*, and even *Essential*, to the Church of *Christ*, as any others can be; And yet have been at length much changed by gradual Alterations. For, as the Writers and Explainers were *Many*, This Number naturally, in a very few Years, produced a very remarkable Variation from what was once settled; Every one who writes unavoidably using his own Style, and Manner of Expression, which often alone begins the Change; and perhaps, in some Cases, his own *Scheme of Philosophy* which, introduced into *Religion*, very much affects the Scheme of *Doctrine* to be explained; and his own Judgment in interpreting and commenting upon the *Words already fixed*; which carries forward the same Change. — And if This be applied to the First Christian Writers, after the *Apostles* were departed; it will prove that, as their *Language*, and *Philosophy*, were various; and, as they were naturally led by these to differ from one another, in what they professed to explain and settle; great *Variations* from the *Original Doctrine*, might easily, by degrees, creep into the *Doctrines delivered by Them*; and therefore, that nothing remains to Us, firm and stable in Points of *Faith*, but what is recorded in the *First Original Books* themselves, as the
Faith

Faith once delivered by *Christ*, and his *Apostles*. SERM.

II.

The *Protestant* Rule, therefore, remains true and righteous, notwithstanding the Attempts of many to weaken and confound it. To find out what that *Faith* was, which was *once delivered to the Saints*, as necessary for all *Christians*, there is no other Method for a *Christian*, at this Distance, to take, but to search those Books in which it was at first *delivered*. And the Rule for his Direction in that Enquiry is, That every thing necessary to be believed by Him, considered as a *Christian*, is in those Books not left to be gathered by *Consequences*, or *Implications*; but declared expressly to be necessary to his obtaining the Favour of God promised to *Christians*. These are the Points he is to attend to, whilst he is searching after what is the *Faith* absolutely necessary to *Him*, as a *Christian*. For no one can possibly think, that every thing *absolutely necessary* is not, in the *Gospel Revelation*, expressly proclaimed to be so: The Supposition of which will make it a very useless, or, at least, a very imperfect Rule; or, rather, *no Rule* at all.

The Goodness and Wisdom of God will be manifest from this *Rule*; because the *Points*, expressly declared, in express Words, to be *necessary*, will be found to be few, and not

D

fur-

SERM.
II.

surrounded with that *Confusion* and *Darkness* which Human Explications and Additions have brought in by way of *Light*. For, as the *Wisdom of Men is Foolishness with God*; so is the *Light of Men*, who would be wise, in Matters of *Revelation* alone, above what is written, *Darkness with God*. To proceed,

As the *Sense*, or Meaning of the Declarations of this kind, in the *New Testament*, is to be the Matter of *Christian Faith*; the only *Rule* is, That in order to find out the *Faith once delivered*, we must all endeavour, to the utmost of our Power, to find out the true *Sense* of those Passages, in which any thing is declared necessary to be believed, in order to our Salvation; and to this Purpose, must make use of our own Understandings, and form the best Judgment we ourselves can. I know of no other *Rule*, but this, given by Almighty God, for the Direction both of the *Learned*, and of the *Unlearned*. And if He has left no other Guide, no other ought to be imposed upon the World, by way of *Emendation* to the *Rule of Heaven*. As to the *Learned*; it is generally allowed, that This may be a good Rule for Them. But with relation to the *Unlearned*, great Outcries are made upon their *Frailty*, their *Ignorance*, their frequent *Errors*; and the like. Whereas, if *Frailties*

and *Errors* be real *Objections*; they lye as much against its being a *Rule* for the *Learned* themselves; who have, in all Ages of the *Church*, been the chief Fountains, both of real and reputed *Schisms* and *Heresies*. It must, therefore, still be the *Rule*, not only for the *Learned*, but even for the *Unlearned*. And, if it be found true, that the *Points*, declared necessary to Salvation, are, at least, as well and plainly expressed in the *Words* of the *New Testament*, as any Man, or Collection of Men, can now express them; and that, in these *Points*, expressly declared to be *Necessary*, all *Translations* agree; and that, in the *Scripture Words*, expressing them, all *Learned Men*, of all Parties, agree; These must amount to a moral Certainty to act upon, in such a *Case*: especially when it is added, That it has not pleased God to settle any other *Rule* for their Guidance. When *St. Peter* complained that the *Unlearned*, and *Unstable*, in those early Days, wrested the other *Scriptures*, as well as some Words of *St. Paul*, to their own *Destruction*; this could not be meant of the *Unlearned*, in our modern Sense of that Word; but probably pointed out Those *Bad Christians*, who, *not having learnt* the true Nature of their Religion, neglected the *plain* necessary *Points* delivered, and distorted some *obscure*

SERM.
II.

S E R M.

II.



Passages to wicked Purposes, in their Practice. But whatever He meant; He himself proposed no Method of *Cure* for this *Evil*, but the *Warning* He gives of it, and the *Care* which He teaches all to take, against being seduced by such Errors of the *Wicked*; and the *Advice* he adds to *increase* in the *Knowledge* of *Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. iii. 16, 17, 18.

We may, therefore, go on to observe, that, as it is absurd to suppose that any Man can be *saved* by the *Faith* of *Another*; or by any *Belief*, but what is truly *his own*; so, there is no possible Method of having a *Faith* of his own, properly so called, without building it entirely upon what appears right to his own Judgment, such as it is, after his best *Endeavours* for Information; and his sincerest Care to find out what God requires in the Gospel. If he rests his Hopes of Heaven upon his professing to *believe*, as *another* Man, or Body of Men, profess to believe; in the *first* place, He does not know whether They themselves *believe*, or only pretend to believe, what they lay upon Others to *profess*; and in the *next* place, it is certain, He really, in this Method, believes nothing by any *Faith* of his own; but only thinks He believes, because he is pleased to take certain Points upon Trust; and to be sure that something is right, of which He
himself

himself knows nothing, because Another, SERM.
whom he deutes to think for him, tells II.
him that it is so; or rather, that it ought to
be so professed. How great a *Delusion* is this,
for any Man to imagine that he can be made
acceptable to God by a *Faith* which is *not his
own*, but the *supposed Faith* of Others?

Let the Shame of such an *Absurdity* be left
to *That Church* alone, which is forced to add
Absurdity to *Absurdity*, in order to make the
Heap *consistent*; and which alone may, with
any Decency, teach that *Christians* are saved on-
ly by Believing (that is, thinking they believe)
as the *Church* believes. For, after having
taught, that Men may be saved by the *Good
Works* of *Others*, tho' they have none of
their own; It may consistently add to this,
another comfortable Point, that Men may be
saved by the *Faith* of *Others*, though they have
none of their own: Especially having, in its
System of *Faith*, so many *Articles* of *Supereroga-
tion*; as well as, in its *Saints*, so many *Works*
of *Supererogation*. But let not *Protestants* fol-
low them, tho' at never so great a Distance,
in this *Destruction* of *Christianity*. No one
can have a *Faith* of his own, who makes not
use of his own *Judgment*, in fixing in his Mind
what God calls upon him to believe, as neces-
sary to a *Christian*. And *This* is the Reason

SERM
II.

why he is to make use of *his own* Judgment; not because it is better than the Judgment of Others; nor because he himself imagines, or thinks, it to be better: but because it is *his own*. It is the *best* God has been pleased to give him; and, being his own, it is therefore, his Guide in this Matter, without which he can have *no Faith* of *his own*; and consequently, without the Exercise of which, He cannot please God. So far is this from being the *Arrogance*, or *Pride*, of setting up His own Judgment against his *Superiors*, in a bad Sense; or vaunting it as better than *Theirs*; that it is his Duty, his absolute Duty, to make use of it, in the Case of the *Faith* once *delivered to the Saints*. Let what will be the Consequence of this, it is the only Rule God has left him to walk by. Without this, he will be so far from contending for the *Faith* once *delivered to the Saints*, that he cannot know so much as what it is; nor have *any Faith* at all, to *contend* for.

Add to this, what must always be remarked; that Almighty God can guard against all the supposed bad Consequences of *his own* Rule, better than all the Wisdom of this World put together: Which, we see in the present Case, never fails, in attempting to cure the *Evils* of such a reasonable *Rule*, to *kill* and destroy that
real

real Faith, which this Method alone can procure. And not only this; but He, who is also the great Judge of the World, can and will make all those Allowances for the Errors of his imperfect Creatures, in their sincere following of *his own Rule*; which He will not be at all obliged to make, for the miserable and wicked Consequences of setting up a *Rule of their own*, in Contradiction to *His*. But I come now,

S E R M.

II.

III. To conclude with a few *Observations*, naturally arising from what has been said. And

1. I shall only just observe, as I pass, if this *Text* should be found, at last, to refer to the *Contests of Christians*, suffering Themselves for what They themselves believe; how greatly, and how fatally, are They mistaken, who apply it to the making *Others* suffer, in any Instance, small or great, for what those *Others* do *not* believe? Thus transferring, according to the vicious Self-love of Human Nature, the irksome Duty of undergoing the fiery *Trial*, or *Contest*, themselves, for what They themselves believe; to *Others*, whom They often bring to Distress and Suffering, for the sake of *not believing* exactly the same? But supposing the Words to relate to

SERM.
II.

the *Contests* of professed *Christians*, in Matters of *Faith* one against another,

2. It is evident, that the *Laws* of the *Christian Contest* must be the *Laws* of the *Christian Religion*; and that whoever transgresses one of these *Laws*, in this *Combat*, forfeits all Right to the *Reward* of a *Conqueror*. And this at once cuts off all *Pretence* from *Christians*, under *Colour* of securing or settling the *Faith*, of contending for it, or any supposed Part of it, by the *Wrath* of *Man*; or, even the *Anger* and *Passion* of *Words*; much more, by the *Terror* of *Corporal Punishments*: In a word, by any *Method*, but what is prescribed in the *Gospel* itself.

3. Since we have, by *God's Providence*, those *Antient Books*, in which our *Lord* himself, his *Apostles*, and their *Companions*, have compleatly laid down what is of necessity to be believed; how injurious is it to represent Those as *Innovators*, whose whole *Design* is to bring *Christians* to search out their *Faith* in those *Books*? The *Faith*, which is there recorded, must be the most *antient* *Faith*: And, therefore, cannot possibly lye under the *Imputation* of *Novelty*. The *Additions* to it of *After-ages*, let them be as near as possible to those *First Writings*, yet still are truly *Innovations* and *Novelties*, with respect to
what

what was settled *before* them. Neither can any Length of Time, or any Number of Ages, give them the true *Antiquity* of *Christ's Religion*, or ever make them any other than *Novelties*, and *Innovations*. And whoever refer *Christians* to any Writings, or Transactions, of Ages later than the *Apostolical*; unless it be as they may refer them to any Writings of the present Age, by way of Helps and Assistances, to find out the Meaning of what was *before delivered*; These are properly the Introducers and Encouragers of *Innovations* in the *Christian Religion*. But,

4. I cannot but observe, that, in order to preserve this *Faith*, *delivered* in those Antient Books, entire; the most secure, as well as the most Christian way, is to preserve the *Old Words*, and the *Old Language*, of those Books, as unvaried and unchanged, as possible. The Reason is plain, because They are the *Words* in which it pleased God it should at first be *delivered*. And therefore, tho' many Persons may mistake in their different Apprehensions concerning the Sense of these Words; yet, we may be sure, whilst we retain these Words, that we retain what God himself has seen fit should be *delivered* and transmitted to us, as the best Conveyance, all things considered, of the *Faith* required of Us. This I mean particularly with regard

SERM.

II.

S E R M.
II.



regard to those *Articles of Belief*, which are properly *Christian*; because *These* could not be so much as known to *Christians* at all, but by the Declarations of the very *Author* and *Finisher* of their *Faith*. It may be otherwise in the Point of *Worship*; and in the *Moral Rules of Practice*; in which Reason, or Natural Religion, may be necessarily applied, to settle the true Meaning and Extent of what is said. But as to *Points of Faith*, peculiar to *Christians*, I do not see how any Rule can be better than what I am now laying down: Nor any thing more reasonable, than that All should be accounted *Christians*, who profess the *Points*, properly called the *Points of Christian Faith*, in the *Words* in which They were delivered, and now are expressed, in the *New Testament* itself.

I am sensible, it is said, that Heresies arose, *i. e.* that *some* Men differed from *Others*, in their Notions founded upon these *Words*: And therefore, it was thought necessary to change the *Language*, in which this *Faith* was delivered to us. But did not Almighty God foresee this great Evil, of Difference of Opinion, in the Points in which Men have since differed? He did: And yet He left our *Faith* delivered in those *Words*, which are said to have been the Foundation of those Differences. Or, are We wiser than God, in chusing more effectual
Words.

Words to this Purpose, than those in which the Persons commissioned by Him delivered His Will? Who will say this? Or did He appoint that, in After-ages, the *Antient Language* should be totally changed, for a *New System* of Words; and that the *Faith* of *Christians* should be delivered over again in *Novel Expressions*? If he did, let a plain Text be produced; and not such a consequential Argument, of the Usefulness or Fitness of it, as may be urged, even for the *Popish Infallibility* itself.

But when *New Language* has, by the Help of such an Argument, been introduced; what has been the Effect? Good and Honest Men alone have been the Sufferers. *These* have been cramped and disturbed, and, perhaps, deprived of all worldly Privileges, by it. The Dishonest, and Unthinking, and Slavish, Minds have always rejoiced in such an earthly *Peculium*, as this Method secures to them. And, if we consult Experience, the *New Words* invented for the Security of the *Faith*, with regard both to *Learned* and *Unlearned*, have been generally, such as have increased, and not diminished, *Heresies* and *Schisms*: Hard Terms, metaphysical and abstruse Expressions, ambiguous themselves, tho' introduced under Pretense of avoiding Ambiguity; utterly *unintelligible* by the *Unlearned*, who yet are to be saved by *Faith* as well as others; and eternally

S E R M.

II.

S E R M.
II.

eternally debated amongst the *Learned*. And thus it will always be, when Men become wiser, in their own *Conceit*, to prevent Evils, than God himself. They first go out of the Road which He has chalked out: and then they find, at the End, that they cause a great deal of Evil, without preventing any: And only invent Instruments to *distress*, but not to *convince*, any Man of his real, or supposed, *Errors*.

Lastly, By contending for the *Faith*, as it was once delivered to the *Saints* in the *New Testament*, we shall only press upon Men the receiving what it is has pleased God to deliver; but shall avoid that *Great Evil* of enforcing upon *Them* the *Consequences*, which *We* ourselves see, or think we see, to follow from the *Doctrines* first delivered. It derogates from the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God to think that He has not provided, that all Points truly *fundamental*, should be delivered in *express* Terms, and, in so many Words, declared to be *fundamental*. And this must ever be a great *Prejudice* against any Point enforced by *Men*, as *fundamental*; to find them obliged to deduce it by a *Consequential* Arguing from their own *Sense* of the Words of *Scripture*.

The just *Consequences* from any *Truth*, are, certainly, equally true with that *Truth*, from which they follow. And it is as certain, that

to

to *Him* who sees them to follow, or thinks he sees them, they are as *Truths*; and may justly be maintained as such. But they are not so to Others, who see them not in the same Light. Nor can they be made necessary to be believed by Others, 'till these Others themselves discover their *Relation* to the *Primitive Truths* of Religion: And then they will, of Course, and Necessity, believe them. But to make the Consequences, supposed or real, of *fundamental Doctrines*, to be *fundamental* to *All Christians*, and necessary to be *explicitly* believed, is first to create a *new Rule of Faith*; and then it is to suppose, as a Truth, what is the greatest Falshood in Fact, that all Men's Capacities and Understandings are equally fitted to see the same *Deductions*, and the same *Consequences*, which Some may see.

And this is a great Objection against all *Innovations* of *Language* in fundamental Points; That almost all those *New Words* and Phrases, upon which the greatest Stress has been laid, are seen to be framed from *Consequential Arguings*: not to be merely *other* Words for the *Old Words*, but to be framed upon a particular *Interpretation* of those *Old Words*, and by a Train of Consequences drawn from the antient Expressions, explained in a particular Manner.

In

SERM.
II.

In fine, the *Faith* to be *contended* for, was compleatly delivered, *before* it was to be contended for. The *Direction* of *Other Men's Faith* is not, *our* Capacity of seeing Consequences, or *our* Skill in Interpreting; but the plain Declarations of *Christ*, and his *Apostles*. To *contend* for it, in the very Form in which it was at first *once delivered*, is a Glory to a *Christian*. It is to follow God, by contending for it in a Method surrounded with those Inconveniencies only, with which it has pleased Him to leave it surrounded, for the Trial of the Sincerity of his Servants. To contend for the *Faith*, as it has been *over and over again* delivered by *Men*, has, at least, this Evil in it, that it is a forsaking the Method *chosen* by Almighty God, as insufficient; and chusing *Another*, which, by being effectually pursued, has been already seen to be the Inlet of All *Superstition*, all *Absurdity*, and all *Persecution*, into the *Church* of *Christ*: from the *Reproach*, and *Guilt*, and *Burthen*, of which, may it please God at length to deliver it, through his Son *Jesus Christ*, our Lord!

Of Judging One Another.

S E R M O N III.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 18,
1721-2.

ROMANS xiv. 4.

*Who art Thou that judgest another Man's Ser-
vant? To his own Master he standeth, or fal-
leth.*

WE find, in this Chapter, the *Apostle*, with his usual Zeal, opposing that Spirit of Censuring and Judging One Another, which very early shewed itself in the *Christian Church*; and, at the same time, displaying before the Eyes of all *Christians*, in his own Example, the greatest Instance of Temper and good Conduct in this respect. He knew the Genius of the *Christian Religion* perfectly well. He was acquainted where the *Truth* lay, in those Differences which raised this Spirit of Censure in his Time. He is free to declare his own Judgment, on *one* side of the Question. But tho' He had all the Light
and

S E R M.
III.



SERM.
III.

and Authority of an *Apostle*, to enforce an *Agreement* with Himself; yet, He chose rather to plead, even with Warmth, for Condescension, and Love, and Regard, to Those who were not of his Mind; and whom He knew to be in an Error.

The things which gave ground for this ill Behaviour of *Christians* to one another, were of the smallest Moment; *Some* thinking to please their common Master, amongst other greater Matters, with observing several *Jewish* and trivial Rules with respect to Eating, and Holydays, and the like; *Others*, thinking this a Weakness, and that *Christians* were freed from such like Burthens: But *neither* contented with enjoying their own Judgments; but *One* Sort censuring and judging the *Other*, for the Observation, or Neglect, of such Matters, just according as They themselves thought fit either to observe, or neglect, them. Here it was fit, therefore, for the *Apostle* to interpose; and shew the Nature and Temper of *Christianity*, with respect to the Case before Him. But, alas! This evil Spirit of *Censure*; and *Judging*, was not then lay'd, even by the *Authority* of an *Apostle*: nor by the *Argument* taken from that *Day of the Lord*, which He placed in their view, and from that *Judgment-seat* of *Christ*, their com-

mon Master, to which He directed their Minds; that they might not dare to raise *Judgment-seats* of their own, in order to try and condemn One Another.

Too much of this Spirit was still seen in the earliest Ages of the *Church*, and too much remains to this Day: to which there is no other Remedy to be applied, but the same Remedy prescribed in the *Gospel*; the same Rules laid down by *St. Paul*; and the same Argument, which he thought fit to make use of. For, *Christianity* was revealed from Heaven, not only to lead Men into all necessary *Truth*; but into the Paths of *Humanity* towards Those who are really in *Error*, or supposed to be so: to conquer the Tempers and Passions of Men; to teach them not to make their own Notions the Measure of other Men's Conduct; to habituate them to such a forbearing, complying, yielding, and tender Disposition, as may be a moving Argument to their great and supreme Judge, at last, to forgive and acknowledge Them.

There being, therefore, so much of the contrary Spirit to this, still reigning amongst *Christians*, tho' not one Grain of it in *Christianity* itself, it must be very proper to consider the Argument, here made use of by *St. Paul*; and see, if it will not help to cure that Dis-

E

temper

SERM.
III.

temper of Mind, by which many *Christians* still rave against Others, with all the Marks and Expressions of Enmity and Reproach; and often shut the Gates of the *Church*, and of *Heaven* itself, against them; declare them unacceptable to God; and condemn them, with as much Authority and Solemnity, as if They were appointed by God to be their final Judges. *Who art Thou*, says the Apostle, *that judgest the Servant of Another? To his own Master he standeth, or falleth.* From which Words, the following Particulars may properly be recommended to *Christians*, as Arguments against this Spirit of *Censure* and *Judging*.

I. That we are not qualified thus to sit in *Judgment* upon One Another.

II. That it is not the Province of *Us*, who are but *fellow Servants* to the same *Master*.

III. That it is a Province peculiarly reserved to *Himself*, by that common Master whom We all serve. To which let us add, what is implied to the same Purpose, ver. 10. of this *Chapter*,

IV. That it is our Business to prepare for the final Judgment of Ourselves, and not to be found judging Others. *For we shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ*: And, ver. 12.

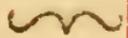
Of Judging One Another.

51

Every One of Us shall give an Account of Himself to God. S E R M. III.

I. We are not at all qualified thus to sit in Judgment upon One Another. For, *Who art Thou that judgest Another*, but a weak, prejudiced, fallible Man thyself; and, consequently, not at all qualified for such an Office? This is, indeed, a strong Consideration, against our assuming to Ourselves the Office of Judging Others, That *We* are void of all those Qualifications, which are requisite to our *judging aright* about Them; and particularly, with regard to their Religious Conduct; in which we are most apt to exercise this Dominion over them. For, being Ourselves *weak* and *fallible*, and often passionate Men, We are so easily imposed upon and misled; so insensibly and even undesignedly prejudiced; so little acquainted with the first Springs of Action in Others; so wholly Strangers to the inward Thoughts and Designs of their Hearts; so unable to know all the several Circumstances that ought to be thrown into the Balance; (their Education; the unavoidable Bias put upon their Minds, before They were able to think for Themselves; their natural Tempers; their Inducements and Motives;) and so unwilling to make all those necessary and due

SERM.
III.



Allowances, which We always expect in our own Case: That, on all these, and many more Accounts, who would venture so far out of his Depth, as to declare, or insinuate, any thing concerning not only the evil Designs of *Others*, but their Unacceptableness to God; who have no other apparent and visible Mark of wilful *Evil* upon Them, but their differing, in some Opinions, or circumstantial Practises, from Ourselves?

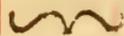
And there is one great Proof of our being unqualified, either by the Defects of our Wills, or our Understandings, to set up Ourselves for *Judges* over *Others*; that it is our constant Way, in this unreasonable Procedure, to *judge* Others by our own Notions, and our own Opinions, *i. e.* by our own Powers and Capacities: Whereas God Almighty, the great Searcher of all Hearts, will not judge one Man by the Notions of Another, but by the Man's own Notions, and his own Capacity. And He is infallible in his *Decisions*, and unerring in his Knowledge, of what is Truth. *We* condemn *Others*, not because they are not consistent with Themselves; not because they speak, or act, in Religion, against *their own* Consciences; but because they agree not with Us, or contradict our Opinions. A Procedure, which all Men so constantly judge to be unjustifiable,

justifiable, when it comes to their own Turn to be so used, that They think Nothing more unreasonable; or more unjust. Did we truly value and regard that Simplicity, and Integrity of Mind, without which *Truth* itself is but an accidental Thing, and of no Value to the Possessor; or had We a true Christian Love of our Neighbour; We should take a Delight in every Mark of apparent *Honesty*, which We meet with, even where We meet with the greatest Difference of Opinion at the same Time: and our great Concern would be *then* expressed, when We find so much of what Others perhaps think, or call, *Truth*, taken up without Examination; repositied in ill-tempered Minds; void of all other Recommendation, but an accidental Agreement with Ourselves. But whilst our Passions are as strong, as our Understandings are weak; and whilst We are as unwilling to treat any thing well, but what is agreeable to our own Notions, as We are unable to see and know what is requisite to our making a due Judgment of *Others*; We ought to acknowledge Ourselves unfit for the Office; and to keep at as great a Distance from it, as possible. But,

II. As We are not at all qualified for the Work of judging Others; so it is wholly

SERM.

III.



out of our Province, who are Ourselves but fellow Servants with Those whom We thus treat as if We were their Lords and Masters. Who art Thou that judgest the Servant of Another? One in the same Rank and Order with Thyself? His being of another Mind, or differing in Judgment, about some Things relating to his Master's Service, in which honest Men may differ; is no real Injury to Us; it imports no Calamity; threatens Us with no Ruine: and therefore, We have not the Pretense of *Self-Defense*, or *Self-Preservation*, to take upon Us the Province. If *these* have any thing to do in this Matter, it must be to induce Us to act a quite contrary Part. For Nothing will so reconcile Others to Us; Nothing will so meliorate and soften their Dispositions towards Ourselves; Nothing will so defend Us from those Censures and Judgments, which are so uneasy to Us, when they come to be our own Lot; as our not censuring and judging *Them*. For *They* have as much Right to do it to *Us*, as *We* have to *Them*. *We* differ as much from *Them*, as *They* do from *Us*. *They* are as tenacious of what they believe, as *We* are of our own Faith: and think it as sacred, and as important, as *We* can think our own: and, as far as *We* can know, are as fully persuaded, that it has all the Marks of *Truth* upon it.

We

We see, therefore, Our great Business is, with S E R M.
 Honesty and Integrity, to serve our own III.
 Master. If we should think it too much for 
 our Fellow Servants, to interrupt and molest
Us, in what We are persuaded is for his Ser-
 vice, or the Propagation of what He approves;
 and esteem *them* much out of their Province
 in such a Behaviour; let Us learn that We are
 equally out of *our* Province, when We, in
 the same Manner, disturb and vex our *Fellow*
Servants, with our severe *Censures*, and Judg-
 ments.

III. It is to be particularly considered, that
 this is the Province reserved to *Himself*, by
 that common Master whom We all serve. *Who*
art Thou that judgest another's Servant? To his
own Master he standeth, or falleth; that Master
 whom he serveth, whose Disciple he is, who
 is to be his *Judge*; and whose peculiar Office
 it is to determine concerning the Behaviour of
 his Servants, from Multitudes of Circumstan-
 ces, which He alone can and does know. To
Him the last Appeal is justly made. He is
 qualified for the Office, being perfectly know-
 ing, wise, and good; perfectly free from all
 Bias and Prejudice; fully acquainted with
 every Particular necessary to the forming a
 right Judgment; and fully disposed to make all

SERM.
III.

fitting and reasonable Allowances, for his *Creatures and Servants*; and none, but such as are so. And this Office peculiarly belongs to Him, as he Himself has declared; He being the Master, who will call every individual Servant to give up his own Account; to be judged according to his own Capacity, his own Talents; his own Opportunities; and not according to those of other Men, or according to the Humours and Passions of Others of his Fellow Servants. And this being declared to be the Province of God himself, in order to deter Us from meddling with it; how should it affect Us to consider, that whatever rash, hasty, ungrounded, prejudiced, uncandid, *Judgment*, We pass upon our Neighbour, for what perhaps, he, in the Simplicity of his Heart, believes to be Service to God, and to *Christ*: We invade the Province of God; usurp his Dominion; erect Ourselves into Gods over our Brethren; and, like the Man of Sin, exalt Ourselves to a Dignity and Office which is the sacred Prerogative of God himself, who alone knoweth the Hearts of Men.

IV. I observed that the *Apostle* (in the 10th Verse of this Chapter) puts *Christians* in Mind, in order to remove their Thoughts from judging

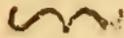
ing One Another, that *We shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ*, and, in the 12th Verse, that *We shall every One give an Account of himself to God*: plainly recommending it to our Thoughts, that We have enough to do to prepare for *our own Judgment*, at that great and solemn Day; without troubling Ourselves with the censuring and judging Others. And, indeed, what greater Argument can there be? For, Who, that considers that there is a *Day* coming, when he shall himself appear before an All-knowing Judge, to be condemned or acquitted, as his own Actions have been agreeable or disagreeable to the Law of his Master; Who, that considers that he has such a Concern upon his Hands, such a Trial to expect, such a Judgment to meet, will easily find Time to employ upon the Behaviour of a *Fellow-servant*, whose Master he is not, and for whom he is not to answer?

Nay, Who that thinks of that solemn Day, does not hope for, and stand in need of, the Mercy of God to himself, or, in other Words, the Favour and Candour of his Judge? And who that considers the Matter in this Light, can suffer in himself a Severity towards Others; whilst he himself expects all reasonable Allowances at the Hands of his great Judge?

If

S E R M.

III.



If Thou, Lord, shouldst be extreme, to mark what is done amiss; O Lord, who may abide it? And, since it is this Extremity of Rigour in our great Judge, that We have so much Reason to dread for Ourselves; how can We expect any other, if We be, not only extreme to mark what is really amiss, but to judge and censure in our Brethren, what, for ought We know, may be founded upon the strictest Honesty and Integrity; the most lovely Qualities in the Eyes of God? Who art Thou, therefore, O Man, who judgest the Servant of Another? To his own Master he standeth or falleth. Nay, We shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ; and every One of Us shall give Account of himself, and not of Others, to God. These are Words which, as We have seen, contain the most powerful Argument against all unreasonable Censure, and Judging, of our Brethren; such Arguments as human Minds, rightly informed, and rightly disposed, cannot withstand.

But what is it, then, it may be said, that *Christianity* allows in this Case? Doth it not permit Us to take any Notice of the *Errors* and *Mistakes*, in the important Matters of Religion, in which We imagine Others to be? Have We no Part to act with respect to *Them*? And are they wholly to be overlooked by Us? I answer, by no Means. . The *Gospel* rather

rather obliges Us to take Notice of them, than the contrary. But this, in a Way very different from that in which generally *Christians* have done it. Two Particulars I shall mention in answer to this Inquiry.

1st, We are not at all forbidden, but encouraged, to endeavour to remove all Prejudices, and Errors, out of the Minds of our *fellow Christians*; and to recommend to them, with all Demonstration both of good Argument and Christian Temper, the Way of *Truth*, which We are persuaded is right. Thus, in this very *Chapter*, *St. Paul* doth not scruple to declare his own Judgment, in Favour of that Notion, that there was no Sort of Meat but what it was lawful to partake of; and this, to be sure, with Design to lead insensibly those *Christians*, who were troubled with the contrary Scruple, into a true Notion of this Matter; that they might be rid of a false Notion in their Judgments, and a great Burthen in their Practice. And, without doubt, He would not have scrupled to have argued the Point more largely with any who were of another Mind, upon any just Occasion. Nor is there the least Reason to be given from *Christianity*, or the Practice of the *Apostle*, why it should not be allowable, and commendable, for any *Christians* to endeavour to persuade
Others

SERM
III.

Others of their Errors, even tho' they be not of the first Order, or of the most malignant Consequence. But then,

2dly, After this is done in the most in-offensive Way, all the rest must be left to *Christian Charity*; which never shines brighter, never displays its Glory more, than when it shews its Power amongst those of different Minds, and different Persuasions. *St. Paul*, in this Chapter, layeth down his own Judgment. And, tho' he was an *Apostle*, and had as just a Claim as possible, to be followed in that *Judgment*; yet He doth not immediately expect, that all those *Christians*, prejudiced and biaſſed the other Way, should at once leave off their Practises, or correct their wrong *Judgments*, in a Matter which concerned not the Vitals of Religion; but thinks it most for the Honour of God, that *Charity* should shew its Part in these Differences: and rather chuses, that Humility and brotherly Kindness should conquer Passion and personal Prejudice, than that they all should presently be obliged to have, or profess, the same Notions; or to conform themselves to the Judgment of One Another. To love, and bear with, Those who agree with Us in all Things, is but a low Pitch of Good-Nature and Virtue: I had almost said, it is but sacrificing to our own Pride; and

and little better than loving *Ourselves* over again in *Others*. But to bear with, and to be kind in our Opinions of, Those who differ from Us, is to sacrifice our Pride and Self-Complacence at the Altar of *Charity*: It is truly to love *Others*, who are so much the farther from being *Ourselves*, as They are removed from Us in Judgment and Opinion about some Points. This is a Pitch of Virtue worthy of a *Christian*, That he judges not the invisible Ground of the Behaviour of *Others*; that, as GOD, for *Christ's* Sake, has forgiven *him*, and is ready to make all reasonable Allowances for *him*, so is *he* ready to be candid in interpreting the Actions of *Others*; and to bear with all that Variety of Judgment which can possibly be accounted for, from that Variety of Tempers, Education, and Conversation, which is unavoidable in this State.

If any one now enquires after the ill Effects of the *contrary Temper*; it is enough to say, that it is the Beginning of all *Persecution*: which is as directly opposite to the *Spirit* of the *Gospel*, as any *Error* can be to *Truth*; and is, indeed, a much worse Evil than all the Errors put together, which, in all Ages of the *Church*, have been ever pretended, or designed, to be cured by it. We may see, in the earliest Days of the *Church*, what *Evils* sprang from

SERM.
III.

S E R M
III.

from such small Beginnings, as some may account this mutual *Censure* and *Judging* to be; and how one Degree of Iniquity brought on another. In the *Apostles* Days, and even under their Eyes, the Scene began with mutual *Censure* and *Condemnation* in *Words* only. The *Interposition* of *St. Paul* with the *Christians* at *Rome*; We may hope, kept this Evil a while from breaking out into greater *Violence*. But some Years after the *Apostle's* Death, it shewed itself again, and particularly at *Rome*, the very Place to which He had writ his Advice; and in a Manner, enough to give all *Christians* Warning at what a Distance they should ever keep themselves from this Temper. I mean that very remarkable Instance of *Violence*, shewn by the *Bishop* of this very *City* of *Rome*, against *Another* *Bishop*, on no more important Occasion than That of his celebrating a *Festival*, on a *Day* different from That on which it was observed at *Rome*: and this *Violence* carried as far as *Rencouncing All Communion* with his *Brother-Bishop*; and with a great Number of Other *Churches* which joined with Him.

This was before the *Powers* of this World were become *Christian*. As soon as That was the Case, This fiery Spirit brought the *Secular Arm* into its Aid: and by degrees, the *Punishments*

nishments properly belonging to *Temporal* Affairs, were made the Instruments of the Rage of *Christians* against one another. For human Passion seldom knows where to stop, when once the Mind is taken off from that mild, and gentle, and forbearing, Temper, which is so great a Part of the *Law of God*.

Happy had it been for the After-ages, if all *Christians* had learnt, from such Examples, not to depart from this most reasonable Branch of his Law. But, however it has been hitherto; so many hundred Years Experience may, by this time, one would hope, teach the *Christian* World, and the *Protestant* World especially, to recollect itself. In vain has the Gospel reached our Ears: In vain doth *That* attempt to root out Barbarity, Inhumanity, Violence, Persecution, unless the Beginning be laid in our Tempers; unless we learn to be inwardly well-disposed, and candid to one another. For indeed the *Contrary*, even in *Thought*, is no better than a *mental Persecution* of our Neighbour, which, first express'd in hard and angry Words only, seldom fails to end in open and avowed Acts of *external* Persecution; whenever *Opportunity* adds *Power* to the *Wills* of Those who indulge Themselves in so unchristian a Disposition.

Upon

SERM.

III.

Upon the whole; If the tender Compassion of God to Us be any thing more than *Sound*; if We be sensible what *We* are Ourselves, and what our *Neighbours* are to Us; if We have any Regard to that great common *Master* whom we all serve; if we ever think of that great *Tribunal* at which We must all appear: Let Us be induced by all these, to cast out of our Thoughts, and Words, all that Censure and Judging of Others, which will only help to condemn Ourselves: and let Us cultivate in our Breasts that happy and god-like Temper of *Forbearance* and *Candour*, which will contribute so much to our inward Peace now, and to our final *Forgiveness*, and *Happiness*, hereafter.

Of the true Use of this World.

S E R M O N IV.

Preached before the KING, *Febr. 21,*
1724-5.

I CORINTHIANS vii. 31.

*And They that use this World, as not abusing it:
For the Fashion of this World passeth away.*

AFTER St. Paul had, in the former S E R M.
Part of this *Chapter*, given the *Corin-
thians such prudential Rules, relating I V.
to their Behaviour in the World, as the Cir-
cumstances of *Christians* at that Time required,
He comes to sum up what He chiefly intended
by all that He had been saying. This He doth
in the 29th, 30th, and 31st Verses. Verse 29.
But this I say, Brethren, the Time is short. It
remaineth that both they that have Wives, be as
though they had none: So our Translation ex-
presseth it. But it seems more agreeable to
the *Original*, to connect the Parts of that Sen-
tence, after this Manner. But, Brethren,
F this*

S E R M. this is what I am saying, and inculcating upon
 IV. you, (because, as to what remaineth, the Time, or Opportunity, that will be afforded Us in this World, is very short) This is, I say, what I am pressing upon you, that they *that have Wives*: They that have Families to concern themselves for, should thus far be as though they had none, that They should not suffer themselves to be overwhelmed with worldly Cares, so as to forget the State they are in, as They are *Christians*: Ver. 30. that They *that weep*, or are under any Affliction, should be *as tho' they wept not*; should behave themselves under it, as Persons who in a short Time shall be released from it: that They that *rejoice*, should be *as tho' they rejoiced not*; They that enjoy the most prosperous Condition of Life, should behave themselves with Moderation, as Persons under a Sense of the Shortness of that Time which I am speaking of: and *They that buy*, should be *as tho' They possessed not*; should behave themselves only as Tenants for a very short Space, not as lasting Possessors of what They purchase.

At the 3^{1st} Verse, He sums up, in a very comprehensive Expression, the Whole of what He means to press upon *Christians* at that Time, with regard to all the *Goods* of this *World*: *viz.* that *all who use this World*, should behave

behave themselves, as *not abusing it*; either, S E R M. as not using it with too great an Intenseness of Affection towards it; or, much more, as not using it, or any Portion of it, in any Manner, or for any Purpose, contrary to the Original Design of the Creator of all Things. Then the *Apostle* adds this Reason for what He saith, *for the Fashion, or Figure, of this World passeth away*: That is, either the *World itself*; or the present *State and Condition* of Things in the World. This is all, according to the *Apostle*, to *pass away*; or to be so entirely altered, as that the same Things, and Circumstances of Things, can have no Place after that Alteration. IV.

In this *Passage*, indeed, the *Apostle* may be supposed to have had a principal View to that Scene of Persecutions which was then coming upon true *Christians*; and which should alter, to them, the State of the World entirely: and likewise, to that total *Dissolution* of the present Fabrick and Face of Things, which in those *first* Days was certainly understood, and often spoken of, as a Matter just then coming, and very near at hand.

But, without any critical Examination of the precise Meaning of the Words, as They stand in this particular Place: and considering them in that more general Sense which the

SERMON. first Sound of them may be supposed to raise
 IV. in Us, as allowing an *Use* of the *World*, law-
 ful and necessary; as condemning the *Abuse*
 of it; and as urging a Reason against abusing
 it, from the uncertain Condition of this World;
 it will be proper for Us to consider,

I. What is meant by the *World*; and what
 is comprehended under this Word.

II. When it is that We *use* it, as it is our
 Praise and Duty to do. And,

III. What it is to *abuse* it. And then to
 make a short Reflexion upon the Argument
 here made use of, by the *Apostle*. And all,
 with Reference to Ourselves, and the State of
 the World at present.

I. The *first* thing is to consider what is
 meant by the *World*; and what is compre-
 hended under this Word. And here it is most
 evident that by the *World*, we are to under-
 stand, whatever this World contains in it;
 whatever it can boast of as on any Account
 desirable; and particularly, whatever there is
 in it, that Men are seen to think it most worth
 their while to pursue after, and to obtain. All
 this may be reduced to these *three*, *Riches*,
Honour, and *Pleasure*; the *three* great Masters
 of the Affections, and Actions, of Those who
 think most of this World.

Riches may well be mentioned in the first Place, because they lead the way to worldly *Honour*, and worldly *Pleasure*. They have it in their Power most commonly to procure whatever a Man may propose, or fancy to himself, as necessary to his Happiness in this World: and, too often, to procure what ought to be the Reward of *Merit*, and *Virtue* alone. But then, as they seem frequently to be desired, and sought after, even for *their own Sakes*; I mean by the *Covetous*, who despise what is called *Honour*, and know no other *Pleasure*, but that of having much of them in their Possession: They may well claim a distinct Place by themselves, as they are seen to stand for *themselves*, and *all other* good Things too; to be not only *Riches*; but *Honour*, and *Pleasure*, in the Opinion of Those who set their Hearts upon them. But, as there are *Others* who are as fond of worldly *Honour* and *Grandeur*, as the most *Covetous* Man can be of his *Mony*; and *Others*, as transported with the Love of *Pleasure*, as either of these can be with *their Idols*; and, as *Both* these latter can make *Riches* subservient to the *Objects* of *their particular Desires*: They may justly claim, every One of them, to be distinctly spoken of, on this Occasion.

SERM.

IV.

SERM.

IV.

Nor is the Nature of this World, or of Man, so framed, as that We must suppose that Riches, Honour, or Pleasure, are not good Things; or, that all Desire of them, or Enjoyment of them, is sinful. Far from it. *This World* is our *Habitation* at present. It is our *House of Entertainment*, in our *Passage* to another. The three great *Entertainments* that it sets before Us, are *Riches, Honour, and Pleasure*. They cannot but be accounted *Goods* (till they are wilfully made *Evils*) by all who carry human Nature about them, and live in such a State as this is.

This being then the Nature of the *World*; and these being the *principal Goods* it pretends to; and of so great Consequence, as to be ever chiefly comprehended in the Name *World*; it is plain, that the *Use* of these, is the *Use* of the *World*; and the *Abuse* of these, the *Abuse* of the *World*: that, when We use *Riches, Honour, and Pleasure*, as we ought, then We *use the World without abusing it*; and that *then* We *abuse the World*, when We abuse the *Riches, Honours, or Pleasures*, of it. Let Us then,

II. In the *Second Place*, enquire, as I proposed, when it is that We *use the World*, that is the *Riches, Honours, or Pleasures* of it, as We ought; as it is our Praise, and Duty to do. The *first Step* of all is to use them *innocently*, so as not to be induced, by the Love of them,

them, to the Violation of *any* One Law of S E R M. God; or of *Reason*, which is *His* Gift. The IV. *second* is to *use* them so as to make them the Instruments of much good, and of lasting Happiness, to Ourselves and Others. The *former* is something: but it is the lowest Degree of Virtue and Praise. It leads naturally to the *latter*: and without it, it can hardly be supposed; and, I believe, never is found. For He that doth not *use* the good Things of this World, so as to make them the Instruments of *Good* to himself, and of *Happiness* to Others, is, I fear, always seen to make them the Means of *Evil* to Himself, and of *Unhappiness* to Others: as, He that is seen to receive no Harm from them himself, and to be untouched by the Evil that comes from them too naturally, will likewise be seen to make them the Occasions, and Instruments, of Good, and Happiness to Others. Their Nature is such, that, if they produce not Good to Ourselves and Others, they can hardly avoid producing a great deal of Evil and Mischief.

The true use of *Riches* is first to be considered. And in what is it that They differ from the other common Dirt of this Earth, if they be not used so as to administer the Conveniences and Necessaries of this Life to Ourselves; and after that, to all about Us, to whom Our

SERM.

IV.

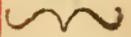
Help can reach? When a Man is seen, out of a Sort of Madnefs of *Covetousness*, to deny Himself the common Conveniences of Life, rather than break in upon his sacred Store; He cannot be said to *use* Riches, because they lie untouched and unused, unless they are sometimes handled and told over, with an unaccountable Satisfaction. But this is so very rare a Sort of *Covetousness*, that it raiseth the Astonishment of all, whenever it appears. There are *Few*, who will not make use of the *Riches* of this World, for their own Ease, and Convenience; but *Many*, who stop here, when they should go much farther.

The next Thing is to consider the Abundance that We enjoy; and how much of it can safely and securely be spared, without breaking in upon our own Conveniences and Accommodations, or our own nearer Relations: and of this Abundance to impart to Those who have it not in their Power to procure for themselves the common Necessaries of Life without our Assistance. This is a noble Use of *Riches* in Truth; but not more noble, than it is reasonable, and fitting. For what can We better, or more becomingly, do with those Superfluities which surround Us? what Method can We take, to make them more effectually subservient to our own Happiness,

Happiness, than to use them thus? What more manly Pleasure, than to look upon every Thing human to be of Concern to Ourselves? and every Thing that can happen to any *other* Men, to touch *Us* nearly, as *Men* also? What more rational Satisfaction, than to think of Multitudes made happy by *Us*? It is a Sort of approaching to Divinity; and a being, in the best Sense possible to *Us*, *Partakers* of the *Divine Nature*; to make Ourselves, under the supreme God, Assistants, Supporters, Benefactors, Preservers, to all within our Reach. They that feel it, know that there cannot be a greater Pleasure to a well-disposed Mind, than this of adding to the Happiness, or diminishing the Miseries, of our Fellow-Creatures around *Us*. Nor can the Praise due to such a beneficent *Use* of *Riches*, be detained from it. Every One applauds it, tho' every One will not imitate it. It constrains and commands the Voice of Mankind in it's Favour. And if it should at any Time, by some strange Accident, go without *that*; yet, it always recommends to the great Judge of the World. It makes *Us* rich towards *Him*; and makes *Him* condescend to be Our *Debtor*, on Account of Others, to whom our *Riches* are dispensed.

S E R M.

IV.



It

It is God, the Great Disposer of all Things, who makes *One Man* differ from *Another*. It is his *Providence* that gives or allows Success to attend upon his Designs; that fills his Coffers, and makes his Abundance to overflow. What can this be for? Not merely for *his own* Happiness, considered by himself, as separated from the rest of the World: for GOD sees, what We do not always see, that the Happiness of a Man, the present Happiness, is so far from being certainly promoted by the *Abundance of what He possesseth*, that it is too commonly utterly destroyed, and confounded, by it. The plain Intent of this Favour is, that this *Abundance* should be dispensed abroad, by the *Rich*; whom he makes his Stewards, when He makes them *Rich*, for the Support of the Poor and Distressed under them.

This is the *Use*, the only *Use*, that Almighty GOD can design shall be made of the Abundance and Superfluities of *rich Men*: and when they use their Riches after this Manner, then do they truly *use the World*, as far as the *Riches* of it are concerned, not only *as not abusing it*; but as God, and Reason, and the End of Human Society, require.

The next Thing is the true Use of the *Honours* of this World. Now, the whole End proposed in them, by the very Nature of the Thing,

Thing, being only to preserve and keep up such Distinctions of Order amongst the Members of the same Body, as seems necessary for the better carrying forward the Ends of Human Society; it is certain that, when they are *used*, by the Possessors of them, with regard only to that Distinction, they are then used, as the Nature and End of them require. When Humility and Affability accompany them; when the *Power* that is generally joined with them, shews itself in *Benevolence* and *Charity*; when the Mind of the Possessor views them with that *Lowliness*, and *Moderation*, which are the constant Companions of a great Spirit; and actuates the whole Behaviour so, that all that is decent and regular seems the Effect of that Greatness, and to be dictated by that Distinction, which they give a Man; engaging him to excel in *Virtue*, as well as the outward Appearances of *Honour*; then, We may truly say, that He *useth* this World, as far as the *Honours* of this World are concerned, as He ought to do; as the Nature of them, or, as Reason, and God, require.

The *third* of those *Good Things* which this World principally boasts of, is *Pleasure*: a fatal *Evil*, in the End, to Many! but what may be used so as to bring no Guilt along with it.

SERM. it. For *Pleasure*, in the Design of Almighty
 IV. God, being that Satisfaction, which necessarily
 arises from Our Senses, and the Objects about
 Us; and from the indissoluble Relation of
 these *two*, to one another; and our Senses
 and these Objects in this mutual Relation be-
 ing the Work of God himself: the *Pleasure*
 which results thence, must be in itself good,
 and fitting. The *Pleasures* of this World
 consequently are *used*, as they ought to be,
 when they are looked upon as the grateful
 Circumstances of our well-being in this
 World; when they are pursued with *Tempe-*
rance and *Moderation*, so as to preserve, and
 not destroy Life and Health; so, as the Laws
 and Dictates of sound Reason direct; so, as
 not to break in either upon our own Duty
 and Innocence; or upon the *Property* and
Peace of *Others* about Us. Thus using them,
 we take care, that what is not *Evil* in itself,
 doth not become evil, and pernicious, but
 beneficial, and good to Us, as long as we are
 in this State.

I have thus endeavoured to give you the
 best Account I can, when it is that we use *this*
World, as not abusing it; by shewing You,
 when we may be said to use the principal good
 Things it boasts of, *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Plea-*
sure, as we ought: viz. as the Nature of
 Things,

Things, the Nature of Ourselves, the Nature of Human Society, and the eternal Laws of God, direct, and require. And from this Account will easily appear, what I proposed,

S E R M.

IV.

III. In the *third* Place, *When* it is that We use the World, in the *Apostle's* Phrase, as *abusing* it. And this *Abuse* of the World, to be sure, is the very contrary to the *right Use* of it. When the *Love* of *Mony* becomes in Us the *Root* of all, or of any, *Evil*: When we are so under the Power of it, as to be barbarous even to *Ourselves*; When the *Riches* of this World are made the Occasions, or the Instruments, either of Unmercifulness and Hardheartedness; or of Fraud, Rapine, and Injustice to *Others*; or, of Intemperance and Madness of Pleasure, to *Ourselves*: Whenever any thing of this Sort appears, *Riches* are then grossly *abused* with the highest Ingratitude to GOD who bestowed them; and the greatest Inhumanity to *Society*, which ought to feel the Benefit, and good Influence, of them.

Again, When the *Honours* of this World dazle a Man's Eyes, and turn his Head giddy; so that *Right* no longer seems *Right*; nor *Wrong*, *Wrong*; but *Good* is put for *Evil*, and *Evil* for *Good*; *Bitter* for *Sweet*, and *Sweet* for *Bitter*: when Pride, and Haughtiness, and discourteous Behaviour, are the Effect of that Dis-

SERM.
IV.

Distinction which they give to one Man from another: when the *Passions* of the *Heart* are raised and boiled up into the *Head*, by them; and the Man can come to think himself above the Rules of *Ordinary Virtue*, and that He is privileged to be a *Sinner*, as well as a *Man*, of Distinction; then, the true Use of *Honour* is forgotten; and the *Abuse* of it is gross, and palpable, thro' the whole Behaviour of such a Person. Or, if all his Aim be to be high in the View of Men, and exalted in *Place* and *Power* above the common Level; *Ambition* then is his God; and the *Laws* of *Ambition* are the Maxims of his Conduct: and then, tho' the Laws of the true God, and the Rights of all Mankind, stand in the Way, they are but of little Force to hinder the Effect of such a *Master*.

Again, When the *Pleasures* of Sense, administered by *this World*, are made the Measures of all Good, and a Man comes to place supreme Happiness in them; when they are pursued beyond the Bounds of lawful and right; so as to break in upon his own Health, and Life; or upon the Rules of *Decency* and *Modesty*; or upon the Quiet and *Property* of *Others*; so, as to hinder him from doing God or Man that Service He might otherwise do: When Intemperance, and Luxury, and Neglect of all that is great and good, is the Effect of a Man's Attach-

Attachment to *Pleasure*, and his Love of worldly Delights; I need not say, the *Pleasures* annexed by God Almighty to Sense and sensible Objects, are then grossly and perfectly *abused*. The Man himself will come to find it, if He lives long enough to feel the pernicious Effects of such a Behaviour, which it will certainly, at length, have, upon his Mind, his Health, his Estate, his Reputation; upon every Thing which he values, even in this World, supposing him to have cast off all Regard to another to come. In a word, when the World, the *Riches*, or *Honours*, or *Pleasures*, of the World, are so regarded, or so *used*, as to be the Occasions, or Instruments, of sinning against God, our Neighbour, or our own true Interest; *then*, the *World* is used, so as to be *abused*.

From this Account, therefore, of the *Use*, and *Abuse*, of the *Riches*, *Honours*, and *Pleasures* of this State, it appears that there are two Ways of Behaviour, with respect to these Things. The *One* is such a Behaviour, as renders Us, and denominates Us truly the *Masters* of what we possess here; the *Other*, such a Behaviour as makes and denominates Us their *Slaves*: the *One* makes these good Things, our Servants; the *Other* renders them our Lords. For when we are perfectly under the Dominion of *Riches*, *Honour*, or *Pleasure*;

S E R M.
IV.

so bewitched and captivated with the Love of any of them, as to be influenced in our Actions by them; so, as *when they say Come, to come; when they say Go, to go; and when they say Do this, to do it*: when the Case is thus, I say, it is plain, That *they* possess *Us*, and not *We, them*; that *They* are our *Masters*, not we *theirs*; that they *use Us*, as their *Slaves*, not *We, them*, as our *Servants*: For they command, and we obey. But *then* only are *We* their *Masters*, when our *Love* to them is in perfect Subjection to the *Love* of *God*, which is the *Law* of *Eternal Reason*; when we make them subservient to the End of our enjoying them, and the true Happiness of Ourselves; not guided or impelled by the unresisted Violence of *Passion*; but governed and tempered by the wise Influences of *Reason*. And now, that we may thus *use the World*, as not *abusing it*, We must, in the last Place, as I proposed,

IV. Consider the *Argument* here made use of by *St. Paul*; only, accommodating it to the ordinary and more general Condition of this World. *For the Fashion, or Figure, of this World passeth away*. The present Scene of Things is perpetually changing: and Another, of a very different Nature, hastning to open upon Us: Both which make up the

Apostle's

Apostle's Reasoning. There is Force enough in these *two* Considerations, to destroy that Devotion to this World, which is the Cause of all the *Abuse* of it; and to temper our Concern about it, so as to engage Us to *use* it as we ought.

For consider, I pray you, when you have amassed together an Heap of *Riches*, what is it you have got? An Heap of *good Things*, if you please; but good Things, liable to a thousand Accidents: uncertain in their Possession; often following the great Revolutions of this lower World; and changing their *Masters*, with all the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs. It is enough to say of them, that they belong to a Scene of Things, which is always in Motion, and ever ready to change. A great Loss, common to all worldly Business; a great Mistake, to which the best Heads are liable; a *Fire*, an *Inundation*, a *Perfidiousness* in Those who are trusted; a *popular Rage*; Many more Things, to which this State is liable, have often changed the *Scene* of *Plenty*, and *Riches*, and surprized those with Distress and Calamity, who have perhaps thought themselves too secure, and far out of the Reach of any such Evils. And *then*, the Possessors themselves are sure of being removed, either sooner or later, from these Possessions; and this is another

S E R M.
IV.

ther Change made in our Scene. *We* are taken away from the World: and so, with Respect to *Us*, the *Fashion of this World* truly *passeth away*, when we *Ourselves* pass away. For it is all one, in effect, whether *That* passeth from *Us*, or *We* pass from *that*; whether *We* are removed from our *Riches*, or our *Riches*, from *Us*. This latter *may be*, by Multitudes of unforeseen Accidents: but the Former *must* certainly *be*, one Time or other, by the unmoveable Decree of our Maker.

The same may be said with Respect to worldly *Honours*, and *Pleasures*. They must be as uncertain, as this State itself is, to which they belong: and *We* must as certainly be torn from them by Death, as we now enjoy them in Life. And the little Time we live in this World, how often do we see the *Scene of worldly Honour* changed; and the *Wheel*, that is ever turning, carrying up *one*, and bringing down *another*? The *Fashion of this World* passeth away, when the *Scene of Honour* is changed: and that *Scene* is as often turned upside down, as *Favour*, and *Opinion*, and a thousand unforeseen *Accidents*, work. And, as to *Pleasure*; Men die to *that*; even before they die to Nature. It becomes insipid to them, even whilst they are alive. The *Scene of that* changes, whilst they look on: and they grow insen-



insensible, whether they will or no, and unmoved by what used to give them the greatest Satisfaction.

But then, as *this Scene* changeth continually, and at last is quite removed, there is *Another* to succeed, so unlike it, so opposite to it, that the same *Riches* are no *Riches*; the same *Honours* no *Honours*; the same *Pleasures* no *Pleasures*, when that appears. Your *Mony*, if you could carry it with You, is not current in that other State: Your *Honours* are *there*, as *faded Garlands*, dead and gone. Your *Pleasures* will there have no Attraction or Influence; because They will have no being.

What little Reason, therefore, have We to *abuse* them in this State, by overvaluing them, or by employing them to ill Purposes; when the *Scene* that is to succeed is of such a Nature that they will be all useles in it; and the very Memory of them insipid: and especially, when the only Mention to be made of them at the opening of that New State of Things, will be, upon Occasion of a strict and tremendous Enquiry, how We have used them in this? The *Charity*, the *Humanity*, the *Generosity*, that have accompanied *Riches*, will then be the only Advantage and Gain of the *Rich Man*: the *Modesty*, the *Humility*, the *Meekness*, that have attended the *Honours* of this World, will

SERM.
IV.

be the only Glory of the *Honourable*: and the *Temperance*, and *Moderation*, that have been used in the Pursuit and Enjoyment of *Pleasure*, will then be the only *Happiness* of such as have had the *Pleasures* of this World at their Command.

The Sum of what hath been said, is this. *The Fashion of this World passeth away. But the Fashion of Another World, which passeth not away, succeeds to it. And therefore, let Us use this World, as not abusing it; and let our Hearts, and our Treasure, be in that other future, never ending, State; in which we are all infinitely concerned.*

Of the Love of PLEASURE.

S E R M O N V.

Preached before the KING, *March 10,*
1727-8.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 4.

Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God.

IN an *Age* of Gaiety and Luxury, which, S E R M
v.
if we had a mind to distinguish it from
other Ages, we might justly call the *Age*
of *Pleasure*; and in a *Country*, where the Taste
and Pursuit of *Pleasure* have been carried to as
high a Pitch of Elegance and Extravagance,
as Invention and Wealth can well stretch them;
and in an *Assembly*, in which many of Those
present have all the Advantages which Power
and Riches can put into their Hands for the
full Enjoyment of *Pleasure*: it cannot be impro-
per; Nay, it must be agreeable to the peculiar
End of Preaching; to spend some Time in lead-
ing Men to just and reasonable Thoughts upon a

S E R M.
v.

Subject in which their Happiness, even in their own Opinion, is so deeply concerned.

Let not what I have now proposed give you any Fears that I am so absurd, as to attempt to rob you of so great and darling a *Good*, as *Pleasure*; or to persuade you into such a *State of Insensibility*, or *Pain*, as neither *Human Nature* can admit of, nor Reason, or GOD, require. My Design is quite the Contrary. I am going to be an *Advocate* for *Pleasure*; and to shew you, as well as I can, how you may enjoy it more effectually, by enjoying it more sincere, and less mixed with *Unhappiness*, as well as for a longer Duration, even in *this Life*, than you can possibly hope to do in any other Method. This is all the *Mortification* you shall hear of, from Me, in *this Season* (so called) of *Mortification*: *A Mortification!* which will, I am confident, *mortify* and kill only the *Pains*, and *Uneasinesses* of Life; but enliven and prolong the *Pleasures* of it; and such an *One*, as is perfectly agreeable to the *Christian Religion* itself, which came from Heaven not to dissolve any of the Laws of Nature, or to destroy the natural Connexion of any one thing to another; but to add the Motives of the World to come, to those Dictates of *Reason*, which are still left as the unalterable Rule of our Conduct, in such Cases

as this now before Us. And, in answering S E R M.
the End I have proposed, I shall v.

I. Shew what I mean by the *Pleasures* I am going to speak of: And,

II. Make some *Observations*, chiefly upon the *Two* different, or contrary, Methods of pursuing these *Pleasures*. And from these you will easily judge,

III. On which Side the *Advantage* manifestly lyes, in the Point of *Pleasure* itself.

I. Under the *first* of these, I will not be so unfair as to mean One Thing, whilst, I know, Those, who are most concerned, mean Another. The Word *Pleasure*, is now, by long Custom in common Discourse, come to be appropriated to the *Gratifications of our Senses*, properly so called. And when we speak of a *Man of Pleasure*, we are always understood to mean, One who is, in a peculiar Manner, a Follower of the *Pleasures of Sense*. The *Covetous* Man has, without doubt, his *Pleasures*, adapted to his own Narrowness of Soul, and inordinate Appetite after *Mony*; even that Abundance of it which is quite useless to Himself. The *Ambitious* has likewise *Pleasures*, in the Elevation of Himself above Others, and in the flattering Hope of a still greater Heighth,

S E R M.
V.

abstracted from other Gratifications. The Man of *Virtue*, that is, of true *Honour*, has *Pleasures*, infinitely superior to both, immediately and directly resulting from the inward *Rectitude* of his Mind. But These are not the *Pleasures* we mean when we use the Word by itself, in Discourse: but the *Idea* which always goes along with it, is That of the *Pleasures*, or *Gratifications*, of *Sense*, properly so called. And it is with regard to *These* peculiarly that I now speak. After I have said this, the

II. Next Step is to offer, as I proposed, such *Observations* upon this Subject as will lead us to that true Judgment upon the Whole, without which all Boasts of *Pleasure* are but vain Words; and by which alone we can justly pretend to settle any Title to that *Good*, which, with so much Passion, we are seeking after. And this, I think, cannot be done better than by considering the *Circumstances*, and *Consequences*, of the *different* Conduct of Men, in their Pursuit, and Enjoyment, of this Good: neither aggravating the *Unhappineses* of *One* Sort; nor exalting, more than is undeniably just, the *Happineses* of the *Other*.

I. In the *first* Place, with regard to *Those* who have entered, without Reason or Moderation,

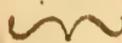
ration, into this Field of *Pleasure*; No one of themselves can deny, what too many know by conscious and sensible Experience, that there is a *Pursuit* of *Pleasure*, (of That I mean which must be allowed to be *Pleasure*,) which, by natural Consequence, introduces a Scene of *Pain* and *Bodily Uneasiness*; as really *Pain*, (and much more lasting,) as the *Pleasure* itself was *Pleasure*, which was the sole Cause of it.

Nor can it be denied that, in some Cases, the Pursuit of *Pleasure*, made eager by the present ungoverned Passions of the *Pursuer*, is seen, in a little Time, to lay waste the very Support of *Pleasure* itself; and, by the Excess of Extravagance, to bring on such temporal Inconveniences, as change the Scene entirely from a *short* Scene of *Rioting* in *Joy*, to a *long* one of sensible *Grief* and *Sorrow*, when He finds Himself deprived of the very Possibility of going on in the same Course. For this must be the Case of *Pleasure*, wherever *Passion* will know no Bounds; considering that the *Riches* of the Pursuer, tho' great as you please, upon this Supposition, must be soon wasted to Nothing.

But if such immediate Evils are, by a cautious Prudence, avoided by Some, it may still be said, that there is often seen, in their Ex-
amples

S E R M.

v.

SERM.
v.

amples, a Pursuit of *Pleasure*, founded upon a *Scheme* of Dishonour; and this is always accompanied by uninterrupted *Cares*; carried on with numberless *Anxieties*; successful perhaps for a Length of Time; but, when an End is put to it by any unlucky *Event*, naturally followed by *Uneasinesses*, which outweigh all the Remembrance, and efface every Image, of what was once thought *Pleasure*. For, before Men have quite put off Humanity, the Reflexion of a *wounded Spirit*, and the Regret of a sensible Heart, are, in some Events, such Effects of this *Pursuit*, as change the sweetest *Honey* into the bitterest *Gall*; even in the Minds of Those who think of *this Life* only.

This is indeed, a *Pursuit* of *Pleasure*, so unworthy of human Nature, and so dishonourable, in the Estimation of the Generality of Mankind; that, as *Shame* for ever follows it, so must the *Fear* of Discovery always attend it. And this is a Companion, alone sufficient to destroy the very *Essence* of *Pleasure* itself, in any Mind not totally lost to all Generous Sentiments within.

You may observe that I have not, in these Instances, so much as mentioned any *Remorse* of Mind, but that caused by the *present* Evils of a too eager *Pursuit* of *Pleasure*;

nor

nor any Miseries but those of the *present* State, introduced by it. But, as *Conscience* is *Reason* itself, first guiding Us, and then censuring Us; as *Reason* is the Gift of God to all Men, for their Government; and *Pleasure* is his gracious *Law*, for the Good, and not for the Ruine, of his Creatures; it is impossible that there should not be a Remorse of Another Sort, and an inward Distress, in all well formed Souls, following upon such *Pursuits* of *Pleasure* mentioned before, as evidently are Contradictions to the Will of that God who made Us what we are, and placed Us in this State, surrounded with sensible Objects; Instances of the highest *Ingratitude* to Him, who formed us capable of *Pleasure*; *Injuries* to our Neighbours, who have a Title to our good Offices; and, in some Cases, gross *Violations* of the Laws of *Society*, for which our great Creator made Us.

2. *Secondly*, I will now go on to observe the opposite Maxims of pursuing, and enjoying, the same Good: and these are such as make the *Pursuit* of *Pleasure*, entirely different, in every *Circumstance*, and *Consequence*, from the former. For this Pursuit and Enjoyment of *Pleasure*, under the Conduct of *Reason* and *Moderation*, is undeniably such a *Pursuit* of it, as does *not* bring on a State

SERM.

v.



of Bodily *Pain* and Indisposition, as its natural or probable Consequence. It is such a *Pursuit of Pleasure*, as is free from that long Train of Fears and Anxieties, which never fail to attend upon the contrary Pursuit; unacquainted with any Disappointments but what the common Condition of human Life makes unavoidable; and untroubled with any Remorse of Evils procured to Others, by the Man's passionate Regard to his own Pleasure only. It is such a *Pursuit of Pleasure*, as does not waste or destroy that Fortune which is necessary for the Purposes of the most innocent Enjoyments of Life themselves; and such a Pursuit, as carries no Shame along with it, in the Judgment of the World about Us. In a word, it is such a Pursuit, as is a Mark of Gratitude to the Giver of all our Faculties of Pleasure Themselves, and of all the Pleasures about which they can at any Time be conversant. And, being no Violation of any one of his Laws; no Breach into the universal System of Good and Right; carrying with it no Evil to the Members of human Society, or to the Publick; It cannot be the Parent of any inward Distress or Anguish of Mind; nor consequently end either in Repentance here, or Punishment hereafter.

Thus stands, in general, the Difference of the *two Pursuits*. And now,

III. On which Side, the *Advantage* lies, SERM.
 even in the Point of *Pleasure* itself, is next to
 be considered. V.

Now, in the stating of This, we must imitate the Men of worldly Business, in the *Method* of stating their *Profit* or *Loss*, which They follow so as not to impose either upon Others or Themselves. If never so many of the particular *Articles* in their Account are real *Profit*, but yet have themselves been the Occasions of *Loss* or *Disadvantage*, more than proportionable to it; the Sum of such an Account cannot be *Profit*: and if the *Balance* at the *End* be *Loss*; it is small Comfort to them, and little Matter of Boasting, that there are in it particular *Articles* of *Gain*, and those, perhaps, very considerable. It is from the *Total Amount*, that they judge: as That alone, by which their Condition in Business must be determined.

And thus it must be in the Case of *Pleasure*. Put down, if you please, all the *Gratifications* of Sense, you can think of. Let them be magnified and swelled to as high a Pitch as an Imagination devoted to them can do it. But be just in not deceiving yourselves. Put down, before you pretend to judge of the *Whole*, all the *Pain* of *Body* and *Mind*; the Diseases, the Calamities, which were the Result of them:
 the

SERM.
v.

the Fears, and Anxieties, and Disappointments, which attended them: the Ruine, in some Cases, of Fortune and Estate; in some, of Reputation and Honour; in others, the lasting Wound of Remorse, in the Reflexion upon what, it may be, has produced Miseries somewhere or other, never to be retrieved, and never to be alleviated; and in All, the inward Uneasiness natural to a reasonable Being, in every Step of Life, which Reason does not approve of. Put into the Account every known evil Consequence under the Notion of Pain, the opposite of Pleasure; and then it must come out thus. If the total Amount of such a Pursuit of Pleasure, be really found, as it must be, to be Pain, of the several sorts before mentioned, naturally produced by it; and this more than sufficient to counter-balance every Article of Pleasure in it: the Man of Pleasure himself, to whom the Name is now appropriated, the Man who pretends to study and follow after Pleasure as his great Good, must be found, at last, not to understand what it is truly to enjoy Pleasure itself; nay, frequently to destroy his own Purposes, by shortening and ruining his own Pleasures.

On the contrary, the Man of Virtue, who is also the Man of true Honour; who enjoys the Pleasures of Sense under those Rules which

which make them fit perfectly easy upon his SERM.
Mind, his *Body*, his *Estate*, his *Reputation*;
v.
 must be acknowledged, in the *Whole*, by
 the natural Operation of *Virtue*, and by the
Wisdom of *God*, in establishing the Nature
 and Relation of *Man*, and all things around
 him, far to exceed the *Other* at the *Close*
 of the *Account*; and to triumph just as much
 over Him, in *Pleasure* itself, as he does in
Virtue, *Innocence*, and *Honour*. I say, in the
Whole; because, as I am free to acknow-
 ledge, on the one hand, that there are *Plea-*
sures, in the Sense in which We now use the
 Word, to the *Man* of *Pleasure*, which to the
Man of *Virtue* are wholly unknown; yet, it
 is certainly true, that Judgment must be made
 from the *Whole*, and not from a *Part*; and
 that, upon the foot of the *Whole*, it is undeni-
 able that the *Man* of *Virtue* enjoys *Pleasure*,
 more *sincere*, i. e. more free from the Mixture
 of any of those *Pains* and *Evils* which are its
 natural Consequences to others; and with
 much more Security of continuing so to do;
 than the *Man* of *Pleasure* can pretend to do.
 To which We may add this disagreeable Cir-
 cumstance, that the Course of *Pleasure* which
 the *Voluptuary* runs so precipitately, is *first* in
 Time; and that the Course of *Evils* which are
 its Produce, succeeds; and lasts often long
 after

S E R M. after the whole Scene of *Pleasure* is vanished.
 v. And certainly, it is less tolerable to *human*
 Nature, to pass from *Pleasure* to a State of
Pain, than to pass thro' a Course of *Pain*
 to a settled State of *Pleasure*. To which We
 may add, That, as these two enhance one
 another, the *Pleasure past* must give the Man
 a *double* Sense of that *Pain*, which not only suc-
 ceeds it, but is really owing to it.

The great *Doct̄or* of *Pleasure* in the *Hea-*
then World, who had, with equal Stupidity
 and Impiety, banished *Providence* out of the
 World, and took into his Account *this Life*
 only, saw plainly the Importance of *Virtue*,
 in order to the Enjoyment of *Pleasure* itself.
 And tho' his Doctr̄ine, by unhappily placing
 the *Chief Good* of Man in *Pleasure*, not strictly
 explained, led his rash Followers into the most
 intemperate *Pursuits* of their own *Unhappiness*
 under that Notion; yet his *Example*; and
 the Temperance and Command of Passion, by
 which He enjoyed and prolonged his own
Pleasures, were, indeed, a Reproach to *Them*,
 who would not interpret his *Maxim* by his
 own *Practice*. I only just mention this, to
 shew that even *He*, who studied *Pleasure* only,
 put the *Virtue* of *Temperance*, or the Command
 of present Appetite, into the very Composition
 of *Pleasure* itself. To return,

The

The great Mistake in this Matter, amongst the Men of *Pleasure*, seems to lye in this, that they do not make *Pleasure*, and *Happiness*, two distinct Considerations: or rather, that they never inquire after *Happiness*, but are only for ever seeking after particular Instances of *sensible Pleasure*, and ready to fall in with every Invitation to them. Whereas *Pleasure* and *Happiness* stand, even in common Discourse, for two so different Things, that no One, by a *Man of Pleasure* understands you to mean a *Happy Man*; but rather, a *Man* who disregards *Happiness* for the Sake of particular Instances of *Pleasure*. For *Happiness* being a State of Mind, of a better and more fixt Nature than the sudden Starts and *Passions* of Mankind; it must follow, that, if the passionate *Pursuits* of any real or imagined *Pleasure*, break in upon *that Happiness*, which is the true *Happiness* of an Animal endowed with Reason to direct the Conduct of his Life; then, the Man, meanly and ignobly, enjoys *Pleasure*, without being in a State of *Happiness*.

And from hence a most important *Truth* flows: *viz.* That, if the *total Amount* of the Pursuit of sensible *Pleasures* be *not* a settled State of *Inward Happiness*, but the contrary; the *Pursuit* has been irregular and unworthy of a *Creature* to whom God has given the *Capacity*, and

S E R M.
v.
~

S E R M.
v.

Occasions, of such *Pleasure*; and that these unreasonable *Pursuers* of this attracting Appearance, have, by their passionate uncontrolled *Love of Pleasure*, shewn that they have no Knowledge of what *Happiness* is; and are quite Strangers to their own greatest Good: And that *Others*, who have observed the contrary Rules in all their Gratifications, have really, and truly, enjoyed *Pleasure* itself in such a Manner, that it has not interrupted their *Happiness*; nay, that it has contributed to as good a State of *Happiness*, as Man can hope to attain in this present short, uncertain, Life.

Thus have I been an *Advocate for Pleasure*, as I at first promised; and not against it. I allow *Man*, as framed in the Manner he is, by his Creator, and placed in *this State*, surrounded with Objects of all his Senses, to be unavoidably, by his Nature, and by the *Law of Creation*, which constituted the Relations of Things, a *Lover of Pleasure*. My great Point has been, to shew you the true, and most lasting, Way of enjoying this *Good*. And, if I have been speaking to any Purpose all this Time, the *only good Rule* must be, to be *Virtuous*, in order to enjoy *Pleasure*; at the first Sound, perhaps, to many Ears, a surprizing, dull, and unacceptable *Rule*: but to Those who will give it but a few Minutes Consideration, a certain *Truth*; a *Rule*

a Rule demonstrable, from Nature and Experience, to be a Friend to *Pleasure*, by ennobling it; by extending it beyond the Limits which ungoverned *Passion* will ever confine it to; and by freeing it from those Mixtures of *Evil* and *Pain*, which the contrary Rule will certainly throw into it.

You see, then, that, in the Account of Reason, which always considers all the Circumstances and mutual *Relations* of Things, the *Love of Pleasure* is not, in itself, a Crime; but, indeed, the *Law of God*, who created Man what He is, and placed Him in such a World as This; and is himself the *Author* of that *Pleasure*, which necessarily results from his own Works, and his own Will. You will see, if you go a Step farther, that Reason itself will support the *severe Censure* of the *Apostle*, in the *Text*, fixt upon Those, *not* who are *Lovers of Pleasure* (for the *Apostle* does not rest his *Censure* there) but who are *Lovers of Pleasure*, more than *Lovers of GOD*: *i. e.* who prefer the passionate *Pursuit* of particular Instances of *Pleasure*, before the Regard due to the *Laws* of that *God*, who is the great Author of *Pleasure* itself, to whom they owe the very Possibility of enjoying it.

Let us, therefore, from *This*, and from what has been said, argue, that They, who

SERM.

V.



pursue *Pleasure* in Contradiction to the *Laws* of God, or to his Dishonour, are ungrateful to *Him*, who alone gave them this Good, by being *Lovers* of *Pleasure* more than *Lovers* of *God*: that They who pursue it in any Instances, in *Violation* of the Peace and Rights of Neighbourhood, are very bad Members of *Society*, by being *Lovers* of *Pleasure* more than *Lovers* of their *Neighbours*: and that They, who pursue it to the Hurt or Ruine of their own *Honour*, *Reputation*, *Estate*, *Health*, and *Families*, are unjust to their own Interests, by being, truly, *Lovers* of *Pleasure* more than *Lovers* of *Themselves*, in that Sense in which they ought to be so; exposing *Themselves*, for the Sake of a present violent *Passion*, to the Loss of every thing dear in this World; even of all *their own Happiness*, which can never subsist, but under the Direction of *Virtue*.

To summ up the Whole of what is justly to be said; If We chuse to consider Ourselves as Beings concerned chiefly in the finding out, and enjoying, the *Pleasures* of *this World* only; it is most certainly true, That, in this View only, however the Unexperienced may flatter themselves, the Course of *Pleasure* must, and will, be *limited* by something or other; and the *wild Pursuer* must, and will, be *stopt*, by some *Obstacle* or other, in his *Career*. And

whether any Man will not be more easy, and satisfied, in the Reflexion that good Reasons, though of *present* Concernment only, have prevented the utter Ruine of his *Happiness*, by confining his *Pleasures* within the Bounds of *Just* and *Right*, than in the Thought of having left them to be totally *stopped*, and destroyed, by the natural Consequences only of his own unrestrained *Passion*; let Himself judge.

But, if We will be so just to Ourselves, as not to stop here; but to go, as We ought, into a Course of Thoughts much more worthy of such Creatures as We are; If We would look farther into Ourselves, and consider our own Frames; and also the main Design of our great Master, *Christ* himself, in coming into the World; We could not but find still plainer Demonstrations, that *Reason* was given Us to govern the *Love of Pleasure*. For We should very clearly see, That, as We have Faculties adapted to sensible Objects in this short Life; so We have Others, of an higher Nature, to govern them, which look forward, towards a better State to come: That We are made with such Capacities, and such Powers, of Reasoning, Reflexion, and Judgment upon our own Conduct, as will force Us to acknowledge ourselves capable of being called to a strict Account, and framed exactly as We should have been, up-

SERM.
v.

on the Supposition that so it will be : That, as it is perfectly agreeable to the Reason of Mankind to expect it, so our Blessed Lord, by a plain Declaration, sufficiently attested by his Resurrection from the Dead, has assured the World that such a solemn Day of *Account* will come, in which the Triumph will belong to Those, who have here below kept the *Love of Pleasure* in Subjection to the *Love* of Virtue, and true *Happiness*; and Shame and Distress to Those, who have been *Lovers of Pleasure*, more than Lovers of *God*, their *Neighbours*, or *Themselves*. And These will be such *Arguments*, as will set us above every Allurement; and engage us to live the present Life by that *Religious Wisdom*, whose *Ways are Ways of Pleasantness*, and all whose Paths are *Peace*: and will certainly conduct us safe, thro' a short delusive *Scene* of the fleeting *Images of Pleasure* only, to the real and lasting *Pleasures* of a State of *Happiness*, never more to be interrupted, either by our own *Passions*, or any other *Enemy*.

St. PAUL'S *Discourse* to FELIX.

S E R M O N VI.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 15,
1729-30.

ACTS xxiv. part of 24th and 25th Verses.

He sent for Paul, and heard Him concerning the Faith in Christ: And as He reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled.

THE Persons here spoken of are, St. Paul, a faithful Preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and Felix, the Governour of Judea: St Paul, now a Prisoner, under the Apprehension of all the Evils which the Malice and Importunity of the Whole Body of the Jews might extort from their Governour, now his Judge: and a Governour, whose personal Character, it appears from a Roman Historian, as well as from what is said of Him in this Chapter, might well have increased the

SERM.
VI.



SERM.

VI.



Apostle's Apprehensions of the most unjust and severe Sentence which *Power*, in the Hands of such a Man, could threaten; and, what is still more, a *Governor* accompanied, at this very Time, by *One* who had a Share in his Guilt, and an Influence over his Passions. And yet, in the Midst of all these Circumstances, we find a very uncommon Appearance; the *Prisoner*, undaunted and unconcerned at his own Danger; the *Governour*, terrified and *trembling*, as if his *Prisoner* had been his *Judge*; and were now pronouncing a Sentence of Condemnation upon him. What was the Reason of this surprizing Event? Innocence, and the Testimony of an upright Heart, on the One Side; Guilt, and the Reproaches of an awakened Conscience, on the Other. The *Former* created in *St. Paul* a Boldness to adapt his *Discourse* to the Case of the great Man he spoke to, whose Character, it is evident, he well knew: the *Latter* enfeebled the Heart of *Felix*, and forced Him to betray that Fear of future Punishment, from a superior Power, which all the Amusements and Pleasures of this World can hardly ever totally remove from Guilt and Sin.

As my present Design is to make this Account of *St. Paul's Discourse* to *Felix* the Occasion of such Observations as are of universal Importance to all *Christians*: the *Three*
Points

Points which immediately offer themselves to my Thoughts are These :

S E R M.

VI.

I. The Notion St. *Paul* had of preaching *Jesus Christ*, and *his Faith*.

II. The Agreeableness of This to the whole *Tenor* of the *New Testament*. And

III. The great Use, towards the main *End* of the *Gospel*, of the *Argument* drawn from a *Judgment* to come, to such Creatures as We are.

And if I apply this particularly to Those in the *Higher* Stations of human Life, it is because I think it the greatest Instance of Duty, and the best Good-Office, which any One, who speaks from This Place, can possibly perform.

I. We cannot but observe from this Passage, what St. *Paul's* Notion must have been of Preaching the *Faith* of *Christ*, so as to answer the main End of it.

It is expressly told us, that *Felix* sent for *Paul*, in order to hear Him concerning the *Faith* in *Christ*; concerning that Religion, for the Sake of which he was now in Bonds. There can be no Doubt but that St. *Paul* placed in the best Light, all the Evidences for believing in *Jesus Christ*, and particularly his
Re-

SERM.

VI.

Resurrection from the Dead; which was to him instead of All, and to which it was his Custom always to appeal. But, it is as plain that, in describing to *Felix* the Complexion and Genius of the *Christian Faith*, and the great End of *Christ's* coming into the World, He represented it as enforcing all those Points of *Virtue* and *Morality*, to which Men are obliged as the reasonable Creatures of an Holy and Just God; fitted and designed by Him for the mutual Offices of Society. For the only Part of the *Apostle's* Discourse about *Faith* in *Christ*, or the *Religion* of *Christ*, which the sacred *Historian* has thought fit to leave us, relates solely to *These*, and to the Great Motive to practise Them. The Words are very remarkable. In this *private Sermon* about *Christ*, and *Faith* in Him, upon which alone *St. Paul* was desired by *Felix*, to speak, He *reasons* (as the Word is well rendered) or *argues*, in his Discourse. He shews him the *Nature* of the *Faith* in *Christ*, by shewing him the unalterable Obligations to *Righteousness*, which includes all Justice and Equity; to *Temperance*, or, a Command over our Appetites; and then, by displaying before Him the *Judgment* to come, as the great and awful Motive urged by the *Gospel* of *Christ*, to secure and restore the Practice of these, and all

all other Branches of Morality. It is by *this* Method that He did honour to his Master, and to that *Faith* he had embraced; and by *this*, that he endeavoured to represent the coming of *Christ* into the World as worthy of God who sent him.

If St. *Paul*, therefore, *reasoned* upon these Duties; and, in setting forth the Excellencies of the *Christian Faith*, described and inculcated *Morality*, as the great End of it; and thought he could do nothing more for its Honour, than to represent it as joined in the same Cause with Reason and uncorrupted Nature; as enforcing the same Practice of all the moral and social *Duties*; and reveling the *Wrath* of God against all *Immorality*: this is Evidence enough of the Apostle's Notion of the Nature and End of the *Christian Religion*; and will be the Justification of All Those who follow him in this way of Preaching *Christ*, and his *Faith*. But I will go a Step farther, and observe,

II. That the Representations made throughout the *New Testament*, of the great *End* both of Preaching and Receiving the *Faith* of *Christ*; and particularly, the Accounts given of that *Judgment to come*, which is mentioned in the *Text*, do all exactly and uniformly answer to this Notion.

SERM.

VI.

The Fore-runner of our *Lord* opened the Scene by giving Notice to all Sinners around Him, of the Nature of that *Kingdom of God* which was then beginning to shew itself: That it did not consist in imaginary, or Real, Privileges of *One Sort* of Men, or of *One Nation*, above Another; but that All who would flee from Misery, or enjoy the Blessings of such a *Dispensation*, must *repent*, so as to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*.

When our Blessed *Lord* himself began to teach the Nature and End of his own coming; it was by preaching *Repentance*, that is, *Amendment*: and, as soon as ever He discovered any false Imagination in his first Followers, as if he was come to flatter their Pride, or to indulge their bad Inclinations; He took the first *Opportunity* immediately to make them sensible of their Mistake. To this Purpose are these solemn Declarations; That it is not their taking *Him* for their *Master*, or the *calling Him their Lord*, that would entitle them to the Happiness He promised; but *the doing the Will of His Father*, the Maker and Governour of all Things: That, in order to be the Children of *God*, and to have the Privileges of such, They must constantly obey, and imitate, (as far as Humanity will permit) all the Moral Perfections of their Heavenly Father.

And

And to the same purpose is every other Expression of his, in which he professedly delineated to them the main Strokes of his *Religion*, or taught Them the *End* of his *Appearance*.

His *Apostles* and immediate *Disciples* followed Him close in this main Point, after They themselves were instructed in it. St. *Peter*, in his first Preaching, declared to the *Jews*, that God sent his Son to *bless us, by turning us from our Iniquities*; or, as the Words rather import, to *bless us, as far as we turn, or in our turning, or being turned, from our Iniquities, to the Practice of all Virtue*. And, in his first Epistle, He represents One great End of *Christ's* Suffering to be, that We may *follow the Example of his Patience*; and declares that He *bare our Sins upon the Cross*, to this Intent, *that We, being dead unto Sin, should live unto Righteousness*. And in This they all un-animously agree, even whilst they speak of his *Death*, under the Notion of a *Sacrifice*, or a *Propitiation, for our Sins*; expressly taking Care to make this itself a Lesson of *Morality*, by declaring no Sins to have any Title to any Benefit from it, but such as are forsaken; and all Immorality to receive a fresh *Aggravation*, instead of any *Indulgence*, from it.

The *Life*, therefore, of our *Saviour* was designed for our *Pattern* in all *Morality*. His

Doctrine

S E R M.

VI.

SERM.
VI.

Doctrine was to lead us to the *Imitation* of God, and to the Practice of the Law of uncorrupted Reason, which He always supposed; and to which he always appealed: and this is *Morality*. His *Death* was to engage Us to himself, *i. e.* to the stricter Observation of his Laws, which are the *Laws* of *Morality*. The *Doctrine* of *Forgiveness* of *Sins*, openly promulged by Him, is ever confined to *Sins* that are forsaken. *Prayer* to the Supreme God, (that great Duty) is an Instance of *Morality*, and is the Dictate of Reason and Nature, as well as the Command of Revelation; and leads us, in its End, and natural Operation upon ourselves, to a greater Sense of all our whole *moral* Duty. And, if We go from hence to the two *Positive Institutions* mentioned in the *New Testament*; We shall find *their* Design to be the same Interest of *Morality*.

The *first* of them, *Baptism*, or the *Ceremony* of Immersion in Water, used in receiving Persons converted to the *Faith* of *Christ*, is constantly declared to be thus intended. It is never described as a *Charm*, or a mere *Privilege*. On the contrary, the Thing signified by it is magnified by St. *Peter*, in Opposition to the Ceremony itself; *the Answer* of a good *Conscience*, to the *Washing* of the *Outside*. And St. *Paul*, in a most remarkable Manner (*Rom. vi.*) declares

declares the whole Ceremony to represent to SERM.
Christians their *Death* unto *Sin*; and their *Life* VI.
 unto *Righteousness*: the *former*, by their being
 covered with the *Water*; and the *latter*, by
 their rising out of the *Water* again. And, in
 the Nature of the Thing, it is plainly the Ce-
 remony of admitting Men into a *Religion* which
 revives all the Obligations of *Morality* upon
 them, and enforces them more strongly than
 any other in the World. The *other* Institution
 is, the Remembrance of *Jesus Christ*, in the
Lord's Supper; that is, in plain Words, a Re-
membrance of that *Master* who taught us the
 absolute Necessity of *Morality*, or *Virtue*, to
 our *Happiness*: and particularly, the Remem-
 brance of his *Death*, which was the greatest
 Example of many *Virtues* to be practised by us
 in this imperfect and afflicted State; and which
 is sufficiently declared to be no Advantage to
 his Followers, but as it moves *All, who name*
the Name of Christ, to depart from Iniquity. And
 if we speak of *Them*, in the more modern
 Phrase, as *The Means of Grace*; the very Ex-
 pression denotes their *End* to be something
 higher than the *Ceremonies* themselves; and
 signifies either that *Christian Virtue*, by some
 called *Grace*, is the *End* to which they are
 subservient; or that they are *Means* to pro-
 cure the *Divine Assistance*, another Significa-
 tion

SERM. tion of the Word *Grace*: which *Assistance* is
 VI. allowed to have that higher *End* in view, of
 our Improvement in all *Morality*.

Thus the *Believing* in *Christ*; and the coming into His Religion, and the Remembrance of Him when we are in it; are all adapted, and in their Natures subservient, to One and the same great End; the engaging us to abhor all Immorality, and to proceed to the highest Perfection we can, in every Instance of *Morality*.

Take away this one great Point; and, I fear, it will be impossible to convince any reasonable Man that *Jesus Christ* was sent into the World by God. One of the noblest Arguments, I am sure, drawn from this *Design* of the *Gospel*, worthy of God and Man, will be for ever removed from *Christianity*: and where, without This, the Advocates for it can find any Others, truly sufficient, I know not. Nay, if either *Reason*, or the *Gospel*, tell us Truth about the Dispositions either of God, the *Father* of all Things; or of the *Son* of God, towards Mankind; it is not supposeable that *Jesus Christ* would have been sent into this World, and have lived here, to preach to Men, but in Order to their Perfection in Virtue; and much less, that He would have died for Men, but expressly in order to their Living, as becomes *Men*.

Thus,

Thus, We see, the *Religion* founded on *Faith*, or *Belief*, in *Jesus Christ*, is *preached*; and *Christ* himself is *preached*; when the strict *Obligations* to all *Righteousness* are *preached* and inculcated, agreeably to the *End* of his coming into the *World*. To this *Purpose* alone is the *Declaration* which *St. Paul* made to *Titus*, in order to give him a comprehensive *View* of the *Nature* of *Christianity*; and this so full an one, that it may well deserve a *Place* here, *viz.* That the *Grace*, or *Mercy*, of *God*, bringing *Salvation* unto all *Men*, hath appeared, in the *Gospel*, *teaching* us (as the only way in which it brings *Salvation*) that, *denying Ungodliness* and *worldly Lusts*, *We* should live *Soberly*, *Righteously*, and *Godly* in this *World*; waiting for the *Appearance* of *Jesus Christ*, who gave *Himself* for *Us*, (for this very *End*, here pointed out,) *viz.* That he might *redeem* us from all *Iniquity*, and *purify* unto *Himself* a *peculiar People* *zealous* of *Good Works*.

To all this agrees, also, every *Account* we have in the *New Testament*, both of the *Proceedings* at the *Solemn Day* of *Judgment*, mentioned in the *Text*; and of the *Rewards* and *Punishments* to be dispensed to *Men*, in *Consequence* of that *Judgment*. In all of them *Nothing* but *Immorality* is declared to be *punished*; nothing but *Morality* and *Virtue*, to be

S E R M.

VI.

be rewarded. The *Pretenders* to the *Favor* of their Master, at that Day, who are declared to be rejected by our Lord, in his own Account, are introduced by Him as pleading a certain Title to his *Favor* from their *Zeal*, and *Faith*, by which they have *professed* in his Name, and in his Name even worked *Miracles*. But they are to depart from Him into Punishment, with all their Pretenses about them, merely because they were *Workers* of *Iniquity*. But the *Good*, and *Beneficent*, are entertained with Praise, and invited into the *Kingdom prepared for them*.

No mention is made of Any condemned, who can plead that they have sincerely endeavoured to find out the Will of God, and have preferred it before all other Considerations. No Sentence pronounced against such for Errors in Judgment, through the unavoidable Weakness of human Nature: but the Integrity and Morality of All accepted and applauded. One cannot help, as we pass, being led, by our Saviour's own Account, to think how many Pretenses will the more *modern Ages of Christianity* furnish out at that Day? Have we not transgressed all the moral Laws of God and Nature, to shew our Zeal for what we call Religion? will many say: And how greatly surprized will they be, to find That all their

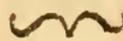
Inquisitions,

Inquisitions, and *Racks*, and *Tortures*, and *Hardships*, and *Oppressions*, and even the Merit of overturning all the Boundaries of Good and Evil, for the *Faith* of *Christ*, blasphemously so called; for the *Honour* of *His Mother*; or the extending the Bounds of *his Church*; will be esteemed by their *Lord* himself as Instances of their Guilt; and the highest Injuries to Himself? And how much more surprized, to find the *Excommunicated*, and the *Persecuted*, and *Those* to whom they would not allow the Name of *Christian*, or the Usage due to a *Man*, now called forth into Glory, and honoured in the *Sight* of *Men* and *Angels*, as the true *Children of God*; as having sincerely loved him, and practised all his moral Laws?

Infidelity itself (I hope it may be said without Offence) will then be punished no otherwise than as it is *Immorality*, proceeding from a wilful and resolute Neglect of *Evidence*, or an *immoral* Contradiction to it. And *Faith* itself will then be rewarded, no otherwise than as *Morality* in an *intelligent Agent*; the Result of the honest Enquiry of a well-disposed Mind. Or rather, the *Immorality* of the *Will*, leading at any Time to *Infidelity*; and the *Immorality* of *Practice* proceeding from it; are the Things only to be punished: and the *Moral good Disposition* leading to *Faith*, and the *Moral Prac-*

SERM.

VI.



tice following from it, to be the only proper Objects of *Reward*; agreeably to all that is said in the *New Testament*. For in *That*, We may observe, there is not any *Faith* celebrated, but either as the Word is taken for the *Gospel-Dispensation*, in Opposition to *Moses's Law*; or, as it is expressly declared to produce actual Obedience to God, and all *Morality*, as the End of it. And this, again, is perfectly agreeable to all that we know of the Nature of God, either from Reason or Revelation; Both which represent Him as just, and a Punisher of dishonest Men, let their *Faith* be never so right; but never as a *Punisher* of the *honest* and *upright*. St. Paul, in a very particular Manner, (*Rom. ii.*) declares that future *Rewards* and *Punishments* will be adjudged to the *Morality* and *Immorality* only, of *Those*, who are without a *Revelation*, as well as of *Those* who enjoy One.

This does not at all depreciate the high Value of *Faith* in *Christ*; or of Any of *his own Institutions*. On the contrary, Nothing can be more for their Honour, than to find that the most noble End, and the most worthy of God, is the very End of that *Faith*, and of those *Institutions*. And, I fear, whoever depreciates *Morality*, and would represent to the World any other *End* of *Christianity*, as high-
er

er than *This*, and not subservient to it; or, whoever would magnify Any *inward* Accomplishment, or *Outward* Christian Institution, before this, and as an *End* superior to it, will be, upon Examination, found to rob that *Divine Religion* of One of it's brightest Ornaments; and of One of the noblest Arguments it can boast: and an Argument, without which, not *Miracles* themselves can, perhaps, be found sufficient to recommend it, with Success, to any Persons of *Virtue*, and good Sense. Nay, these Acts of the Mind, and Outward Performances, receive their Value from the good Disposition, or *Morality*, of the *Mind*; and are, properly speaking, subservient to *Morality* in *Practice*, through the Man's Life: but *Morality* can in no Sense be said to be subservient to *Them*, as a superior *End*; because it would have been the same unalterable good Thing, whether *They* had ever been required, or not. In a word; when We speak of the *End*, We mean the *highest End* of the *Gospel*. And that is the *highest End* of the *Whole*, to the procuring or Improvement of which, every *inward* Act of the Mind, and every *outward* Institution, belonging to it, are made and declared to be subservient. And This, to the Glory of the *Gospel* be it said, is the *Practice* of all *Morality*.

SERM.
VI.

But to proceed ; Since this solemn *Judgment to come* is so expressly declared by our *Saviour*, and preached by his *Apostles*, as the great *Motive to Righteousness, Temperance, and every other Virtue*; Let us now observe

III. Of how great Use the Consideration of This, may and ought to be, to such Creatures as We are, placed in such a World as this.

St. *Paul's Discourse to Felix*, about the unalterable Obligations to *Morality*, might have been entertained as a good and reasonable Lecture: But it was the *Addition* of this other *Topic*, of a *Day coming*, in which All Men were to be called to *Account*; and to be rewarded, or punished, by the supreme Judge; which made the Impression upon Him, here mentioned; and forced him to betray the *inward Apprehensions of a Guilty Conscience*. We find, indeed, that it went no farther, than his *present Concern and Uneasiness*. He put off the *Discourse*; and, without doubt, the *Thoughts* of it too. The World had taken such hold of Him, that his Attention presently returned to the Profits and Pleasures of it; and would not suffer Him to give this Subject such a Place in his Thoughts, as the Importance of the Matter required. But let not Us follow such an Example,

This awful Subject of a *Judgment to come*, is not, I own, much worthy of our Regard, unless the Expectation of the Thing itself be a reasonable and manly Expectation. But let not any one put the Thoughts of it far from Him, as if This were the Case. Let Him look into his own Mind, and it will shew Him, in the strongest Light, That a *Being* made capable of giving an Account, may justly be called to do it: That a *Being* framed so as to see *Duty*, and *Honour*, in one Method; and *Sin* and *Dishonour*, in another; and plainly designed for *Duty* to a God above Him, and a World of *Fellow-Creatures* around Him; has the greatest Reason to expect to have that Account of his Behaviour, demanded of Him, in *Another* Place, which is never demanded of him, in *This*. These are the Thoughts of a Man, as a reasonable and social Creature: and it is agreeable to the *Dignity* of a Man, and of the highest of Men, to entertain Himself with the Reflexions becoming his Nature, and resulting from the peculiar Excellencies of it. And to these great and unextinguishable Evidences of it, furnished from within the Circle of every Man's own Breast, the *Gospel* has added the Weight of that Assurance which *Christ* has given Us of such a *Judgment to come*.

 SERM.
VI.
 

SERM.

VI.

Neither let any fly from this Employment, as from a Scene of *Melancholy* and *Distress*, producing only Terror and Uneasiness. The End of this great and awful *Motive*, proposed by *natural* Religion, and heightened by *Reveled*, is not, to make Men *tremble*, but to make Men *better*; not to fill their Souls with *Horror*, but to lead them to the very contrary, by guarding them most effectually against those *Practices* which rob them of their Innocence and their Peace. And could Men be prevail'd upon to think of it, as becomes them, I am perswaded, it would make even all the *Goods* of this World more agreeable to them. It would not destroy any *Profit*, *Pleasure*, or *Honour*, which a reasonable Creature would not wish to have destroyed. To all others it would add a Lustre and a Value. To *Riches* it would give the true and proper Use; which is their only Advantage. The *Honours* of this World it would adorn, by setting them off with all those *Virtues*, which alone can render them amiable in the Eyes of Beholders; and without which they are, at best, but gaudy Pageantry. And the *Pleasures* of Sense themselves would be rendered more sincere, unmixed, and lasting, by being restrained from hurting either the *Health*, or *Reputation*, or *Interest*, or *Honour*, of the Pursuer; and by
being

being deprived of that Sting of Guilt, which otherwise will for ever attend upon them. SERM.
VI.

In such a World as ours is; with such a Nature as Man must be content with; surrounded with the *Temptations* of *Prosperity*, and the *Trials* of *Adversity*; Who would not wish to be under the Influence of a *Motive*, which may preserve the Dignity of his Nature, at the same Time that it guards and increases his Virtue. In every Age of our rational Life, and every Circumstance of it, We more and more, as We pass, want the friendly Assistance of such a Motive. The *Innocence* of *Childhood* quickly vanishes, and is succeeded by the *Voluptuousness* of *Youth*: and in *This*, a Torrent of uncontrolled *Passions* often threatens to carry all that is good before it. In the more advanced Years of Life, the Pursuits of *Ambition* or *Lust* of *Power* and *Advancement*, take place; not without Danger of the Man's changing Truth, Sincerity, and Honesty, for Art, Diffimulation, and Deceit. And in *Old Age*, the *Power* of *Avarice* often shews itself in too absurd a Manner to be described. This is the general State of Man. And therefore, Every Man may justly be said to have so much need of such a Motive to fortify Him, that he will, too probably, fail without it.

But

SERM.
VI.

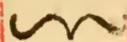
But They who are, by their Situation in Life, surrounded with more *Temptations*, and *Opportunities* than *Others*, have, of all Men, the greatest Necessity for such a Guard and Defense: Or, in other Words, They who have most *Temptations* to *forget* the great Day of *Accounts*, have, of all others, the strongest *Reasons* not to do it. Those who see little around them, besides the Hoards of Wealth, or the Gaieties of Power and Prosperity; whose *Stations* raise them above the common Level, and put them out of the way of many of the moral Advantages Others may meet with; whose Riches and Power invite the *Smoothness* of *Flattery*, but check the *Freedoms* of true *Friendship*; and whose exalted Degree of Life removes them from the lesser *Fears* or *Motives* which sometimes weigh with others: What remains for *These*, who lye most open to the strongest *Trials* of this Life, those of Prosperity, and Pleasure; of Profit, or Superiority; but to be alarmed into a Behaviour quite different from that of *Felix*, now before Us? Not to content themselves with hearing These Truths, and feeling a little present Commotion of Soul upon them; not to throw off the Consideration from the *present* certain Time, to an *uncertain* Futurity; but to enter seriously into their own Breasts; to think in earnest

ness of a Being superior to Themselves as much in Power, as in all other Perfections: and particularly to represent to themselves that Solemn *judgment* to come, in which They have an equal Concern with the Meanest of all their Fellow-Creatures; and in which they must appear as free from all Distinction of Superiority, as the lowest of Mankind. The Strength, or Multitude, of the Temptations which have here surrounded Them, will then increase the Glory and Crown of their *Virtue*; but not take away the Guilt of the *Contrary*, in the Eyes of *Him*, who will judge all Men according to their Works.

In a word; If the Men in *high Stations* of every Sort; and the most involved in the Affairs or Pleasures of Life, would but, now and then, find or force an Interval; wearied, as they must sometimes be, with the Hurry of Business, or tired with the Circle of Amusements; if They would, I say, now and then retire from all these; and think seriously of the Dignity and End of their Beings, and of their appearing in Judgment before that GOD whom They can neither deceive nor resist; This would teach *Them* to despise every Instance of *Power*, *Profit*, or *Pleasure*, inconsistent with Duty and *Morality*. This would give eternal Peace to their
OWN

SERM.

VI.



own Minds; and make their *Example* a Light, and an Incitement, to All below; who are ever looking up to *Them*, and forming their Manners on the *Model* of Those above them. And thus might *Virtue*, by degrees, spread itself through the *Inferior World*; and the Number be increased of Such as may be *Hap- py* both here and hereafter.

Of CONSISTENCY in all our ARGUMENTS about RELIGION.

S E R M O N VII.

Preached before the KING, March 5,
1731-2.

GALATIANS ii. ver. 18.

For if I build again the Things which I destroyed, I make myself a Transgressor.

IN the Verses going before this, we have a SERM.
VII.
very remarkable Instance of St. Peter's Misconduct, in contradicting, by Doctrine as well as Practice, what He himself had taught to be the *Design* of the *Gospel*; to the great Prejudice of it amongst the *Gentiles*; and this, out of *Fear* of some *Zelots* amongst the *Jews*: as appears evidently from St. Paul's Reproof, when He said to him, before all, (ver. 14.) *If Thou, being a Jew, livest after the Manner of the Gentiles, and*
not

SERM
VII.

not as do the Jews, [*i. e.* without a Regard to the ceremonial Parts of the *Jewish* Law] why compellest Thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? or, Why do you teach and lead *Them* to the Observance of what you do not observe yourself? A Behaviour! which one would be almost tempted to think to have been, by the Design of Providence, recorded, that it might stand as a perpetual Warning and Monument against founding any Pretenses to *Infallibility* upon a Succession to *this Apostle* in particular. *St. Paul*, who records it, after shewing the *Inconsistency* of this Conduct with the Rule by which *St. Peter* had walked before, and by which the *Gospel* had been propagated, goes on farther to shew the Christian People, ver. 15, 16, 17. that the *Gospel* is not to be censured, as a deficient Dispensation, not able to put us, out of the State of Sinners, into a State of Favour with GOD; but *They* only, who either teach, or receive, such Doctrines, as are *inconsistent* with those *Principles*, upon which *They* themselves first received the *Gospel*.

He then, in the *Text*, lays down this general Rule, by a common Figure putting Himself for any other Person, *For if I build again the Things I have destroyed, I make myself a Transgressor: that is, For whosoever doth, by his Doctrine, contradict those First Principles upon*

upon which his *Religion* is founded; and, to get rid of a present Difficulty, again maintains or receives those *Doctrines*, upon the renouncing of which his Title to the Privileges of his Religion depends; *makes Himself a Transgressor*; that is, puts Himself back into the Condition of an *Unbeliever*, and *Sinner*, not entitled to God's Favour offered by his Religion; and so hurts the Religion He professes, by a Behaviour absolutely inconsistent with it. And what the *Apostle* affirms here of Those who *build again what they have once destroyed*, may, with an exact Agreeableness to St. *Paul's* Intention, be affirmed of Those also, who *destroy*, or pull to pieces, *that which they had before built up*, as necessary to the Support of their Religion: because there is exactly the same Reason for it; and because what may be called *building up*, with respect to *False Principles*, may be as justly expressed by the *destroying*, or pulling down, those *Good* ones which are contrary to them.

This being the *General Reasoning* made use of by St. *Paul*, in the earliest Days, to oppose the Mischiefs done to the *Gospel*, by the inconsistent Behaviour of first supporting it, and inviting the *Gentiles* into it, by particular *Principles*, and then, as seeming Difficulties pressed, declaring against those very *Principles*;

SERM.
VII.

SERM.
VII.

Principles; and the reasoning being at first unanswerable, and in all Ages the same; it will be natural to apply it to our own Use, by observing, That the *Arguments* which alone can successfully defend, or recommend, *Christianity*, must be *consistent*, and uniformly maintained: That whosoever *builds up*, or maintains again, those same *Principles* by the Destruction, or Confutation, of which alone *Christianity* itself was at first, and ever must be, defended against its Opposers; and that Whosoever *destroys*, and throws off those *Principles*, upon which alone *Christianity* could be first *built*, and supported; *makes Himself a Transgressor*; greatly hurts the Cause of *Christianity*, and furnishes the Adversaries of it with the most Popular, and, according to the Genius of the World, the most successful, Pretenses against it.

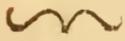
And as *St. Paul* thought it of great Importance to address His Discourse, and his Cautions, against such *Inconsistencies*, to the *Christian People*, not without some hurt to *St. Peter's* Character, for fear They should either receive such *Inconsistencies* as would vitiate their own Title to the *Privileges* of true *Christians*, or come to reject the *Gospel* itself, for the Sake of them: so, I hope, I shall be excused, if I follow so great an Example, and lay

before a Congregation of *Christians*, the same SERM.
 General Rule, and the same *Cautions*, equally VI.
 necessary now, as in His Days, to preserve
 Them from being nominal Believers invain; or
 from rejecting *Christianity* entirely.

You see plainly, by this Time, that my
 Aim is, To bring that same Rule, of *Consist-*
ency, into the Service of *Christianity* in *this*
 Age, which the *Apostle* made use of, in the
first Age of the *Gospel*; and to shew the great
 Disadvantage arising to *Christianity*, from
 swerving at any Time from it.

The *Débates* which have long been, and
 still are, subsisting, both in the *Popish*, and
Protestant, World, give us Occasion enough
 for this Lesson. If a judgment were to be
 made from the Tenor of some of them, one
 would be apt to imagine an open War de-
 clared between *Reason*, and *Revelation*; an ir-
 reconcilable Enmity between the *Religion* of
Nature, and the *Religion* of *Grace*, or *Favour*,
 proposed in the *Gospel*. I hope, for the Sake
 of *Christianity* itself, that this neither is now,
 nor ever will be, the Case. For if such a *real*
Contradiction should once be granted; it is very
 evident, Which of the two must suffer. But,
 to come to what I chiefly design,

I. The *first* *Observation* I shall make, is, That
 when *Christianity* is recommended to any *Unbe-*
 K lievers,

SERM.
VII.

lievers, either as it lies in the *Gospel* itself, or as it is modified in any particular *Church of Christ*, the *Arguments* are, and must be, all built upon the *Right*, and *Duty*, of all Men to enter into an impartial *Examination* of their former Opinions. The *Appeal* is made to their common *Reason*. They are called upon to try, by the Rules of That alone, what is proposed to them, as from GOD, before they judge or determine about it. This very *Appeal* supposes the *Law of Reason*, that is, the *Religion of Nature*, to subsist before-hand, as the Measure of their trying whatever is offered to Them, as a *Revelation* from Heaven. It supposes the *invisible Things* of God; not only his *Being*, but his *Attributes* and *Perfections*, to be already *seen*, from the *Things that are made*; and from their Relations to one another; and particularly, from the moral Capacities and Powers of Man, evidently made accountable to His great *Creator*.

And there can be no other Method than This. For how can I possibly judge, whether any *Proposition*, or *Injunction*, be worthy of GOD, unless I first know the Nature and Perfections of that GOD, about whose Dispen- sations I am called upon to judge? And how can I possibly judge whether the *Proposal* offered be agreeable to his Original Law, the *Religion*

ligion of Nature, by which I am called upon to judge; unless there be such a *Law* existing, either actually known to me, or within the Reach of my Capacity, *before* I form my Judgment about what is proposed to me?

This being so, it is evident that when Men are first invited into *Christianity*, it is not by the way of *Imposition* upon their *Faculties*, or *Senses*; nor by depreciating, or throwing Contempt upon, their *Reasoning* Capacity; but by acknowledging the Usefulness of *Reason*, and the Excellence of the *Religion of Nature*. They are then told, that it is their Duty to *judge* of the Demands made upon them, in the Name of GOD; and that they can and ought to do this, by applying Themselves to their natural Light, with an honest Heart; and by comparing what is now proposed with that *Light*, which the same GOD has already given them, before they can be assured that Nothing is now required of them, but what is agreeable to their former Law: and All, We see, is to be built at first, not upon the Ruines, but upon the Evidence and Support, of *Reason*.

If any *Unbeliever*, in such a Situation, should answer to this Proposal, when first made to Him, that he dared not trust Himself in so important a Case: That the *reasoning* Ca-

SERM.
VII.

capacity in Man was too weak, to judge of the Ways of the great GOD; that the *Light* He had to see by, in this Case, was so dim, that He could not presume, without forfeiting all Title to Humility, to determine a Matter of such infinite Importance by it; and therefore, thought it more becoming Him to rest Himself where Providence had once lodged Him, rather than to enter into Searches, out of which his poor, weak *Reason*, would hardly bring Him sound and whole: If any One, I say, upon the first Proposal of *Christianity* to Him, should answer in this Manner; I doubt not, he would be told that this was only the Refuge of a lazy, unactive, or wicked Mind; that the eternal Law of *Reason* and of GOD, was not so obscure, or remote, as Vice and Indolence would fain represent it to be; that his *reasoning Capacity*, let it be what it will, was the only Measure of his judging for which He can be accountable; that GOD has a Right to call upon Him to make use of it, as the *Rule* of his Judgment, concerning all Pretensions of this Kind.

Thus evidently does it appear that Men are not, and could not be, invited into *Christianity*, but by a professed *Homage* paid first to the *Religion* of Nature, as to a Superior Judge, of GOD's Appointment, by whose Sentence the *Religion* of

of *Grace* (or *Favour*) is to stand or fall: and that the whole Weight of the *Latter*, lies upon the acknowledged Strength of the *Former*. The *Agents* of the *Church of Rome* themselves, who *compass Sea and Land* to gain a Profelyte, even *They* are forced to speak to Men, at their *first* Application to Them, in this same Manner; and to make some Complements to the *Reason* of Mankind, as to the proper Judge of the *First Step* necessary to their Success. Thus much for the *first Observation* I had to offer.

II. The *second* will relate to the *Procedure* which too often is seen to follow this *Beginning*; but is quite *inconsistent* with it; and therefore, hurtful to the Cause of *Christianity* itself. I will give only an Instance, or *Two*, of what I mean: but these sufficient to shew of what Importance it is, to be perfectly *consistent* in what We say upon so interesting a Subject, as *Religion*.

1. If any of *Those Persons*, to whom the *Christian Religion* is, in the Manner before said, recommended, should take Occasion, from the Excellency of Reason, and of the *Religion* of *Nature*, thus appealed to, as the Rule of Judgment, to argue against the *Probability*, or even the *Possibility*, of the *Christian Revelation*, upon this Ground, that, there being already so good a *Law* open to Men, there

SERM.
VII.

can be no *Necessity* for such a *Revelation*. Supposing this, I say, (which has been the Case) can it possibly be *consistent* with what was proposed to these Persons before; nay, must it not hurt the *Cause*, designed to be served, for Them immediately to be told, as They sometimes are, that *Human Reason* is very *weak*, at best; that the *Law of Nature*, or the *Religion of Nature*, is imperfect and insufficient; or *obscure*, and not within the Reach of our Understandings; and therefore, a *Revelation* was *absolutely necessary* to the Direction and Salvation of Mankind? For, How quick and natural will the Reply to this be? Why then have you appealed to this same *Reason*, and this same *Religion of Nature*; and demanded of Us to judge from *These*, whether *Christianity* be worthy of God?

Human Reason, or the Capacity of a Man, be it what you please, is all the Light that Man has to judge by, concerning the Nature and Attributes of the *Great God*. By this *Reason*, weak as it is; weak as it can be painted out even since the Fall, We are required by You to judge of the *Gospel* itself, by comparing it with the prime *Law* of our *Creator*, and with His known *Attributes*. But if we are too weak either to find out *That Law*; or if *That Law*, when found out, is no *Law* for

for Us to judge by; but either a dim, or a deceitful Light; either not sufficient to shew Us Good, or leading Us (as some *Lights do Travellers,*) out of our Way: If this be the Case; We are brought back again, where we set out; and, if This be the State of *Human Reason*, with regard to That *Original Law*, and the *Attributes of God*, from which it must be deduced; We have Nothing to judge by, with respect either to the *Truth*, or *Expediency*, of the *Gospel-Revelation*. And how such a *Reply* can be well answered, I do not plainly see.

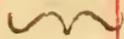
SERM.
VII.

This is enough to shew, that the Cause of *Christianity* itself may be unwarily hurt by our thus *pulling down* what We once *built up*; or *building up* what we once *pulled down*; in our *Arguments* relating to it.

If any ask after *another Answer* to this Difficulty, and one quite *consistent* with the Appeal made to *Reason*, or *natural Religion*, as to a previous *Law*, perfect enough to be the *Touch-stone* of all *Revelation*; I hope, such an One may be easily pointed out. For, supposing the *Perfection* of this Primary Law of God; and granting the Plainness and Clearness of it to all attentive and well-disposed Minds; and also, That a *Revelation* is not absolutely necessary; I think it may be, with

SERM.

VII.



the strictest Truth and *Consistency*, answered, That, agreeably to all the Notions of Almighty God, taught by Reason and natural Religion, it is in all respects worthy of that supreme Governour, to do for the Happiness of such Creatures as He has made us, not only all that is *absolutely necessary*, but what may be *excellently useful* to that End: That He may, with Glory to Himself, display his paternal Regard for Us, by doing much *more* than what is *strictly necessary* for our Eternal Good: That it is *Love*, and not the *Rigour* of Obligation, which is represented in the *Gospel*, as the Moving *Principle* of his sending *Christ* into the World; and that this *Love* is a *Principle*, which leads to greater and more Instances of *Beneficence* towards his Creatures, than what can be thought in *Justice* due, on his Part.

This may be illustrated by observing, That a *Father* amongst Men, would be accounted but a very indifferent *Friend* to his *Child*, who, because his Son might possibly find out the Ways of Prudence and Safety, by a constant Attendance to the *Light*, he Himself could strike out, should, upon this Account, refuse to advise him, from his own *Experience*; or so much as to awaken him to a Sense of any Danger, in his Entrance into the World: That, as it would not be esteemed an useles

OF



or weak Thing for a *Father* to do more than can be called *necessary*; but, on the contrary, a Mark of *Indolence*, or *Ill-nature*, not to do it in many Cases; so it cannot be thought in Almighty God a *Conduct*, either fruitless or unreasonable, but accompanied with the greatest *Propriety* and *Glory*, to do more for his Creatures than He is *strictly* obliged to do, in order to put Them into the True Way to all Good.

Thus may it be proved to be worthy of the *Supreme* Governour, to consult their Happiness, by calling upon them, in an *extraordinary* Manner, to forsake that *Vice* and *Idolatry*, which they might, without such an *Interposition*, see to be contrary to *Reason*; and to practise that whole System of *Morality*, the *Obligation* of which, it is granted, They *might possibly*, without this, find out to be their Duty. Nay, It may be added, that, considering the Importance of the *Religion* of *Nature*, and the willful *Negligence* and *Corruption* of the Bulk of Mankind, it was very *probable, à priori*, that a *Good* God would once at least, interpose to awaken his reasonable Creatures, by some extraordinary Method, to the Study and Practice of *That Religion*. And surely, it must be acknowledged that the *Gospel*, if We consider it seriously, proposes what is at least most *useful* to Mankind, by making *this* very *Religion* of *Nature*

SERM
VII.

Nature a main Part of what it requires; and by revealing plainly the Motive of a *Judgment to come*, in order to secure all Obedience to it.

This, I think, must be allowed to be a satisfactory Way of treating the *Difficulty* before-mentioned; and particularly on this Account, that it is a Way perfectly *consistent* with all our *Appeals* to natural *Religion*, and all that can justly be said of the Excellency of it; and therefore, a *Way* which preserves to Reason all its Weight, and to *Revelation* all the *Dignity* it claims.

2. I will now mention a *second* Instance of a very *inconsistent* Conduct with regard to the *Christian* Revelation. When an honest Man, moved to the *Enquiry* into it, by the *Appeal* made to the sufficient *Strength*, not to the *Weakness* of *Human Reason*; called to it by the *Trust* reposed in Him by God, of looking after his own Soul, and his own Happiness; encouraged to it, by his acknowledged Capacity to find out and judge of the *Attributes* of the Great God, and his *Right* to reject all *Doctrines* about them, but what are agreeable to the Dictates of *natural Religion*: *When*, thus invited and encouraged, a Man with an honest Mind, compares the Contents of the *Gospel*, as preached by *Christ* himself, and Those immediate Disciples whom He called
to

to do it, with the immutable *Law of Nature*, and the invisible Things of GOD ; and is justly come to this *Conclusion*, that the *Gospel* is worthy of God, and accompanied with sufficient Evidence : *When*, after He is come thus far, to his Satisfaction, He thinks himself still to have the same Right to consider, and judge of, the Meaning and Extent of the *Propositions* and *Precepts*, recommended in the *New Testament*, or taught by Those who profess to preach nothing else, by the same Rule of Reason, and GOD's first Law : how surprizing must it be to Him, to be stopt, and told, that, having come to this good Resolution, and entered Himself into the *Church*, or Society of *Christians*, it is now Time to acquaint Him, that, after his embracing the *Christian Religion*, there will be very little need of his troubling himself in that Manner : That He has been called upon, indeed, as a Person entrusted with the Care of his own Soul ; but that He is now to be eased of that Trouble, and to devolve it upon *Others* : that He has been treated as a Person endowed with Understanding, and required to embrace *Christianity*, as far only as his own Understanding should perceive and find every thing in it worthy of GOD transacting with Man : but that now he must lay aside this Character of an *Understanding Being*,

and

SERM.
VII.

and must not think it hard to embrace what is dictated by Others, though quite unintelligible to Himself; or, which is worse, absolutely inconsistent with all his own well-founded Notions of GOD, and of his Duty? How surprizing, I say, must this be? And yet, as *surprizing* as This is, it is the open avowed Language of the whole Church of *Rome*; and, I fear, the unavoidable *Consequence* of what *Some*, who have departed far from that *Church*, unwarily teach and inculcate.

But is not This again, *destroying what we have built up*; and, in another View, *building up again what we have destroyed*? And, what is most to be lamented, with Men who have not Strength of Mind enough to get out of these Difficulties, and yet Understanding enough to see them; the Damage falls upon the *Gospel* itself. With all others the *Case* is plain, and the *Answer* easy. If We are fit to be trusted with our own Souls, and we are justly called upon, as a Duty owing to *them*, to judge of what is proposed to Us, as from GOD; We are as fit still to judge of the Nature and Extent of our Duty, as we are still as much obliged to take Care of Ourselves, and of our own Happiness. If We had no Capacity to understand any *Propositions* expressed in Words; we could never be called upon by a Righteous GOD to judge of them

them in order to receive them. If the *whole* were unintelligible to Us; it would be of no more Concern to us, than if the *Form of Words*, pretending to convey it to Us, were only a Crowd of inarticulate Sounds; and We, no more interested in it, than if we were of the Herd of *Animals*, uncapable of Reason. And, by the same just Rule, if any *Part* of what is proposed to Us, be utterly unintelligible to Us, *that Part* is just as much out of our Sphere, and equally of no Concern or Influence, with Regard to Us: and We ought not, if this be the Case, to be called upon to judge at all in so important a Matter. As therefore, in all other *Sciences*, truly so called, amidst all the most intricate Difficulties and Differences, it is expected that the *Words*, on each Side, should have a Meaning to them, and be understood, without which, no Use could be made of them: So, much more, in *Religion*, which is a *Science* of infinite Use to our Practice, nothing can have Influence, that is not known; and nothing can be made known to Us, that is not expressed in Words, which are intelligible to Ourselves; and therefore, to be judged of by Ourselves.

And if we go from Speculations, and Principles, to *Precepts*, no one can deny but that the true Meaning, the exact Bounds, the Nature

SERM.
VII.

ture and Extent, of the *Figurative*, or *General* Expressions, in which almost all Duties are laid down in the *New Testament*, cannot possibly be fixed, but by the Attributes of God, and the Law of Reason and Society; which is the *Religion of Nature*. And this *Religion*, neither our *Saviour*, nor His *Apostles*, ever professed completely and explicitly to delineate, in all its Parts and Measures; but They constantly appealed to it, and invited the World to regard and practise it. On the contrary; if this be so, that, in embracing the *Christian Religion*, we must discard that *Reason*, by which alone we were led to embrace it; and if that *Understanding*, which we were told was sufficient to judge of the *Relation* between the Attributes and First Law of GOD, and the *Revelation* of the *Gospel*, is now in some Parts of *Religion*, to act no more the Part of a Director to Us: May it not be said, too justly, that this *Procedure* is no better than leading Us by the *Brightness* of *Light*, into the *Blackness* of *Darkness*; and a *Method* of making our *Understanding* itself the Instrument of guiding Us to a State of no *Understanding*? Nay, Will it not from hence be urged farther, by Some, that They have been imposed upon in the whole *Proceeding*; and ought to go back to that *Point*, at which They began, when They

They were first *invited*, and (if I may use the SERM. Expression) *enticed*, into *Christianity*, by the VII. *Complements* then paid to the *Religion of Nature*, as the *Original Light* constituted by GOD for us to judge by, of all possible Schemes of Religion.

I have not Time to name more *Instances* of the same Sort. But these *Two* are sufficient to shew the just Ground I had to observe that *Christianity* itself must suffer by the *Inconsistencies* of Those, who, in their Arguings about it, do thus *build up again what they had destroyed, or destroy what They had built up.*

I will now conclude with a few *Remarks*, which plainly follow from what I have said.

1. They who inadvertently treat *Reason*, and the *Religion of Nature*, in the Manner I have now described, if We go on to speak in *St. Paul's Figure* of a *Building*, seem to have totally forgot the Beginning and Progress of the *Work*, in this whole *Fabrick* of Religion. They treat the *Law of Reason*, as if it were only the *Scaffolding* of the *Building*; and, like the *Scaffolding* of *Other Buildings*, to be taken away with the *Rubbish*, at the *End* of the *Work*. Whereas, it is the very and only *Foundation*, upon which They themselves are forced, and glad, to raise the *Building* at first. And, like *other Foundations*, so absolutely necessary to the standing, as well as to the first erecting, of it, that
if

SERM.
VII.



if you take *this* away, the *Building* itself must fall. It may *seem* to *Themselves*, indeed, to remain; and They may please themselves with the Thoughts of living still in the *upper Rooms*: But it is from that Moment a *Fiction* only; the *Fiction* of *Fancy*, and a mere *Castle in the Air*. The *Rain* need not descend, nor the *Floods* come, nor the *Winds* blow and beat upon this, to weaken and destroy it, like the *foolish Man's House* in the *Gospel*, built upon the *Sand*: for, upon taking away the *Foundation*, This must of itself immediately fall; not having so much as *Sand* to support it.

2. As the *Law* of Reason, even in fallen sinful Man, is GOD's *original Law*, to the Test of which *Revelation* is, of Necessity, submitted: Methinks, there ought to be, in all Persons concerned, the *greatest Fear* of offending GOD, by depreciating *This*, which may most justly be called His Primary Revelation of his Will, under the *Pretense* of a more than ordinary *Zeal* for any *Secondary Law* of his, which cannot be received, or so much as known, without *This*. And this Fear must be the more reasonable in a *Christian*, if it be considered, That whoever attempts, (let his Design be never so honest and pious,) to extinguish, or diminish, the Splendor of GOD's *Original Light*; if He could succeed, may
be

be sure of *darkening* the *Second Light*, which He thinks to set up on high, and make brighter: because the *Light of Nature* is the *Light of the Gospel* also, as it shews Men the Way to it; and as it throws its Beams upon every *Page* of it. And I will here add, what seems too often to be forgot, that the *Religion of Nature* is not the *Opinion*, or *Whimsy*, of this or that *Philosopher*; no, nor what any, or all of them put together, have *actually* said, or may say: but it is truly that Law of GOD, which may justly be collected, by His reasonable Creatures, from the immutable *Reasons*, and *Relations* of Things; and is the *same Law*, as one of the Heathen Writers well observes, at *Rome* and at *Athens*; that is, in other Words, at *all Places*, from *one End* of the World to the *other*.

3. Though it appears from what has been said, that the bad Consequence of such *inconsistent* Methods, is, or may probably be, the *turning away* of Many from the *Faith of Christ*; yet, it is fit that such Persons should know, that This Fault in *Others*, will not wholly excuse *Them*; because They may see, if They please, that This cannot be charged upon the *Gospel* itself, but only upon the Weakness, or *Wickedness*, of Frail Men. On the other hand, how great the Guilt is of Those who lay any *Stumbling-Blocks* in the Way of *Christianity*;

S E R M.
VII.

let our *Saviour* himself teach us. *Wo unto the World, because of Offenses. For it must needs be that Offenses come: that is, The Nature of Man is such, that Stumbling-Blocks will be laid in the Way of the Gospel. But Wo unto that Man, by whom They come. And this Wo is more particularly described by our Lord, in a Manner, pathetic enough to awaken all Persons concerned, to put a strong Guard upon their own Zeal, or their own Passions; lest They should, even under the Influence of a well-meaning Heart, at any Time fall into this Condemnation.*

4. As the *Religion of Nature* is supposed to be a sufficient *Rule*, and in a sufficient Measure within our Reach, when we are called upon, as a Duty, to examine into *Christianity* by it; it evidently follows, that Whosoever takes most Pains, and most successfully, to delineate the *Religion of Nature*, in all it's Branches, and all it's Extent, is so far from being an *Enemy* to the *Gospel*, in the Event; that He really is the *Man*, who does what the *Gospel* came to awaken the *World* to do; and what is necessary towards the explaining and settling the *moral Duties* mentioned in it: and furnishes out a *System*, which, if it be founded upon *Truth* and *Reason*, becomes immediately a Part, an essential, certain, and indisputable Part, of the *Gospel*.

pel itself; being *That Part*, upon which the *great Account* to come is so often there represented chiefly to turn.

SERM.

VII.

There can be no greater Service done to *Christianity* itself, than what arises from such Labours of Wise and Serious Men. And it is with a View to the same Service, that I have, at this Time, used my best Endeavours that the *Religion of Favour and Mercy* may not suffer by any Disgraces unwarily put upon the *Religion of Nature*. In a word; if We have a real Regard and Concern for *Christianity*, let us shew it by the Value we set upon that *Religion of Nature*, by which alone we could be rightly conducted to it; and without which We cannot interpret, or understand, any of it's Doctrines and Precepts, when We have received it: Nay, which is now incorporated into it, and itself made the *Law of Christ*. Let us not encourage, or receive, Any one *inconsistent Method* of treating the *Christian Religion*: For such *Inconsistency* is, in Truth, the great Strength of *Insidelity*, on one hand; and, in some Cases, of *Popery*, on the other. But, let us act that *consistent Part* which alone can make *Christianity* sit easy upon a thinking Mind; or recommend it to the World of *Unbelievers*.

If we conscientiously do this; neither *building again* any Part of that System of Darkness

SERM.
VII.

which We in effect *destroyed*, when We, upon our own Conviction, embraced *Christianity*; nor *destroying* the least Part of that System of *Reason* and *Light*, which We may be said *then* to have *built up*, as the *Strength* and *Support* of it: And if We add to this that beautiful *Consistency*, in the *Practice* of All that is good, which is the *Duty* and *Ornament* of a *Christian*; We shall, by this whole Conduct, do the greatest Honour and Service to the *Gospel*; and secure to ourselves the *Happiness* attending such a Behaviour in *this* Life, and the *Reward* promised to it, in That which is to come.

No continuing City here, &c.

S E R M O N VIII.

Preached before the KING, *Febr. 23,*
1734-5.

HEBREWS xiii. 14.

*For here have We no continuing City; but We
seek one to come.*

THE Life of Man, in this World, is often represented, by the *Author* of this *Epistle*, and other sacred *Writers*, our *Life* of a *Traveller*, a *Stranger*, or *Sosjourner* here below: and this World itself, as the *Road* to another. And, in Truth, this is a very proper Representation of the Case. *Heaven*, that Seat of established Happiness above, is our *Home*; and ought to be so accounted by Us. Thither all our Steps ought to be tending: and through this World must we go, as through a Road, before we come to it. In our Journey

SERM. VIII. *ney, We have all the Unhappineſſes of Travellers. We meet with an inconvenient Lodging, and ordinary Entertainment, for ſome Time. And if it be otherwiſe, yet we muſt certainly leave it; and no more think of ſettling ourſelves in it, than a Traveller does of fixing his Habitation upon the moſt beautiful Spot of Earth he meets with in his Way; or in the beſt accommodated Houſe upon his Road. The little Reſt we have, if we have any, is, as in a ſtrange Place, diſturbed and interrupted with much Noiſe, and Hurry, and Diſorder; and, like that of Travellers, to be left, perhaps, with the next Morning's Light; and ourſelves to be called Home to a more fixt and durable State. For here have We no continuing City: but We ſeek me to come.*

From this *Alluſion* to the Life of a *Traveller*, by which the Uneaſineſſes of *our Life* in *this World*, are illuſtrated; and from the *Words* of the *Text*, particularly ſetting forth the Uncertain, and *Unſettled*, Condition of Man here below; it is my Deſign to take Occaſion, without any critical Examination into their *Connexion* with the Words before and after them, to conſider, more at large,

I. The *unhappy* Condition of Man in this uncertain State, where *he has no continuing City*; ſuppoſing

supposing Him to be without the Hope of a better and happier State to come.

II. The Grounds we have firmly to expect, and seek, such a State of Happiness, in *a continuing City to come*: And,

III. Lastly, the Importance, and true Use, of the foregoing Observations.

I. The *unhappy* Condition of Man in this uncertain State, in which *He has no continuing City*; supposing Him to be without the Hope of a better and happier State to come.

1. To be brought into the World (by the Will of a superior Being) weak and helpless; to pass our first Years in a State of absolute Dependence upon the imperfect Wisdom, or strong Passions, of Others; to be nourished, through *Infancy* and *Childhood*, with much Care and Trouble to Those about us, and much Uneasiness and Pain to ourselves; to be educated, through our *Youth*, and through all the Hazards and Storms of that impetuous Season, according to the good or bad, the just or mistaken, Notions of Those who claim the Right of conducting us to the *Gate*, at which we are to chuse our own Path, and at the Entrance of which *our own Life* properly begins — To enter upon this Life, now to be led under our own Conduct, perhaps big with the Thoughts of Nothing but the Enjoyment

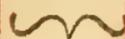
SERM.
VIII.

of uninterrupted *Good*; and to find ourselves soon surrounded by a Crowd of *Evils*: To go on, and still be hoping for something satisfactory, and still disappointed; Unhappy, by missing the Aim in View; or more cursed, by obtaining it; either not finding what we sought, or finding what appeared *Happiness* at a Distance to be Emptiness, or perhaps, *Bitterness* itself: — To inherit the *Pains*, and *Diseases*, of our *Forefathers*; or to suffer under new ones of our own: To bend under *Afflictions* properly belonging to Ourselves; or to partake sensibly in those of Others, in whose Happiness our own is wrapt up; or at least, to sympathize with our Fellow-creatures, in the many Scenes of *Distress*, forcing themselves into our View, on which Side soever we cast our Eyes: And, after passing such an uncertain and tempestuous Sea, in which one Wave is continually pressing upon another; and one Danger attending to take the Place of another: *i. e.* after passing a *short* Life of *Folly* and *Vanity*; of *Expectation* and *Disappointment*; of imperfect Health, and uneasy Pain: After all this, I say to sink into Nothing; to fall into a State of utter Insensibility: — The *Experience* of the *One*, and the *Prospect* of the *Other*, seem too great a Burthen for a rational Creature to bear.

2. Nor are the Unhappineses and Uncertainties of human Life confined to any particular *Climates*

mates of the Earth, or Degrees of Men. Go to those Parts, which are sometimes called *Happy*; where the Sun shines warm, and the Earth is always ready to pour forth its Abundance: and you will find, in the *Moral* World, little but *Violence*, and *Iniquity*, triumphant; in the *Political*, the *Oppression* of the Powerful, laying waste the Rights, and living upon the Spoils, of Those below them; and in the *Natural*, Distress and Want spread over the most delightful Countries, through the *Sloth* and *Effeminacy* of their Inhabitants; or the *Violence* of Tempests and Earthquakes frequently scattering Terror and Ruine all around them. And if You return to those Parts where Power is made useful and lovely by Justice and Law: How often will you find them torn to pieces by intestine Quarrels; always disturbing, and, sometimes, totally destroying, the Peace and Security of private Life?

3. If we let our Thoughts go up to the more elevated Stations of Life; are *They* more securely fenced about from *Evils*, by Providence; or more defended from *Uncertainty* and *Unhappiness* than Others? Is the Sleep of Those who possess them, sweeter, or less interrupted by anxious Cares and Fears, than That of their Inferiors? Or, are Diseases and Death kept farther and longer from *Them*, than from the Meanest? Far otherwise. The Outside, indeed,
is

SERM.
VIII.

is all dazzling and pompous: But *within*, are the Cares, and Perplexities, and Unhappineſſes, naturally attending ſuch Stations, either through the Imperfections inſeparable from human Nature; or from the Envy and Diſatisfaction of Others. And were their Eſtate a thouſand Times more eligible; I might ſay, leſs pitiable, than it is—Nay, were *Power* nothing but *Happineſs* unmixed; were *Government*, Pleaſure without Pain; and the ſincere Cares of it always repaid with Duty and Gratitude: Were *Riches* the Inſtruments of *Good*, untainted by any Marks of *Miſery*; were *Grandeur* as gay *within*, as it is gaudy *without*: yet, have the Poſſeſſors no Security from Evils of another Sort, and *no continuing City here*. The Diſeaſes and common Calamities of Life are ſufficient, often, to make the whole *Scene* of all theſe united, *Inſipid*, or *Nauſeous*: and whether They do, or not; the *laſt Enemy* muſt come; and to *his* Force, by the Appointment of God, the beſt built Fabrick of human Happineſs muſt yield.

If This, therefore, be really the *unhappy* and *uncertain* Condition of Man in this World; and, from the higheſt to the loweſt, no One exempt from it; what does it become Us to do? Shall We ſtop here in this Diſtreſs, and place our only Happineſs in *Deſpair* of Any? Or ſhall we ſpend the Vigour of our Minds in unmanly

Com-

Complaints of our unhappy Portion; and lose Sight of all Happiness, because it will not attend Us, upon *this* tottering and uneven Stage? If we are wise, or know what it is to be made reasonable Creatures, in our Degree; Let us rather try, what was proposed in the next Place,

II. Whether this *Unhappiness* itself, in *this* State, will not guide our Thoughts to Happiness *hereafter*; and the Experience of *having no continuing City here*, lead us to the reasonable Expectation of *One to come*?

1. The *first Thought*, upon this Head, will arise from our being brought into Life, and placed in this World, by a *Superior Agent*, a GOD of all possible Perfections. If this Supreme Director be a Being, not only of all *Power*, but of all *Wisdom* and *Goodness*; not acting by arbitrary Will, but by the Maxims of unclouded Reason: Whatever Darkneses there may be, in our finite Understandings, with regard to the Design of every Part of the Creation; yet, This must be certain if any thing in the whole Comprehension of Nature be certain, that Such a Being could not possibly command us into Existence, with such Faculties as We possess, with any Design separated from That *Godlike One*, of conducting Us *finally* to *Happiness*; whatever *State* of *Trials* and *Uneasinesses*, He may *first* appoint
Us

S E R M.

VIII.

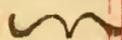
Us to pass through. It is unworthy of such an *Agent*, whose *Goodness* must give Counsel to his *Power*, to suppose that He could have had any *Glory* of his own in view, but what was perfectly consistent with a just Regard to the *Happiness* of such Beings, when He resolved to send Them into this World. The contrary Notion of the *Glory of God* is the Foundation of the worst Errors about his Dealings with his reasonable Creatures; and cloaths Him with *Power*, only to make Him their *Terror*, and not their *Delight*.

If God, therefore, who *then* brought us *first* into Being, *when we first* tasted of Life, and were free from all Possibility of wilful Offence on our Part, could be supposed to throw us into this State, in which so few have any Taste of Good, and so many are almost devoted to Pain and Misery; and, at the same Time, to open to our Thoughts no other Scene but This: might it not justly be said, that such a Proceeding as this, is no better than to force many kinds of Evil, and many Degrees of Misery, upon *Creatures* void of all *Offense*, without the least Hope or Pretense of so much as any Recompence for them? But if the *Greatest* Being in the Universe be the *Best*; as He certainly is; let us be afraid of imputing such a Conduct to Him; and, under that Fear, let us do Justice to his Attributes

in this Instance; and, with Assurance, conclude that He would never have created intelligent Beings, only to sport a little, and suffer much, in such a World as *This*: and, consequently, had in his View Another and better State after This, when he first commanded us hither.

2. Let us go one Step farther, and, if we may be allowed to do it, let us suppose a Being created with sufficient Degrees of Intelligence; and immediately placed, by his Creator, in such a *Point of View*, as to be able to see through all the Mazes of human Life, and survey all the Imperfections, and Miseries, and Uncertainties, here below; and to judge of them just as well as *Experience* enables the most unprejudiced amongst Men, to do. Let us suppose, after such a full View, it were left to his own Option, whether He would be content to pass through the same several Periods of Life which the Inhabitants of this World do, and to take the common Lot of Mankind here below, as his whole Portion; whether He would chuse this certain Conflict with *Evils*, and small Chance for any *Good*; and, *after* the Conflict, be reduced to a State of *Insensibility*; or to be thrown back now *immediately* into his former State of the same *Insensibility*. Were this the Case, I hardly think that the bare Name of *Life*, which is but an empty Sound when separated from all Hope of

S E R M.
VIII.



of settled Happiness; and much worse, when connected with a great deal of Misery; that the mere *Name of Life*, I say, could possibly tempt him to chuse a Part in such a State, and then to *cease to be*; rather than to accept of the same Sentence, without going through the *Evils of this State, before it*.

But then, put the Case that a Scene of *Established Happiness* should be opened to the View of this Being, to succeed the *Vanities and Unhappineses* of the present; and this *Happiness* declared to be reserved for such as shall pass through the Other with *Virtue and Honour*: This would alter the State of the Question; and would be a sufficient Inducement to any such Understanding Being, to undertake the Conflict; and to be content to tread the uneasy and uncertain Path of human Life here below; when he found it to lead to the Certainty, and Duration, of *Good, and Happiness* hereafter.

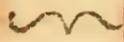
This way of *Discourse* is not founded on a mere *Curiosity* of prying into the Secrets of unfathomable Wisdom; but a sober Attempt to justify the Ways of God to Man: And these He himself, in all *Points*, in which moral *Justice, Equity, and Goodness* are concerned, must be supposed to have submitted to the Judgment of his intelligent Creatures, when He made Them *moral Agents*, and obliged Them to govern themselves
by

by the same Rules of *Justice, Equity, and Goodness*, which He himself observed.

My Meaning, therefore, is not to pretend to judge of all the Views of infinite Wisdom, which would be *Arrogance*; but to draw an Argument from the *Moral Attributes* of GOD greatly conducing to his Honour: *viz.* That the *Best* of Beings, being unalterably happy in Himself, cannot be justly supposed to have commanded into Being a Number of intelligent Creatures, void of all Offense towards Him, upon any such unhappy Terms, as no One of them could have consented to, had it been possible for him to have judged of it: And, therefore, that such a Being ought not to be supposed to have forced Us into the poor *Habitation* of this World, without designing us for Another, and a Better.

3. I will go on, in the next Place, to argue from our peculiar Capacities, directed to the finding out the Existence and Nature of the Supreme Being; and fitted for the Worship of Him, and the Imitation of his moral Excellencies. For how *vain*, or worse than vain, are all these *Capacities*, if they be not designed by Him, who gave us them, to lead to his Favour in a future State? The *low* Concerns of *Animal* Life, and even of *Social* too, might have passed on, in a way worthy enough of this present Life, without our being made capable of the exalted Notions of

SERMON
VIII.



a GOD, and of That true *Religion*, which cannot properly subsist, without the Expectation of a *future State*. If there be something *real* to answer to what We can discover by the Powers given Us; then are our *Capacities* worthy of God who is their Author. If the *contrary* be supposed; how greatan Absurdity is by this fixt upon *Him*, who endowed Us with these Capacities?

Much the same may be said of those reasonable and restless *Desires* of almost All Men; longing to continue in Life; and travelling perpetually towards greater and greater Degrees of Happiness, and made capable of them by their good Creator. These must all be accounted the fruitless *Efforts* of vain *Capacities*; unless *Life* be Happiness; and designed to be our lasting Good.

If we add to These, the common and well-known *Complaint* of all Ages, that the Affairs of *this World* are conducted, under the Inspection of *Providence*, in such a Manner, that the Best of Men, even in the ordinary Course of Things, are often seen to groan under the Weight of the same common Calamities of this Life which Other feel; and besides these, in some extraordinary and unnatural Cases, to suffer all the Evils that the Malice of wicked Men can bring upon them, for the Sake of a good Conscience: If We add, I say, such Considerations; The Argument

gument from hence will be This, That the Best and most Equitable of all Beings must design, and act, consistently with that amiable Character; That He cannot do this, without putting as great a Distinction between the *Best* and the *Worst* of his reasonable Creatures, in *Happiness*, as there is in *Behaviour*: and therefore, there being no such settled distinction in *this* State, but much Misery left for the Virtuous and Upright often to struggle with; there must be, in the great Design of the Creator, *another* State, in which *Virtue* and *Happiness* shall be seen inseparably united. Without this, there can be no Appearance of *Proportion*, in the *whole moral System*: and with it, all the just Relations and Habitudes of Things are exactly preserved. Upon which Account we may justly conclude it to be so designed.

These *Considerations* are not thin *Speculations*, spun out of the *Cobwebs* of the *Schools*, or built upon the Subtleties of *Metaphysics*; but *Arguments*, founded upon the *Nature* of *God*, and the *Nature* of *Man*, and the sensible *Experience* of our present State: and particularly, upon those Notions of the Supreme Being, which it is our Duty to embrace, and conduct ourselves by: and therefore, ought not to be entertained as the *Dreams*, or *Wishes*, of good Men wearied out with the *Evils* of

SERM. this Life; but as *Conclusions* drawn from the
 VIII. plainest and most rational Principles.

To these We *Christians* ought to add the
 Assurances given by *Jesus Christ*, of a *Future*
State of Rewards and Punishments, without
 which his great Design had been all Vain and
 Fruitless: and these *Assurances* confirmed, be-
 yond all reasonable Doubt, as the Voice of
 God himself, by that Series of Wonderful
 Works, and that *Resurrection* from the *Dead*,
 which were the Demonstrations of his being
 sent by God, into the World, to shew Man-
 kind the true and only *Road* to their *eternal*
Happiness, in a *continuing City* to come.

III. The *Use*, to be made by us, of what
 has been said, is the only remaining Point:
 and the Point, indeed, in which we are most
 concerned.

We have seen the *Conditions*, upon which
 we live in *this* World: how certainly Pain,
 Affliction, and Adversity, in all their various
 Forms of Misery, are our Portion here; and
 how small a Part of our Time any Thing that
 has the Appearance of *Happiness* takes up. We
 are, at best, rather *Amused*, than *Happy*, in
 this Life: rather diverted from the continual
 Sense, or Dread, of *Evil*, than filled and satis-
 fied with any *Good*. There are, indeed, Images
 of

of Pleasure, like Phantoms, dancing before our Eyes; and, like Phantoms, soon disappearing. But, even with regard to These, we are rather taken up with the Pursuit of what we have not, than satisfied with what we have. And, supposing ourselves possessed, as we falsely call it, of all the Goods of this World; in the midst of *Life*, we are in *Death*.

SERM.
VIII.
~

In these Circumstances of Distress, what *Beings*, made capable of higher Things, as We are, can forbear to wish for a more settled State of Good? And if we wish for it, our greatest Interest will incline Us to attend seriously to the *Arguments* which prove it; and to yield up Ourselves to the Force of that Evidence they carry with them: And if we be convinced of the *Reality* of such a *State*, we cannot be so insensible as not to desire a Place in it; and, if we really desire it, we cannot but be solicitous to take the true Method of obtaining it: that only Method of fitting ourselves for it, pointed out to Us by the *Religion* of *Nature*, and of *Christ*: I mean the uniform Practice of all Virtue, which is the *Imitation* of God, the *Best*, and most perfect, of all Beings.

This is the true and only *Use* of what has been said, that can possibly be made,

S E R M. with any Appearance of Reason, by any *Crea-*
 VIII. *ture*, brought into Being by the Supreme Fa-
 ~~~~~ ther of all Things, and endowed with all the  
 Qualities necessary to the constituting of a  
*moral Agent.*

The Thoughts which I have now laid before You, are of infinite Moment to every *reasonable Being*, condemned at present to *this World*, in which He *has no continuing City*; but framed so as to *seek One to come*.

The *Lowest*, and the most Unhappy, of all the Sons of *Adam*, may receive Support and Comfort, from this Lesson, which ought to be ever in his Mind, That the Evils of his wretched Condition, his Pains, and Sickneses, and Poverty, and all the Distress attending it, cannot last longer than his short Life; and that, after a Period put to his Life and his Miseries together, He has as good a Title to plead to a durable State of unmixed Happiness in a never-ending State, or a *continuing City to come*, from his patient and blameless Behaviour here below, as the most elevated, Prosperous, Rich and Powerfull, of all that tread on this Earth; and that his Voice will *then* be as well heard, and as much regarded, as the *Voice* of Any of Those, who perhaps thought too much of their *Superior* Exaltation above Him, in *this* State. Those in the middle State of Life, will feel the great  
 Advan-

Advantage of the *Thoughts* I have propos'd, throughout their whole Conduct, in all their Business, and every Stage of Life.

S E R M.

VIII.

But what is most proper to be said of Them, in this Place, is, that They are Thoughts of equal Importance to the highest *Prince*, and the meanest *Subject*: to Those who are distinguished by the *Honours* of this World, and Those in the *common* Order of Life. For what can, indeed, be more awful and moving, and therefore, what more useful, to Those in *exalted Stations*, than to consider seriously, that, at the opening of that *Future* never-ending State, All the most dazzling Distinctions of this World shall cease; and none remain, but that *essential* One between the *Good* and the *Bad*; the *Virtuous* and *Vicious*: That no Rank shall then be regarded, but the Rank of Moral Excellence; no Guards shall attend the Great, but their Innocence, or true Repentance; and no Praises be heard from the Mouths of Flatterers, but from the Voice of their good Actions only: That in *this continuing City*, their Station shall be allotted, not according to their exalted *Power*, or *Grandeur*, or *Riches*, but according to their Use of them, here below; and that their Godlike Behaviour in this World, shall be the only Title to their *Thrones* of *Glory*, in the World to *come*?

SERM.  
VIII.

And let me add, that I would not permit Myself to recommend such Thoughts as These, in this Audience, If I were not fully persuaded that they are *Thoughts*, which will blunt and soften the Thorns and Cares of *Power*; will throw Comfort into the Retirements of the *Great* and *High*; and scatter Innocence and Honour through the whole *System* of their Actions: Which will most safely conduct them through the Troubles, and Allurements, of their present Situations; will animate them to be like God himself, in the exerting all their Capacities for the *Happiness* of the *World* around them; and give them an Ambition to excel in every thing praise-worthy here, in order to their obtaining a Seat in that State of *future Bliss*, which is represented in the *New Testament*, as a *Kingdom unshaken in the Heavens*, far out of the Reach of all such Commotions and Disorders, as are seen in the *Kingdoms* of this World; and as a *continuing City*, the Seat of Established Happiness for ever.

---

---

*Christ's YOKE, Easy; and  
BURTHEN, Light.*

---

---

S E R M O N IX.

---

---

Preached before the KING, *Febr. 27,*  
1736-7.

---

---

MATTHEW xi. 30.

---

---

*For my Yoke is Easy, and my Burthen is Light.*

---

---

**I**T is not improbable that our *Blessed Lord*, SERM.  
when he spake these and the foregoing IX.  
Words, was looking upon Crowds of  
*Travellers*, coming up to *Jerusalem*, upon  
some great *Feast-Day*; many of them loaded  
with *Burthens*, and all tired and weary with  
their *Journey*: and that, according to his usu-  
al Custom in other Cases, He took Occasion  
from hence to speak to *Them*, who now want-  
ed *Rest* of *Body*, concerning another Sort of  
*Rest*, of far greater Consequence; the true

SERM.

IX.



*Rest* and Happiness of reasonable Creatures: calling their Minds from the low Concerns of their *Bodies*, to the higher ones of their immortal *Souls*; and from the Bustle and Hurry of this World, to the Calm and Quiet of true *Religion*.

But, whatever the immediate *Occasion* of this Discourse might be; the *Intent* of it is so important, and so general, that every Man, in every Age, is equally concerned in it, who feels in his Breast any Degree of Reason and Reflexion. For it is very evident that, in this and the two foregoing *Verses*, our Lord is inviting Men to take upon them *this Religion*, and to imitate *his Example*, as the happiest Course they can chuse. At the 28<sup>th</sup> Verse; *Come unto Me, all ye that Labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest*. Come unto me all ye who are wishing for *Happiness* and *Rest*, but are still in a State of Uneasiness and Disquiet, by pursuing it in wrong Methods; and I will shew you the only way to that *Rest*, which is worthy of your Searches. Verse the 29<sup>th</sup>; *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in Heart: and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls*. Enter upon the *Practice* of my *Moral Rules*; or, in other Words, imitate my Example, in the Practice of every Virtue, and particularly of *Meekness* and *Humility*,

*mility*, which are in their nature *Rest* and *Quiet* s E R M.  
 themselves; and you will quickly find your- IX.  
 selves in that State of Happiness you are seek-  
 ing. Then follow the Words of the Text,  
 verse 30; *For my Yoke is Easy, and my Burthen*  
*is Light.* For that *System* of moral Duties  
 and Obligations, which I am come to inforce  
 and lay upon you, is of such a Nature, as to  
 be much more agreeable, and easy, to such a  
 Creature as Man is; and much more condu-  
 cive to the Quiet and Happiness of such a Be-  
 ing; than a Freedom from it, or an En-  
 gagement in any Course of a contrary Nature;  
 can be.

Thus far these Words of our Blessed Lord  
 may, justly and naturally, be extended. For  
 He plainly appears to speak to Such as are in  
 a *restless* and unquiet Condition wanting and  
 wishing for *Happiness*; from his offering to  
 shew them the only way to it. He plainly  
 intends what He says of *his Yoke*, to be under-  
 stood of the *Moral Rules* and Obligations of  
 his Religion, because He himself instances in  
*two* of them; *viz. Meekness*, and *Humility*. He  
 plainly appears to comprehend, in what He  
 says, his whole *System* of *Virtue*, from his  
 calling it by the Name of *his Yoke* and *his Bur-*  
*then*; which must mean his *Whole Moral Law*.  
 And He certainly intends what he says of the  
*Easiness*

SERM.

IX.

*Easiness* of his *Yoke*, and the *Lightness* of his *Burthen*, to be understood in Comparison of any other, set in Opposition to it; because he still calls it a *Yoke* and a *Burthen*: Words, which suppose it not to be void of all present Difficulty, and Uneasiness. And the *Whole* is plainly meant, in Comparison of the *Yoke* and *Burthen* of *Sin*, or *Immortality*; because He instances, expressly, in the *Practice* of the *moral* Virtues mentioned, as the Way to Happiness.

I may, therefore, very reasonably, take Occasion from these Words, to consider how truly and justly it is said, that the *Yoke* here spoken of fits *easier*, upon such a Creature as Man; and the *Burthen* of practical Religion *lighter*; than any of a contrary Sort: or, in other Words, to shew that the *Practice*, implied in *This*, is a much surer way to his Happiness, than That of *Vice* and *Immortality*. In order to this,

I. The *first* necessary Step is, to consider what a Sort of Being Man truly is.

II. The *second* will be, to enquire what Circumstances are necessarily required to the making any *Course* of *Action* easy and happy to such a Creature.

III. And the *third* will be, To shew that an uniform Course of *Virtue*, or practical Religion,

on, has a Title to all these Requisites ; which the Course of Life, *opposite* to it, cannot pretend to.

SERM.  
IX.

I. As to the *first* of these ; it is but Folly to spend our Time in vain Complaints of the Imperfections of our Nature : That we are not made, on one hand, with Abilities to practice all *Virtue*, in every Circumstance of Life, without any Inclination, or Temptation, to the contrary ; or, on the other hand, capable of enjoying unbounded Pleasure, wherever it offers itself, without any Restraints from within, or any ill Consequences from without. Our Business is to consider ourselves as we truly are ; and not as we could wish ourselves to be : as Creatures, related to the inferior Part of the *Creation*, in our *Bodies*, and *bodily Appetites* ; but greatly distinguished from it, by a Faculty within us, which enables Us to find out the Existence of a GOD above Us ; the Excellency of his Nature ; the true Glory, and Duty, of a rational Being ; and the Expedience, and Becomingness, of One Sort of Conduct above another. For to consider *Man*, either as a Creature merely *Animal*, without any Direction in his Nature but to the *Animal Pleasures* ; or as a *Creature* merely *rational*, without any Bias from Flesh and Blood, or any Temptation from the present Scene of Things ; is a very *partial* and unequal Consideration ;

SERM.  
IX.

deration; and likely to carry us but a little way in the *Enquiry* now before us.

2. After this, the *Second Step* is to consider what *Circumstances* are requisite to the making any Course of Life easy, and agreeable, to such a *Creature* as Man, certainly, is.

And here, there are *two Things*, which seem to me to have a just Claim to This, *viz.* That this *Course of Action* should be agreeable to the best and governing Part of his Frame: And, That it should either have no Difficulties, and Distresses, of any Sort, in it; or that those Difficulties, and Distresses, should be, at least, sufficiently compensated by Advantages, either present, or future, or both.

1. To make any Course of Action, *easy* and happy, to *Man*, it must certainly be agreeable to that *rational Principle* within Him, which, He is sensible, has a Right to guide and direct Him in his Actions.

The *Liberty* of a reasonable Being is his *Happiness*: and the *true Liberty* of such a Being, cannot consist in an unbounded Freedom from the Obligation of all Laws; but in the ready and settled Habit of following that *Principle*, or that *Authority*, which is, evidently, entitled to the Rule and Government of Him. For by this means it is, that a Person, or intelligent Agent, comes to do what Himself approves

proves of; what Himself recommends to his own Practice, *before* Action, and delights in and applauds, *after* it. On the contrary, it is the *Slavery* of *moral Conduct*, which is most of all to be dreaded by such a Being: And the most hard and intolerable *Yoke*, and the most grievous and oppressive *Burthen*, to Him, must be a *Life*, in which He is hurried, by the Command of an *Inferior* Principle, got loose from the Influence of the *Superior*, into such a *Scheme* of Actions, as Himself can never seriously approve, *before Execution*; and cannot but wish undone, *after* it. It is with *Moral Liberty*, as it is with *Political Liberty*, in its Perfection; which is greatly mistaken, and ill-treated, when it is supposed to be *Licentiousness* absolutely free from Rule; whilst its very Essence consists in a ready and uniform Submission to such *Principles*, or *Persons*, as have a right to govern us; and govern us by such Laws as Reason, (consulting the Good of the whole Society) declares it to be best for us to obey.

If we ascend higher in our Thoughts to That Being who holds all Perfection in Himself, it is no Presumption to say, what He accounts his own Glory; That it is the *Liberty* of Almighty God himself, to be constantly, and without any Deviation, governed by the  
 4 eternal

S E R M.  
IX.

SERM. eternal and immutable *Laws* of Good and  
 IX. Right, Just and Equal. From whence we  
 may justly argue, that no Being capable, in  
 any Degree, of knowing any Part of those  
*Laws*, can have any other *Moral Liberty* than  
*This*; or desire any other, upon any reason-  
 able or honourable Terms.

Consequently, on the other hand, it must  
 be the Effence of *Moral Slavery* to Man, to  
 be arbitrarily governed by such *Powers*, as He  
 knows to have no Right to any Command over  
 Him; or hurried into Action, by such *Laws*  
 and Commands, as He himself cannot think  
 of in any other Light than as Contradictions to  
 the Dictates of the Superior Principle, and in-  
 consistent with his own Peace, and all Order  
 within Him. Neither does the present tran-  
 sient *Pleasure* of obeying them, in any Instance,  
 at all alter or affect this Truth: unless *Pleasure*,  
 against Reason, can change Evil into Good;  
 and alter the Nature of Things, so as to turn  
*Bitter* into *Sweet*; the *bitter* Reproaches and  
 Resentments of an offended Mind, into the  
*sweet* Approbations of its *ruling* Principle.

It may, therefore, be justly inferred, from  
 what I have already said, that it is impossible  
 that any *Course* of *Action* can be an *easy Yoke*, or  
 a *light Burthen*, to *Man*, in which He is ever  
 contradicting the Superior Principle within, and  
 the

the only one He has to consult, and to be influenced by; and is guided by the impetuous *Rule of Another*, which was made to obey: because, such a Course, must necessarily beget Self-Condernation, and the worst Sort of inward Distress; and make the Man his own Enemy, and his own Punisher. But,

2. To the making any Course of Life *easy*, and *happ*y, to such a Creature as *Man*, I will be free to own it not to be quite enough, that it be perfectly agreeable to his *best* and governing Part; but necessary also, that it should either have no greater Difficulties, and Disadvantages, in it, than what are certainly found in That opposite to it: or that These Difficulties, and Disadvantages, should be sufficiently and fully compensated by Advantages, *present*, or *future*, or *both*.

This needs no Sort of *Proof*, or *Illustration*; that, if any *Course of Action* has *Difficulties* in it, next to insuperable; or *Uneasinesses*, next to intolerable; there can be but little Hope of *Constancy* enough, in such a Creature as *Man*, to keep Him steady in it: But that if the *Difficulties* in it are not worthy to be named with the *Advantages* and *Encouragements* attending it; this will render it an agreeable Task to every well-informed Mind. If the *present* Advantages of it be but *small*; yet, if the *future*

S R E M.

IX.

ture ones be vast and durable, tho' they be supposed only probable, This will weigh greatly against the present Difficulties of it. But if it should be found to have a more sure and probable Title than the contrary, to all present Advantages, worth the seeking after; and the surest allowed Title to all *future* ones; only supposing us to be Creatures accountable to that GOD who made us: These Considerations, joined to what I have said, under the former Head, will be more than sufficient to place it far above any *Course of Life* that can be opposed to it; and recommend it to the Choice of Men, as the most *easy Yoke*, and *lightest Burthen*; or as the *Course of Life*, much more free than any other from all the Evils that are most to be avoided by such a Being.

III. Let us now proceed to the *third* Proposition I laid down; *viz.* That a settled *Course of practical Religion*, or *Virtue*, has a much surer Title to all these Requisites before-mentioned, than that of *Vice* and *Immorality*.

And here, I believe, it is an uncontested Truth, that the habitual Practice of *Virtue*, is the Practice fully approved and applauded by our *best* and *superior* Faculty; by that *Principle* within Us, which, we are sensible, was given to rule and govern our Actions. And this single Truth will make a vast Difference between

between the Practice of *Virtue*, and that of *Vice*; That, to the *Former* a Man is constantly directed by serious Consideration, and by a willing Choice, which is the Result of it; that *in* it, He is accompanied with his own Applauses, and the secret Approbations of his Conscience; that *after* it, He is entertained with the Pleasure of a sweet Reflexion, and the Praises of unpolluted Reason: That, on the contrary, to the *Latter* He is never, in any one Instance, led by the serious Considerations and Arguments formed by Reason and Judgment; that the more he considers, and reflects, and reasons, the more he is dissuaded *from* it; that he is hurried *into* it by quite the contrary Principle; that he is accompanied *in* it by frequent Reproaches of his own Reason; that he is often pursued *after* it by the Lashes of a guilty Conscience, and by the stinging Thought, that he has done what he can never justify at the Tribunal of his own Heart, or the more impartial one of Him who made him what he is.

Of this one might make the wickedest of Men, not void of all common Sense, Judges themselves: whether it was serious Consideration and Reflexion that made them Sinners; whether it was the last Result of their *Judgment* and *Reason*, that the Path they tread

N

would

S E R M.  
IX.

SERM.  
IX.

would lead them to their greatest *Happiness*; or, whether the Course of *Vice* be the Course agreeable to their superior and governing Principle. On the contrary, let the lowest Order of good and virtuous Men witness, whether their *Virtue* ever gave them any Uneasiness, upon the Review of it; whether the Sentiment of sorrowful Repentance was ever stirred up in their Minds, by the Thought that they had been just, or temperate, or humble, or charitable; or, whether They ever felt any Remorses within, upon looking back upon the virtuous and righteous Part of their Lives. They will give Testimony, every one of them, that if they ever have felt any Uneasiness of that kind in their lowest and most desponding Moments; this has been owing to the Suspicion, that They have not done enough in the Cause of *Virtue*: not that they have been so good, as they have been; but that they have been no better. On the other hand, if any Ease of Mind, in a religious Sense, has been experienced by any habitual *Sinners*; it is undeniable that it has never arisen from any *Pleasure* resulting from the Review of a *vicious* Course: but from their deep Sorrow, on account of their past Conduct; and from the secret Hope they sometimes entertain, that GOD will accept such Sorrow instead of that *Virtue* and

*Holiness,*

*Holiness*, which they mourn the want of. All sERM. which puts it beyond Doubt, that a steady IX. *Course of Virtue*, is the *Course*, entitled to the constant Approbation of our best Part, and to the Favour of that *Principle* within, which was given to rule and direct us: and that the *Course*, contrary to this, is accompanied with all its Dislike, and Displeasure.

2. If we now proceed to the *Second* of Those *Requisites* before-mentioned, “ That to make any *Course of Life*, agreeable to such a Creature as Man, it should either have no *Difficulties*, or *Distresses*, in it; or, that *they* should be sufficiently compensated by *Advantages*, *present*, or *future*, or *Both*; We shall, I hope, find it also true, that a *Life of Virtue* has manifestly the Preference, in this View, that the *unnatural Discouragements*, it may, in some extraordinary Cases, meet with, are more than compensated by the *Advantages* attending it; and that the general Rule, in the *natural Course* of Things, is greatly in its *Favor*.

To this Purpose, let it be considered, That the *present Advantages* of it are as certain, as Any of the most certain *Pleasures*, or *Profits*, of *Sin*; and of much more Importance to such a Creature as *Man* is. It constantly, and without Variation, brings along with it a *Peace*, and *Serenity*, and *Joy of Mind*; never known

SERM.  
IX.

or felt without it. It tends, naturally, to the *Health* of that Body itself, upon which some place the highest Value; to as good and creditable a *Situation* in Life, as ought to be wished; to such a *Reputation*, as a Man would chuse upon the best Considerations: And, in the Enjoyment of the Goods peculiar to this World, being bounded only by *Reason* itself, it is always free from those many Embarrassments, Disappointments, Uneasinesses, Anxieties, Perplexities, and present Miseries, to which the unbounded Enjoyment of the same Goods is every Day seen to expose Men.

On the other hand, the Practice contrary to this, if it has any Effect upon the *Mind*; (as it must have, as long as the *Mind* exists) it is to disquiet and discompose it, by such well-grounded *Uneasinesses*, as are themselves *present Unhappinesses*. The Effect of it upon the *Body* is, in many Cases, to bring on *Ruine*, and *Dissolution*, before it's Time; to fill it with more Distempers, and invite more Calamities into it, than would, otherwise, be experienced. The Effect of it upon the Name and *Reputation*, is no better; if the *best Reputation* be the Esteem of the Good and Wise. And upon Men's *Estates*, the Influence of *some Vices* is as bad, in lessening them, and bringing them to Nothing; and of *Others*, in making them useles.

useless to the Possessors themselves. And if this be plainly the Case, that, excepting in some very *unnatural* and extraordinary Circumstances of Affairs, the Cause of *Vice* has nothing to boast of, even in this *present* State; and that the *Course* of *Virtue* has, in itself, a constant Fountain of *inward* Ease, and a *natural* Tendency to all the *outward* desirable *Happinnesses* of Life; here, at this Point, all the Boasts and Pretensions of *Vice* cease at once.

It is *Virtue*, alone, that can look forward, with any Courage and Satisfaction, into a *future* State of Things. *Vice* is no *Rival* there: nor does it so much as presume to think of any Claim to *future* Rewards; but, as long as Thought remains, is often allarmed with the Fear, or Suspicion, that, as *Punishment* is due to it, *Punishment* will hereafter overtake it. I say, it is a State of *Virtue*, alone, that can make Us feel a Pleasure in hoping and thinking, That, as surely as there is a GOD, who made Us reasonable Creatures capable of the Guidance of *Moral Rules*; as surely, as He has made us with all the Tokens of Creatures *accountable* for our Actions; and as surely as there is a *State* after this poor Life: so surely will the Favour of GOD, and all the proper Marks of it, be shewn to the truly *Virtuous*; and the *Rewards* of *another* and *better* Life,

SERM.

IX.

more than make up for all that was grievous in *this*, to the most unfortunate and oppressed of all the Lovers and Followers of it. And We *Christians* know that it was the great *Design* of our *Blessed Lord*, to bring *Life* and *Immortality*, in a future State, to *greater Light*, than they were viewed in, before; in order to make his *Yoke* still the *more easy*, and his *Burthen* the *more light*, to All who should take his Religion upon them.

I have thus endeavoured to induce you to chuse the *Yoke* and *Burthen* spoken of, in the Text; that is, the *Obligations* of *practical Religion*, or *Virtue*, before the *Slavery* of *Vice*; the only *Rival* which stands in Competition with it. I have compared their several Pretensions: And I am not sensible that, in this Comparison, I have given one Grain of Weight to the Scale of *Virtue*, which does not, undeniably, belong to it; or taken from the *contrary* Scale any one Advantage which it could possibly claim.

And now, if I may conclude with a *Word* more peculiarly proper to *this Assembly*, and *this Place*, in which I now speak; I will add, That, if what I have been laying before you be the Truth of GOD, of such Importance as to be worthy of your Attention; it cannot but be the immediate Conclusion from the Whole, in

the Breast of every Person of *High Rank*, here present, that a settled Course of *Virtue* must be the only Course of *Honour*, to such a Being as Man is; and that the more established any Man is, in this Course, the greater Title he has to be called a *Man of Honour*. The Word *Honour* still remains amongst us, applied to the Behaviour of Men; and, if the *Ideas*, annexed to *Words*, be not yet entirely confounded, it can mean Nothing distinct from, much less contrary to, *Virtue*. Nor are the Differences of Things yet so lost, but that the *Word* is still designed, in all the Instances of Conduct and Action in which it is used, to signify a Degree of *Virtue* even exalted above the common Pitch; and exercised in Cases, to which human Laws, and human Eyes, often cannot reach; but the Right and Reason of the Thing do: as in those of *Gratitude* to *Benefactors* known only to Ourselves; *Truth* to the most secret Promises; *Justice* and *Equity*, as such, where *no Court*, and no Man's Judgment, can enforce it. These, and many other Instances, shew an Acknowledgment, in Those who use the *Word*, of the strict Obligation to *Virtue*, as the Dictate of the rational Faculty; and of the utter Disagreeableness of the contrary to that *secret Principle* in Them, the

SERM.  
IX.  
~

SERM  
IX.

Power of which, in some such Instances, they cannot forbear to feel, and follow.

This is, in Effect, to acknowledge, what is a most certain Consequence, that a Man of *Virtue*, and a Man of *Honour*, through the whole System of *Morality*, are only two Expressions for one and the same Thing: and that it is a *Contradiction* to the *Nature* of Things, as well as the greatest *Abuse* of *Language*, to put afunder what GOD and Reason have joined together.

And, indeed, what can be the *Honour* of *Man*, but that *Practice*, which is unvariably agreeable to his superior and ruling Principle? Let him not claim any other, for fear He should be found to claim the *Honour* of *lower Animals*, instead of *his own*; and to boast of *That*, in which many of the *irrational* Kind, could They act in our World, would greatly excell him. For, in *Men* themselves, it requires but a very low Capacity, and little more than *Inclination* free from the Restraints of Reason and Reflexion, to be *dishonourably wicked*.

This is no wandering from the *Words*, and *Doctrine*, of the *Text*. For I mean to infer from what I have been now saying, that *Virtue* must be the *Easiest Yoke*, and the most *Light Burthen*, to a Mind sensible of the Rules of the strictest *Honour*; because this, we see,

is ever acknowledged of some particular *Instances* of it; and therefore, cannot be denied of any other *Branches* of that *God-like System*, which relies, in every Part of it equally, upon the same eternal and immutable *Laws of Right*, and *Truth*: and, on the other hand, that a *Course of Vice*, and *Immorality*, must be the most *galling Yoke*, and the most *heavy Burthen*, to such a Mind; because it is a most uneasy *Contradiction* to those same *Rules of Honour*, by which the Man acknowledges himself, of *Right*, to be governed, and preserved from *Moral Evil*, in *some Cases*; which *Rules* extend equally to *every Branch* of the whole *System of Iniquity*.

And here, let me repeat, That no imagined *Pleasure*, or *Profit*, can alter this Truth: because Nothing of that Kind can turn *Unreasonable* into *Reasonable*; nor, consequently, the *Dishonour* of an *intelligent Being* into its *Honour*. Nor can all the *Ensigns* and *Trappings of outward Greatness* (in another Sense, sometimes, called *Honour*,) make it otherwise. They will always render *Vice* more deformed, and more disagreeable, in the Eyes of all who think rightly; because it is truly more out of *Character*, in such a Garb, than in the *Coarser Dress* of the *Lower World*: but They can never give to it the peculiar Privilege of *Virtue*; which,

S E R M.  
IX.

SERM

IX.



which, alone, ever was, and still remains, the true *Honour* of all the Great and Noble of this World, as well as their Duty and Happiness.

I have thus, in the best Manner I could, explained and enforced a very important Declaration of our *Blessed Lord*, concerning the Practice of all the *Moral Duties* of His holy *Religion*: and, I hope, in doing this, I have been preaching *Christ*, and his *Doctrine*. It is the *Glory* of His *Gospel*, that the great Design of its Founder was to direct his Followers to the whole *System* of *Natural Religion*, or *Morality*. His *Doctrine*, upon which He rests their *Happiness*, is *Virtue*. His *Life* was an *unspotted Example* of all *Virtue*. His *Death* is the greatest Argument for *Virtue*. And his *Sufferings* are *blasphemed*, when they are represented as designed for the Advantage of any *Sinners*, but such as have forsaken their Sins, and are returned into the Paths of *Virtue*. Let Every One, therefore, who professes to follow *Christ*, as his *Master*, learn of Him; and take his *Yoke*, and his *Burthen*, upon Him: And he will find Rest to his Soul, in a Conduct agreeable to his own Mind, in every Part, and every Relation, of Life, *here*; and unspeakable Happiness, *hereafter*.

Of

---

---

Of PERSECUTION *on Account of*  
RELIGION.

---

---

S E R M O N X.

---

---

ROM. xiv. 4.

*Who art Thou that Judgest Another Man's Ser-  
vant? To his own Master, He standeth, or  
falleth.*

---

---

**I**N a former <sup>a</sup> Discourse upon these Words, S E R M.  
X.  
I observed, that the Foundation of all *outward Persecution*, for any sort of Differences about Religion, was laid in the Mind *within*; that the first Step was the *Inward Act* of *Censuring* and *Judging* our Neighbours, on Account of what They esteem, as any Part of the Worship or Service of God: But that the Evil seldom stopped there, but was generally observed, when Opportunity offered,

<sup>a</sup> *Note*, This was the *Second* Sermon upon this Text. See the *First* in p. 47. of this Volume.

SERM.  
X.



to break out into open *Violence* to Men's *Bodies* or *Estates*, for the Sake of their *Consciences*.

This being the Case, the first Step I chose to take, was to attempt the Cure of that wicked Distemper of Mind *within*; or, to shew the inexcusable Iniquity of the *Inward Act*, before it can proceed to *Outward Evils*. This I endeavoured to do, by observing,

1. That we are not qualified *thus* to sit in *Judgment* upon One Another.

2. That it is not the Province of *Us*, who are but *Fellow-Servants* to the same *Master*.

3. That it is a Province, which our Great and Common *Master* hath peculiarly reserved to Himself. And,

4. That it is our great Business to prepare for the *final Judgment* of *Ourselves*, and not to be found *judging* Others.

But, as Men have been, in all Places almost, and in all Times, observed to proceed from *Inward Censures*, to the Application of *Outward Force*, and *Worldly Evils*, in Matters purely *Spiritual*, and belonging to *Conscience*; I shall now pursue this Subject farther; and endeavour, in the plainest Manner possible, to shew the great and unpardonable Iniquity of all *Outward Persecution*, on *Religious Accounts*: And this, by such Considerations, as will  
at

at once determine *That*, and answer the chief Pretences alledged by Any Men for it.

Now, this Great Evil of *Persecution* is, by All such *Patrons* of it as speak seriously of believing the *Gospel*, and regarding the Salvation of Mankind, always avowed, to be built upon the Great Importance to All Men, that They should be Believers of the *One* only true Religion, and sound Members of the *One* only true *Church* of *Christ*, in order to their *Eternal Salvation*: And upon the *Duty* of bringing Men to their own Happiness, by *Force* of *Outward Evils*, when other Methods fail. I know, there is *Another* Reason, or Excuse, for it, sometimes mentioned; taken from the Peace and Quiet of *Society*, and of the Christian World about Us, which is pretended to require such an Agreement, as this Outward Force is designed to produce and establish. But *this*, (not to mention that it is built upon a great Mistake, directly contrary to Truth and Experience) being merely of a *political* Nature; and plainly founded upon the Wicked Maxim, that it is of no Importance what is *True*, or *False*; what is pleasing to Almighty God, or not; and throwing *Religion* quite out of the *Question*; I shall not now enter at all into the Merits of so weak and worldly a Pretense; but shall only consider the *Former*:  
which,

SERM.  
X.

which, being the most honourable Pretense for *Persecution*, is always the most avowed: Few caring to own that they mean nothing but this World, and their own *Power*, or *private Interest*, in it. This then being plainly put upon the Importance of right Sentiments about Religion, and the true *Church of Christ*, out of which there can be no Salvation,

I. The *first* Consideration which offers itself, is this; that supposing, the *Importance* of *Truth* would justify Us; yet, without the Certainty of our being *Infallible*, in what we ourselves hold to be *Truth* in Religion, it would be most unreasonable, and inexcusable, to act against our *Fellow-Creatures*, by the Application of *Outward Force*. *Persecution*, you may know from all History, takes a great Compass, and is seen to exert itself, not only with Regard to the Fundamental Truths of all Religion; but, (We may say, chiefly and most commonly,) for the Support of Those *many* inferior, or lesser Points, in which the Thoughts of serious and sober Men ever were, and ever are likely to be, different. And if, in These, or any of These, We make a wrong Judgment; then, Every Step we take is not only out of the Paths of *Charity*, but of that *Truth* likewise, the  
Name

Name of which we make use of to cover our S E R M.  
Uncharitableness. X.

This is so plain, in the Case before us, that the *Romanists*, who generally take Care to make their Scheme of *Absurdities* consistent with it self, *first* assume to themselves an *Infal-  
lible* unerring *Judgment*, before They venture to affirm to You, that You shall believe, and profess, what They think fit. For They well know that, if They should own Them-  
selves, to be liable to Errors, and to be *fallible* Men, in all contested Points of Religion, They could not claim the Submission due only to *Infallibility*, in Matters of *Faith* and *Worship*: and so, They chuse rather to lay their *Founda-  
tion* in *Impudence*, than to lose the Benefit of *worldly Terrors*, for the enlarging the *Bounds* of their Church.

But such an *Outrage* upon the common Sense of Mankind, cannot be carried by mere Dint of *Assurance*. For it comes to no more than This, “ We affirm that We are *infalli-  
ble*: and therefore, you are bound to obey Us, as such: neither can They themselves, who utter this Oracle, tell Us, in what *Place*, and *Person*, or *Persons*, We shall certainly find this *Infal-  
libility*.”

This therefore, is a *Voice*, little becoming such a Creature, as *Man* is, even the most  
elevated

SERM.

x.

elevated of all so called: who every Day finds within himself the Experiences of a Creature, capable of being deceived; and standing in need of all favourable Allowances, both from God, and his Fellow-Creatures. But,

II. Supposing that We could be, not only morally certain, but infallibly secure, that All the Points which We ourselves embrace as Parts of Religion, were really True, and Irreprehensible; the next thing to be considered is, That it is naturally impossible, by outward Evils, to force the *Inward Assent* of Others; or to make their real Sentiments about those Points conformable to our own. For the *Assent* of the *Mind* to any thing as Truth, must be upon such Evidence, as makes it appear to be Truth. Now nothing *External* can make any Proposition appear True to a Man's Understanding. Whatever doth that, must be of a kind, congenial to the Mind within: To which outward Force bears no Similitude, nor Relation. It is *Reason* and *Argument*, either real, or supposed, that works *within*; and which alone must do so, till the Nature of Man, and of Truth, be totally altered.

If a Blind Man were put upon the Rack, day after day; and intense Torments applied to Him, for the great Crime of not seeing the  
*beautiful*

*beautiful Colours*, which his Neighbours see. This might extort from him a Protestation, that He doth see them; nay, it might create in Him such an Inclination to see them, that He might *fancy*, He did so: But it is plainly true, that it would not make Him really see any thing like them. He would still be the same *Blind Man*; incapable of seeing, and unacquainted with *Colours*, till All Defects should be rectified, and All Things requisite to the Purpose of *Sight*, should be rightly disposed.

Thus it is, in the greater Case before Us. All Men are pleased to suppose, that They themselves see and perceive *Truth*, and that Others are blind, and stupid, just so far as They differ from Them. Be it so. Let *Us* be wise and knowing; and let the Herd around us be all Blindness, and Ignorance. Must it follow, therefore, that the Application of *Outward Evils* will work that Persuasion in Others, which will make Them, altogether such as we are, in the Inward Sentiment? No. It may create a Wicked Prevarication, a false Protestation, an impious Hypocrisy; all ending in *Irreligion* and *Atheism*, which We must in great Measure answer for: Or, It may go so far, as to make Creatures, distracted with the Intensity of Pain, fancy at last that They see what Others see, and believe what Others believe. But this can

S E R M.  
X.

be no more than Imagination, or Fancy; because it is plain that the *Medium* made Use of, is not the proper Mean, or Instrument, to convey a real Persuasion. *Force* is not *Evidence*; *Torment* is not *Argument*. And therefore, whatever it may work, tho' bearing never so much Resemblance to *Persuasion*; yet it cannot be *That* it self in Reality, because *That* can no more be the Effect of any thing merely external, than the *Sight* of a *Blind Man* can be restored by tormenting him in an improper Place, and Manner.

This is so plain, that Those who profess to argue for any sort of *outward* Penalties, or Inconveniencies, upon Accounts merely Religious, if They ever touch this Argument, only alledge, that those outward Things duly applied, may make Persons the more willingly attend to Argument and Reason: For so Every thing is called by Men, which Themselves hold, or would appear to hold. And from this very *Concession* it is plain, that it is the *Evidence* and *Argument*, which is the Mean of this supposed Conviction; and that even by Themselves nothing but this is supposed, or can be supposed, to work a real Change, in the Persuasion, and inward Sentiments of any Man. And this being the only Gloss that can be put upon this Proceeding,

III. It

SERM.

X.

III. It is to be considered that, supposing *This* were possible; it is neither the Business, nor the Interest of *Truth*, to be received, by such Methods, or in such a Manner. It is much *better*, and more pleasing, in the Eyes of Almighty God; if We can judge at all, either of his Nature, or of his *Revelation* by *Jesus Christ*; That any Man, in the Uprightness and Sincerity of his Heart, should remain in an *Error*, than that He should embrace the *Truth*, so induced, and so persuaded to it. It is the great Interest of Truth, to be received upon such *Motives*, and *Principles*, as are manly and honest; such as lay the Foundation deep within, and are directly opposite and contradictory to Those by which alone *Falshood* is, or can be, supported.

But when a Man is worked upon, by Torments, or any sort of *outward* Inconveniencies only, to wish, or incline, to see a *Point* to be *True*; and the *Inclination* carries Him to assent, as He thinks, to the supposed *Arguments* for it; He is not at all sure that He hath not parted with his *Integrity*, for a *Speculation*; that He hath not made Ship-wreck of his *Conscience*, for the sake of a supposed *Faith*: or, that He is not worthy of that Imputation of holding the *Truth*, in *Unrighteousness*. It is plain-

S E R M.  
X.

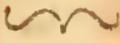
ly an *Accidental* thing to *Him*, if *He* should, by this Method, be brought to a *Right* Opinion in any thing. It is wrought by such Methods, as would as certainly have turned him from *Truth* to *Error*, as from *Error* to *Truth*. He doth not, therefore, reap the Honour of a sincere and hearty *Lover of Truth*; and perhaps loses entirely the Reward of all his former Uprightness and Integrity. Almighty God gains no *Servant*, no faithful *Dependent*, in *Him*: nor doth the Man secure to Himself any Share in the Favour and Love of God; as far as We know, either by *Nature*, or the *Gospel*, the Will of our Heavenly Father.

And, as it is not at all the Interest of *Truth*, to be accidentally received, just in the same manner, as *Error* it self might; so, is it the greatest Indignity and Dishonour that can possibly be offered to that same *Truth*, for whose Service, as it is pretended, this great Concern is shewn. For what hath *Truth* to boast against it's *Enemy*, and it's Opposite, but that the *One* stands in need of nothing but *Light* and *Evidence*, to recommend it to Men's Minds; and that the *Other* cannot be supported without the Passions and *Wrath* of *Man*? This Boasting is entirely destroyed, when the Methods of propagating and supporting *Truth* and *Falshood*, are made the same. This puts them upon an equal

equal Foot, and makes their Glory the same: For, whatever becomes of *Falshood*, this Method extinguishes all the *Beauty* and *Glory* of *Truth*, by conveying it to the Minds of Men, in a Method unworthy of any thing, but the *grossest Falshoods*.

This, therefore, is certain to All who know the Value of Integrity and Honesty in the Eyes of *Almighty God*; that, supposing the Application of *Outward Evils* could create a real Change of the Persuasion within, and that for the better, as to the mere *Truth* of any *Proposition*; yet, *Error* it self, joined with Uprightness and Sincerity of Soul, cannot but be more valuable in the Account of our Great Judge, than *Truth*, either accidentally embraced, or infused into the Mind by the Workings of *Force*, and the Considerations of *this World*. But it cannot be supposed, that such a *Persuasion* within can really be the Effect of *Outward Evils*. Nor indeed do *They* who make use of them, at all trouble themselves about the *True Sentiments* of Those whom They use in a such manner. All that They think of, is to draw the same Words, or Sounds, *that is*, the same outward *Professions*, from All. This leads us, in the next Place, to observe,

SERM.

X.  


IV. That to *force* the *Professions* of Men contrary to the *Dictates* of their *Consciences*, in Matters of *Religion*, and *Divine Worship*, is directly contributing to the Worst of Sins; and acting a Part the most inexcusable, and unreasonable. Any Instances of *Torment* or *Misery*, applied to this Purpose, even if it were in Favour of the plainest Proposition in *Mathematics*, would, in the natural Tendency of Things, be so far from inclining, either a generous or a perverse Mind, to the *real Belief* of it, that They would rather create an *Averseness* to, and *Hatred* of, a *Point*, which stands in need of such Methods of Support. And, supposing that *Weariness* under *Evils*, at Length shall make Men *profess* such Points to be *true*, which They cannot believe to be so: this is, in Those who make use of such Methods to this Purpose, the Great Crime of ensnaring their Fellow-Creatures into *Hypocrisy*, and in the End, perhaps into *Atheism* itself; into a Contempt of every Thing truly good, and a Disregard of what is *True*, and what is *False*. So that I should not doubt to say, that All the *Inward Infidelity* and *Atheism*, that is in the Hearts of so many Men, in those Countries, where *Persecution* is openly avowed, is in great Measure owing to that *Persecution*,

*tion,*

tion, which pretends to root it out; and will be charged upon the *Persecutors* themselves, by the Great Judge of the World, when He shall come, to bring to *Light* the *hidden Things* of *Darkness*, and to make manifest the *Counsels* of the *Heart*. Let us go on now to observe,

SERM.

X.

V. That, as it is just, and holds good, in the Case of all *Truth*, that it ought to be received, by every Man, in the *Love* of it, and not in the *Fear* of any of this World's Evils: so, is it plain, that the more *Important* the *Truth* is, and the more it relates to another State, and his own *Eternal Salvation*; the more still is it certain, that it ought not to be forced, but to be left to the Man's own *Conscience*, and to that *Thought* and *Reflexion*, which were given to Man for the balancing and receiving it; and which alone entitle Him to *Reward*, or *Punishment*, for his Conduct relating to it.

The Reason is plain; because the Importance of any *Truth* to the Service of God, or the Happiness of Man, makes it more requisite, that the *Man* should pursue the *Enquiry* after it, with *Sincerity*; and hold it fast with *Constancy*: neither of which He can do, if He is overpowered by the *Motives* of this *World*; and by the same Arguments, which equally recommend *Truth* and *Falshood*; and

SERM  
X.

which therefore, would have had the same Effect upon his Mind and Tongue, were any *certain Error*, by the like Pain and Distress, recommended to Him.

Nay, upon this Account it is not unreasonable to affirm, That it would be more justifiable of the two, to erect a *Court of Inquisition*, and to apply the *Extremity* of Bodily Torments, for the Conviction of All who will not own that *a Part is greater than the Whole*, or that *Ten are more than Twenty*; than to make use of the same *Terrors*, in Matters purely *Religious*, that touch the *Worship* and *Service* of God, according to Men's own Consciences. The *former* is monstrous, and absurd, and an Injury to *Human Society*. The *latter* is as monstrous and absurd; and besides, is a profane *Invasion* of Almighty God's Province; a Judging his Servants before the Time; an Insult upon *Conscience*, which is to be the Rule, and Measure, of a Man's Duty here, and of his *Happiness* hereafter.

Since therefore, to force the *Mind* and *Conscience* within, is impossible; and since to force the Words and Professions of Men, against their Inward Persuasion, is impious and wicked; and since this is much more so, where *God's Prerogative*, and *Man's Greatest Interest*, are concerned, in the most peculiar manner: it remains

remains that the only Method in this Case, allowed by Justice, or Equity, is, the Use of Reason and Argument to convince Men inwardly of any Errors; and that All the rest must be left to Charity, and mutual Forbearance. There are *Two* Arguments, to prove This, and to inforce it upon all Men, and *Christians*. The *One* is taken from the Sentiments of all Men, when they make it, or rather feel it, to be their own Case: and the *other* is, what ought to be constantly regarded by All who bear the Name of *Christ*, the Method in which *Christianity* was propagated through the World.

1. As to the *first* of these; there is no Rule allowed to be more equitable, or more humane and fitting, than this, that what one Man hath reason to expect from another, He is obliged in Reason to perform to that other, in like Circumstances. If we cannot think it just in Others, in *their* Height of Power, to demand an Agreement in every Thing relating to Religion, of *Us*, supposing us under their Power; no more can we think it just in *Us*, to exact, with worldly Penalties, that same Agreement, whenever Superiority, and Strength, give leave: Because *Force* is not *Right*; nor can any Thing be done lawfully by one Man, which may not as lawfully be done by Another, in the  
same

SERM.

X.

same Circumstances. So that Men perpetually pronounce, in this Case, their own Sentence of Condemnation, by asserting and pronouncing That to be the Height of Injustice and Wickedness towards themselves; which yet They will venture too often to practice towards Others, upon every the least Opportunity. It is not only a Law of the Christian Religion, but of eternal Truth, *Whatsoever ye would* (whatsoever You have reason to expect) *that Men should do unto you, That do unto them*; and never the *contrary*.

2. But then, as I observed, there is something so peculiar to *Christians*, in the Propagation of their own Religion, in its first and pure State, that it deserves to be duly considered. The great Debate, We see, lies, between two Ways of promoting and supporting, what is called *Religion*; or extending the Bounds of a *Church*. These are, either *Force*, or *Persuasion*: either the Argument of *Reason*, or of *outward Evil*. Here then, we shall find, which was most agreeable to the Wisdom of God. It was, with respect to his Power, equal to Him which Method to make use of. Had He seen fit to have illuminated and converted the Princes and Magistrates of this World, (as He did *St. Paul*) this, according to some, would have done the Work effectually. The *Authority* of such

such Men, besides the Influence of their Examples, which there is a natural Inclination in Mankind to imitate, would immediately have drawn into the *Church*, the numerous Throng that is always seen to follow Power and Greatness. Nay, Multitudes of Lives might probably have been saved this way; because no *Persecution* of this *new Religion* could have been set on Foot, when all Power was with it; but would have been applied, on the side of it, if a few (which is not credible,) should have been so unmannerly, or so stubborn, as not to follow Great Examples. But then, the whole End of the *Gospel* had been well nigh frustrated; which was not, a bare Profession of it; but a receiving it as the *Truth*, in the Love of *Truth*, and the not holding it in *Unrighteousness*. Where would then have been the Trial of Men's Hearts and Souls? Where would have been the Proofs of Sincerity and Integrity in it's *Professors*? Where would have been Virtue and Honour, in following what was their great and lasting Profit?

Almighty God, therefore, who sees the Springs and Ground of all praise-worthy Actions, chose a Method the direct contrary, for the Honour of the *Gospel*, and of the first Professors of it. He not only did *not* cloath it at first, in the Garments of this World's Glory;

SERM.

X.



not only did *not* arm it with any of the Force and Might of this State; but He left it to the Power of those Evidences that accompanied it: And, that *Sincerity* might have it's *perfect Work*, He opened it, when all the World was disposed to arm against it; not only not to cherish or befriend it, but to persecute and oppress it. So that here is the Difference between the *Sentiments* of Man, and of Almighty GOD. Weak *Man* never seems to think even the *Religion* of God's *own Institution* safe, unless it have Persecution, and worldly Power, in it's Friendship and Alliance. And the All-wise God judges so differently from this, that, in the Settlement and Establishment of the Religion of *Christ*, he chuseth to have the Power of this World against it, rather than for it. The Reason is, that *this* World may have as little to do with Men's Determinations about *Religion*, as possible; that the Uprightness of the Heart may lay the Foundation; and that Virtue may have it's Effect here, and it's Reward hereafter.

This, methinks, should convince all *Christians*, that *Persecution*, in any Degree, is the Invention and Instrument of God's greatest Enemy: and that, as *Christ* disdained to make use of *outward Force*, in planting the *Best Religion* in the World; so it is Unchristian and  
 Impious

Impious to change his Method, in supporting It; and for this Purpose, to chuse Those very *Weapons*, which his *Enemies* used at first against Him, and his *Kingdom*: and which, his Father, in his infinite Wisdom, rejected, as improper for the good *End*, He then had in view.

S E R M.

X.

We may now, at the Conclusion of this Discourse, very justly ask, If all this be true, according to the Law of *Nature*, and the *Gospel* of *Jesus Christ*; how great, how inexpressibly great, is the Guilt of the Leaders of *that Church*, which places the whole Strength of Religion in the Strength of Power, and the Arm of Flesh; which turns the Motives of all that is good, from *inward* to *outward*; which hath no Care or Concern about *Honesty* and *Integrity*, but enforceth an *Unity* of *Voices*, by Fires, Banishments, Racks, and such like Methods; which forsakes the Paths of Meekness plainly pointed out by *God* and *Christ*, and pursues those of Desolation, and Destruction? And then, Let us consider, how much it behoves All who have professed to separate from that Church, to separate effectually from the most *Unchristian* and *Diabolical* Thing in it; and to keep themselves at a Distance from every Tendency to the same *Evil*: to study the *Gospel*, and to put on that Spirit of Charity,  
of

SERM.  
X.

of Peace, and of Forbearance, which breathes through *Every Page* of it. And This will effectually dispose them, not to judge, or censure; much more, not to condemn and injure, oppress and torment, the Servants of *Another Master*: but to leave their Fellow-Servants, in all Matters of *Religious Concern*, to stand or fall, by the Judgment of their one common Lord and Master, to whom alone They must all give an Account for Themselves.

---

---

Of ZEAL *not according to* KNOW-  
LEDGE.

---

---

S E R M O N XI.

---

---

R O M. X. 2.

---

---

*I bear them record, that they have a Zeal of  
G O D, but not according to Knowledge.*

---

---

**Z**EAL, (in the usual Acceptation, of the S E R M.  
Word, and as it may be understood in XI.  
most Places of Scripture,) is a great and  
Sincere Concern of the Mind for any Thing.  
And a *Zeal of God*, is a fervent Concern of  
the Mind, founded upon a *Religious* Principle;  
a Concern for something which a Man thinks  
of Importance to the Honour, or Worship, of  
God. But the true Notion of *Religion*, and of  
the *Honour* of God, has been so little known  
in the World; and Superstitious and fond  
Opinions about his Will, and his Worship,  
have taken such Root in the Hearts of Man-  
kind,

SERM.  
XI.

kind, and been propagated so from Age to Age; that the *Zeal* commonly observed in the World, has been of more Prejudice to *true Religion*, and the *Honour of God*, than the greatest Indifference and Coldness could have been. So ready human Nature has always been to mistake, in such weighty Matters; and to turn the *Virtues* and *Duties* of *Religion* into *Vices*, by their Misunderstandings, and the undue Management of their Passions.

A *Zeal of God* is, in itself, a reasonable and commendable Thing. But when Men mistake in the first Principles, and great Fundamentals of *Religion*; and fix upon the Deity whom they worship Such Attributes and Qualities as are agreeable to their own Fancies or Inclinations; all that they act is out of the right Way: and their *Zeal* degenerates into a superstitious Fury, and a mere Madness; being not guided by Reason, nor built upon a true Understanding of the Nature of *Religion*. Thus *St. Paul* observes, in the Text, that the *Jews*, even whilst they rejected and persecuted *Christianity*, and adhered to Justification by their own *Law*, had a Religious *Zeal*: but He observes, also, that it was *not according to Knowledge*; not accompanied with Understanding, or built upon a right Apprehension of Matters.

And

And that We, whilst we have a *Zeal* of *God*, and a Concern for what we account *Religion*, may not fall into the same *Condemnation*; it will be proper for Us to spend some *Thoughts* upon this Subject. And, in order to do this with *Advantage*, I propose these following Things :

SERM.  
XI.

I. To shew When it is that a *Religious Zeal* is not according to *Knowledge*.

II. To lay down the best Rule I can, for regulating our *Religious Zeal*.

III. To offer some *Motives*, in order to our avoiding that *Religious Zeal*, which is not according to *Knowledge*.

I. I shall endeavour to shew When it is that a *Religious Zeal* is not according to *Knowledge*. And, I think, this may be determined, 1. By the *Degree* of our *Zeal*, which ought always to be proportioned to the *Value* of the *Object* of it. 2. By the *Methods* in which it shews itself. And 3. By the *Motives* which give *Life* to it.

1. A *Religious Zeal* is not according to *Knowledge*, when the *Object* of it is not what it ought to be. Nay, It is *Absurd* and *Foolish*; a *Contradiction* to *All Reason* and *Understanding*; when is employed upon what does

S E R M.  
XI.

not deserve any Part of our Regard. As We are made Reasonable Creatures, We are obliged to act as Such. And therefore, When Men regulate and settle their *Religious Zeal*, for their own private Conduct, which is a Matter of great Moment to them ; it ought to be done with the most mature Deliberation, and upon the best Grounds ; with Regard to nothing, but what is of real Weight in the Balance of Reason, and of the *Gospel*. Otherwise, They may unhappily come to lay out the Strength and Vigour of their Souls upon what cannot profit them ; upon what cannot carry forward the great Affair of their Salvation in another World ; and to found their warmest Expectations of God's Favour, and Happiness, upon insignificant Trifles. And then, All their Concern for them; the more Vigorous and Passionate it is, the more Absurd it will be also. It may be a *Religious Zeal*, indeed : but it will be, *not according to Knowledge*, or Understanding.

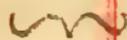
And as the *Degree* of our *Zeal* ought to be proportioned by the Value of it's several *Objects* ; it is evident That Our *Religious Zeal* is not *according to Knowledge*, when We shew *more Zeal* for some Matters of Little Consideration, than we do for Those of much more Moment, and of greater Importance to us. All Men who believe any

Thing of Religion, (and none but such can pretend to any Thing of a *Religious Zeal*;) cannot but acknowledge that the main Design of it, and the strong *Lines of moral Duty*, to which it always tends, are the Matters of greatest Concernment to them. This, I am sure, our *Saviour* has plainly taught all *Christians*: and yet, the *Zeal* of Men, and even of *Christians*, which has most appeared in the World, has been seen to exert itself, as if *These* were framed to yield to Points of much less Consideration. The Honour of God, in the Sanctification of Men's Lives, has been too much neglected; the Terms of *Salvation*, proposed by God himself, both in his Book of *Reason*, and That of *Revelation*, have been overlooked. Other Terms have been invented; other Supports for Men's Hopes and Expectations sought out: and a much greater Stress laid upon some Circumstances, which are, comparatively, trifling and insignificant, than upon what God has *plainly* declared to be of the greatest Importance.

But, certainly, We act not agreeably to that Character of understanding Creatures, which we pretend to, when we put off the great and momentous Points of *Religion*, with a very small Part of our *Zeal*; and employ the main Force of it upon something of much less Con-

SERM.

XI.



sideration: when we express a very cold Affection, and little Warmth, for Righteousness, and Justice, and Temperance, Truth, and Honesty, and Integrity; but have a burning *Zeal* for some particular outward Forms, or inward Opinions; or for the Enlargement of the worldly Interest of a particular *Seēt*; none of which can come in Competition with Those greater Matters, which True Religion strictly and principally requires.

2. Our religious *Zeal* is, certainly, then *not according to Knowledge*, when it shews itself by undue *Methods*, and is discovered after an indecent and unchristian Manner. Let the *Objects* of our religious Concern be what They will, and what they ought to be; let the *Degree* of this inward Concern be, according to the Rules of Equity, proportionable to the *Objects*; yet there is something more requisite: It must not break forth into *Indecencies*, or do *Evil that Good may come*. We cannot be too much concerned for the Honour of God, and the Conversion of the World from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan to the living God. But the aiming at the Service of God himself, will not justify all the Means we may possibly use, in our great Concern for it. *Zeal* for God, and his Glory, must not break in upon any of the Laws which He himself has

has laid down, in order to his own Glory: for this would be to affront Him, in order to honour him; and to bring a Disgrace upon his Religion, in order to propagate and extend it. And therefore, When the *Zeal* of any Persons for what they account Religion, breaks forth into Reproaches and Calumnies, Murthers and Destructions, Violences and Passions, Invasions of Rights and Privileges, and the like; or, when *Zeal* for Religion discovers itself in any Thing contrary to the known Laws of that same Religion; so that Virtue itself suffers, in any of its Branches: it is apparent that This is a *Zeal of God, not according to Knowledge*; being founded upon the Ignorance of what God expressly requires; and proceeding from Men's not knowing, or not regarding, the eternal Laws of Practice, which God himself has proposed to Mankind. And of such Persons as These, the Apostle, in another Place of this Epistle, says, *whose Damnation is just.*

3. *Lastly*, When the *Motives* that give Life and Vigour to our *Religious Zeal* are worldly and Evil; then our *Zeal* is *not according to Knowledge*, nor begun, and carried on, by Reason and Understanding. This *one* Thing will spoil the Best of all our Actions, and will certainly ruine the Beauty and Acceptableness of our *Zeal* in the Eyes of God. To express a Warm

S E R M.

XI.

*Zeal* for *Him*, and for his Honour, and His Commands, above all other Things; and to shew this Zeal in proper and becoming *Methods*; *These* are very laudable and Christian Points. But to exert this *Zeal* upon Temporal Considerations, and for some vile End of our own, undiscovered to the World, renders the whole Procedure odious to God; even when there is Nothing bad in it, but the *Principles*, upon which Men act. For God sees the Heart and the Reins; and is intimately acquainted with every Thought in Man. He delights in *Sincerity*. And though *That* will cover many an Imperfection in his Eyes, yet, Nothing can atone before Him, for the Want of *That*. And it is the Highth of *Ignorance*, for any understanding Creature not to know this: and, if it be known, it is the Highth of *Assurance*, to think to impose upon Almighty God with the outward Appearance, or Mask, of *Zeal* for his Name.

That *religious Zeal*, which alone He can look upon with Delight, must be founded upon an inward Sense of the Importance of *Religion*. But if there be all the Outside and Pomp of *Zeal* imaginable; and this be founded upon mere *worldly* Considerations, and be expressed only to carry forward some *temporal* End; it is absurd to think, that God can approve of it;

or

or that this is such a *Religious Zeal*, as it becomes an understanding Creature to have. Actions materially good and praise-worthy, are rendered vicious and evil by the *Motives* that give the first Spring to them. From whence it follows, that, though a *Zeal for God* and Religion, be, in itself, worthy of Commendation and Reward; yet, when it is built upon Considerations taken from this World only, and not upon a due Sense of Religion heartily embraced within, it becomes a *vicious Zeal*, a *Zeal* unacceptable to God; as it is not only *not according to Knowledge*, but absolutely inconsistent with it. Thus have I endeavoured to shew, *when* it is, that a *Religious Zeal* may be said to be *not according to Knowledge*: which was the *First Thing* I proposed.

But, before I proceed any farther, I desire to put in a *Caution*, That I would not be understood, by any Thing I have said, under this first Head, to intimate That a great *Regard* was not due to Those *Performances* appointed by our Lord, in his *Religion*, which, compared with Some *Others*, may justly be esteemed of *less Importance*. For I know Who has said, *These Ye ought to do, and not to leave the Others undone*. But what I have offered on this Subject, I intended to this Purpose, that We should not fix our *Zeal* upon these *lesser Matters*, more than upon Those which God him-

S E R M.  
XI.

self has with a greater Concern recommended to us: and that We should, much less, discover a greater *Zeal* about the Differences in Opinion and Worship, amongst *Christians*, not plainly determined in the *Gospel*, than for the more important Duties expressly commanded in it: for this is, certainly, a *Zeal not according to Knowledge*.

When the Duty of *Sacrifice*, under the *Law*, came in Competition with the Duty of *Charity* and *Mercy*, our *Lord* himself observed, out of one of the *Prophets*, that *GOD required Mercy, and not Sacrifice*. And so, when any Moral Duty comes in Competition with an instituted Rite, we know, by this Rule, (confirmed by our blessed *Lord*;) which is to give Place. This Preference shews that the One is, of itself, of greater Value; and therefore, Reason will direct us to have *more Zeal* for it.

So likewise, it is certainly lawful for Us to be concerned for any Practice, Opinion, or Notion, relating to Religion, which we ourselves think True, and of Importance; and to shew this Concern by all Christian Methods; nay, to endeavour to convince Others of the Reasonableness of complying with it. But it is a wretched Absurdity to make the Obligation to this Compliance, of equal Importance to Mankind, with their Obligation to Righteousness and Holiness; and much more So, to shew a greater Heat and Concern,

Concern, in order to make Men all of one Mind, and one Opinion, than in order to make Them holy, and just, and charitable. Having just mentioned this *Caution*, I now proceed to the *next* Thing I proposed; which was,

S E R M.  
XI.

II. To lay down the best *Rule* I can, for regulating our *Religious Zeal*.

This is certain, that it is our Duty to have a *Zeal* for God, and for *Religion*. But it is our Duty also, as certainly, to take effectual Care that it be a *Zeal according to Knowledge*; lest otherwise it should flame out, to the Prejudice and Dishonour of Religion itself, and of that God in whose Service it pretends to burn. The Best and only Rule, I can think of, is, that we must take all possible Care to fix in our Minds just and true Notions of the Nature of God, and of the great Design of *Christianity*. For, as the fundamental Error of Men, in this important Matter, has been the forming to Themselves the falsest Notions of the *Nature* of Almighty God, and of the *End* of the *Gospel* itself; and, as this Error has given the sad Occasion to all their Madness, under the Covert of a godly Zeal: So, the *Rule* I have mentioned must be the most proper to prevent, or cure, this great *Evil*.

When Men have been so foolish, as to imagine that God is pleased, and served, and worshipped,

SERM.

XI.

hiped, as He ought to be, by little and trifling Ceremonies; nay, by absurd Rites, and ridiculous Offices of Devotion; (as many have brought themselves to think,) They naturally lay out all their Strength, and employ all the Bent of their Minds, to establish and propagate these; and stick not, at last, to destroy All that stand in the Way of their Fancies. Indeed, the chief Agents of this Sort, in the World, are, I believe, too wise to be persuaded themselves of the Truth of what they pretend to Others. But many, who serve under them, in the Prosecution of their Ends, think that all they are doing, let it be never so bad, is necessary for the Honour and Service of Almighty God, and his true Religion; and therefore, lawful. But if we would not Ourselves be of the Number of Those whose Zeal is a Dishonour to God; we must take Care to know what that God is, whom we serve; what his Nature and Attributes are; what his Will and Pleasure is; and what the End of his making Mankind capable of regarding it, and living according to it.

Nothing can be of more Service to us, in the Matter now before Us, than This, which I am now recommending to you. Supposing, what is certain, that We shall find, upon Inquiry, that God, the great Lord whose Servants we are, is a God of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity; that

that He is merciful, just, and holy, to an infinite Degree; that he cannot hate any of his Creatures; that he wishes, and designs their Happiness; that he made them to know, and worship, and serve Him, in the Practice of all Virtue; that he reveled his Will to them, by his Son, in order to teach them more effectually to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World; and by This to bring them to all Happiness in another, and better State: Supposing, I say, a serious Person made truly sensible of this; Is it possible for him to think of honouring God any otherwise, than by the Practice of what he knows to be pleasing to him? Or, to pursue any thing in the whole World, with a *Zeal* comparable to That, with which he presses after what He knows to be the *Will* of that God? Can such a Man ever suffer himself to transgress the plain Laws of God, in order to promote his Honour? to be cruel and barbarous, in order to carry forward the Glory of his *merciful Father*? to be unjust and uncharitable, to shew his Zeal for the God of all Right, and the Father of all Mercies? Or, to be ill-natured to all the World about him, in order to propagate the most peaceable and best-natured Institution in the World?

I hope, as far as the Nature of the Thing itself can go, I may be justified in answering,

That

SERM.  
XI.

That such a Conduct is next to impossible. *He*, who sincerely inquires into the Attributes of Almighty God, cannot easily suffer himself to act any thing contrary to that Nature and those Attributes. *He*, who seriously looks into the Christian Religion, will not easily think that any Thing, which contradicts the very Design of that Religion, can be acceptable to Him who instituted it. *He*, who sees how great a Stress is laid in the *Gospel*, upon Holiness, and Mercy, and Peace, can never be induced, under Pretense of the Honour of *Christ*, or his Church, to disregard the Practice of *these*, even for one Day. Nor can *He*, Who ever once thought in earnest about Religion, be brought to imagine it to be a praiseworthy Practice to serve the Cause of it by vicious and immoral Actions.

There is nothing therefore, more likely to fix our *Zeal* upon its true Object; and to fix it in the greatest *Degree* upon what most deserves it; to keep it from discovering itself in all *Methods* disapproved and condemned by Religion; and to rectify the Principles and *Motives* which give Life to it; than the Study of the Nature of God, and the Design of *Christianity*. I hope, upon the whole, I may conclude, That, if Men would study the *Book of Reason*, and the *Gospel* of *Christ*, seriously, They could not possibly entertain, or shew forth, any *Religious Zeal*, but what

what is *according to Knowledge*. I shall now proceed,

SERM.  
XI.

III. To offer some *Motives*, in order to our avoiding such a *Religious Zeal*, as is *not according to Knowledge*. And to excite us to the well-regulating our *Religious Zeal*, it will be very proper to consider,

1. The Reasonableness, and excellent Usefulness, of *Religious Zeal*, when it is duely regulated. It is not left to our Choice, whether we will have a *Zeal for God*, and *Religion*, or not; but it is our Duty to form and nourish it in ourselves: and such a Duty as we cannot but practice, and effectually compass, if we heartily set about it. To have a *Zeal for God*, is to have a warm and affectionate concern for a Being to whom we have innumerable Obligations; who is the proper Object of all our Hopes, and Desires, and Expectations; and who has all possible Claims to our whole Service. And to have a *Zeal for the Substantials of Religion*, is to have a great Regard for what deserves it more than all other Things in the World; for what is truly pleasing to our Lord and Master, and can never be otherwise; for what is essentially necessary to the Happiness of human Society here below, and to our own eternal Reward hereafter.

It

SERM.  
XI.

It is just and becoming, therefore, to have a *Zeal*, and hearty Concern, for this great and important Business of *Religion*. And, to have this *Zeal* so directed, as to pursue its End by none but proper and Religious *Methods*; by Nothing but what Reason and God himself recommend; is, to consult the true Honour of Religion, and the Service of that God who requires it of Us. No Scandal is brought, by such a Conduct, upon our Profession: but every Mouth blesses it. And then, to have this *Zeal* founded on the *Motives* of eternal Moment, the Rewards of Heaven, and the Importance of Religion, and the Favour of God and *Christ*, is to improve the Beauty and Loveliness of it yet more. There can be no Argument in the World, nor the least Shadow of an Objection made, against a *Zeal*, which has God, and the Practice of Religion, for its Objects; which regards *These* more than any Thing of lesser Consideration; which discovers itself only in the Ways and Methods recommended in the Gospel; and which works upon no other Principles but what the Gospel approves of. But, on the contrary,

2. Let us consider the Unreasonableness, and the pernicious Consequences, of a *Religious Zeal*, not well-regulated; or, in the *Apostle's* Words, *not according to Knowledge*.

And

And here it is too obvious to Every Man's Observation, that Nothing has done more Mischief, or produced more lamentable Effects in the World, than this Sort of Zeal. It was this *Zeal* for the ceremonial Part of their Law, that kept the *Jews* from acknowledging our *Saviour*; nay, which induced Them to reject and crucify him. It was this *Zeal* for Matters of lesser Consideration, which, in very early Days, disunited the *Churches* of *Christ* from One Another; and in these *later* Ages, keeps up, with a fatal Heat, the Differences between the several Sorts of Disciples of *Christ*, in the World; and leads *Christians*, by degrees, to act against their Fellow-Christians, with a Spirit of *Fury*, and wicked Persecution. It is this *Zeal* without *Knowledge*, and the Discovery of it in an undue and unchristian Manner, which has prejudiced many against the very Name of *Christ*; and made the glad Tidings of Salvation a *Scandal* to Unbelievers.

But though it appears (as we have seen it to be, in the first Part of this Discourse,) so unreasonable, in itself; and has proved so pernicious to the Cause of true Religion in the World; Yet, it has always had a Multitude of *Votaries*, who have loved and entertained it *Themselves*; and who have abused and persecuted *Others*, who have not shewn their Zeal in  
the

SERM.

XI.

SERM  
XI.

the same severe, and inhuman *Methods*. Nothing could be of worse Consequence to the *Jews*, than this *blind Zeal* for their *Ceremonial Law*: and yet Nothing was in more Repute amongst them. And They who had it not; They, who believed that *Sacrifice* was of *less Value* than *Mercy*, or moral Duties of greater Moment than Ceremonies; or the Salvation of the whole World of greater Concern than their Rites and Forms of Religion; were accounted false and perfidious; treated with Contempt, exposed and affronted, excommunicated, and banished from Society. And They have been followed, in this Path of Uncharitableness, ever since, in all Ages and Countries, by Such as have followed them in their *Zeal not according to Knowledge*.

But, One of the *Worst* Consequences of this, I must not omit; because it is to be found wherever this *blind Zeal* is, even in the lowest Degree; That it naturally brings in, wherever it is universally embraced, an universal Neglect of the great and substantial Parts of *Practical Religion*. For when Men's Thoughts and Hearts are taken up with the Shadows of Things, and all their Heat and Vigour spent upon these; They have no Time, or Zeal, left for the greater Matters of the *Gospel*. Nay, it is often seen, that, when They are most possessed with a *Zeal* for

for the lesser Matters and Appendages of Religion, They are most of all apt to forget the sacred Laws of Practice, and to transgress the Rules laid down in that very Religion which, they think They are propagating.

S E R M.  
XI.

There cannot be any *Consideration* of more Weight with *Christians*, in the present Case, than This, That *where* the greatest Heat and Concern are expressed about the insignificant Circumstances of Religion, *there* the *essential* Parts of it are seen most to be neglected, in the Lives, and whole Behaviour, of the Professors of it. What *Christian* will not be moved to discourage, and put what Check He can, to a Fire, which may, too probably, burn to the Destruction of all that is valuable in that Religion itself, in whose Cause alone it pretends to burn?

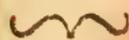
It is, I confess, a melancholy Consideration, that some of the best *Qualities* and *Affections* of the Mind, so easily degenerate into accursed and wicked Passions; and tend, in their Corruption, to the Ruine of the best and most important Things in the World. But this should excite our most serious Consideration; and induce us to make the great Strokes of *Practical Religion* the chief *Objects* of our *Zeal*; and to resolve to shew this Zeal by Those Methods only,

Q

which

SERM.

XI.



which the Gospel recommends to Us, as much as it doth this *Zeal* itself. And then, We may be secure from falling under the Censure of the Apostle, in the Text, of *having a Zeal not according to Knowledge*; and not only of This, but of pleasing *Almighty God*, by placing our *Zeal* where it ought to be placed; by regulating it agreeably to his Nature and Perfections: And so, at last, may inherit the Reward of that *Faith* and *Obedience*, which we have not defiled by a false, rash, and wicked, *Zeal*; or by pretending to carry forward the Honour of God, by such *Methods* as He himself abhors.

---

---

*The Impossibility of serving* GOD and  
MAMMON.

S E R M O N XII.

---

LUKE xvi. 13.

*No Servant can serve two Masters: for either He will hate the one, and love the other; or else He will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve GOD and MAMMON.*

**I**N these Words our *Blessed Lord* supposes, S E R M.  
and represents, all Men who have it in XII.  
their Power to come to the Knowledge   
of the Supreme GOD, as tied and bound to  
Him, in the Relation of *Servants*. This being  
the Supposition; in order to convince his Follow-  
ers of the great Unreasonableness of pretending  
to be the *Servants* of God, and yet to be the  
*Servants*, together with *Him*, of an opposite  
Q 2 Master,

SERM.  
XII.

Master; Slaves to the *Riches*, or Grandeur, of *this World*; Our Lord useth an Illustration taken from common Life. *No Servant* amongst Men can possibly *serve two Masters*, that is, *two Masters*, with different and opposite Wills; of contrary Tempers, and contrary Resolutions. For it will be either thus, that the Servant will have a much greater inward Affection, and Kindness, for *one* of them than for the *other*: Or, supposing that He can inwardly *love* them both equally; yet the Nature of their Commands, and separate Interests, is such, that He must often, whilst He is obeying the one, or *holding to the one*, as the Text expresseth it, *despise*, that is, *neglect* the Commands of the *Other*. The *first* Affirmation is, that He cannot be supposed to *love* them both equally, so as to be attached to their Interests equally in his inward Affection, and Inclination: the *second* Affirmation is, that, supposing him to *love* them both equally, yet, in the Execution of their contrary Commands, He must unavoidably *neglect*, or *despise*, the one, whilst He *holds to*, or obeys, the other. From this Instance of a *Servant* amongst Men, pretending invain to *serve two Masters*, opposite in their Interests, and their Wills, Our Lord argues, and assures his Followers, That it is so, with respect to *God*, and *Riches*, here represented as  
*a Person,*

a *Person*, or *false God*, set up as a *Master*, in Opposition to the *true God*. Ye cannot serve the true GOD, and *Mammon*; that is, *Riches*, or the imaginary *God of Wealth*.

SERM.  
XII.

If you would now see the Force of our Lord's *Argument*, extended, as it ought to be, to other Points, as well as Riches; it may be comprehended in these three Propositions. "You are all obliged by the strongest Ties, and the most unanswerable Reasons, to be faithful and sincere *Servants* of the true GOD, to whom You owe Yourselfes, and all you have, and all You can hope for." Now, as it is impossible, amongst Men, for a *Servant* to serve two opposite Masters, either affectionately, or faithfully; so, it is impossible for You to be the *Servants* of the fictitious *God* of this World, and to serve the *true God* faithfully, at the same Time. "Therefore, you are obliged, if you would serve God, as you ought, to renounce to the Service of every *other Master*, opposite to him, in Interest, and in Will." From the Text, thus explained, I shall take occasion to discourse of several Particulars, not foreign to the plain Design of the Words; nor useless to *Christians* of these *later Ages*.

I. I shall observe that many Persons, who have naturally good Dispositions, and, frequently holy and warm Resolutions, please themselves

SER M. with dividing their Services between God,  
 XII. and Something opposite to Him; and entertain a foolish Opinion that this Conduct is a secure way to his Favour.

II. I shall observe to you how unreasonable, and how useless, this Division of their Service is; and how ill-grounded and vain, all their Hopes are, which are founded upon such a Service.

III. I shall endeavour to dissuade you from all such Service to Any thing in this World, as will make it impossible for you to perform the Service that is indispensably due to God. And,

IV. I shall conclude with a proper Application, concerning the Reasonableness, the Honour, the Advantage, and true Glory, of that Service which we owe to Almighty God.

I. I shall observe, that many Persons, who have good Dispositions, and frequently holy and warm Resolutions, often please Themselves with *dividing* their Services between *God*, and something opposite to Him; and entertain a foolish Opinion that, by thus halving their Behaviour, They are in a secure Way, and *truly* his Servants. For it being so, that *Religion* hath been taught them, and the plain Doctrines

trines of it inculcated upon them from their Childhood; and That, notwithstanding all the Allurements, or Terrors, of the World, *Virtue* hath still its peculiar Attractions, and Advantages; and that the Prospect, or even Suspicion, of God's Anger and future Punishment, is very terrible, and to some Minds intolerable: These Things, I say, being so; many Persons find it impossible to root out of their Minds all Regard to *Religion*. They experience a Reluctance in their Consciences, when they attempt it; and this Reluctance gives them so much Uneasiness, as rather determines them to set about some *Part* of the Work of *Religion*, than to neglect the *Whole*. They cannot bear the Thoughts of being totally cast off by Almighty God; and of forfeiting all possible Title to Heaven and Happiness; and of incurring certainly his Wrath and Displeasure. These Things they cannot think of with any Ease; nor can they bring their Consciences to sit down quiet under the Apprehension of them.

But then, on the other hand, perhaps their natural Inclination leads them strongly to some particular Vice, or other: Perhaps Custom has improved this Inclination, before they were enough aware of it: Perhaps, it brings them in a great deal of present *Profit*, and *Advantage*;



S  
E R M.  
XII.

or it procures them a great deal of *Pleasure*; or Honour, and Pomp, may attend upon it. These Things are so entertaining, and bewitching, to some particular Minds, and Tempers, that Men are not able to bear the Thought of parting, effectually and entirely, with what procures them so much present Satisfaction. When their Minds are employed upon the Excellency and Beauty of Religion, and the good Consequences of serving God truly; and are a little at Leisure from the close Attacks of any thing of this World; then perhaps, they may come to a Resolution of forsaking all for God, and a good Conscience; and be vain enough to think that Nothing shall move them from such Resolutions. But when the Season of *Trial* comes again; and the Temptation presents itself to Them, in all its Force: They begin to think more favourably of the Matter; and to imagine it no mortal Crime, to be influenced by it; and to give Proofs, by their Weakness, that they are Men.

This being their Case, between the Motions of Conscience, and God's Commands, on one hand, and the Temptations of Profit, or Pleasure, or Honour, on the other; They at last are seen to come, with Calmness and a Sort of Serenity of Mind, to divide themselves between *this* World and the *other*: between the *true* God, and the

*Idol God* of this State; and to procure themselves a Sort of Ease, by performing Part of that *Service* which they owe to Almighty God, (and This, to be sure, will be the Part that They themselves happen to like best) whilst at the same Time they never lose the View of what they propose to themselves in this vain World. All indeed do not give up themselves to the same Masters. Some you may see pursuing Pleasure to an immoderate Degree; others, ambitious beyond all Bounds; others, busying themselves in amassing Heaps of useles Wealth: and very many of these, in their Intervals, appearing before God, in publick Worship; calling themselves his Servants, and perhaps really thinking that they are so. But

S E R M.  
XII.

II. I come now to observe to you how unreasonable, and how useles, this *Division* of their *Service* is: and how ill-grounded, and vain, all their Hopes are, which are founded upon such a Service.

And this will appear most evidently by considering, what the true *Service* of God is; and how much of our Hearts and Time it must unavoidably require. The great Mistake of Men seems to lye in their not knowing, or not attending to, the true Notion of God's Service. Were it so indeed, that to serve God  
were

SERM.

XII.

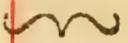
were nothing but to say our Prayers, to call him Master, to attend upon his Ordinances, to bow before him, to lift up our Hands and Eyes, to confess our Sins, to beg his Blessing, and to give him Thanks: were *This*, or the like, all that is implied in serving God, then it is very certain that we might divide Ourselves, and give the World our Strength, and our Heart, and our Practice, whilst we serve God (as some call it) with our Lips, and our Bodies. We might then certainly go, from our Intemperance and our Luxury, to our Prayers and Praises; we might come fresh from cheating our Neighbours, and fall low before the Footstool of our Master; we might come from our Hoards of ill-gotten Possessions, and be as loud, as the best of our Neighbours, in calling God our Father, in professing our Faith in him, and laying Ourselves before the Throne of his Mercy.

But this Notion must be rooted out of Men's Minds. This is what God complained of, under the *Jewish* Dispensation. *This People draweth nigh to Me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from Me.* You see, the *Worst* amongst that wicked and corrupted Generation of Men, in which our *Saviour* appeared, put on the greatest Shew of *Zeal* for God and his *Service*. Who such Zealots as *They*, to pay *Tithes*;

*Tithes*; to *fast*; to *pray*; and to do *many* other Things which belonged to their *Religion*? But what was this? or to what Purpose? Their Practice, their Hearts (which are discovered by Practice) were all another Way. *Mammon* was their true Master; because *They* were his true *Servants*. The *Service* they did to *Sin* was visible. The World about them felt the Effects of it: whilst they called that Form of *Religion*, the Service of God, which He assured them He abhorred and detested, when it was separated from that practical Service which He indispensably required.

For what is it, in which the *Service* of any Master upon Earth consists? Is it in the calling *Him*, our *Master*; or *Ourselves*, his *Servants*? Is it in a formal Attendance upon him, to receive his Commands, or merely to know his Pleasure? Is it a bare confessing of *Ourselves* guilty of transgressing his Will, and in a daily returning to ask his Pardon? Will any *Master* upon Earth acknowledge this to be *Service*? or, will any *Master* value, or regard a Man who behaves himself thus, as his *Servant*? Offer it now to any Man, and see if He will accept of such *Mock-Service*, as this. If *I* be a *Master*, saith God, by his Prophet, *where is my Service*? i. e. If I be *your Master*, as you pretend to call me, pay me the *Service* due to a *Master*:

SERM.  
XII.



ter :

S E R M. *ter* : Behave yourselves as that Relation, which  
 XII. you pretend to be between us, enjoins and demands.

It is the Part of a Servant to regard the Interest of his Master, as his own Interest; to consult the Honour of his Master, as his own Honour; and principally, which is the only Thing to judge by, to look upon his Master's Will, as far as a Master's Authority reacheth, as the Guide and Rule of his Actions. Now, if We apply this to Almighty God, and that Relation we stand in to Him, as *Servants*; we shall presently see how far the Service we owe him reacheth; how much of our Time, and how much of our Hearts, it must of necessity take up. The *Interest* of our great *Master* must be esteemed by Us, as our own Interest. Now, the Interest of our *Master* can be Nothing, but the Encrease of all that He approves of; and the Addition of as many Persons as possible, to his true Service. Our great *Master's Honour* is what we are obliged, as Servants, to consult and regard. And this lies likewise, in the Likeness of all understanding Natures to his moral Perfections; and in the advancing, as much as possible, the State of true Virtue in the World. And, what comprehends all, our great *Master's Will* must be made the Rule of all our Actions: for They are but  
 indifferent

indifferent Servants indeed, who do not pay a constant and strict regard to the *Will* of their *Masters*. Now, the *Will* of God is every Command that he hath made known to Us, whether by the Law of Nature, which is his Voice; or by the Law of Revelation, which is an open Confirmation of that first *Law*.

From hence, therefore, it appears that, under the *Service* of God, is comprehended the whole *System* of *moral* Virtues, as well as all the external Acts of Devotion and Worship. A *Part* of that *Service*, which we owe to him, is indeed, external Adoration; the Prayers, and Praises, of our Lips; and all the Expressions of Dependence upon *Him*, and universal *Love* to *Others*, which become such Creatures as we are. But *this* is but one *Part* of his *Service*; however it may have come to be called, in general, by that Name. Nay, if it do not proceed from the Heart and Soul; if the Mind and Thoughts do not sincerely accompany it, and direct it all, with due Affections and Sentiments, to Him; it is indeed no Part of his Service; but only so many Words pronounced, without Meaning; and so many Sounds, muttered over for *Form's* Sake, without any Effect either upon Him, or Ourselves. Nay, and supposing the Heart and Soul to go along with Us in these *outward* Exercises of our *Religion*; supposing  
Us

SERM  
XII.



Us to be sincere in *this* Part of God's *Service*; and to confess, and pray, and praise, and intercede, with all the present Affection that becomes the Attendance of such *Servants*. upon such a *Master*: yet, when this is done, This is but a *Part* of his *Service*.

There remains behind a large Field of *Virtue*. *Temperance*, and a Command of Ourselves, and all our Appetites; *Charity*, or an unbounded Love to all the intelligent Creation; *Justice*, or a strict Regard to the Dues and Rights of all Mankind about us; *Forgiveness* of the greatest, and most provoking Injuries, that can be offered us; *Patience*, under all the *Evils* of Pain, Sicknes, Loss, Disappointment, that come upon us by the Providence of our Master; and *Contentment* in every Station, to which he is pleased to confine Us; in a word, such a Behaviour and Conduct, in that Post in which our great *Master* placeth us, as becomes us, as *Servants*, and as is required by the Nature of it, whatever it be. All may be comprehended in the two great Commandments, of *loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, and all our Mind, and all our Soul, and all our Strength*: and of *loving our Neighbours as Ourselves*: or may be summed up in St. Paul's comprehensive Expression of *living soberly with Respect to ourselves; righteously, with Respect*  
to

to our Neighbour ; and *godlily*, with Respect to Almighty God, in this World.

S E R M.  
XII.

This being then the Task of God's *Servants*; this being the Work which every one hath to do, that hath given up his Name to Him ; tell me now, Is there any room for *other Masters*, opposite or contrary to Him ? Can any Man *love God with all his Heart*, and yet love any Enemy to God with the least Degree of his Affection ; or the least Part of his Heart ? Can any Man, who hath such a Task marked out for him ; so many Virtues to excel in ; so many good Habits to implant in himself ; so many good Actions to fill up every Moment of his Time ; so strict a Regard to pay to the Honour of his great Master, and the Commands of such a Lord : Can any Man, I say, in these Circumstances, find any Opportunity, or the least Interval of Time, for the Service of other *contrary* Masters ; such, I mean, as direct Him to any Instances of that *Sin*, which is as opposite to the Will of God, as *Darkness* is to *Light* ? It is evident indeed, from the Nature of the Thing itself, that, in whatsoever Point we decline from his Service, we cease to *serve* him ; and that, as soon as we are drawn to *Sin*, we are no longer the *Servants of God*, but of his *Enemy*. For *know ye not*, saith the Apostle, *that to whom Ye yield yourselves Ser-*  
*vants*

S E R M  
XII.

*wants to obey, his Servants ye are, to whom Ye obey.* And consequently, If You obey the Commands of GOD, You are the Servants of GOD: But if You obey Those of *Sin*, You are the *Servants* of Sin; and have departed from the Service of God. And the *Service* of God being the Practice of all *Righteousness*, in every Instance equally; it is impossible that You should at the same Time be the *Servants* of God, and yet transgress Any of the Rules of that *Righteousness*.

How vain therefore, and groundless, are the *Hopes* of Those, who pretend to divide themselves, and their *Services*, between God, and *this* World; between Duty to this supreme Master, and any Sort of *Vice*; They themselves may see, by considering seriously what the *Service* of God is: Not a Prayer, or a Tear, or an Act of Devotion; but a continued *Tenor* of good Works; a Progress and Improvement in all Virtue. This is a *Service*, which admits of no Remission of Care and Diligence; and which can brook no Rival. And therefore, the Man, whenever this is neglected, or broken into, immediately ceaseth to be the *Servant* of that God, who cannot be truly served, unless He be served with the whole Heart. The Reasonableness of what hath been said under

this Head is so manifest, that it will make SERM.  
Way for what I next propos'd ; Which was XII.

III. To dissuade you from any such *Service* to Mammon, *i. e.* Riches, or any other Thing, or Person, in the Universe, as will make it impossible for you to perform that *Service* which is indispensably due to GOD. For, it having appeared plainly, that it is impossible to serve, or obey, any Two Contrary and Opposite Masters ; and consequently, impossible for the same *Man*, to be the Servant of *Mammon*, and of GOD ; the only Question is, Which of the two opposite *Masters*, who contend for his *Service*, He shall chuse for his Lord and Director : whether the True *God*, or the false Gods of this World, *Pleasure*, *Profit*, or *Honour*, that set themselves up against *his* Right, and in Opposition to *his* Will : for *One* or *Other* of these, He must chuse.

Now, there is this, at first Thought, to be said of the Service of God, that the greatest Part of Those who are truly the Servants of *Mammon*, or some other evil Principle, know not how to throw off all Regard to their *rightful Master* ; but even, whilst they are *servi*ng his *Enemy* truly, would gladly ever now and then, return to the *Service* of God, in some Instances, or other. By this They themselves give a remarkable Testimony that

S E R M.  
XII.

Almighty God hath a lasting, true, and certain, Title to their *Service*; whilst They cannot be easy in their Minds, without paying him *some* Sort of *Service*. On the other hand, all that the greatest Votaries of this World can say for that sincere Service they pay to their *other* Masters, is, that Inclination strongly leads them to it; that they hope it is not so bad as it seems to be; and that they design still, one time or other, to have due Regard to the *Service* of God, their true, and rightful Master. But how long will such Pretenses satisfy reasonable Creatures? Only long enough, to serve to make them miserable, when they come to see, too late, the Unhappiness of that *Service*, in which they have engaged themselves.

For this is the Case. Almighty God hath such a right to your Services, that is, to your Obedience to all his Laws, that, in the midst of your serving other Masters, you are forced often to recur to his Service, and to pretend to pay him some Sort of Obedience. Now, you have seen that this interrupted Obedience, this Half-duty, which is only so much as your other Lords, your Lusts and Passions, your Covetousness, or Luxury, will permit you to pay Him, is not truly *his Service*; and that you cannot pretend, by such a limited and broken Obedience,

Obedience, to prove yourselves his *Servants*. Would you, therefore, be his Servants, so as to have that Reward which He hath promised to his true and faithful *Servants*? There is an absolute Necessity that you should immediately come out of the *Chains* of other contrary Lords; that you should break their Fetters; and renounce every Degree of that *Service*, which *Mammon*, or any Sort of evil Principle, requires of you. For God's *Service* cannot be his true Service, unless it be perfectly free from all such Regard to any thing else in the World, as is inconsistent with your constant Regard to all *His* Laws. His *Service* never can be easy to Yourself within, till You have thus got rid of all the Influences of impetuous Inclination to the Service of all contrary *Masters*: nor can it be ever pleasing to Him, till it is that uniform, sincere, unmixed, Obedience, which He hath a right to, by all possible Titles.

On the other hand, consider what Title, what Right, any other Thing in the World, opposite to Him, hath to our Regards. What do we owe to them? Are they the first Causes of our Beings? Are they the primary Occasions of our Happiness? Will they, at the End, stand us in stead, against the Attacks of Adversity here, or the Displeasure of an offended God hereafter? Are they stable, unmoveable,

SERM. ble, certain, unshaken, Goods? or, Are we  
 XII. certain of always having them for our Com-  
 ~~~~~forts and Supports? or, Are they not rather,  
 vain, imaginary, moveable, and transitory
 Things; and we ourselves, hasting away with
 a never ceasing Pace; till all Correspondence
 with them is entirely interrupted, never to be
 renewed again? And are such Things as These,
 fit to be chosen for our *Masters*? or, Are we
 of that Nature, as that it can become Us to
 make ourselves their Servants? By no Means:
 God, and Reason reclaim Us from all Ap-
 proaches to such a *Service*; God, and Rea-
 son, which are to Us infinitely more than all
 the World besides.

If therefore we would have God for our
Friend, we must chuse him first for our *Mas-
 ter*; and his Laws for the Rules of our *Ser-
 vice*. And if we would have our own Rea-
 son, and Conscience, at Peace with Us; we
 must act the Part to which they direct: and
 that Part is ever the *Service* of that God, to
 whom we owe ourselves. Whatever hinders
 us from a constant Application of ourselves to
 that *Service*; whatever opposeth us in it, or
 would draw us off from it, is to be disregard-
 ed, and cast from us with Courage and Con-
 stancy. And, it being certain that the *Service*
 of *Sin*, is utterly inconsistent with the *Service*

of God; it is certain, that if we would *serve* God, as we ought, in Duty and Interest, to do; We must first shake off all Regard to his Enemy; we must, if we think of being his *Servants*, unto all Righteousness, shake off that *Yoke of Servitude* which *other Masters* would impose upon us. And if we be truly willing to do this, there will remain Nothing to hinder us from giving up ourselves to the true *Service* of GOD.

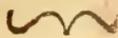
S E R M.

XII.

IV. To this I shall now endeavour to persuade you, and so conclude. His Title, or *Right*, to this *Service*, is indisputable. He hath created us what we are. We owe to him all we have, and all we can ever enjoy; and the very Possibility of enjoying any thing. He hath bought us again into his Possession, by the Life and Death of his Son. To him we owe this fresh, and greater, Opportunity of making ourselves happy in his *Service*. And, how can we deny a *Service* due on so many, and so excellent, Accounts? The *Rules* of his *Service* are his Laws, by which He governs us, and to which he requires our Obedience. And these are *Reason*, and *Light*; the Transcripts of his own *moral Perfections*, which constitute his own Happiness. They are the Dictates of eternal Truth; and every Step we take in the

SERM.

XII.



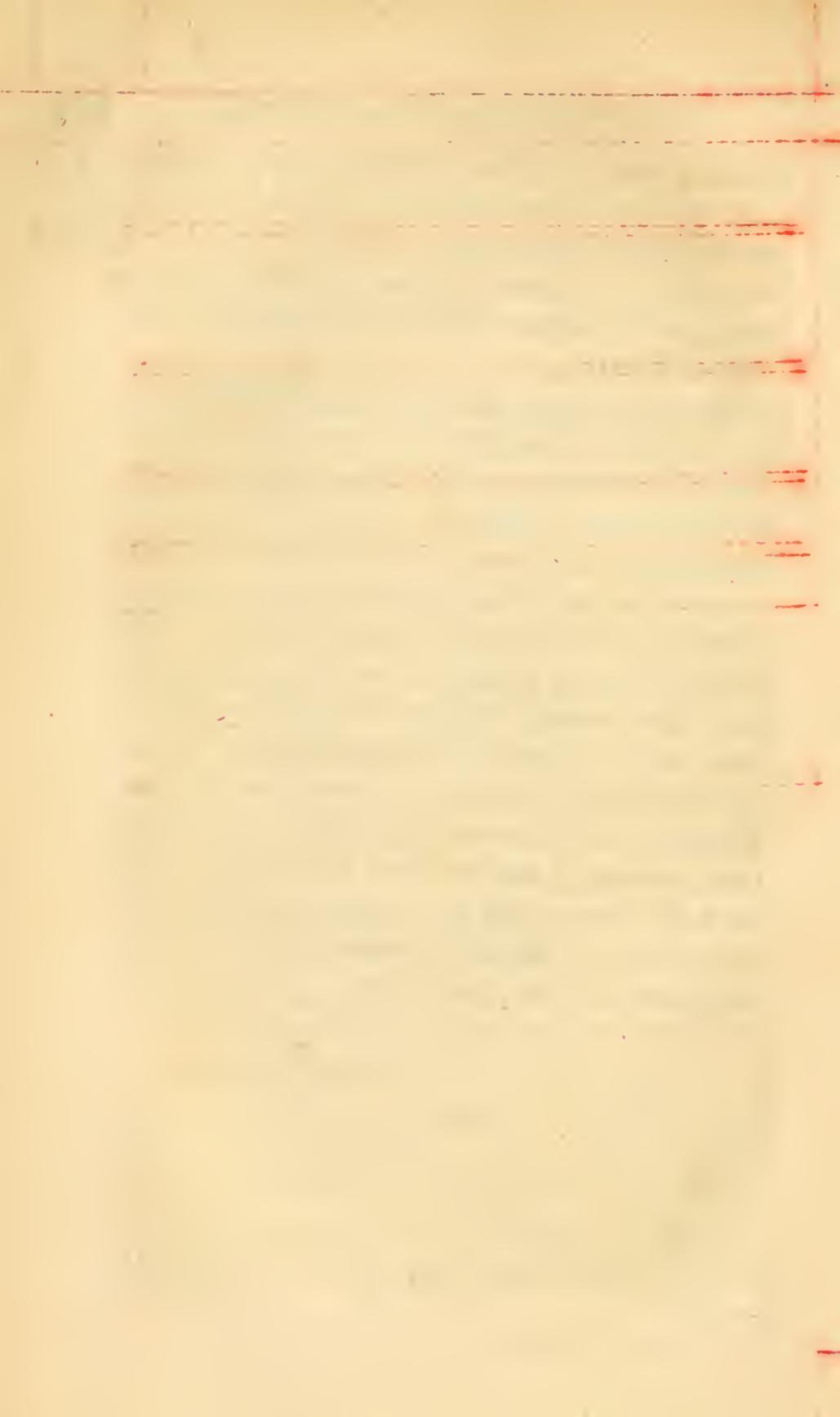
Paths of them, brings Peace and Joy along with it: in which they entirely differ from the Laws of every *other sinful* Principle, that would draw us aside from them.

The *Rewards* of this *Service* (for we *serve* not God for nought) are unexpressible. The *present* Reward is all that inward Satisfaction which a well disposed Mind can take, in the Consciousness of a good and reasonable Conduct; and the Thought of having God's Approbation. The *future* Reward, after the Service is over, is all the Happiness of God's Presence, or, of those more immediate Communications of his Love, and Favour, which he hath promised to all his faithful *Servants*. In the *Scripture-Style*, by being his *Servants*, they become his *Sons*; and, by being his *Sons*, they are adopted into the Inheritance of the Saints in *Glory*.

What is it now, I pray, that can come in Competition with this *Reasonable Service*? Can uncertain *Riches*, or empty *Honour*, or insatiable *Luxury*, pretend to any thing like this? What Title can they shew to the *Ser-vices* They claim? or, what can they produce in Favour of their own Right? Can they speak Peace and Satisfaction to the Mind within? Are their *Laws* the equitable *Laws* of *Reason*, and obeyed with the Approbation of our Consciences? or, will they entitle to any, the least
Reward

Reward hereafter? What are their *Laws*, indeed, but the hard Commands of Tyrants, accompanied by Disquiet, here, and ending in Unhappinefs and eternal Death, hereafter; flattering with Images of Pleasure, but leading to certain Pains?

Here then let us stop, and acknowledge that it is Almighty God alone, who can justly claim Us, as his Servants; He alone, who hath the Reward of our Services, in his Hand; and hath Power to execute what his Goodness hath promised us; and He, alone, therefore, who demands, and deserves, our whole Service. We cannot, We see plainly, serve *Him*, whilst we serve *other* contrary *Masters*. To him, therefore, without Delay, without Reserve, without Hypocrisy, let us give up ourselves, as true *Servants*; and shew ourselves such, by our sincere, constant, and uniform Obedience to all his holy Laws: that so we may, at last, with the good and faithful *Servant* in the *Parable*, enter into the *Joy* of our Lord.



*The AMBITION of CHRIST'S Disci-
ples reprov'd.*

S E R M O N XIII.

M A T T H E W XX. 26, 27.

*But it shall not be so amongst you: but whosoever
will be Great amongst you, let him be your
Minister: and whosoever will be Chief
amongst you, let him be your Servant.*

THE Occasion of this Lesson of our S E R M.
Lord's is particularly related in the XIII.
Verses immediately before these Words. 

*The Mother of Zebedee's Children, (viz. James
and John,) being very desirous of shewing the
great Affection she had for Them, and her
Zeal to promote their Interest, came with
Them to our Blessed Lord, whose Disciples
they were, and, with the proper Marks of
Respect, let him know that she had a certain
Thing to ask of Him. Our blessed Lord,
always inclined to grant to all his Follow-*

SERM. XIII.  ers every Thing truly good for them, presently asked her what Favour it was she desired? It appeared by what followed *that She* was not content with the ordinary Marks of his Kindness, dispensed to her *Sons*, in common with his *other* Apostles; but hoped for some very extraordinary and signal Token of his *Love* to her two Children; Something that she esteemed the greatest Gift and Honour they were capable of receiving from him. And this was, That, he being the *Messiah*, and his glorious *Kingdom* being now to be opened (agreeably to her Expectation, and that of all the *Jews*) with the greatest earthly Glory, her *two Sons*; might have the two principal Places in this *Kingdom*; and might sit, the *one* on his Right Hand, and the *other* on his Left, as his two greatest Favorites, and chief Officers. This was her Notion of Good and Happiness; and according to That, *This* was her Petition.

Our *Lord*, with the greatest Goodness, turned himself to the *two Apostles*, in whose Name, and with whose Consent this Petition was made, and said, *Ye know not what ye ask: that is*, you are not yet sensible what a Scene of Difficulties *They* must go through, who desire to be *Great* in my *Kingdom*; and what it is that is requisite to the making

making you the highest amongst my Favorites: *Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with?* You must not expect to arrive at any Dignity in *my Kingdom*, without following my Steps. And are You able to do as I, your Master, must do; and to undergo what I must undergo, before I arrive at my own Glory? The *two Disciples*, not knowing well what He meant, and being possessed of the Opinion that, let these *Difficulties* and *Distresses* be what They would, His *Kingdom* would display itself, *after* their short Continuance, in all worldly Pomp, and *Victory* over all the Enemies of his People; and still inflamed with the same Desire of *Power*, and *Preeminence*, answered him with a great deal of Confidence, that They were *able* to follow him, and to *drink* of the same *Cup* that he should drink of, whatever it should be.

Our Lord, well knowing that, in the midst of all their Ignorance, They had a sincere Zeal for *Him*, and his Service, and that they would be great Instruments of good in his *Church*, said unto Them, *Ye shall, indeed, drink of my Cup*; that is, (if we speak more plainly than our *Lord* at this Time designed to speak,) Ye shall, indeed, be persecuted and afflicted, according to the Example of your
Master;

SERM.

XIII.



Master; and go through a Scene of such like Difficulties as I myself must; and, by this Means, make yourselves fit to be glorified in my *Kingdom*. But, supposing you thus to follow my Steps in this uneasy Way to *Glory*; yet, *To sit on my Right Hand and on my Left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to Them, for whom it is prepared of my Father*; that is, the chief Places of *Dignity*, in my heavenly Kingdom, are not now, to be disposed of, according to my arbitrary Will and Pleasure; or to be given away any otherwise than as my *Father* has seen fit, in his perfect and unerring Wisdom, to decree and order them.

When the other *Ten* Apostles heard what had passed betwixt *Jesus*, and the *Two Brethren* and their *Mother*; what *They* had solicited, and how great their Ambition was; *They*, as little knowing the Nature of their *Master's Kingdom*, as the other *Two*, and as much desiring the great Posts and Honours in it, were very angry at the Request of *James* and *John*, and very uneasy at their aspiring Designs. But *Jesus* called them *all* to him, and took Occasion from the *Petition* of the *two Brethren*, and from the *Pride* of the other *Ten*, to instruct them a little farther in the Nature of his Kingdom; and to teach them, that though in the Nations of this World, Those were reputed the

the *Greatest* who had the greatest outward S E R M.
 Dignities, and the highest *Authority*; yet, in XIII.
his Kingdom, They should be accounted the *Greatest*, who had least *Pride*, and least *Ambition*; and who were most ready to stoop to do all good Offices, and to *minister*, as Servants, to their Brethren. And this *Instruction* he concludes with his own *Example* (ver. 28.) *even as the Son of Man came not to be ministred unto, but to minister, and to give his Life a Ransom for many*: as if he had said; As I myself, whom you will easily acknowledge to be the *Greatest* in *my own Kingdom*, think it no Diminution of that Greatness to condescend to all Instances of *Love* and Kindness to Mankind; and now am come into the World to be a *Servant* to Men, and, at last to dye a servile and ignominious Death for their Sakes, and to procure their Happiness.

Having now related to you, and explained, as I went along, this *History* of the *Ambition* of the *Two Brethren*; their *Mother's* Petition; the Answer of our *Lord*; the *Indignation* of the *other Apostles*; and our *Saviour's* Instruction, occasioned by their mistaken Notions: it is my Design to consider, not the *Words* of the *Text* only; but what other particulars shall offer themselves, upon the Review of this whole *History*, and the *Circumstances* of it.
 And

SERM.
XIII.

And the Observations I shall make at present, are These :

I. This *Story* gives Us Occasion to observe, how inclined Men are to mistake their own Happiness; and how apt Many *Parents* are to overlook the real Good, and true Interest, of their *Children*; and to frame their Wishes with regard to *Them*, rather with a View to the Riches and Grandeur of this World, than to their true and lasting Happiness.

II. This History gives Occasion to observe the great Tendency, and strong Bias, there is in human Nature, towards outward Dignity, and Superiority over Others.

III. We may observe from it, what Notions the *Jews* had, at this Time, of the *Kingdom* of their *Messiah*, and the *Nature* of his *Glory*.

IV. It concerns us principally to regard what our blessed Lord here delivers and intimates about the *Nature* of his own Kingdom; and the Method of attaining to the greatest Dignities, and highest Stations, in it.

I. This *Story* gives us Occasion to observe, how inclined Persons are to mistake their own Happiness; and how apt too many *Parents* are to overlook the real Good and true Interest
of

of their Children; and to frame their Wishes with regard to *Them*, rather with a View to the Riches and Grandeur of this World, than to their true and lasting Happiness.

Here were Two of our *Lord's Disciples*, who had been his Followers for some Time, so grossly ignorant in the Doctrine he had delivered, as to think that they were not capable of greater Happiness than They should experience, if they were placed in an eminent Post of Honour and Dignity, above their Brethren, in that *Kingdom* of their *Lord*, which, according to their Notion of it, was very soon to be opened, full of earthly Glories and temporal Splendour. And here was their *Mother*, who thought she could not give a greater Proof of her Love for her Children, than by joining with Them, in what was truly *their* Petition, and adding her Request to our *Lord*, in order to procure them this great Dignity which they aimed at. How much better had They consulted their true Happiness, had they asked to be instructed in the certain Method of obtaining and improving All those Virtues and Graces, which are the eternal Ornaments of a Christian Mind? And how much greater a Demonstration had their *Mother* given, of her True Love to them, if she had checked their forward *Ambition*, and aspiring Thoughts;

SERM.

XIII.

SERM.
XIII.

Thoughts; and petitioned our *Lord* for his favorable Directions, in order to make her Sons glorious in all that was lovely in his Eyes, and agreeable to his great Design?

After our Lord's Resurrection, They were sufficiently convinced of the Folly of their former *Address* to *Him*; and found, by Experience, that *His Kingdom* was to be established by Persecution and Hardships; and a Place of Dignity in it, to be obtained by the Practice of the lowest *Humility*. How happy had it been, if the *Christians* of all succeeding Ages, had been wise by their Example; and had learned, from their Weakness, and our Lord's Instruction occasioned by it, to check and conquer this same Temper in Themselves?

But it is too visible, That, though the Nature of Christ's *heavenly Kingdom* is so plainly declared, and the Way to the *Glories* of it so clearly pointed out, through the Path of *Humility*, in the Writings of his *Apostles*, and his own Discourses; yet, there are Few that can persuade themselves to think the Crowns of Heaven, upon the Terms of the *Gospel*, worthy of so warm a Contention, and so eager a Pursuit as any temporal Superiority, or earthly Dignity, is. How much Time, and how much Attendance, and how much Importunity, can Men employ, in soliciting some worldly

worldly Honour, or Post of Rank, above Others, who perhaps, grudge to bestow a few Minutes of a Day upon the Thoughts of Religion, and the Pursuit after the good Things of another World? How many Men, who know the *Tenor* of the *Gospel*, and profess to believe it, are seen to lay out the Strength and Eagerness of their Desires, for *Themselves*, upon the *Possessions*, or *Pleasures*, here below; without mixing, perhaps, one hearty *Prayer* for *Possessions*, and *Pleasures*, of another Nature? And no wonder, if such Persons, as far as They concern *Themselves* with the *Happiness* or *Unhappiness* of their *Children*, should chuse to fix their *Wishes* for *Them*, on *the Things which are seen*, as the Instruments of all Good; rather than on *the Things, which are not seen*.

We may judge, without Uncharitableness, that the Motions of their Hearts all centre in this World, by the indefatigable Pains They will be at, to raise their *Children* to *State* and *Riches*, here below; and the little Concern they express, to make them *Great* by *Goodness*; by the Practice of *Charity* and *Humility*, and all the other moral Virtues. There are but *Few* that can *taste* this Sort of *Greatness* and *Glory*, *Themselves*; and *Few* therefore, who will recommend it to *Those*, in whom They

SERM. are most nearly concerned. *Some*, I trust and
 XIII. believe, there are, who are not ashamed of a
 different and better Conduct. But the Num-
 ber is great of Those, who are so blind and
 mistaken in their Notions of *Happiness*, that
 they too often wish and procure, for Them-
 selves, and their *Children*, *Misery* instead of it ;
 whilst They are labouring only after such
Glories, *Greatness*, and *Wealth*, as, in the End,
 often prove the greatest *Diskonour*, and the tru-
 est *Poverty*, to an intelligent Being. And,
 as this is the Case, Who can wonder, That, by
 the Many, *He* is not accounted so good a Father,
 whose chief Regards are expressed in what
 tends to the real and lasting Happiness of his
Son ; as *He*, who leaves no Methods unat-
 tempted, to raise him to such a Highth of
 Greatness ; or to overwhelm Him with such
 Hoards of Money ; as must bring along with
 them the greatest Danger to his Virtue and
Eternal Interest.

II. The *History* now before us, gives us oc-
 casion to observe the great *Tendency*, and strong
Bias, there is, in human Nature, to the Love
 of *Superiority*, in Power, and Place, over
 our Fellow-Creatures in the same Society.

The *Twelve Apostles* were now, as it were,
 divided into *two* Parties ; and both equally
 tainted

tainted with the same Sort of aspiring Thoughts. SERM.
Two of them hoped to have prevented the XIII.
 Attempts of the *Others*, and to have secured
 to themselves the *Places* of prime *Dignity* in
 their Master's *Kingdom*. The other *Ten* dis-
 dained to be thought inferior, or subject, to
Them; and conceived a great Anger against
 them for their Design. It may, indeed, raise
 some Wonder, that such a *Temper* should at
 all take place in the Breasts of Those, who
 saw Nothing in their own *Master*, more re-
 markable, than the greatest Instances of the
 contrary Spirit, of Meekness and Humility.

If any thing can be an Excuse for this, and
 abate our Wonder, it is, that they All thus
 strove for Dignity, and worldly Glory, when
 they thought their Master's *Kingdom*, a *King-*
dom only of this World. But who can for-
 bear to wonder more, as well as to lament,
 that *Christians*, who cannot read a *Page* in
 the *Gospel*, without reading their own indis-
 pensable Obligation to all the Offices of Hu-
 mility, for the Good of Others, should be so
 devoted to the Love of *Superiority*, as we every
 Day may observe them to be? What a Contention
 does there often appear, in our World, for
Place and *Precedence*? what Passion, and Re-
 venge, for an Affront put upon the supposed
 Honour and Dignity of a Man? What a Care

SERM.
XIII.

and Caution, about every *Punctilio* of Ceremony, and Observance? What a Noise, about *Family*, and *Titles*; the Antiquity of a *Name*; the Dignity of *Predecessors*; or, the like Sort of Excellencies? Nay, what a prodigious Value is there often set, even upon so low a Matter, as Equipage and Attendance?

It would weary one to speak, or even to think, of the Vanities and Follies of weak Mortals, upon this Head; the Uneasinesses, Quarrels, Jealousies, and Breaches, it occasions; the inexcusable Mispende of Time, and Neglect of all that is great and good, which this Temper introduces into the World; and the great Mischiefs which, in various Shapes, have proceeded from it, in every Age. And yet, Mankind seem not, in the least Degree, wiser for their Experience; or at all the more disposed to set only a just Value upon those *Distinctions* which the Nature of Society makes proper amongst Men; or, to resist that Inclination (that *perverse* Inclination) there is, in human Nature, to the Sweets of *Superiority*, and *Power* over Others.

It is one of the meanest *Characters* we can draw, of any Men, to describe Them, as searching out Opportunities of depressing and sinking Others *below* them; and finding out continually some new *Distinctions*, if the old

Ones are worn out, in order to place their *Brethren* in a meaner and more contemptible Rank than Themselves; and thinking the most empty Reasons sufficient for this ignoble and unmanly Purpose. And yet this is so true, and so universally observed, that it is constantly lamented by all good Men; and constantly ridiculed by All, who make Themselves publicly merry with the Follies of Mankind. Thus are the Minds of reasonable Creatures busied about *Trifles*, which divert them from Matters of infinitely greater Concern; and are founded upon such *Maxims* only, as appear to be unworthy of their Attention, either as Men, or as Members of human Society. Let us now proceed.

III. The *third Observation*, I said, we might make from this *History*, related to Those *Notions* which were, at that Time, common amongst the *Jews*, about the Nature of the *Kingdom* of their *Messiah*.

We find, in this *Passage* of the *Gospel*, not only *James* and *John*, with their *Mother*, but also the other *Ten Apostles*, all agreeing in the same Expectation of a *Temporal Kingdom* of *Christ*; and of Places of *Eminence*, and *worldly Authority*, to be enjoyed under Him: as appears from the *Lesson* our Lord reads to them

SERM.
XIII.

all at last, about the Way to *Greatness* in his Dispensation; and from many other Places of the *New Testament*: from which we may gather, that the *Apostles* themselves could not, before They were better instructed, so much as bear the Thought of their *Master's Suffering* Death; or of his reigning in any other *Kingdom*, but *One* full of this World's Majesty and Glory. They did, indeed, cleave to Him, in his low and mean Estate, convinced by the powerful Works he shewed forth: but They were continually watching, and longing, till he should open another Scene, and *reveal himself to the World*, by *restoring the Kingdom to Israel*. Thus had these well-meaning Men the same low and groveling Expectations, which were entertained by the Crowd around them.

For the *Jews* universally neither looked for, nor desired, any *Messiah*, but *One*, who should crown them with the Glories of this World; and clothe their temporal *Enemies* with Shame: *One*, who should *blefs* them with Victory, and Plenty, and Riches, and Power. Nor would the far greater Part of that People accept of any *Salvation*, or *Blessing*, which could be offered, but such a *Salvation*, and such a *Blessing*, as They had figured to Themselves upon the Principles of this World only. The
saving

saving Them from their Sins, which was the S E R M. *Salvation* of *Jesus*; and the *Blessing* Them, XIII.
 by *turning Them from their Iniquities*, which
 was the *Blessing* of his Gospel: *These* were
 Kinds of *Salvation*, and *Blessing*, which They
 thought too mean, and contemptible Offers,
 for *their Messiah* to make; or for Them to
 accept. They had no Relish for such Sort of
 Happiness: and desired no Part in a Kingdom,
 which was not of *this World*.

The *Apostles*, indeed, were sincere and honest, whilst they were so grossly mistaken. But the Bulk of that Nation were led to these Notions through a Course of Wickedness, and Hypocrisy. No Wonder, therefore, that those Persons should go on to greater and greater Degrees of Hardness of Heart, and reject a spiritual *Messiah*, who had before given themselves up to their own Lusts and Passions; and had shewn, by their Manners, that there was, in their Opinions, no greater Happiness to Mankind, than the Enjoyments of Flesh and Blood; the Glories, Profits, and Pleasures, of this World. This was their *Principle*. And the *Argument* from this *Principle* was very agreeable to it, *viz.* That, the *Blessing* of their *Messiah*, who was to make them *happy*, could consist in Nothing, but what They themselves accounted their greatest *Happiness*; and, No-

SERM. XIII. thing being, by Them, accounted so essential to *That*, as these *temporal* good Things: *This Blessing*, therefore, must consist in granting, and securing, to Them, the unbounded Enjoyment of what They so highly valued. But,

IV. It concerns us chiefly to regard what our *Lord* delivers, upon this Occasion, concerning the Nature of his own *Kingdom*; and the Method of attaining the greatest *Honours* in it. And,

First, It is plainly implied in his *Answer* to the *Petition* made to Him, in Behalf of the two Brethren-Disciples, that his *Kingdom* was so far from consisting in worldly Pomp and Glory; that his true *Servants* were to expect to meet with Persecution, and all evil Treatment, for their Master's Sake. And,

Secondly, The *Instruction* which He gives to all his twelve *Apostles* at last, expressly taught *Them* that the Way to be *great* and glorious in his *Kingdom*, both here, and hereafter, is to be *humble*; and truly disposed to condescend to one another, and to stoop to all good Offices, for the Service of their Brethren.

First, I say, It is plainly implied in our Lord's Answer to the *Petition* of *James* and *John*, and their *Mother*, that his *Kingdom* was so far from consisting in worldly Pomp and Magnificence, that;

that, in this World, all his true *Servants* were to expect to meet with Persecution, and great Hardships, for their Master's Sake. This *Answer* is in the 22d Verse: where, instead of feeding them with Hopes of enjoying great Power and worldly Grandeur, under *Him*, he mentions the *Cup*, He himself was to drink of; and the *Baptism*, He himself was to be baptized with; and proposes the *same Cup*, and the *same Baptism*, to Them, for their Portion, before they could come to any Glory in his Kingdom. It is true, the *ordinary* Course of a Christian's Life, in these later Ages, is not exposed to such *Persecutions*, and to such severe Trials, as the Lives of the *Apostles* were, at the Time when They were sent forth to be the first Preachers of *Christianity*. But yet, This is applicable to all sincere *Christians*, in some Degree, That They must drink of their Lord's *Cup*, and be baptized with his *Baptism*; that They must follow him through evil Report, and evil Treatment; through Reproaches and Disgraces; and through many, not inconsiderable, Hardships, though not perhaps so far, as to a *Cross*, or to a *Stake*. They may not be called to part with *Life* itself, for the Sake of their *Faith*, or their *Integrity*: But they will certainly have occasion to exercise a great deal of *Patience*, and *Courage*, if they resolve, in all Cases,

SERM.
XIII.

to

SERM. to approve themselves *his Disciples*. For
 XIII. there never yet was any Age of the World
 known to be so indulgent to *Virtue*; and so
 kind to the Practice of all the *Christian Duties*;
 as not sometimes to cast many Difficulties, and
 many Grievances, in the Paths of the virtuous
Christian, under some Pretense, or other.

But the principal Thing that we ought to
 remark, is, the *Instruction* our Lord gives to
 his *Disciples*, upon the Sight of their indecent
Pride and *Ambition*, in the Words of the
Text: By which We are plainly taught, as
 I observed just now, in the

Second Place, That the Way to be great
 and glorious in his *Kingdom*, both here and
 hereafter, is to be *humble*; and disposed to
 condescend to all good Offices; and to make
 ourselves the *least* amongst our Brethren, ra-
 ther than to contend for Superiority and Pre-
 eminence.

This was our *Lord's* Instruction. But it was
 a *Lesson* too hard for the *Apostles* Themselves,
 at the Time when it was first given Them;
 and is daily seen to be too hard for the
 generality of *Christians*, though it be so in-
 dispensably insisted upon, in the *Gospel*. Not
 that it is, or can be, sensibly *hard*, or pain-
 ful, to *Those*, who will consider what They
 are originally; and how much Occasion,
 and

and how great Reason, they have to be *hum-ble* and *lowly*: Not that it doth not carry its own Reward along with it, when duly practis'd; freeing the Soul from all those Uneasinesses that attend upon Pride and Ambition; and filling it with all the Quiet, and Peace, and Satisfaction, naturally flowing from the Contrary: Not that it is not reasonable and becoming all Men, in itself, standing in no Need of a positive Command to enforce it: but it is a *hard* Lesson, because Men have been generally trained up in the Notions of Pride and Ambition; and therefore, are seldom disposed to regard what is truly reasonable, and fitting their Natures, so much as what is agreeable to their present Inclinations, and the Practice and Customs of a corrupted World.

Many are the *Considerations*, by which we might inforce upon Ourselves, and our own Consciences, the Practice of this *Instruction* in the *Text*. But, because our blessed Lord uses no Argument, in this Place, to inforce it upon his *Disciples*, except his own *Example*; I shall, therefore, confine myself, at present, to the *same Argument*; and endeavour briefly to shew the Strength of it, with regard to *Ourselves*, as well as His *Apostles*.

He is *our* Lord and Master, as He was *theirs*. And, therefore, we cannot think it
beneath

SERM.
XIII.

beneath Us, to behave Ourselves, as *He* did. This he himself, upon several Occasions, judg-
 ed to be a good Argument to recommend any moral Duty, That He himself practised it. *Learn of Me*; *for I am meek and lowly*, is his own Direction; in the Case of that *Humility*, I am now speaking of. And, indeed, We must either throw off all Relation to Him, or acknowledge it to be a very forcible Consideration. He was far exalted above Us, before He descended to converse with us here below; high above all Principalities and Powers; above the greatest and wealthiest and most powerful of Us, the poor inconsiderable Inhabitants of this Earth. But, notwithstanding this infinite Distance betwixt him and us, He pitied Us, and condescended to be subject to our Infirmities; to live a poor and despicable Life in our wretched World; and, at last to lay down his Life, at the Command and Decree of a Man. He knew perfectly well what was becoming a reasonable Being; what Behaviour was beneath the Dignity of an understanding Nature, and what was not so. And his *Notions* of that *Dignity* appear from hence, That, during his Abode amongst Men, He divested himself of all *Appearance* of Grandeur, and stooped to minister to the *meanest* of his *Servants*; whose Interest He regarded, both in his Life, and in his
 Death.

Death. And it is very remarkable, and ought to be taken into this *Argument*, what St. *Paul* affirms, That for this very Humiliation; and *making himself of no Reputation*, and descending to wear *the Form of a Servant*, God exalted Him, and crowned him with Glory inexpressible.

S E R M.
XIII.

From this, then, we cannot but thus reason with Ourselves. If He, who was so great, and so wise, did not think it beneath his Dignity, to condescend to such Instances of *Humility*, as we are never called to; to live such a Life of *Lowliness*, and die such a Death, in order to minister to the Necessities of Mankind; We cannot think it beneath the Dignity of the Highest of Us, to imitate this great Example; and even make Ourselves, by the lowest Instances of Love, truly subservient to the good of our Brethren, in this World, and their true and eternal Interest, in That to come.

When we look upon this great *Example*; and see our *Lord* bending Himself to all Acts of Charity, towards Those who were so much below him; how can we think it right to stand upon little Niceties, and Punctilios; or becoming Us, to find out any trifling Excuses to exempt Ourselves from doing the like good Offices to our Fellow-Creatures, in the same *lowly* way? Let not his *Example*, therefore, be ever out of
our

SERM.
XIII.

our Minds, when any occasion of *Humility* presents itself to us. Let us consider how readily that *Lord*, whom we serve, would have laid hold on such Opportunities: and we shall be ashamed to avoid them Ourselves. Let us look upon those Glories which He is said to have acquired by his *Humility*; and they will animate us to bear even the *Reproach* of *Humility* here below, if *Reproach* can ever follow so lovely a Virtue. And, as He is set down at the Right Hand of God; and has a Name given him above every Name, for the Sake of his *Lowliness* and *Condescension*; so We, by the same *Practice*, may hope to sit down at his Right Hand, and to be crowned with *Glory* and *Honour* in the Presence of God.

The Different Characters of John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ.

S E R M O N XIV.

LUKE vii. 33, 34.

John the Baptist came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine, and ye say, he hath a Devil. The Son of Man is come, eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners.

THIS is our blessed Lord's own Account both of the Manner of Life used by *John the Baptist*; his Fore-runner, and by *Himself*; and of the Perverseness of the *Jews*, in misinterpreting and censuring the Conduct of them Both. *John the Baptist came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine*; i. e. he avoided all common Conversation with Men, and retired from the Noise of the Multitude; not so much as allowing himself the
Enjoyment

S E R M .
XIV.

SERM.

XIV.



Enjoyment of human Society frequently ; or laying hold on any Opportunities of *eating, and drinking*, with the rest of the World about Him. And the *Jews*, because they were not disposed to receive his Doctrine, (which was the severe Doctrine of Repentance, and Amendment,) and his Testimony concerning *Jesus Christ*, represented him as a Person disturbed in his Brain, possessed by some evil and melancholy Spirit ; and led, by That, into the Retirement, and Solitude, and Austerity, which he seemed to affect.

Well then, one would have thought, by this, that if a *Prophet* should appear amongst them, with all the Signs of a divine Mission ; and converse freely with Them ; not refusing to be present at their Entertainments, or to mix himself with them, upon all just Occasions ; that This should be quite acceptable to Them ; and all their Prejudices be removed. But it was far otherwise. For *the Son of Man, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, came eating and drinking ; i. e. conversing freely with Mankind ; partaking with them, upon all proper Occasions, of the ordinary Refreshments of Life, without Scruple ; and laying hold on all Opportunities of a free Society with the World around Him : and yet This also was so far from pleasing, that*
They

They only changed their Note of Dislike and Censure; and said, *Behold* a Man, addicted to his Appetite, a Lover of Wine, and a Friend to the *Worst* of Men. SERM.
XIV.

And, indeed, He was a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners*, in the truest Sense of the Word, *Friendship: i. e.* His great Design was to do them *real* Service, and to lead them to *Repentance* and Happiness. But it was so manifest a Piece of wicked Scandal and Injustice, that he was *intemperate*, in those Opportunities which only he could take of conversing with the Men, whom he came to save; that no Person of common Sense; No One, whose Eyes were not blinded with the darkeſt Prejudice, could poſſibly believe, much leſs, report, ſuch a Thing. So far from it, that Nothing was more viſible, than the greateſt and ſtricteſt Abſtinance from all Exceſs, through his whole Life and Converſation: no Delight in the pampering of his Body, or the pleaſing of his Senſes; but a conſtant Regard to the Rules of Sobriety and Temperance. But, waving this, I ſhall return to my Deſign in chooſing theſe Words, at this Time: and That will appear in the Conſideration of theſe following Particulars.

I. The different Behaviour of St. *John Baptist*, and our bleſſed *Saviour*, with Reſpect to
T
human

SERM.
XIV.

human Society ; and the Agreeableness of it to their different Designs.

II. The gross *Misinterpretation* put by the *Jews*, upon this their different Conduct ; and the *Lesson* we may learn from thence. After which I design,

III. To say something, with respect to these two different Methods of Life : That of *Austerity and Retirement* ; and *That* of a more free Enjoyment of human Society.

I. We see plainly, in the very Words now before us, the different Behaviour and Conduct of our blessed *Saviour*, and *John the Baptist*, with respect to human Society : and shall presently observe the *Agreeableness* of it to their different *Designs*. *John the Baptist* chose a *Wilderness*, or Desert, for the Scene of his Appearance and Action ; avoided the Places of Concourse and Society ; and took upon him, in the best Sense, the Habit and Vow of *Austerity*, and the strictest *Abstinence*. I call it the Scene of his Appearance, and Action : for this Retirement was not, as some have been in later Ages, chosen by Him for an unactive and idle Life of *Contemplation*, and useless *Speculation* ; nor with the least Thought of withdrawing himself from the Eyes and Ears of a vain

I

and

and wicked World, by a voluntary and pleasing Recluseness within Walls and Fences. But it was embraced by Him, on quite contrary, and very useful Accounts.

SERM.
XIV.



He was to preach, and therefore to be known, to his Country-men. And accordingly, the Desert he chose, at his opening his Ministry, was very near to *Jerusalem*: where his Name could not but be soon heard of, and whither He sometimes went himself. And there was something so peculiar in his Manner of Life, and his Preaching, which presently became the Subject of Discourse; that it drew the Attention of all People towards him: and They were induced by his Fame, and the Curiosity which That raised in them, to go out to Him, and hear what He taught, and what He pretended to. Our blessed *Lord*, on the contrary, when he displayed himself, and opened his Message to Mankind, frequented the Places of greatest Concourse; and laid hold on all fair and good Opportunities of conversing with the World of *Sinners*. He chose even to *eat and drink* with Them; and took their own Times, and attended their Leisure, and their Invitations; and seemed rejoiced at every Occasion of the most familiar Intercourse with them.

And this different Conduct, We shall now see, was very suitable and agreeable to their

SERM
XIV.

different Designs. The *Baptist's* great Business was to raise the Minds, and turn the Eyes, of the People of the *Jews*, towards the *Messiah*, who was now going to appear; to prepare them, by the *Baptism* and *Doctrine* of Repentance and Reformation, to understand the true Nature of his Kingdom, and to receive Him when he should shew himself; to bear a Testimony to the true *Messiah*; and, after that was done, He himself *was to decrease*, and the other *was to increase*: as He expresses his own Sense of his Office. Now, there is something in that retired, and severe, Manner of Life He chose, which is apt to raise the Curiosity and Attention of Men very much; and to put them upon asking such *Questions*, as may lead to the Knowledge of the most useful and important Truths.

And We see accordingly, that this Method of Living and Preaching, in which *John the Baptist* shewed himself, had such an Influence upon the *Jews*, that Many were in doubt whether he was not Himself the *Messiah*, the promised Saviour of that Nation. It was so long, since so much Sanctity, and so much Contempt of the World, had been seen amongst them, that, in their good and sober Moods, They were induced to think, from such Beginnings, that This might possibly be *He*:
 4 though

though they quickly came to reject Him, when they found he spake of Nothing so much as of *Repentance, and bringing forth Fruits worthy of it.* But, after They had thus rejected Him, we find the most Artful and Designing amongst Them were so embarrassed between their own *Conduct* towards the *Baptist*, and their Fear of the *People*, that They did not know how to answer the *Question* put to them by our *Lord*, whether the *Baptism* of *John* were of divine Original, or Not? For his Manner of Life, and Holiness of Conversation, had gained him such an *Authority* amongst the *People*, that it would have incensed *Them*, to have denied him to be a true *Prophet*; and, to have owned it, would have condemned *Themselves*, for not receiving Him.

And as the Manner of his appearing, in that outward Garb, and inward Reality, of *Severity* and *Austerity*, forcibly invited the Eyes and Attention of the Multitude to him; and engaged even the *worst* Part of the *Jews* to send Messengers to him, to ask him of the Character he bore, and the Design he came upon: So, likewise, it is worth observing, That, his chief Design being to bear Testimony to a greater *Prophet* than himself; and not to ingratiate himself so much with the *People*, as to gather Multitudes of Disciples to

S E R M. his own Person ; He could not have chosen a
 XIV. more proper Method of pursuing this, than
 ~~~~~ that retired and austere Manner of Life. Had  
 he made it his Business to have frequented all  
 Places of Concourse, and gathered to himself  
 great Numbers of *Disciples*, who were often  
 Followers of the *Person*, more than of the  
*Doctrine*, of their Master ; it might possibly  
 have had an unhappy Effect with Relation to  
 the *Messiah* himself, who was to preach Sal-  
 vation to, and make Disciples of, the whole  
*Nation*, as far as They would permit Him.

It must indeed be owned that, the greater the  
 Number of *John's* Disciples had been, the  
 greater Influence it would have had upon the  
 Cause of the *Messiah*, if All of them had cor-  
 dially received their Master's Testimony con-  
 cerning Him. But this, probably, would  
 have been found too hard for *Practice* ;  
 as it carried with it unavoidably this Conse-  
 quence, That *Jesus* was a *greater Prophet* than  
 their Master, *John the Baptist*. For we see, there  
 was always a Contest between the *Disciples* of  
 several *Masters* ; and a great Regret, and En-  
 vvy, raised in every Sort, to see their own *Mas-*  
*ters* sunk and depressed by the greater Glory  
 of *Others*. And it is not improbable from the  
 sacred Story, that the few Disciples *John* had,  
 were leavened with this Sort of Temper ; and  
 that

that They could hardly have been persuaded S E R M.  
to believe any *Prophet* greater than their *Master* ; or, with their whole Heart, receive the XIV.  
*Messiah*, who was now going to appear as Such. 

Here therefore, was another Reason for the *Baptist's* Manner of Life ; That his Business was, Not to consult his own personal Interest, as a *Master* and a *Prophet*, so as to gather *Disciples*, and Followers, to himself ; but to be a living *Witness* to one *Greater* than Himself, and only to prepare Men's Hearts for the Reception of *Him*, and his Doctrine. And for this End, the Method which he chose seems much more proper, than if He had mixed himself more with the World ; and made it his Business to frequent the Places of popular Concourse, and to shew Himself daily in the Commerce and Crowds of a great City : which might have appeared a Design of gaining Popularity, and Followers to Himself ; rather than of serving the Honour and Interest of that Prince of Prophets, the *Messiah*, whose *Forerunner* only He was.

But the *Messiah* had another Part to act. His great Business was to gain Profelytes and Disciples to *Himself*, who could not adhere too close to him. He could not be too *popular*, when once it was proper to open his Pretensions, and reveal his true Character to

SERM.  
XIV.

the World. His great Design was to engage Mankind to Himself by all proper Methods: and of These, an easy and familiar Conversation, and a Compliance with their innocent Customs, was one of the most likely to win upon them.

Another *Consideration* is, That it was justly designed by God, and expected by the *Jews*, That the *Divinity of Christ's Mission* should be proved by wonderful Works in public; never performed, after such a Manner, and in such Number, before that Time: which being not the Case of *John the Baptist*, it was the less necessary for *Him* to affect the Society and Concourſe of Men. And as the *Truth of our Lord's Pretensions* was to be demonstrated, and the Mouth of his Adversaries stopped, by a constant Series of these astonishing and divine Works; upon this Account, a more *public* Scene was the proper Scene of his Action: that He might not be said to have chosen the darkest Corners, and Places void of Witnesses, (which are thought proper Places to shew Tricks in,) and then to have weakly expected the World to believe in *Him*, for the Sake of what They never saw. The clearest Day-Light, and the greatest Multitudes, and even his *Adversaries* themselves, were to be the Spectators (though, to their own Shame, the envious and malicious

ous Spectators,) of the Proofs he had to give of his divine Authority. And therefore, it became him to pursue them, as it were, of his own Accord, with his wonderful Works; to appeal, every Day, to the Eyes and Ears of Thousands, and to call in all the Witnesses possible to the Testimony He had to give of Himself. For Truth, entirely void of all *Fraud*, doth not fear, but desire, *Witnesses*. Again,

*John the Baptist*, though a Person of extraordinary Holiness of Life, without regard to that peculiar Character in which He appeared, was not designed to be proposed to Mankind, as the great *Example*, for their Imitation: But the *Messiah* was to be that perfect *Example*, which all should be obliged to copy after, with the Care and Attention of sincere Followers. It became Him, therefore, to choose a Sphere of Action, and a Manner of Life, agreeable to the Tempers, and Necessities, and Business, of the *Generality* of Mankind; not such a one, as suits with the Tempers, and Purposes, of a very small and inconsiderable Number. Our *Saviour*, without Doubt, had as mean an Opinion of that Generation of Men, in which He appeared, as it was possible to have conceived from a perfect Knowledge of their Weaknesses, and Follies; their Passions, and Vices. And, had he only had his own Inclination, without regard

SERM.

XIV.

S E R M.

XIV.



regard to the good of Others, to have consulted; no Person could have relished the Pleasures of Solitude so well: because no Person was so fully sufficient to his own Entertainment and Happiness; or so little in want of Any of the Supports of human Society. But how, then, should he have *fulfilled all Righteousness*? Or, How could He have answered the End of his Appearing, to be made an *Example to Us*, who must converse, and deal, with one another: who must court and attend one another; and cannot, without our mutual Assistance, preserve the least order in the World; or answer the beneficial Ends of *Society*, in it?

But I have said enough on the *first* Head, *viz.* the *different* Behaviour of our blessed *Lord*, and *John the Baptist*, with Relation to human *Society*; and the Agreeableness of this their different Behaviour to their different Characters and Designs. And shall only add this one Caution; that what I have said is not to be understood as if, on the one hand, I thought that *John the Baptist* would not have been perfectly ready to a greater Correspondence with the World, had it been more for the Purpose of his Appearance, all Things considered; or, as if, on the other hand, I was not sensible that our Saviour had often shewn his Love to Retirement, especially

cially for *Prayer* to his Father: though it is observable, this was generally his Entertainment, when there was no Opportunity of conversing with Mankind; and of doing good to Any of Them by his divine Presence and Discourse. I come now,

S E R M.

XIV.

II. To observe, what I proposed in the next Place, *viz.* the gross *Misrepresentation* put by the *Jews*, upon this different Conduct of our *Lord*, and *John the Baptist*. And that is plain in the *Text*. The *One* they censured, as a *Glutton* and a *Wine-bibber*, and a *Friend of Sinners*, because he *ate and drank*, and entered into Company, after the usual Manner of *Men*, in order to a more free and more beneficial Conversation with Them: And the *Other* they esteemed little better than a mad Man, because he seemed to fly from the rest of the World; and lived not after the common Form, but affected something very peculiar in his *Garb*, and in his *Diet*. So hard is it to please Those who are resolved not to be pleased. The *Lesson* we may learn from hence is this, That Men are often very ready to entertain the most unjust Prejudices, rather than yield to the plainest Truths which contradict their beloved Notions or Practices. Had the *Jews* entertained the same Notions

of

SERM.  
XIV.



of the *Messiah*, and of the *Nature* of his *Kingdom*, that the *Baptist*, and our *Saviour*, both preached; They had shewn no such Perverseness and Prejudice, as now appears; and the *Two Prophets* had not met with so unjust and heavy Censures. Or, had the *Baptist* and our blessed *Lord* carested them in their beloved Notions of worldly Greatness and Majesty, or their favorite Vices; and taught them Happiness after their own absurd false Scheme; One may venture to say, They had been extolled to the Skies, and Both received with open Arms. To such a Pitch of *Prejudice* were the *Jews* come, that They could not bear to have their received *Opinions*, or *Practices*, condemned; and would not accept of an Happiness, not to be obtained without relinquishing their old beloved Follies and *Vices*: When, in Truth, it ought to have been quite otherwise. For, if *John* the *Baptist* had preached any other *Messiah*, than one whose *Fan* was in his *Hand*, and who required the strictest Holiness of Life; Or, if our blessed *Lord* had preached any other *Gospel*, than the *Gospel* of Holiness, and Humility, and Love: the *Jews* might, justly, have charged the *One*, with the Madness of having a Commerce with evil Spirits; and the *Other*, with being a *Friend* to *Publicans*, and *Sinners*, in the worst Sense; a Lover of their  
Practices,

Practices, and an Encourager of their Vices. S E R M. XIV.

It was this Doctrine of Repentance, and Amendment of Life, that gave such a Stop to the *Gospel*, amongst the *Jews*, at first. It is this that hinders the Increase of it, and that bars its Entrance to so many Ears, at this Day. The great Obstruction, I say, to the *Gospel*, is, that it will not reconcile Vice and Happiness, a wicked Life and the Hopes of *Salvation*, together. Could it do this, plainly and effectually, how many Votaries should we daily see flock in, and how many Encomiums should We hear upon it? What *joyful Tidings* would it be accounted, and how glorious a *Salvation*, to the Sons of Men, wearied and affrighted with the Prospect of the *Punishment*, but not with the *Practice*, of their Transgressions?

How obliging and courteous a Thing, therefore, is it, in the *Church of Rome*, to endeavour to make up this great Defect in the *Gospel*; and, by the infallible Spirit it assumes, to supply this Want; and remove the only insuperable Objection to wicked Minds against it? When we consider the Workings of human Nature, we shall not much wonder that *Profelytes* are gained, by teaching Men how to compound with GOD for the Breach of his Laws: Or,  
by

S E R M.

XIV.

by the dextrous Management of such *Machines*, as *Indulgencies*, and *Absolutions*. But when we consider the *Reason* of the Thing itself, it is most astonishing that even the weakest of Men can be seduced by such Pretenses. For I truly think, That, of the *Two*, it is more easy, and more pardonable, to believe *Transubstantiation* itself, than to believe that Almighty God would enter into any such Covenant with Mankind, as should encourage them to continue in their Sins; or give them the Liberty of transgressing the least of those Laws of eternal Reason, which are the Foundation of his own Glory, and of all the lasting Happiness there is in the World.

In *moral Philosophy*, This is as great an Absurdity, as the other is in *Natural*; attended with as many *Difficulties*, and with much more intolerable Consequences, relating to our Eternal Salvation. And, I am sure, it is more excusable to *err* in a Matter of Opinion; nay, though it may draw after it great Evils in the Worship of God, than in a Matter, which destroys the very Essence and Obligation of all *Morality*; confounding *Virtue* with *Vice*; making *Light*, *Darkness*, and *Darkness*, *Light*: and which is, indeed, calculated for the promoting of the whole System of *Immorality* in the World, as much, as if it had

had been designed for Nothing else. Our blessed S E R M.  
*Lord* had no such *Gospel* to preach : and there- XIV.  
 fore, found no Reception amongst Men of  
 corrupt and profligate Minds ; constant Pur-  
 suers of the Pleasures, or, unwearied Sol-  
 licitors of the Glories and Honours, of this  
 World.

Nay, could a Religion of such Indulgence be  
 supposed agreeable to the Will of GOD, I see no  
 Need of a *Prophet* to be sent into the World,  
 on Purpose to teach, or inculcate, it. No fear,  
 but that Mankind would learn this fast enough,  
 by the Influence of their own *bad Hearts*, and  
 the Example of Others. From the *Beginning* of  
 the World, great *Multitudes* had no *other Gospel*,  
 but This: and to the *End* of it, I doubt, great  
 Multitudes will embrace no other ; but live  
 and dye in their *Sins*, expecting Mercy and  
 Heaven, whilst they have no Foundation for  
 it within, nor Promise of it, from without.

For ourselves ; Let us learn, from this per-  
 verse Temper of the *Jews*, how unbecoming  
 it is, and how unreasonable, to reject, or to  
 neglect, any thing, not because it is not agree-  
 able to our own best Principles of Reason, but,  
 because it is contrary to our wicked Inclinati-  
 ons, and to our worldly Designs. It is ma-  
 nifest from the *Gospel*, and from the Accounts  
 of

SERM.  
XIV.

of those Days, that the *Jews* set Themselves to asperse both *John the Baptist* and our *Saviour*, and, at last, rejected Them, chiefly because They were *Preachers* of the strictest *Holiness* and *Virtue*. It was because the *Baptist* was assisting in *destroying the Works of the Devil*, that they said he had a *Devil*. And it was because our *Saviour* was *not a Friend to Sinners*, who continue such, that they blasphemed him as a *Friend to Sinners*, in the worst Sense. But let it not be said that any of his own Followers, who are called by his Name, act, as if They partook, in any Measure, of the same Temper; and retained the same wicked Principles. I come now, in the last Place,

III. To say something, in short, concerning those two Methods of living, now seen in the *Christian World*; *That of Retirement* and *Austerity*; and *That of a more free and general Conversation*: the *One*, sometimes pretended to be copied after that of *John the Baptist*; and the *Other*, really copied after that of our blessed *Lord*.

It must be acknowledged to be very becoming the Character of a *reasonable Creature*, placed in *this State*, to have a due Sense of  
the

the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Enjoyments of this Life. And who would not be glad to retire from a World of Noise and Impertinence, of Ignorance and Folly, and, what is worst of all, of Wickedness and Impiety? Who would not be glad, I say, to do this, in the most absolute Sense, that could support himself in Solitude; were it not, that We have other Obligations to answer, and other Maxims to live by, than the following our own *Inclinations*, or *Humours*? The World is the *Stage of Action*, to a *Christian*: and all the Members of that vast Body are his *Neighbours*; entitled to his Regard, as He is to *Theirs*. The Afflicted, the Desolate, the Lame, the Blind, the Sick, the Weak, the Fatherless, the Widow, the Poor, the Needy, the Ignorant, and the Sinner, These all, We know, called for our *Lord's* Assistance: and He thought it unbecoming *Him* to retire, when Any of these could be met with to receive the Influences of his Goodness. And the same Obligations belong to his *Followers*, by Right of *Descent*. They are the *Disciples* of *Him*, who lived in the World to do good to All in it: and these distressed Objects are left by *Him* to *their* Care; and They are made the Patrons and Guardians of them, in his *Absence*. Whenever a *retired Life* hinders not the Care, and Relief, and Support, of These;

S E R M.  
XIV.

S E R M.  
XIV.

nor breaks in upon any other moral Engage-  
ment; Or, any of the Duties strictly owing to  
Human *Society*; it cannot be said to be un-  
worthy of a Man, or a *Christian*. And ac-  
cordingly, our *Lord*, we see, freely mixed  
himself in *Society*, in order to the Benefit of  
the World about Him, as long as the *Light*  
permitted Him: and when *Darkness* came on,  
often laid hold on the Opportunities of what  
may be called a *Religious Retirement* from it.  
And generally speaking, *Christians*, in their  
due Measure, can imitate him in *both* these  
*Cases*. But They, who cannot follow him,  
in *Both*, are strictly obliged to take especial  
Care not to neglect the *Former*. This was  
his peculiar Delight; to converse, with Ease  
and Humanity, amongst Men, because, with-  
out This, no Instance of Charity could reach  
Them: and This was what he peculiarly  
recommended to his *Followers*, as the Du-  
ty They owed to their *Fellow-Creatures*.  
Every Man may find Opportunities of Retire-  
ment, sufficient to secure the Blessing of Hea-  
ven, and the Favour of God, by *Prayer*:  
and every good *Man* will make Use of them.  
And if He be always disposed to lay hold on  
every Occasion of doing Good in human Soci-  
ety, according to his Abilities; He will by  
These Two Instances of Practice, shew Him-  
self

self the true Disciple of that *Master*, who went before Him, in Both. SERM.  
XIV.

But to make *Retirement*, an *Art*, or a *Burthen*; to build Houses of Entertainment to entice Men into it; to frame arbitrary Rules of Severity for it; to guard it with rigid Vows, too probably, drawing bitter *Repentance* and *Sorrow*, after them; and to clothe it with such Appearances of Something extraordinary, and above the common pitch of Devotion, as may ensnare unguarded and unexperienced Minds into what may prove the great Unhappiness of their whole Lives: Nay, to court it merely on *our own* Account, in order to lead an idle and useles Life; or to be at Leisure, perhaps, not for the Study of God's Will, as delivered to Us by himself, but only for the Improvement of our own peculiar Whimsies: This is, undoubtedly, unworthy of the Grand *Design* of the *Christian Religion*; and was not only never commanded, but never intimated, by the first Preacher of it, and his immediate Successors, as far as we have any Knowledge of them.

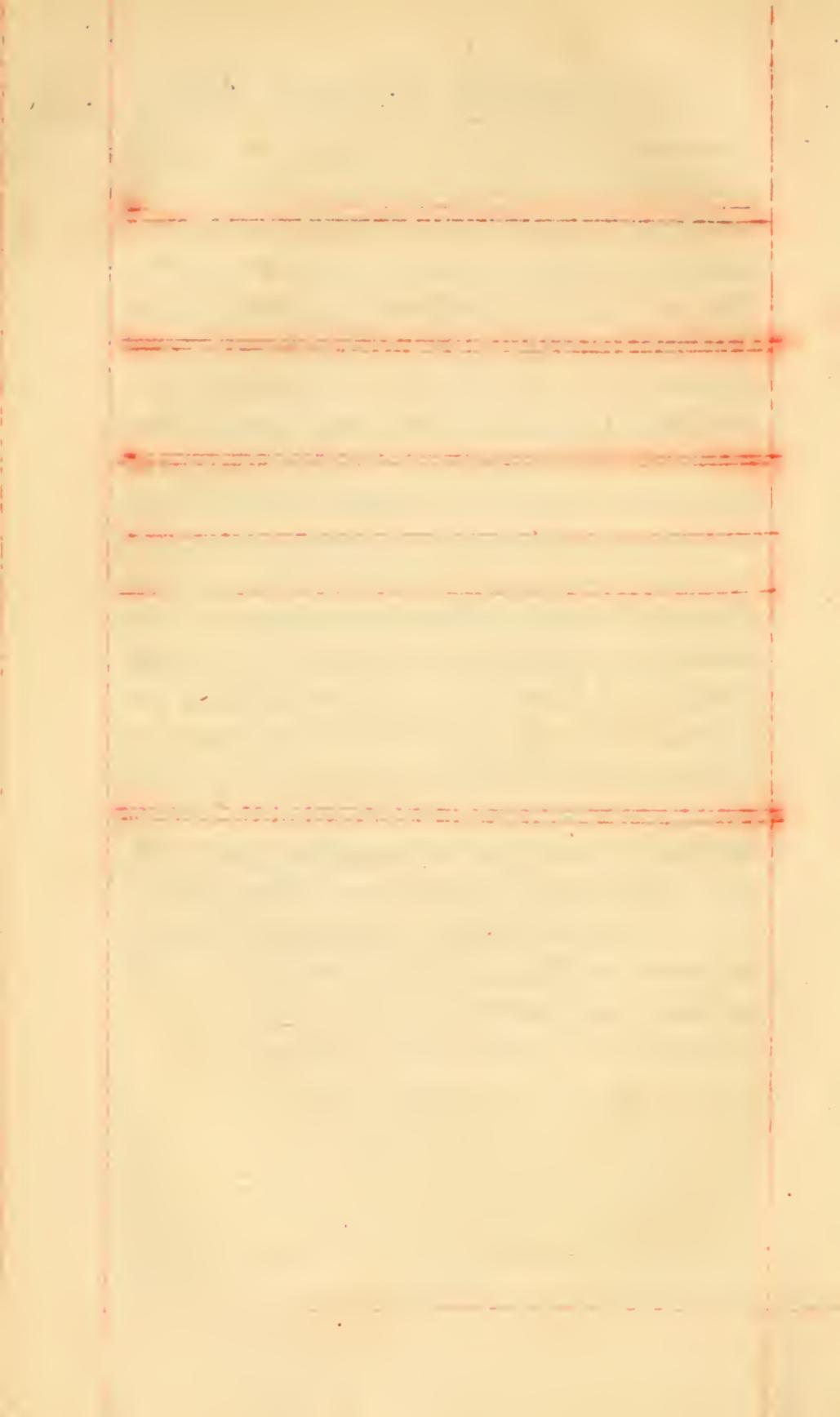
That this is not copied after the *Life* of our blessed Saviour, All will allow, who read the History of it; and find Him daily and hourly, conversing with All that came in his Way, in the Streets and

SERM.  
XIV.

Houses of *Jerusalem*, and the neighbouring Towns. Nor can it be called the *Life* of *John the Baptist*; or the least Imitation of it: because it is most evident that He retired, not to please his own *Phansy*; but to answer the End of his Office; and dwelt in the *Desert*, not in order to avoid the *World* entirely, but to entice and invite All within his Reach to hear his Doctrine of *Repentance*, and of the *Kingdom of God*, then at hand. And, as far as We know the Nature of this *Kingdom*, or *Gospel*, of *Christ*, We may *retire*, as much as *That* requires of us, in the Midst of the most *populous City*; and without throwing off the least Part of our necessary Business, or innocent Conversation: Nay, I may say, We may do this much more agreeably to the Nature and End of that *Gospel*, than if we were shut up, within Walls, from the Sight of Men, and employed our whole Time, in performing, by Night and by Day, the most regular Round of *Offices*, under the specious Title of Devotion.

In a word, the Way of Life, with regard to human Society, in this World, recommended to Us by our Master, is the *Life* of such *Benevolence*, as supposes Us conversing, and acting a Part, in the *Society* around Us; and this cannot be, a *Recluse Life* of *Inaction*, but implies in it the very contrary. *This* is that Behaviour

Behaviour and Conduct of ourselves in the SERM.  
*Social World*, according to the several Stations XIV.  
 assigned Us in it, which the *Precepts* of our  
 charitable Religion declare to be our Duty.   
 This is what the *Example* of our great *Master*  
 directs Us to: And, this will be our Reward  
 and our Crown to all Eternity. If we can per-  
 fect Ourselves in *this*; We may securely leave  
 to *Others* the Happiness, and the Glory, of  
 any useles and idle *Retirement*, which They  
 may please to miscall by the Name of *Religion*;  
 but which has not the least Tincture of the  
*Religion of Christ*: And may well content our-  
 selves with following, as near as we can, the  
*Footsteps* and *Rules* of our common *Master*, ra-  
 ther than the silly and fruitles *Inventions* of  
 Those, who, under the Cover of his sacred  
 Name, have almost extinguished the Know-  
 ledge of the *main End* of his appearing amongst  
 Men. And this Regard to our *Lord* himself,  
 above All other Directors, I hope, We shall  
 all resolve to shew, in the whole Conduct of  
 our *Lives* here below.



---

---

*The* EXTREMES *of* RICHES *and*  
POVERTY.

---

S E R M O N XV.

---

PROVERBS XXX. 8, 9.

*Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches; 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.*

I Shall not enter into any Enquiry concerning SERM.  
the *Person* to whom the Words in this *Chap-* XV.  
*ter* are ascribed. The only Question of Im-  
portance is, whether this be not a Wish, or Pray-  
er, worthy of a wise and considering Man; found-  
ed upon Reason, and a careful Observation of the  
Inconveniences, and Conveniences, attending  
the several States of Life in this World. If it can  
be proved to be a reasonable, and well-grounded  
*Prayer*; we ought all to join in it, whoever  
were the first Author of it. And, on the

SERM. other hand, if it shall, after Examination, appear to be contrary to *Reason*, and judicious Observation; it can be of no Importance, to find out, if we could, Who was the Person that made this Wish, here recorded.

Now, in order to our judging rightly, in the Case before Us, it is proper to observe that the *Prayer* in the *Text* is plainly founded upon *This*; viz. that the Hazards, and Inconveniences, attending the *two Extremes* of boundless *Riches*, and the lowest *Poverty*, are so great, and so generally fatal to those who experience either of those two States; that, if a wise Man were to choose for himself, with regard to true Happiness, and the Interest of Virtue and Religion, He would certainly choose the middle Condition: Or, such a *Competency*, and convenient Subsistence, as should set him above the Need of Relief from the Bounty of Others; and enable him to provide tolerably for Those in whom He is most nearly concerned. And as the Proof of the Parts of this *Proposition* will sufficiently vindicate, and establish, the Wisdom of this *Prayer*, which is built upon it; I shall, therefore, make the *Proposition* now mentioned the Subject of my following Discourse.

And here, as to the *one Part* of this Proposition, and this *Prayer*, viz. That which relates

lates to *Poverty*; there is something in *this* so disagreeable, and so distasteful, to the Bent and Inclination of human Nature; something so contemptible and mean, in the outward Appearance of it, which strikes more upon Men than the unseen and hidden Part of any Condition; that there is not One in the World, perhaps, of Those who may be esteemed in their right Mind, who would voluntarily choose the lowest and meanest Condition of human Life. There always was, and always will be, a general Concurrence and Consent in this Part of the Prayer, *Give me not Poverty*: not, perhaps, for fear of sinning against God, in that Condition, which is the Consideration alledged in the Text; but for fear only of that Contempt and Ignominy, and those Necessities, and worldly Inconveniences, which are annexed to that State.

On the other Side, there is, and always was, and always will be, almost as general a Consent against the *other* Part of this Prayer, which relates to immense and excessive *Riches*. There is something in the outward Appearance and Figure of that Greatness and Superiority which often attend upon vast *Riches*; something in the uncommon Conveniences, and Pleasures, They are supposed to procure; Something which captivates the Minds of

SERM.  
XV.

most Men, to such a Degree, that They can hardly know how to choose the *best* State, against their own worldly Interest; or, not to wish *Themselves* in that distinguished *Condition* of Life, which They are so apt to envy, and admire, in *Others*. And, generally speaking, *He* that should go about to persuade any Man to beseech GOD earnestly *not* to grant Him the Abundance of *Riches*, would, I fear, be looked upon, in almost the same ridiculous Light, as He would be, who should teach Him to pray expressly *for* the *Extreme* of *Poverty*, and *Want*.

This being so, That Men are very ready to pray ardently against *Poverty*, and a low Fortune, upon mean and worldly Considerations; and as ardently to wish for the greatest Riches, without a due Regard to the natural Consequences of such a Wish: It is, therefore, of Importance to endeavour to shew, on one hand, that there are *Considerations*, of a better Sort, sufficient to make a *wise* Man pray against the lowest Condition of this Life; that so, our natural Abhorrence of extreme *Poverty* may be settled upon a right Foundation, and improved into a Virtue: And, on the other hand, still more necessary, and of greater Importance, to shew that there are *Reasons* sufficient to remove the Bent of a wise  
Man's

Man's Thoughts from all anxious and importunate Desires after the Abundance and Extremity of *Riches*; that so, we may not fatally err, on that Part, on which there is most Danger, from the apparent Tendency of human Nature. Thus shall we be led to fix our Wishes, with respect to this World, in their due Centre, on the middle Condition, rightly tempered between the two Extremes. In order, therefore, to shew the Wisdom and Reasonableness of this *Prayer* in the *Text*, I propose these following Particulars:

I. To consider the fatal Inconveniences and evil Consequences, with respect to lasting Happiness and Religion, naturally attending the Extreme of Wealth, and the Abundance of *Riches*, in this World.

II. To consider, on the other hand, the Inconveniences, with respect to Virtue and Religion, generally seen to attend the lowest Condition of Life, and the Extreme of *Poverty*.

III. To infer, from what I shall have said, the Reasonableness of desiring the middle Condition, called in the *Text*, *Food convenient for Us*; and the greater Likelihood of obtaining *Happiness*, and securing and improving our *Virtue* and Religion, in this Estate. This will  
be

SERM.  
XV.

be a sufficient Vindication of the *Wisdom* of the *Prayer* now before us. And,

IV. After I have said what may be proper upon these Heads, I shall be led to answer some *Questions* of Importance, which may offer themselves upon this Subject.

I. In order to shew the *Wisdom* and *Reasonableness* of the *Prayer* in the *Text*, I shall endeavour to represent to you the many fatal *Inconveniences* and evil *Consequences*, with respect to *Happiness* and *Religion*, which naturally attend the *Super-abundance* of *Riches* in this *World*.

And here, if I should attempt to speak of all the *Sorts* of *Folly*, and *Madness*, truly so called; and all the *Vices*, to which the *Overflowings* of *Riches* incline, and naturally lead, frail weak *Mortals*; of the *Vanity*, the *Pride*, the *Haughtiness*, the *Contempt* of their *Fellow-Creatures*, which appear in *Some*; the *hard-hearted*, *selfish*, *Sordidness*, of *Others*; the *Luxury*, the *Idleness*, the *Profusion*, the *Intemperance*, the *immoderate Pursuit* of worldly *Pleasures*, to which *Many* more, by the *Guidance* of *Riches*, have given themselves up: *the Time would fail Me*. Nor would this be merely a *Declamation*, or a *Satire*, founded

on

on the Ill-nature and Envy of Those below this Condition; but a Matter of Fact, too much confirmed by the Observation, and Experience, of many past Ages: and seen, at this Day, to be still so generally *true*, that We seldom hear of an *Exception*.

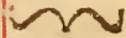
And this *Evil* is never more remarkable than in the Conduct of Those, who have shewn a good and virtuous Conduct in a *lower* Sphere, but have not been able to withstand the Shock of a larger and more exalted Fortune; or, to be Proof against the Attacks of a sudden and extraordinary Prosperity. How often, upon such Occasions, may We justly say, has the Increase of *Riches* been the Beginning of all moral Folly, or the Increase of all moral Evil? How often has the Addition to the outward good Estate of a Man, proved a sensible Diminution of the inward good Estate of his Soul; and the Improvement of his *Fortune*, the Improvement of every evil Disposition of his *Mind*? Where Quiet and Contentment have been known to dwell, in a very great Degree; there, when *Riches* have entered, *Discontent*, and *Uneasiness*, have entered with them. Where Friendship, and mutual Confidence, have flourished: there Enmity, and mutual Animosities, have taken Place. Instead of former Repose and Tranquillity,

ERM.  
XV.

SERM.  
XV.

quillity, Quarrels and Law-suits, Care and Anxiety, have been seen. Instead of Love and Amity, Disguft and Jealousy; instead of Serenity and Calmness, a wrinkled Brow and an uneasy Countenance; instead of Affability and Courtesy, Haughtiness and Contempt of Others, have taken Place.

Thus Vice, in several Forms, has often triumphed over the most amiable Virtues, by the Help of *Riches*: and thus have the truest *Enjoyments*, in human Life, been totally ruined and laid waste by Them. They are pretended sometimes to be sought after, to *satisfy* Men's Desires, and to *extinguish* Covetousness; and They only encrease those Desires, and add Fuel to the *Fire* within. They are really designed perhaps, by Some, to be made use of, for the Happiness of Others who want them: but they are seen to make Men more hard-hearted, than they were before, and less inclined to *Benevolence* and Goodnature. What numberless Temptations, of all Kinds, and these irresistible without the greatest Guard upon their Minds, doth the *Excess* of Riches administer to Men? All indeed do not fall by them: but all are in the extremest Danger. There are Exceptions: Otherwise, the World would be a Scene of *wicked Confusion* between *Covetousness*, and *Pride*:  
And



And happy *They*, who make the Exceptions! But, comparatively speaking, how *Few* are *Those*, who have Strength of Soul enough to know the only reasonable and noble Use of that Distinction from their *Fellow-Creatures*, which *Riches* create? Or, in the Words of the *Text*, how *Few*, who are *full*; and do not, some way or other, in their *Practise*, if not in *Words*, deny God, and say, *Who is the Lord*? So great is the Danger, that immense *Riches* may draw off the Mind from all due regard to *Virtue* and *Religion*; and expose it to be fatally led away into such a State, as is inconsistent with lasting Happiness here, or hereafter; and is, indeed, the Reverse to all that a Wise Man would wish for.

It is impossible to say all that might be properly urged upon this Subject. But, Whoever seriously thinks upon such Observations as have been now mentioned; and consults his own Knowledge, or Experience; will find *Reason* enough not to desire, or pray for, such a *Condition*, as *That* by which so many have been ruined; and in which He himself is sure of meeting with the most hazardous Trials, and all those Temptations which are most likely to prove fatal to his own Greatest and Truest Interest.

SERM.

XV.

II. Upon the next Head, *viz.* the *Inconveniences* generally seen to attend the *lowest* Condition of Life, I need not spend many Words: but must say something; That we may not avoid it, or pray against it, merely for worldly Reasons, because it is a Condition of Life irksome and disagreeable to Flesh and Blood; but upon better and worthier Considerations; lest we should fall into *Sin*, by the *Temptations* peculiar to it. For this is the Reason in the *Text*, upon which the Part of the Prayer relating to *Poverty*, is founded.

But here it cannot be improper, before I mention the *Vices peculiar* to this State, to observe, that, notwithstanding the wide Distance and Difference of the *two Extremes*, there are great Sins common to Both: I mean that the *Lowest* of Men are seen to *practise* Many of the *same Vices*, which their *Superiors* sometimes do: as if They strove to resemble the *Richest*, at least, in their *Wickedness*; and to shew Themselves exactly like Them, in the Worst of their Features. The same *Profaneness* and *Defiance* of God; the same *Lewdness* and *Debauchery*; the same *Oaths* and *Execrations*; the same *Intemperance* and *Drunkenness*, when Opportunity, or the Bounty of the *Rich*, gives leave; nay, the same *Insensibility*, and *Disregard* to the *Happiness*

pineness of the World about Them, are found SERM.  
amongst the very *poorest* of all Men: The XV.  
*Same*, I say, which are seen sometimes to ac-  
company the *Riches* of *Others*.

There is *One* only trifling Difference, That  
the same Vices are practised, by *one* Sort, in a  
coarser and more sordid Manner, which are  
practised, by the *Other*, (perhaps not always,)  
in a more refined and delicate Way. *This*  
methinks, ought to shock Those of superior  
Rank; and, when They see that *Beggars*  
themselves can rise to the same Pitch of *Im-*  
*morality*, must move Them, even from the  
*Pride* of keeping up their so much boasted  
Distinction, to abhor those Vices, in which  
the *Poorest* can equal, if not excel, Them.

But we must now add, that there are *Vices*  
peculiar to this *lowest* Condition. The *Tricks*  
and *Lies*; the *Forgeries*, and *Thefts*; the  
false *Testimonies*, and *Perjuries*; the *Violences*,  
and even *Murthers*, which the *Poorest* are, fore-  
ly and often, tempted to be guilty of, in order  
to support themselves in Life, as they pretend,  
are hardly to be enumerated. *Here*, like-  
wise, there are *Exceptions*; and *Some* may be  
found, who preserve a Sense of God, and Re-  
ligion, amidst the Pressures of the narrowest and  
most distressed Circumstances. But still the true

SERM. and just Reasons why a *Christian* should pray  
 XV. against this State, are, Because he knows not  
 what the extremest Necessity may reduce  
 him to; and how little Strength he may find  
 himself to have, upon Trial, against such Temp-  
 tations, as extreme *Poverty* may expose him to.

If these *Crimes*, now charged upon the *Poor-  
 est* of Men, were in such Sense the *Works of  
 Darkness*, as not to be known, or seen, but  
 only suspected; This Accusation might be  
 deemed only an *Addition of Affliction* to their  
 distressful State. But, who does not know  
 and lament this Scene of Wickedness amongst  
*Them*? And if more Notice were taken of  
 it, it would be much happier both for  
*Themselves*, and their Neighbours. They would  
 have less Encouragement to make so detestable  
 a Figure in their low Estate; and human So-  
 ciety, less to fear from their *evil Practises*; and  
 the better Sort of them more Supports for their  
 Patience and Humility, under their Calami-  
 ties.

Having thus set before you the *Inconveni-  
 ences*, with respect to *Virtue* and Religion, which  
 are too generally seen to attend upon the two  
*Extreme Conditions of Life*, in this World;  
 what I have already said will naturally lead  
 our Thoughts to what I proposed, in the next  
 place, *viz.*

III. To shew the Happiness of the *middle Condition*; that State of *Life*, which is removed from the Trials and Hazards, attending the Superfluity of *Riches*; or the *Extremity of Poverty*: and blessed with Conveniences enough to place the Man out of the Reach of those *Evils*, to which Excess and Abundance, on one hand, and Penury and Want, on the other, are seen to expose Men. We are all weak and imperfect Creatures; too easily imposed upon, and misled, by the specious Outside of Things; or too easily driven, by the Sense of Pain and Want, into the Paths of Error and Sin. Therefore, the best Condition is That which has most Security in it. And *that* has most Security in it, which has fewest Temptations to Vice, and least Difficulty to surmount. And the Extremes of Fortune, in this State, being the most hazardous to *Virtue* and *Religion*; the *middle Condition* between the two Extremes, must, consequently, be what a Wise Man would choose, all Things considered: unless he could know the certain Event of Things, which in their own Nature are uncertain, and depend upon the voluntary Choice of free Agents. For it may be truly said of this *middle State*, That it doth not, by its natural Tendency, so much endanger Virtue, as ei-

SERM. ther of the Two Extremes, of *Riches*, or *Po-*  
 XV. *verty*: not so much, on one hand, inclining  
 the Man to *deny God*, and say, *Who is the Lord?*  
 or, on the other hand, to *steal and take the*  
*Name of God in vain*, as it is expressed in the  
*Text*.

It must be granted, that *many* are the *Vices*  
 of that *Multitude* of Men, placed in this *mid-*  
*dle* Condition: the more inexcusable is their  
*Guilt* and *Folly*. But what would the same  
 Men have been, in greater Abundance, or  
 greater Narrowness, of Fortune? Much worse,  
 it is to be feared. If the lesser Temptations  
 they meet with, are able to draw them into so  
 pernicious Courses; what would those greater,  
 which they must have experienced in other  
 States, have done? But I will not multiply  
 Words. I hope, I have said enough to lead  
 you to see, and acknowledge, the Wisdom and  
 Reasonableness of the *Prayer*, in the *Text*,  
*Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches; feed me*  
*with Food convenient for me*.

IV. The Time will now only permit me to  
 consider some *Questions* that may arise up-  
 on what I have been recommending to your  
 Thoughts: which was the next Thing I pro-  
 posed to do.

I. It

1. It may still, without Impropriety, be asked, S E R M.  
 in return to all that has been said, whether *Riches*, XV.  
 even the Abundance of Them, are not a very  
 great Advantage to *Men* in this State, in many  
 Respects: and, therefore, whether, notwithstanding  
 the *evil Use* that has been made of them by  
 Many, and the *evil Practices* They naturally lead  
 to, They may not be desired by *Wise* and *Good*  
 Men. The true *Answer* to such a *Question*, I  
 think, is this, That there can be no Reasons  
 sufficient to move a considering Person to make  
 it the uneasy Care and Business of his Life to ob-  
 tain any *Riches* beyond what are necessary and  
 convenient for his own well-being, and for the  
 Support of those whom the Providence of God  
 has nearly allied to him; because it is far from being  
 certain that He shall not be tempted to make a bad  
 Use of them, as so many of his Fellow-Creatures  
 have done before him. The Excess of *Riches*  
 can be found an Advantage to no Man, 'till the  
 final Event has shewn, that He has actually made  
 a noble and Godlike Use of them, for the Be-  
 nefit and Advantage of the World about him.  
*We* are apt to think, perhaps, that *We* should  
 make such a Use of them: And it may be  
 so. But we cannot certainly promise this to  
 Ourselves. We may fall by the same Snares  
 that have entangled so many before Us: and We  
 know not the full Power of a *Temptation*, 'till

SERM.  
XV.

we have tried it. And therefore, I cannot think that it would become us to make it the great Object of our Wishes, or our Labours, to be *Rich* above what the Necessities and Conveniences, proper for our Stations, require. And if we walk by this Rule, it is most likely, that what the *Providence* of GOD sends beyond this, may prove a *Blessing*; and not a *Curse*, as it often hath proved, when Men have solicited Heaven and Earth, as it were, for it, and spent their Nights and Days in the Pursuit of it. The only Advantage that the Superfluity of Riches gives to any one is, that it opens a larger Field to his Generosity and Beneficence; that it makes his Charity conspicuous, and his Humility lovely; and adds a Beauty to all his Virtues. But who can tell that He shall certainly be the happy Man, of Virtue and Faith enough, to *possess this World, as though he possessed it not; and to use it, as not abusing it?* We cannot indeed, avoid rejoicing in any of the *Good Things* of this World, which are granted Us. But, if we be *Christians*, we cannot rejoice in them any farther, than as we are resolved to dedicate them to the Glory of Him who gives them to Us; to the Purposes He recommends to Us; and to the Happiness of the rest of our Fellow-Creatures.

2. Another

2. Another *Question* may arise in the Minds of Some, concerning the other Extreme of *Poverty*; whether it be not often represented, and even in the *Holy Scriptures*, as a Sort of a Blessed State, and a Title, as it were, to the Favor of God; and the Rewards of Heaven; and therefore, be not truly worthy of a wise Man's Choice? But this again can be judged of, only by the Event. If Persons behave themselves in that Condition, with a constant Regard to Virtue and Religion; with a noble Courage and Patience; and with a due Submission to the Providence of God; there is no doubt, it opens a Door to much greater Degrees of Happiness to come. But it is not the Part of a *wise Man* to venture *eternal Happiness* upon what may *possibly* improve Him; but rather to wish for what is least liable to Temptations, and least hazardous to his Virtue, in this State of Probation. When we are placed by our great *Governour* in a dangerous Post; our Business is to maintain it nobly and courageously: but it is *Presumption*, and not *Duty*, to desire and court unnecessary Hazards. We seldom come off without the Loss of Honour, from *Dangers* of our own choosing: and therefore, our Lord himself teaches us to pray, *Lead us not into Temptation*. So that, though the *Extremes* of human Life,

SERM.

XV.

SERM.

XV.

Life, on both Hands, may prove honourable and glorious to Those who can bear them with due Temper, and resist all the Temptations which They administer; yet no one, who thinks what human Nature, at present, is, would either *labour*, or *pray*, himself into a Condition, which Multitudes of Examples before his Eyes may make him fear, He shall not go through, without some considerable Loss, or Wound, to his *Virtue*, and *Religion*.

3. If you now ask, what is that *Prayer*, in Relation to the Things of this World, which it becomes You to put up to the supreme Governour of all Things; I answer, that the Wisdom of the *Prayer* in the Text is recommended to You, tho' not made an absolute Duty. This will shew You that You may, with blameless Hearts, and in express Words, pray against the hazardous *Extremes* of superfluous *Riches*, and the lowest *Poverty*: and that when you so pray, out of regard to the greater Security of your moral Practice; lest the *Trials* in those two *Extremes* should be too powerful for You; You are sure, You act according to Duty, by making the Considerations of *Religion* the Ground of your *Prayer*.

If You would not be outdone, or put to Shame, even by the *Heathens*, let One of the wisest  
that

that ever appeared amongst them, lead your Thoughts to a Prayer, a little more general, but near a-kin to that in the Text. You may learn it from One of his *Scholars*, who, in his Address to GOD, requested the supreme Being to *grant* Him whatever was *truly Good* for Him, though He should be so blind himself, as *not* to ask it: and to *deny* Him whatever was not really so, but hurtful, though He himself should be so ill-instructed, or weak, as to beg it of Him earnestly and importunately: or to this Effect.

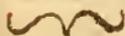
But if You would act in this *Case*, as *Christians*, which your Duty requires of You; You must strictly observe that most *reasonable* Form of *Prayer*, which your *great Master* dictated to his *Disciples*. In this, He effectually teaches You *not* to pray for Superfluity of *Riches*, unbounded *Possessions*, numerous *Servants*, splendid *Equipages*, or the like: but allows You, (I may say, *commands* You) to shew your Dependence upon the supreme Being, by *praying*, in *express Words*, for Your *daily Bread* only; leaving all the rest to Providence, and your own careful Endeavours, within the Bounds of his Holy Religion. This Direction of our *Blessed Lord* is an infallible Guide to all his Followers, upon this Subject.

4. Lastly,

SERM.  
XV.

SERM.

XV.



4. Lastly, if You should ask, what is that exact *Competence*, which You are still permitted to desire, and seek after; I must answer, not only That it is beyond *my* Power to fix it; but that I believe it impossible for Any One to settle *That* precisely, by *one* Measure, which requires *Many*, according to the several Stations of Life, allotted to the several Inhabitants of our World. To say, *It is always Something more than a Man has already*, is the Voice of *insatiable Avarice*; witty perhaps, but sporting itself upon a most serious Subject.

There is *One* Way, I think, of coming near to the Truth; unless it be quite stopped up by the Resolution of Men to *deceive their own Souls*. It is certain, that Almighty God cannot be so rigorous, as to make any Man's *Salvation* depend upon a mere Nicety, in which the most honest Mind may be mistaken. And it is as certain that He will not be *mocked*, or put off, with the poor Excuses of Many, who have it in their Power to know their *Duty*, and their *Happiness*. All Men, who will consider, may know well enough, what Manner of Life is required of them, in *Decency*, and Compliance with *Custom*, according to that Station, and that Rank, in which they are placed. And by the Maintenance of *This*, without *Injustice*, or *Intemperance*,

perance, it is evident, They do not sin; Nay, S E R M.  
 that They contribute to the good Subsistence XV.  
 of many honest and industrious Persons in  
 the World. They may also know, if they  
 have a Mind to it, who They are, whom,  
 in Conscience, they are obliged to provide for;  
 and what is sufficient to place them in a proper  
 Station, in the World; the most likely  
 to prove happy to Them, at the End.  
 And They all must be sensible that, when  
 These *two* Points are tolerably secured, What  
 is over and above, is then used, and improved,  
 with Glory and Honour, when it is made a  
 Fund for *Charity*, and *Beneficence*. If Men  
 will study all Evasions to flatter, and impose  
 upon, Themselves; Who can help it? But if  
 They will deal sincerely and honestly by Them-  
 selves, in this Point, there is no need of a *Pro-*  
*phet*, to say to Any *One* of Them who are con-  
 cerned, *Thou art the Man*. Every One will say  
 it to himself. And this is all that can be done,  
 by Us, in a Case of this Sort; to apply strongly  
 to Themselves, and to leave it upon their Con-  
 sciences, as they will answer it at the solemn  
 Day of Account, whether They do not in-  
 wardly know that They are happy in that  
*Competency*, and good Estate, which a Wise  
 Man ought to wish for. This therefore, is  
 justly left to their own *Determination*.

To

SERM. To conclude, Let us all, in the Sincerity  
xv. of our Hearts, make the best Use We can,  
for our own Happiness, and the Good of Others,  
of what has been said; and shew a *Conduct*,  
worthy of *Men* and of *Christians*, in that Con-  
dition of Life, whatever it may be, in which  
our Great and Good Governour shall think fit  
to place Us.

---

---

The GOOD SAMARITAN.

---

---

S E R M O N X V I .

---

---

LUKE X. 37.

Then said Jesus unto Him, Go, and do Thou likewise.

---

**W**HETHER the Verses before this contain a *Parable*, invented for Instruction; or a real Matter of *Fact*; it imports little. The *Words* I have read to You, are a *Lesson* drawn from the foregoing Story: The Occasion of which was this. A certain *Lawyer*, one who studied the *Law* of *Moses*, and exercised himself in all the *Questions* belonging to that *Law*, having heard that our blessed *Lord* professed to shew a sure and infallible Way to *Life* and Happiness, came to him to try what Answer he would give to that important Question, *What shall I do to inherit eternal Life?* Our Lord's Answer was short and plain; viz. that the *Summ* of all that Religion

SERM.  
XVI.

SE R M. *ligion, which can make us acceptable to God,*  
 XVI. *is to love God above all Things, and our Neigh-*  
 bour *as Ourselves.* The *Lawyer* seems here  
 not to be at all concerned about the *Former* ;  
 not doubting, perhaps, but that he had al-  
 ways sufficiently demonstrated his *Love to God,*  
 by his strict Observance of all the *Ceremonies*  
 of the *Mosaical Law.* And, hoping to justify  
 himself in the Matter of *Love to his Neighbour*  
 also, desires to know of *Jesus,* Who that  
*Neighbour is,* whom he is thus to *love as*  
*Himself.*

Here We must observe, that, at this Time,  
 the *Jews* were in Nothing more corrupted,  
 than in their Notions about the Persons, on  
 whom they were to bestow any Tokens of  
*Good-will.* They had, in a Manner, forgot  
 that strict Bond of *Nature,* by which all Men  
 are allied to one another: and all the World  
 took Notice how stiff and narrow in their Re-  
 gards to Others; and how void of all *Charity,*  
 They were grown. They were come to that  
 pass, that they denied the common Civilities,  
 and the common Conveniences of human Life,  
 to Strangers, and Persons of other Religions.  
 We are told by some, that they would not  
 shew them so much as the Way to any Place  
 they were going to; or direct them to a Foun-  
 tain where they might quench their Thirst.

Here,

Here therefore, our *Blessed Lord* had a good Opportunity of opposing this narrow and inhumane Spirit that was gone out amongst them: And We may be sure, He was glad to lay hold on it; as he came into the World to implant other Sort of Notions in the Minds of Men, and to make their Charity as like to that of *Almighty God* himself, as it could be. In answer, therefore, to this *Enquiry*, and to teach Him who made it, *Whom* He was to look upon as his *Neighbour*; as an Object of that *Love*, he was speaking of; and in order to do this in the most moving and affecting Manner, he sets his Duty plainly before his Eyes in a *Story*, here related.

*A certain Man*, He does not say, whether a *Jew*, or a *Stranger*. If a *Jew*, the good Nature of the *Samaritan*, presently spoken of, was so much the more remarkable; there being a consummate *Hatred* betwixt the *Two Nations*: If a *Stranger*, the Compassion of the *Samaritan* was peculiarly fit to be recommended to the Imitation of the *Jew*; in order to teach Him that universal Benevolence, from which He was utterly alienated. This Man, *in a Journey from Jerusalem to Jericho*, fell amongst *Thieves*, who robbed him, and used him so ill, that he was left *half dead*. Such an Object, lying helpless, and in a most inconvenient

Y

Place,

SERM.

XVI.

SERM.  
XVI.

Place, one would have thought enough to move the Compassion of the greatest *Barbarians*. And yet we find Compassion sunk so low amongst the *Jews*, that our *Saviour* thought their *Behaviour* in such Cases fitly represented by what follows. A *Priest*, and a *Levite*, Persons peculiarly employed in the Service of God, and devoted to the external Offices of their *Religion*, had forgot *Humanity* so far, as not to be touched with the Sight. The *One* saw him, at a Distance, as appears; the *Other* came, and looked on him: but *Both* of them passed by on the other Side. What Pretences they had for this Neglect, our *Lord* does not say. Perhaps, They were in Haste, upon Business; or going to attend upon the *Sacrifices*, or other Offices of the *Temple*; not understanding, nor feeling, the *Force* of that God-like Saying, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*. Or, perhaps, They found him to be a *Stranger*, a *Heathen*; and so fit rather for their Aversion, than their *Pity*. Something, or other, They had to lay their Consciences asleep: and were, without Doubt, glad of any Excuse, or Evasion, to that Purpose.

Let us see what follows. *But* a certain Samaritan, One of that Nation which mixed *Idolatri* with the Service of GOD; which *worshipped* they knew not what; of that Nation which was hated and despised by

by the *Jews*, to such a Degree that They had no Dealings with Them; a *Samaritan*, when he saw this miserable Object, was *moved with Compassion*; shewed him all the Love imaginable; performed all the good Offices that his present Condition could demand of him; and administred every Thing that his Necessity required. The *Cruelty*, and unbecoming *Barbarity*, of Those who neglected Him, was so apparent; and the Beauty and Loveliness of this Action of the *Samaritan* so bright and evident; that our *Saviour* doubted not to make the *Lawyer* himself judge, which of these *Three* had fulfilled that Command, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*; and which of these *Examples* was most fitted to direct him in the Performance of his Duty. And when he had answered, in favour of the *Samaritan*, that it was *He*, who had done the Duty of a *Neighbour* to this distressed Person: *Jesus* recommends this Pattern to him, in these Words, *Go, and do thou likewise*. Imitate this *Samaritan*. Look upon this Example, and You will not be at a Loss to know, *Who is your Neighbour*: but You will lay it down for a Truth, that every Person in the World, of what *Country*, of what *Profession*, of what *Religion* soever, who is in Necessity, and stands in Need of your Assistance, and whom you can assist

SERM.  
XVI.

S E R M.  
XVI.

without *Injury* to *Yourself*, or to Those for whom You are more nearly concerned; That every such Man has a *Title* to your *Beneficence* and *Charity*; That You have the same *Relation* to *Him*, that the *Samaritan* had to the distressed Person before-mentioned; That He is one of those *Neighbours* whom God requires you to *love as yourself*; and to do unto *Him*, as you might reasonably expect Others to do unto *You*, were you in his Circumstances. This was the main Design, and principal Intent of this History.

But, because in such *Histories*, or *Parables*, there are often *Many* other Things to be learnt and observed, besides the *Main Point*; I shall, therefore, in my following Discourse, make such *Observations*, as offer themselves from every Part of this *Story*, as well as from the chief *Scope* of it: but yet I shall name None but such as We may probably enough suppose to have been intended, and hinted at, by our *Lord*. For Instance,

I. We cannot but observe, that a Whole *Nation* of Men; *Men* who have, and think They have, the greatest Opportunities of *Religious Knowledge*; Nay, Men who are peculiarly devoted to the *Study* and public *Offices* of Religion, may be often grossly ignorant of some of the plainest, and most essential, *moral Duties*

*Duties* of It: and, accordingly, their *Practice* SERM. may be most unreasonable, and inexcusable. XVI.

II. We may observe, how glad many Persons are, of any *Excuse*, or *Pretense*, in order to avoid the greatest Objects of *Charity*, which will cost them a little *Trouble*, or a little *Money*.

III. From this *Story*, related by our *Lord* himself, we may observe, that Men of an *Orthodox Faith*, with respect to *God*; and of a true, and a *reveled, Religion*, may sometimes learn the *Practice* of a very great and substantial *Duty* from Men of an unsound Faith, and a *false Religion*; even from *Idolaters, Samaritans*, and *Pagans*.

IV. Lastly, the principal Point intended by our *Lord*, in this *Story*, being to recommend *Goodness* and *Love* to all Men; I shall say something upon the great *Duty* of universal *Charity*, and a most comprehensive *Compassion*; and our strict *Obligation* to the *Practice* of it.

I. From this *History*, and the *Occasion* of it, we may observe, that a whole Nation of Men, Men who have, and think They have, the greatest Opportunities of *religious Knowledge*; nay, Men who are peculiarly devoted to the *Study* of *Religion*, and the *Offices* belonging to *God's Worship*, may sometimes, be grossly ignorant

SERM. of some of the plainest and important *Duties*  
 XVI. of *Religion*; and accordingly, their Practice may  
 be most unreasonable and inexcusable.

Here was the whole *People* of the *Jews*, to whom God had given a supernatural *Revelation*; and, with this *Revelation* in their Hands, not a *Man* to be found amongst them, who was not of a narrow and confined Spirit; who had any Notion of a *Neighbour*, or of Persons to whom any good Offices were due, out of their own *Society*, and *Church*: not a *Man*, who understood, or practised, the great Duty of *Charity*, though it has the clearest and most evident Dictates of *Nature*, on its Side; Or, who had Generosity enough to perform the commonest Offices of *Civility* or *Humanity*, to *Any*, but a *Jew*. This was what the *Heathen Poets*, and *Historians*, often severely condemned, and ridiculed Them for. Here was a Person, who had made the *Law of Moses* his Study, who knew not how to expound that *second* great Precept of *loving his Neighbour as himself*; but, as it appears, stood in Need of some farther Instruction, in this Point; how willing soever he appeared to justify Himself. And, in our *Saviour's* Answer, who always had regard to *Truth* and *Decency*, a *Priest* and a *Levite*, Attendants upon the Service of *God* in the *Temple*, and punctual, without Doubt, in every Ceremony  
 and

and Mode of Worship, are represented as inexcusably guilty in one of the chief Branches of practical Religion; passing by the greatest Object of Pity imaginable, a Man in the utmost Distress, standing in need of their immediate Assistance, and, in all probability, *perishing* without it. So far from embracing such an Opportunity of doing good, and exercising those god-like Virtues of *Charity* and *Compassion*; that They are spoken of, as wholly unmoved at the Sight, and glad to get out of the Way of that Mercy, which might cost Them a little Mony or Trouble.

What a Devastation of All that is good in human Nature, must there be supposed; when it can forget its own manifold Wants and Necessities; put off its own tender Affections; throw off all that is soft and apt to be moved in it; and contract, in its stead, the Roughness of a Brute, and the Hardness of a Rock? And how low must That Man have been sunk beneath *Himself*, who could forget that He himself might have been the Man that *fell amongst Thieves*, and was *left half dead*; and not recollect what would have been the *Anguish of his own Soul*, in such a Condition; and what Regard He himself would justly have expected to his own Cries and Wounds, in so miserable a Case? Yet thus it

S E R M. was, in our *Saviour's* Time: otherwise, He  
 XVI. would not have had the Thought of represent-  
 ing it, in this Light.

II. The next Observation from this *Story*, was, That many Persons have so far hardened Themselves, in Covetousness, and Insensibility, that they are glad of any Pretense or Excuse, for neglecting the most moving Objects of Pity, if they are likely to put them to a little Trouble, or Charge: nay, That they will often, rather than be at the Expense of a little Compassion, arm Themselves against it without any Pretense; avoid whatever seems to demand their Assistance; and fly from all Opportunities of doing good.

The *Priest*, when he saw this poor Man in the most wretched Condition; fearing perhaps, it might be an *Object* moving enough to melt him into *Pity*, seems to have been contented with the Sight at a Distance, and *passed by on the other Side*. The *Levite* came, and looked upon him; viewed his *Condition*; was Witness to his Wounds and his Distress; saw him to be utterly unable to help himself, and destined to Death without present Assistance: and yet, was proof against such a Spectacle of Misery; shut up his Bowels of *Compassion* against Him, and *passed by* also *on the other Side*.

And,

And, as We can observe of *other* Men, That, though they abound in *Riches*, and all the Superfluities of *Life*, They yet are willing to be *ignorant* of the *Wants* of their Neighbours; or, hard-hearted enough to deny them the Relief, which They could easily grant them: So, let us look into Ourselves, and see, if we also are not guilty of this same Wickedness, Ourselves, in some Degree, or other. How many Petitioners, such as really want and deserve our Help, have we been deaf to? How often have we avoided a Person in distress, merely because we knew, or suspected, He would beg our Assistance; and how often have We *passed by on the other Side*, upon a distant Sight of him? Have We not sometimes found Ourselves but too willing to take no Notice of the Opportunities, put into our Hands, of feeding the Hungry, clothing the Naked, relieving the Sick, and Afflicted, releasing the Captive, or Prisoner? All these, whenever they present themselves to us, are our *Neighbours*; and have a Title to our *Love*, and to, the Effects of this *Love*, all the good Offices we can afford them. And when we refuse to hear the Cries of the Unhappy, and to administer that Relief, which we have Opportunity, and Ability, to administer; Or, to supply the Wants of Those who present themselves to us with the certain Marks of

of

SERM.  
XVI.

of Distress and Misery upon them, We do, in our several Degrees, approach to the Barbarity, and imitate the Cruelty, of Those Persons, in the Story now before Us, who could see a Man upon the very brink of Death, destitute of all Comfort; and yet not be moved so far as to afford him the least Assistance.

III. I proceed now to a *Third* Observation, which, I said, we might make from the same *History*; viz. That Men of an *orthodox Faith* with respect to God, and of a true *Religion*, may often learn the Practice of a very great and substantial Duty from Men of an *unsound Faith*, and false *Religion*.

Our blessed *Lord*, in his Discourse with the *Samaritan Woman*, (*John iv<sup>th</sup>*) in express Words, preferred the *Jewish Religion* far before the *Samaritan*. *We know what we worship; Ye worship Ye know not what*. They of *Samaria* had many *Idolatries* mixed with that Worship of the true God, which they retained. The *Jews* worshiped God according to the Law of *Moses*; whose Instructions They received as the Dictates of God himself: And by these Instructions They were led to the strictest Notions of the *Unity* of the *Supreme Being*; and of the *Perfections* of his *Nature*. But, notwithstanding all this, We find,

find, in the *History* before Us, that our *Saviour* did not scruple to propose to the Imitation of the *Jews*, in a most important Point of practical *Religion*, the *Example* of an *idolatrous Samaritan*, in order to throw Shame upon their sordid and cramp Notions of *Charity*; and to inspire them with a pious Emulation, and a Resolution, not to be outdone, in the most God-like Virtue, by Those, whom They so much out-did in their Faith, and Worship.

I know not how it comes to pass, That the very Things which God designs to make *Some Men better than Others*, often prove the Occasions, through the Perverseness of these Men themselves, of making them *Worse*. That peculiar *Relation* which God appeared to have to the *Jews*; that *Love* He shewed to their Forefathers; the fighting their Battles; the establishing Them in a good Country; and, above all, the giving Them the Law from Heaven, and leading them into the Knowledge of himself: All these Favours, instead of making them generous and beneficent, served to sowr their Spirits; to contract their Souls; and to shrink their Affections into a narrower Compass. So ungrateful a Return did They make to these Blessings, that They were always reflecting upon the *worse* Condition of the *Nations* around Them; how

SERM.

XVI.



S E R M.  
XVI.

little other Mortals were esteemed and favoured by God, in comparison with Themselves; and therefore, how fit to be despised and neglected. And how many Men may we meet with, or hear of, in our own Days, who value themselves upon the mere outward Profession of This or That *Religion*; who are often thanking God that They are Members of the *best*, or only, *Church* in the World; whilst they shamefully neglect many Instances of Morality, which the very *Heathens* excell in; and are boasting of their *Faith*, whilst They are inexcusably wicked in their *Practice*?

What Cruelties have been exercised by some called *Christians*, upon *Infidels*, merely for worldly Ends; and these much the more to be abhorred for being coloured over with the specious Name of *Religion*? Cruelties, which are said to have created in those *Infidels* Themselves an irreconcilable Hatred to the very Name of *Christ*. To speak more plainly, what Methods have been taken by Those of the *Romish Church*, to plant what They call *Christianity*, where it was not; or to maintain, and reform it to their own Minds, where it was? *Methods*, that would make the Ears of an honest *Heathen* to tingle; so much beyond the common Bounds of *Barbarity* itself, that They can hardly be expressed; but will always,

ways, I fear, be remembered to the Infamy of the *Christian* Name, by Those who know of no other *Gospel*, but what such Men have preached. And are there not, amongst *Those* who utterly condemn this Conduct, *Some* to be found, so intent upon the Goods of this World, as to forget those Duties in which the Vigour and Life of *Religion* consists; *Justice*, and *Charity*; and to retain little more, than so much of the Profession of Religion as may help on their worldly Designs?

But though God certainly preferred the *Worship* of the *Jew*, before That of the *Samaritan*; yet, we need not doubt to say that He was much better pleased with the good and charitable *Samaritan*, than with the inhuman and unmerciful *Jew*. Nay, we may go farther, and take occasion from hence to affirm that a Good God will make all just Allowances for the *Errors* of every such *charitable* Man; but *None* for the wilful Wickedness of One who professes a true and holy Religion, and transgresses the plainest Laws of Nature, and Reason, and of all *Religions* in the World. *This* admits of no Excuse: the *Other* may, in the Eyes of *Him*, who sees the bottom of all Hearts, and knows the Spring from whence all the Errors in the World proceed.

So also, though it be certain that a *Christian* of a *Right Faith* is more acceptable to *Him*,  
than

S E R M.  
XVI.

SERM  
XVI.

than *One* who is not so, where there is nothing to make it otherwise; yet, We may be as certain, That an honest *Heathen* is much more acceptable to him, than a dishonest and deceitful *Christian*; and that a charitable and good-natured *Pagan* has a better Title to his Favour, than a cruel and barbarous *Christian*; let him be never so orthodox in his Faith. Nay, for the sake of the *Gospel* itself, whatever that Part of *Christians* do, who, in the heat of their Zeal for enlarging the Bounds of their *Church*, seem to think it a Duty to forget all the Softnesses of Human Nature, and to practise the utmost Inhumanity; Let *Us*, (who pretend to be reformed from them) have no hand in casting such an indeleble Blot upon our Holy Religion: and, while our Mouths are making a good *Confession of Faith*, let not our Lives be full of those Vices which the *Gospel* came to extirpate. And, particularly, Let that extensive *Charity*, and unbounded Love and Beneficence, adorn our Lives, which make so great a Part of, and add so great a Lustre to, that Divine Institution. To this End,

IV. The principal Thing intended by our *Lord*, in the Story we are now considering, being to recommend *Goodness* and *Love* towards all Men, let us turn our Thoughts to this great Duty of *Universal Charity*, and our strict Obligation to the constant *Practice* of it.

On

In order to fix the Nature of this, it is proper here again to call to mind, That this universal *Charity* is not designed to break in upon those *Duties* which we owe to *Ourselves*, our *Parents*, our *Children*, our *Friends*, nay, and our *Acquaintance*. It is not in the Power of Any Man to assist every One in distress: and *Nature* directs Him to prefer *These* before *Strangers*, when they come in Competition, and are in the same Degree of Want, or Distress. Accordingly, our *Saviour* here chooses the Instance of *One* in the greatest Danger; at the very Point of Death; certainly perishing without present Help. And had the Case been thus, that the *Priest*, and the *Levite*, were going to a *Father*, or a *Child*, or a *Friend*, in the same Necessity; and had it not in their Power to assist Both; We may venture to say that our *Lord* would not have blamed Them for neglecting a *Stranger* for *One* in a much nearer Relation to Them, and in the same Condition. And therefore, the Doctrine taught in this History, is rightly understood to be this, That Whoever of the human Race stands in need of our Assistance; whom we can relieve without Injury to *Ourselves*; or without neglecting *Others*, in the same Condition, whom we much more ought to relieve; has a Title to our Benevolence and Kindness: Or is *our Neighbour*, whom we are to love as *Ourselves*;

SERM.

XVI.

SERM.  
XVI.

*selves*; and whom we are willingly to comfort, support, and assist. And this We are plainly obliged to do, as we are *Men*, of the same Class and Order of Beings; as we are obliged to imitate Almighty GOD; and as we are *Christians*, to be guided and judged by the Gospel.

1. As we are *Men*; and, as such, Partakers of the same Nature; subject to the same Accidents; placed in this World upon the same Conditions, with Other Men. Look up to the common Creator of all, and the common Father, from whom all had their original; and there is no Difference. The Rich, and the Poor; the Happy, and the Miserable; the Fortunate, and Unfortunate; are of one Stock. God created the One and the Other: and placed them in the same World; where None of them, not the greatest, and richest, and most *Powerful* of them all, can be secure that he shall not, one Day or other, come to be the least, the poorest, and most distressed, of Men. How happy soever and flourishing we are to day; how prosperously soever Things succeed with us; not many Years may, perhaps, make a great Alteration. A single Act of great Imprudence; an unexpected *Loss*; a very calamitous Accident; Envy and Malice of *Others*: One, or more, of *These*, may overturn All; and deprive us of those good Things, a small Part of which We now think

think it hard to afford our Brethren in their Necessities. Let not, therefore, the *Wants* of your *Neighbour*, nor your own *Riches*, make such a Difference between You, in your own Eyes, as to recommend him to your Contempt. Neglect not *Him*, in his distressfull State, whom God has created with the same Faculties you possess, and placed in the same World which you inhabit. Remember that a small Time may, possibly, alter the Face of Things, in so uncertain a *State* as This: and You will always make *their* Case Your own. Call to Mind often that it is not for Men to live without mutual Help, and good Offices: and that the *Richest* of all do, indeed, owe so much to the Labour and Industry of the *Poor*, that They may be glad to supply the Wants of the *Distressed*, when their own Industry and Labour cannot. The more frequently You entertain yourselves with such Thoughts, the greater and more constant will be your Regard to your *Fellow-Creatures* around You.

2. We are obliged to practise this universal Charity, as we are obliged to *imitate* God himself. That great and all-perfect Being wants not the Assistance of any Men; nor can ever possibly want it: and yet He has not neglected, or despised, *their* Necessities. Those Blessings, the

S E R M.  
XVI.

Administration of which he reserves to himself, how common and universal are They? *His Sun shines, and his Rain falls*, indifferently on All: and why then should not those *Blessings* which He has entrusted with the *Rich Men* of this World, be freely and universally distributed, as the *Necessities* of *poor Men* require? What would the *Richest* of them all do, were the Supreme Creator, and Governour, of all things, quite *Regardless* of *Them*, and of *their Well-being* here below? They could not breath one Moment without his Concurrency; and he affords it them. They could not live, without his *Sun*, and his *Air*, and his *Rain*; and all these, by his Command, contribute to their Support. And this is a most powerful Argument, That, when *Others* want what they have in Abundance, and what they can spare; They ought, with all Readiness to communicate it to their *Fellow-Creatures*. To refuse to do this, is indeed a most *ungrateful* Return to that GOD who shews himself, every Day and Hour, so good to *Them*. For to refuse to *imitate* Him in this, is *not to thank him*. Nay, it may justly be taken as an affront to Himself, that, when He has communicated to *Them* of the Fullness of his own Happiness, *They* have so little a Sense of the Beauty of such Benevolence

volence, as not to think it worthy of the most natural Regard of Imitation. But,

3. We are obliged to this Beneficence, as we are *Christians*, to be guided now, and judged hereafter, by the *Gospel* We pretend to embrace. In *that* We are plainly taught, That whatever we have, over and above the Necessities and Conveniences of Ourselves, and those in whom we are most nearly concerned, is intrusted to Us for the Use and Benefit of Those who want it. *To see our Brother have need, and to shut up our Bowels of Compassion against him*, is condemned by the same Gospel, as a Sin: And if in *Sins* there be *Degrees*; We may say that *This* is One of the most unpardonable of all. The Duty of *loving*, that is, *doing Good* to, all our *Fellow-Creatures*, when their *Distresses* call upon Us, is so often *there* repeated, and inculcated, that it is needless to be more particular. The *Example* set before Us, in *That*, is *Christ Jesus*, who was never weary of exerting his *Power* for the Relief, and Comfort, and Support, and Happiness, of all the World around him. The Account *there* given of the Day of *Judgment*, and the great and solemn Audit to come, turns all upon *Charity*; and represents the Case in this Manner. Have you fed the *Hungry*, clothed the *Naked*, enter-

SERM. tained the *Stranger*, visited and relieved the  
 XVI. *Sick*, supplied the Wants of all Mankind, as  
 ~~~~~ far as you were able? If *You* have; *You* are  
 'Those happy Disciples, to whom our *Lord* will
 say, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the*
Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation
of the World. If *You* have not; the *Other*
 Sentence is declared to belong to you, *Depart*
from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire. What
 can be a greater *Demonstration* of how great
 Value, in the Eyes of God, this *universal*
Charity is, and of what a heinous Nature the
 contrary Vice is? And what can be a greater
 Argument to Us, to avoid the *One*, and practise
 the *Other*?

*Of the DUTY of CHRISTIANS
under AFFLICTIONS.*

SERMON XVII.

HEBREWS xii. II.

Now, no Chastening for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceful Fruit of Righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.

THIS, and the foregoing Verses, certainly had reference to that Scene of SERM.
XVII.
Persecution, to which the Profession and Practice of the *Christian Religion* exposed Men, in the *first Ages of the Gospel*. But the Application of them is so natural to the common Calamities and Troubles which Men meet with in this World, even when the outward Profession of their Religion is secure and easy; that We may, very well, take Occasi-

SERM
XVII.

on from them to discourse of those *Afflictions*, which Mortals seem to be born to, in this State; the severe Trials of their Faith and Trust in God, *here*; and the great Instruments of Reward and Glory, *hereafter*, to Those who bear them as They ought to do. And, in order to treat this important Subject, in a manner which may be most useful to the Persons most deeply concerned in it,

I. I shall observe the little Reason we have, any of us all, to expect to pass through this World without our Portion of Trouble and Affliction.

II. I shall endeavour to shew after what Manner we ought to bear those *Afflictions*, which may be said to be our almost unavoidable Portion.

III. I shall point out the great and prevailing *Arguments* there are, to engage us to bear them after the best and most reasonable Manner. And

IV. I shall consider the great and unspeakable Advantages of these *Afflictions* to Those who are exercised therein, and who undergo them after this good and becoming Manner.

I. I shall

I. I shall observe the little Reason we have, any of us, to expect to pass through this World without our Portion of Trouble and *Affliction*.

SERM.
XVII.

Look abroad into the present State of Things, and extend your View as far as That will permit: and find out, if it be possible, those happy Men, who meet with no Bitterness; no Misfortune; no Calamity, in this World. You would think, perhaps, that Such might most successfully be sought for, amongst the Virtuous and Best Part of Mankind. But *These*, if you will believe their own Words, have been most exposed to the Calamities and Misfortunes of this uncertain State; and to have been exercised the most severely with Trials and Afflictions, here below. It has been, in all Ages, a Sort of a Reproach which They themselves have made to *Providence*, that their Virtue, though pursued and cultivated sincerely, has only, at present, seemed to entitle them to more Troubles, and more Misfortunes, than *Others* have experienced; and that ill Success, and cross Accidents, have attended *Them*, when the wicked Part of the World have seemed to be at Rest, and to have all that their Hearts could wish to enjoy.

SERM.
XVII.

But, though this has been said, in the Heat and Passion, if I may say so, of *Good Men*; yet it cannot, in any tolerable Sense, be proved that *Wickedness* is any more a Security against Troubles and Afflictions, in this State, than true Goodness and Holiness. It may, indeed, often prosper, so far as to procure outward Grandeur, and immense Riches: But what is that to the State of Mind within, which is the Seat of Happiness? How many *Projects* does the *wicked Man* often frame, that are not fulfilled, but generally brought to Nothing, when he attempts them? How many *Pleasures* does he pursue, that end in Nothing but the *Bitterness* of *Disappointment*; and often, in, what is much worse, the *Bitterness* of a wounded *Conscience*, which He always carries about with him, and from which he cannot fly. Providence has not yet so forsaken the present Condition of *Virtue* and *Goodness*, in this World, as to leave *Wickedness* wholly triumphant; or to give it the Encouragement of the *good Things* of this Life, without the common Mixture of the *Bad*. Far otherwise. We see, the *Wicked Man* often suffers, in this World: Nor can all his Cunning and Contrivance, in *some Cases*, keep off from him the public Disgrace of Evils much above the ordinary

dinary and common Evils, of which He also has his Share, here below. SERM.
XVII.

It may indeed, be sufficient, to ask, upon this Head, Of all the Men ordained to live in this world, Who is there ; Who has there ever been ; Who can there ever be, truly *Self-sufficient* ? Who, so fitted for *Happiness* within himself, as to place no Part of it in any thing *without* him ; or, to seek for no Part of it any where but *within* his own Breast ? Who, so perfect, or, Who framed after so peculiar a Manner, as not to find it unavoidable to delight in, or love, some particular *Good*, so as to make the Uncertainty, or Loss, of it, a great *Evil* ? *One* indeed, fixes upon *one* Thing ; and *Another*, upon *Another* : *One*, upon the *Riches* of this World ; *Another*, upon the *Honours* and *Pride* of it ; *Another*, upon *Reputation* and *Glory* ; *Another*, upon his *Family*, and his *Children* ; *Another*, upon the *Pleasures* of *Friendship*, or *Learning* : But still every *One*, upon something, or other. All find it so necessary, to seek Support, under the expected Evils of this Life, from some one, or other, of these, or the like, *good Things*, that They constantly, and universally, do it. And though the Best of them do Nothing but what Nature leads Them to ; and though They make the wisest Choice possible, in
fixing

SERMON
XVII.

fixing upon something the most proper of all Things *below*, for their Assistance; and though They pursue it with *Innocence*, and a due Regard to *Religion*; yet even still it must be owned That there is Room enough left for very *severe* and piercing *Afflictions*. There is one single Circumstance of human Life, which is alone sufficient to render insipid every Thing that can be called Enjoyment. I mean, the *Habitual Want of Health*, which Many, we see, labour under. And much more are the frequent Returns of the most *violent Pains* and *Diseases*, which are the *Portion of Others*, able of Themselves, to scatter *Misery*, where *Joy* might otherwise reign; and to bring to Nought the Happiness of Those who possess the greatest of all *temporal Goods*.

Nor do I see a *Remedy* in this Case. For we must take our *Natures*, as God has made them; and the *World*, as we find it. We cannot pretend, by any *Self-Sufficiency*, to procure for Our-selves, that little Happiness which We, for a few Hours or Days, sometimes obtain in this State; and which we cannot help desiring, any more than we can help desiring *to live*. And yet it is true, That, whatever it is, here below, that our peculiar Constitution of Mind directs us to pursue, in Aid of our Happiness, must have
fo

so much of the *Nature* of the other *Good Things* of this State, that it cannot but be, one Time or other, the Occasion of Uneasiness and Affliction. But I come now to the next Point I propos'd, which was

SERM.

XVII.

II. To shew, after what Manner it is the Duty of reasonable Creatures, and *Christians*, to bear those *Afflictions*, which are so unavoidable in this State.

And here, I think, we are to consider the different and various Tempers, Educations, and Dispositions, of Mankind; by which it must come to pass that They cannot possibly All shew themselves equally couragious, or equally patient, in the same Circumstances.

It is nothing to *one* Person to lose a Summ of *Mony*, who yet is sunk by the Loss of an exalted *Station* in Life. It is a small Matter to *another* to suffer in this Point of *Honour*, who cannot bear the least Disappointment in *Profit*, or *Gain*. And a third Person, perhaps, values a *Friend*, or a *Relation*, more than the most covetous Man upon Earth does his Bags; or the most Ambitious, his *high* Estate. And, again, the Passions of Some may be stronger by Nature than those of Others; and their personal Weakness greater: They may be of a softer and more tender Nature,
and

SERM. and so capable of deeper Impressions, and
 XVII. more disorderly Commotions of Mind, than
 ~~~~~ their Neighbours: and the Notions They  
 have received in their Education, may have  
 still more distinguished Them from Other  
 Men. Allowances are to be made for all  
 these Things: and Almighty God will cer-  
 tainly make all reasonable Allowances for  
 such Variety of Circumstances, and Dispo-  
 sitions.

It cannot be expected, that One who is  
 possessed with the Love of Money, or Ho-  
 nour, can bear a *Separation* from *Them*, with  
 as little Shew of Remorse, as One who never  
 felt any strong Inclination towards them. And  
 so likewise, in other Cases. But, taking all  
 these Considerations into the Account, the least  
 that can be our Duty, under the severest Dis-  
 pensations of God's Providence towards us, in  
 the Removal, or Diminution, of those good  
 Things, from which we have expected any  
 Addition to our Happiness in this World, is,  
 To acknowledge God to be perfectly wise, and  
 perfectly good; much better able to judge  
 and to determine what is good for Us, than  
 we are, for ourselves; and to submit to Him,  
 as to a Governour, to whom there is all the  
 Reason in the World to commit Ourselves,  
 and all our Fortunes.

I do

I do not think, and therefore, I cannot teach, That this *Submission* to Almighty God, which is equally the *Duty* of *All*, must be joined with a *rejoicing* in such *severe Dispensations*. On the contrary, It seems to me to be perfectly consistent with a deep and sorrowful Sense of the Loss we have sustained, and of the Good removed from us. Otherwise indeed, it can hardly bear the *Name* of an *Affliction*.

SERM.

XVII.

I know, In the Case of *Persecution* for the Sake of the Gospel, our blessed Lord speaks, of *rejoicing*, and *being exceeding glad*; and his Apostles, of *counting it all Joy to suffer for his Sake*. But these are to be looked upon as *Figurative Descriptions* of a State of Mind, reasonable, indeed, in itself; but not commanded, as the strict *Duty* of every *Christian*.

It is, in itself, I say, reasonable, if we consider only the Goodness of the Cause, and the greater Rewards of another Life, which our *Sufferings* procure us, even to express a *Joy*, in the midst of All the Pains We can undergo, for the Sake of our Religion. Nor can it be denied That there have been Instances of Men, who have, in this Best of *Causes*, shewn all the Marks of a *real Joy* in their *Sufferings* for it. I wish, the like could not be said of  
*Others,*

SERM.  
XVII.

*Others, in the very Worst, and most unworthy of such an Appearance. But, on the other Side, considering the Nature and Circumstances of Man, in this World, it seems impossible for All to arrive at such a Perfection, as to be able literally to fulfil such Expressions. And therefore, This cannot be the Duty of All. I am sure, the Apostle, in the Text, expressly saith, that no Chastening is, for the present, joyous, but grievous; and this, with regard to our Suffering for the Sake of the Gospel. Nay, our Lord himself not only advises his first Disciples, in some of his last Hours, to watch and pray, that They may not enter into such Temptations, or severe Trials, on account of their Relation to Him; but recommends to Them in other Passages, the Prudence of avoiding Them, as far as They innocently and honourably could. And if We call to mind his own Practice, when His Sufferings pressed close upon Him, for the most glorious Cause, which He knew to be his Father's Will, and his own Undertaking; We shall see that He did not think it unworthy of his Character to shew the sincere Tokens of exceeding Sorrow, mixed with his Submission and Perseverance. So that, even in this extraordinary Case of Persecution for His Sake, it may be justly said, That an honest Christian performs*

performs that *Duty* which GOD requires of Him, when He *patiently* submits to Pain and Torment, as the *Act* of Providence, rather than *deny* his Master, or *abjure* his Religion.

And upon all the foregoing Considerations, with regard to the *usual* Calamities attending human Life, I shall not scruple to say, That what the Great and Good *Ruler* of all Things expects from his imperfect Creatures, as a *Duty*, is, Not that they should wish for, or desire, *Calamities*; or shew a *Stupidity*, or *Joy*, under them: but that They should have Recourse to the Considerations of Religion; and make a rational and patient Submission to Him, as to a wise and good Governour, in all the *Afflictions* which They may experience in the Course of this World. And now, in order to this,

III. I shall point out the strong Reasons there are, to induce them to bear these *Afflictions* with Patience, and a proper Submission to Almighty God.

No one can deny that it is both just and reasonable that God should sometimes try the Duty and Affections of his Creatures, provided such Trials contain Nothing in them beyond their own Strength, or That which he is pleased to afford them. Nor can any

SERM. one deny it to be highly reasonable that Men,  
 XVII. in such a State as this, should give some plain  
 Evidence that they believe there is a God, a  
 Being of perfect Goodness, and perfect Wis-  
 dom, who governs and disposes all Things  
 here below. Now, What greater Evidence of  
 This, is it possible for Us to give, than pa-  
 tiently to submit all our Affairs to his De-  
 termination, and quietly to acquiesce in his  
 Decrees? This doth not at all forbid Us to  
 make use of our own Prudence, in guarding,  
 as much as we can, our Lives here below  
 from all the *Evils* of this *State*: but teaches  
 Us to do this under the Inspection of his Eye,  
 and with a constant Submission of *our* Wills to  
*His*. And the serious Consideration of our  
 own weak and imperfect Faculties, and of  
 His infinite Perfections, will soon convince Us,  
 that such a *Submission* is, in our present Con-  
 dition, our greatest Happiness.

If We consider ourselves, and the *Pow-  
 ers* that belong to us; We shall find how nar-  
 row and confined they are. How many ma-  
 terial Things are there, that we must be ig-  
 norant of, even of great Concern to ourselves,  
 and our Happiness here below? By how many  
 Passions, and how many Fancies, are We  
 often led out of the Paths of Right Judgment  
 I about



SERM.  
XVII.

themselves, under the Notion of Good and Pleasure, if they were not so? How often would their Appetites, or their childish Conceits, be the Instruments of their Unhappiness? And what are the best and wisest of Us, when compared with Almighty God, but weak as Children, and as truly unfit to choose for ourselves, in many Cases of singular Importance to Our chief Concern? And if it be an Happiness to *Them* to be under the Guidance of Others, whose Duty it is to keep them from noxious and hurtful Things, and to grant them Nothing but what is truly good for them; how much more is it happy for *Us*, that there is One above us, to train and educate us to a more blessed State, by the Discipline of Afflictions when he sees them necessary; and thus to consult our true Interest by denying us the Enjoyment of what is not so good for us as we imagine; and by not permitting us to ruine ourselves; as, probably, we should do, were our Desires, in this World, more frequently granted us.

It is a Work of Difficulty, I confess, contentedly to part with That, on which we have founded any of our Hopes of Happiness in this State. But see how easy, even for worldly Reasons, and without any of the

the Assistances of Religion, many Men can be, under great and considerable Disappointments; and see also how Time has performed those Cures upon the most disturbed Minds, which They have not permitted Reason and Consideration to do: And then judge, Whether it be not much more becoming Us, to have this Cure effected by wise and excellent Motives, or, in other Words, by the most reasonable and most unexceptionable Methods. And what can be of more proper Influence upon any ingenuous and well-disposed Mind, than the Consideration of God's Providence; the Thought that it is agreeable to his Will we should suffer all we suffer; that the Circumstances we are in, are what He has judged proper, for the best and wisest Reasons, to allot us: Or, at least, that our Portion is so far his Determination, that, if He had seen it to be bad for us, all Things considered, He would not so much as have permitted it to be what it is? And this is much the same Satisfaction, as if He himself had assured us that it is what we ourselves should choose, did we know our own good, and could we see all Things as they truly are.

And this leads to another Consideration very well fitted to make us easy and resigned; That, let our Condition be what it will, at

SERM. present, it is such as We ourselves should choose,  
 XVII. or patiently submit to, as the fittest and best,  
 if all Things, proper to be considered, could  
 be present to our View. For the Reason  
 why We do not, at first Thought, acquiesce  
 in all the Dispensations of God Almighty, is  
 because We do not see that Fitness and Pro-  
 priety in them, which He always has before  
 his Eyes. And this proceeds from the  
 Imperfection of our Capacities and Un-  
 derstandings: which Defect can be supplied  
 by Nothing but our Submission to a superior  
 and perfect Understanding.

It may be an innocent Speculation to think  
 how great our Happiness would be, if we  
 were so framed, as to see perfectly every  
 Particular, and all possible Circumstances, re-  
 lating to our Condition here, and hereafter;  
 what is truly our *Good*, and what is not:  
 But this is not given to Us. We may seek  
 after such Knowledge, as well as we can;  
 but we must be content with that Cloud of  
 Darkness in which it is at present wrapped  
 up; and give Repose to our *Souls* in the  
 reasonable Assurance that there is a Being su-  
 perior to us, who made us, and who governs  
 us; that this Being sees all Things as they  
 truly are, in their own Natures and Tenden-  
 cies; and orders Nothing for his Creatures,  
 but

but what they may be satisfied is best and fittest to be ordered. And did we but heartily believe this, and duey consider it, it could not but be a mighty Relief to us in all our Exigencies: And we could not but feel the satisfaction of a rational Faith supplying the Defects and Imperfections of our own Natures.

But, in order to this Relief, We must strictly guard against that great, and, I had almost said, blasphemous Error, which represents God, as acting, in the Government of the World, and in the Disposition of the Fortunes of his Creatures, after an arbitrary and tyrannical manner, in order to shew his Power and Greatness: and always think of Him, as a *Being* who delights in Nothing more than in doing Good; and esteems Nothing so much his Glory, as to act constantly, and without Interruption, according to the eternal Rules of Justice and Goodness. And if we would often thus represent to Ourselves Almighty God, as the Best and Wisest of All Beings, who could have no End in creating us, and can have none since in governing us, separated from our own Happiness; This would be a solid Ground of inward Satisfaction and Contentment, amidst all the Unhappineses and Pains, and Distresses, of

SERM. this World: especially, if we added to the  
 XVII. Argument, That this same God has assured Us  
 of *Another* future and unchangeable State, in  
 which He will reward the Patience and Re-  
 signation we have exercised in *This*; and  
 make us ample Amends for all the tempo-  
 ral *Evils* we have here sustained. This is  
 what leads Me, as I proposed,

IV. To speak of the great Advantages of  
*Afflictions* to those who *are exercised therein*;  
 and who bear them with a due Christian  
 Patience, and Submission.

To pass through an uncertain miserable  
 World well, has the greatest Encouragement,  
 when it is known to be the Road to a certain  
 and happy State; a State, in which we shall  
 receive infinitely more Good than ever we  
 have lost here; if we press towards it with a  
 manly and Christian Greatness of Mind. And  
 this Encouragement We cannot be without,  
 if We truly believe That there are *Treasures* in  
*Heaven*, sufficient to make the Want of all the  
 Gold of *this* World tolerable; Honours and Glo-  
 ries, sufficient to make the Disgraces of this  
 State fit easy; and Happiness in such Per-  
 fection, as to make all the *Miseries* experi-  
 enced here below, appear of little Moment,  
 when compared with what is to come.

How

How then should this Thought contribute to the enduring any temporal Evils and Calamities with a decent Patience, That, in the other State, if we make ourselves worthy of the Rewards of it, All will be exactly what we could wish; the Loss, or Want, of the good Things of this World made up to us a thousand Fold, by large Communications of unmixed Happiness; *Sickness*, and *Pain*, exchanged for *Health*, and *Vigour*, of Body and Mind; Infirmities of every Sort, far removed from Us: and this happy Condition made more happy by the Certainty and Stability of It; free from the uneasy Suspicion of any future Alteration, or any the least Decay in the Favour of GOD towards Us.

And, Is it not worth while to be Patient under the transient Evils of this World, which you must suffer whether you will, or no; and which are made much more intolerable for want of a reasonable Submission? Nay, to shew a proper Degree of Contentment under them, when this will certainly procure you a higher Place in the Love of God, and a greater Portion of the Rewards of Heaven, than you could hope for without them? It is indeed, for this Purpose, that God layeth his afflicting Hand upon Some; not to crush or oppress them,

SERM.  
XVII.

into a stupid, unactive, and desponding Condition; but to give them an Opportunity of demonstrating their Faith in *Him*, and of practising those Precepts of *Religion* they have treasured up in their Minds.

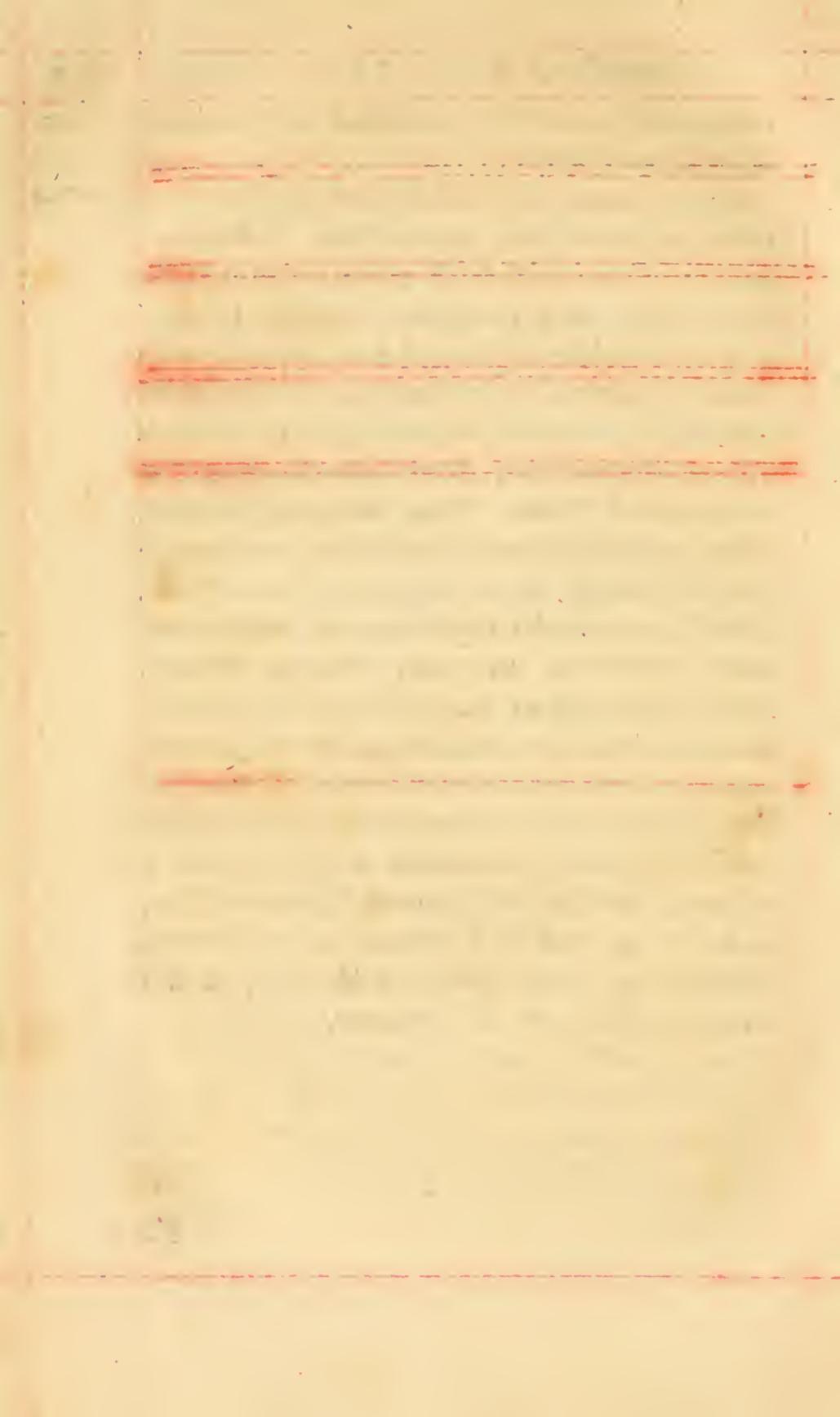
And that this does not proceed from any Want of Love, and paternal Benevolence, towards Them, the *Final Issue* of these *Corrections*, when *Patience shall have had its perfect Work*, will openly prove: when the great *Ends*, proposed by Him, will appear to have been, That He might more effectually take their Thoughts off from this wretched World; and fix them more firmly upon another and better State, to which They are hastening apace: That They might do the more Service to true Religion, by their Examples, *here*; and deserve more of his Favour, and receive a brighter Crown of Glory, *hereafter*: That He might make their Virtue and their Faith to *shine* more bright before Men, in *this* State; and Themselves more *illustrious* Instances of his Love, before his Angels, in Heaven. And we may add to what I have said, That thus it has pleased the same God to deal with Some of the greatest Examples of *Virtue*, (always amiable in his Eyes,) which have appeared in the *Heathen, Jewish, and Christian, World*: and

even with his own Son, in whom He declared Himself well pleased.

ERM.

XVII.

The mention of this *Divine Person*, who, when in our Form, was a *Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*; and who is both our Master, and our great Original to copy after, leads Me to think, I can conclude with Nothing better, than this short Exhortation. Let every one of us, with respect to the *Evil Things* of this Life, have His Example always in Our View. This will teach Us that, before any Affliction is actually come upon Us, We may becomingly say, with Him, *Father, remove this Cup from me*; but it will teach Us also to add, in his Words, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou willest*. And after the Time is come when we see it to be *God's Will* that we must suffer Affliction, in some Point or other; let us learn, from the same perfect Pattern, to endure it after such a Manner, as that, being made like unto Him, in Suffering, and in Patience, in *this World*, We may be made *like unto him* also, in the Glories of That which is *to come*.



---

---

*The* CHRISTIAN RACE.

---

S E R M O N XVIII.

---

I CORINTHIANS ix. 24, 25.

*Know ye not, that they which run in a Race, run all, but one receiveth the Prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every Man that striveth for the Mastery is temperate in all Things. Now They do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but We an incorruptible.*

**T**H E S E Words are an *Allusion* to S E R M. those public Races, which were XVIII. much in Use amongst the *Heathens*, in St. Paul's Days, and drew together a great Concourse of People from all Parts. And as it was His Custom to draw Arguments for Care, and Diligence, and Patience, in *Christians*, from what passed in the World about Him; so we find Him frequently referring to all the Other *Sports*, and *Contests*, then in Use: such as *Fighting*, *Wrestling*, and

SERM. and the like. Thus, speaking of the *Christian Con-*  
 XVIII *test* He says, *We wrestle not*, Or, as it is in  
 the *Original*, *Our wrestling is not*, against  
*Flesh and Blood*, but against *Principalities and*  
*Powers*, &c. Eph. vi. 12. And, immediate-  
 ly after the *Text*, speaking of Himself, He  
 says, *So fight I*, not as *One that beateth the*  
*Air*; Or, more literally, *as One who is not*  
*beating the Air*, in a feigned Fight, merely to  
 exercise his *Arms and Hands*: But, like One  
 in earnest, *I keep under*, or rather, *beat my Bo-*  
*dy*, and bring it into *Subjection* as an *Adver-*  
*sary*: which He expresses by Words taken  
 from the *Bruises and Marks* of those severe  
*Blows* given to *Adversaries* in the public  
*Fightings* of his Days; and the *Insults* over  
 Them when conquered. And, in the tri-  
 umphant Review of his own *Cōduct*, He  
 particularly makes use of the Expressions  
 peculiar to these Games, and Contests,  
 2 *Tim.* iv. 7. *I have fought a good Fight*;  
*I have finished my Race*: *A Crown of Glory,*  
*is laid up for me*. So also, in other Places of  
 his Writings.

In the Words of the *Text*, He entirely  
 confines his *View* to the public Races, then  
 much frequented: And They may be thus in-  
 terpreted. "You know that They who pretend  
 to *run* in the *Stadium*, or Place in which the  
 public

public Races are performed, *All* indeed run for the Prize proposed; but that *One* only obtains it; *He*, that outdoes the rest, in Activity, and Swiftnes. And the like may be said of the *Christian Race*. They who profess *Christianity*, or pretend to be aiming at the Rewards promised to *Christians*, *All* pretend likewise to *run* the Christian Course, or lead the Life of *Christians*. But it is *one* Sort only of *These*, who obtain the Prize proposed; only *They*, who come up to the Conditions required by their great Master and Judge. *So run that ye may obtain*; that is, Since there is but *one* Sort of Professed *Christians*, who can obtain the *Crown of Life*, contended for, it ought to be your Endeavour *so to run* the Christian Race, that you may be of that Number. But in order to this, You must consider That *Every one who striveth*, in these Races amongst the Heathens, undergoes a great deal of Pains, and exercises the severest Instances of Command over his Appetites, in order to the preparing his Body, and going through the Fatigue of his Undertaking. *Now They do all this to obtain a Garland of fading Leaves*, and the *Acclamations* of Men perishing like themselves: How much more should *We* Christians willingly undergo the like Care and Labour, who expect a far greater Reward; an *incorruptible Crown* of never-fading Glory, and

SERM.

XVIII.



SERM. and eternal Honour, in the Presence of  
XVIII. God?"



Thus we see what the *Apostle* aims at, in this *Allusion* to the Preparation, Care, and Labour, of Those who strove in the Sports and Games of the Heathen. And from these Words, thus interpreted, I propose,

I. To consider the Nature of the Christian *Race*, represented to us in this *Allusion*; and what is necessary in order to Success in it: under which will appear the main Intention of the *Apostle* in this Passage. And,

II. To take occasion from hence to enlarge the *Apostle's* Argument, by adding an *Instance* or Two, of that Care, and Labour, and Pains, which the Men of the *World*, by their own Choice, undergo, for the obtaining as great a Portion as They can, of the good Things *below*; in order to stir up an Emulation and Zeal, in *Christians*, who profess to seek after nobler Enjoyments *above*, to equal, if not excell, Them, in all the like Care, and Labour, and Patience.

I. We are led to consider the *Nature* of the *Christian Race*, represented to us in this *Allusion*, and what is requisite to our Success in it:

not

not excluding what St. *Paul* often alludes to, SERM.  
 and argues, relating to the *Other* public *Games* XVIII.  
 and *Contests* for Glory, amongst the Men of   
 his *Age*.

Let us see, then, what was thought requisite, at that Time, towards finishing those *Races*, to which the Apostle alludes, so successfully, as to obtain the Garland, or *corruptible Crown*, He here speaks of; and consider whether this will not lead us into some proper Thoughts about the Nature of the *Christian Life*; and what is requisite towards the obtaining the *End* proposed by all who are really *Christians*. Now,

i. In order to the striving and contending successfully, in these *Races*, or other Exercises, it was thought absolutely necessary for the *Contenders* to undergo a severe *Preparation*, by which they were made fit for the Fatigues of their *Contests*. And this is one Thing principally aimed at, by the *Apostle* in the *Text*, when He says, *Every one that striveth for the Mastery*, or that pretends to run, and contend, for the Prize, *is temperate in all Things*; performs every Instance of *Self-denial*, and Command of all his Appetites, necessary to fit him for the successful finishing of his main Undertaking. And from hence the  
*Apostle*

SERM  
XVIII.

*Apostle* takes occasion to argue, *Much more* should *You Christians* go through the *Discipline* of a due *Preparation*; as the *Prize* *You* contend for, is infinitely more excellent: and then goes on, in the Words following the *Text*, to let the *Corinthians* know that He himself found great *Necessity* of *subduing his Body*, lest his *Bodily Appetites* should hinder Him in that extraordinary *Course*, which He, as an *Apostle*, had to *run*. And, certainly, whatever any *Christians* may find necessary, in order to the having a perfect *Command* over those *Bodily Passions*, and *Appetites*, which are the great *Enemies* They have to strive against, ought to be strictly performed, if They would *run* their *Christian Race* with Success.

But This was not the only *Preparation* They were to undergo, who of old contended for *Victory* in the public *Races* and *Games*. There was another *Preparation* also necessary, without which they could not hope successfully to finish their *Course*: A *Preparation*, by which they were instructed in the *Nature* of their *Courses*; the *Rules* of their own *Conduct*; the *Stratagems* of their *Antagonists*; and animated with a *Desire* of the *Glory* of *Conquerours*. And as, without such a *Preparation*, it was invain for *Them* to enter upon their  
their

their Work: so, likewise, it is invain for SERM.  
*Christians* to enter the Lists against the Ene- XVIII.  
 mies of their Souls; and to undertake so labo-  
 rious a Task as the *Christian Life*, which is  
 furrounded by *Adversaries* on every Hand,  
 and admits no Rest 'till They are come to the  
 End of their *Race*; it is invain, I say, for  
 Men to undertake this, without the like *Pre-*  
*paration*, of considering and knowing, what  
 is necessary for their great Undertaking.

For instance, They must be inwardly con-  
 vinced that *Jesus Christ* was sent by GOD, and  
 reveled eternal Rewards and Punishments to  
 Mankind: or else, They will be greatly in dan-  
 ger from every Temptation that allures them;  
 and too apt to yield to the inviting Scenes of  
 Pleasure, Profit, or Honour, always ready to  
 be presented to their View. They must be  
 forewarned of all the *Dangers* in their  
 Way; all the *Wiles* and *Stratagems* of their  
*Enemies*, so often spoken of in *Scripture*, the  
*World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*: otherwise,  
 They may be apt to be *surprized* by the *Ima-*  
*ges of Good*, which may be unexpectedly placed  
 in their View, to turn them aside from their  
*Course*. They must also be perfectly instructed  
 in the *Conditions* required of them; and in all  
 those *Rules*, that are necessary for the running  
 their *Christian Race* aright: otherwise, They

SERM. may mistake fatally, in Matters essential to  
 XVIII. their Success; and embrace *Evil* for *Good*,  
 and *Wrong* for *Right*; and find themselves, at  
 last, going backward rather than advancing  
 forward. A *Preparation* of themselves in  
 these and the like Particulars, by consulting  
 and considering the *Gospel* itself, and not  
 the *Phantasies* of Men, is what all *Christians*  
 must undergo, before they can hope to finish  
 their Course with Glory. But

2. In the performing of the *Races* of Old,  
 to which St. *Paul* here alludes, there was a  
 Course of Labour, and Care, and Diligence,  
 continued without the least Interruption of  
 Idleness, or impertinent Trifling. And This  
 leads us to consider the *Christian Race* likewise,  
 as a Business of constant Care, and Diligence,  
 never to be interrupted, if we desire to arrive  
 successfully to the End of it. And indeed,  
 To imagine that *Christianity* can ever dispense  
 with the greatest Degree of serious *Attention*  
 and Care, is to contradict the *Design* of it, and  
 to undervalue the *Rewards* it proposes. For  
 the *Christian* is never quite secure on this Side  
 Heaven; because He is never in a State free  
 from dangerous Enemies. He is nearly joined  
 to His own deceitful and flattering Appetites,  
 which are, upon all Occasions, endeavouring  
 to seduce Him; He lives in a World which,  
 every

every Hour, furnishes him with new Scenes of *Trial*; and with *Objects* framed to terrify Him from *Virtue*, and to allure him to *Vice*. And has such a Person any Reason to think of remitting his *Diligence*, or loosening the Reins of *Government* over himself; when one fatal Mistake, or Slip, through an inadvertent Negligence only, may involve him in Circumstances, from which He may never be able to extricate himself? Let the *Christian* only remember That it is the *Habit* of *Virtue* which is the very *Race* He is obliged to run; and then consider that this *Habit* is the continual repeated *Practice* of every particular *Duty*, as often as Occasion offers; and he can have no doubt That the most constant and serious Care is requisite towards the keeping and preserving such an *Habit*, as well as towards the obtaining it.

The Importance, therefore, of the Matter; and the Dangers that encompass a *Christian*, through every Portion of his *Time*, make his *Race* also, like Those of Old, a continued Course of watchful *Labour* and *Care*: But not of *Labour*, and *Care*, without even present *Pleasure* and *Satisfaction* mixed with it. For it is not possible for us to conceive a greater inward Pleasure, than what

SERM. XVIII. the good *Christian* enjoys, in the Testimony his own Conscience gives to the Uprightness and Reasonableness of his Conduct; or a truer *Satisfaction* than He finds in the Thoughts of the Favour of his great Judge, and in the Prospect of the Rewards of Heaven.

3. In order to the right Performance of those *Races*, antiently so much in use, there was a Necessity of *laying aside every Weight, or Burthen*, in order to make the *Body* as active, and light, and unmolested, as possible. So, likewise, in order to the successful running of the *Christian Race*, every *Burthen, or Impediment*, which may make us the less fit for our Course, is to be laid aside, and thrown from us.

Thus *St Paul*, in the *twelfth* Chapter of his *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*, alluding to the same *Games*, says, *Let us lay aside every Weight*, in order to *run with Patience the Race that is set before us*: And this very properly, because the more free Men are from *Weights*, the more likely to perform their *Race* successfully. What the *Apostle* particularly meant by *every Weight*, He explains by adding immediately, *and the Sin which does so easily beset Us*: or rather, *every Weight*, even *Sin* which is always close to Us; and is certainly, the heaviest *Weight*, and strongest *Impediment*,

to a *Christian* in his *Race*; And a *Weight* S E R M.  
 therefore, which He must of necessity lay XVIII.  
*aside*, if He has one Thought, in earnest, of  
*running*, so as to obtain the Prize.

4. Our Lord himself, in speaking of the  
*Christian Life*, and what is necessary in order  
 to it, goes still farther; and often mentions  
 the removing out of the Way, every thing  
 which may *offend*, or, which may be the  
 Occasion of our *Stumbling* in our *Christian*  
*Course*; and so, of *losing the Prize*, by falling  
 before We come to the End. And this, let  
 it be of what Nature it will; never so necessary  
 to our Comfort and Happiness in *this World*;  
 never so dear, or useful to us; never so pain-  
 ful in the Removal of it; though it be our  
*right Hand*, or our *right Eye*, if we cannot  
 keep it without *sinning*, We are to *cut it off*,  
 or *pull it out*, and *cast it from Us*. Otherwise,  
 we cannot overcome in the Christian Con-  
 test.

How ridiculous a Thing would it have  
 been for any Person, in the *Races* of Old, to  
 have pretended so much as to enter upon his  
*Course*, without having first removed from him-  
 self all that might *hinder* him in it? And how  
 much more unaccountable is it, in any *Christian*,  
 to think of arriving, with Glory, at the End  
 of his *Race*, or of being victorious in his spiritual

SERM.  
XVIII.

Contests, whilst he is resolv'd against parting with any thing grateful at present to his Senses; though never so prejudicial to his Virtue, and of never so fatal Consequence to his *Pretensions*.

And yet, *This* is what we see every Day amongst professed *Christians*, That Men can hope and expect to be saved by *Jesus Christ*; and seem to aim at that *incorruptible Crown* which He has promised; and yet are most unwilling to part with Those beloved *Vices*, which They themselves know to be inconsistent with all *Hope* of it: as if They were determin'd to arrive at *Heaven*, in their own Way, or not at all; and thought to take it by Storm, without thinking once in earnest, of the *Conditions* required of them. But *These* are *Christians* who little deserve that Name; nor seem at all to live under the Influence of such an *Institution*; who have undertaken the *Race* of *Christians*, and yet are dispos'd to multiply upon Themselves, more and more of those *Hindrances* which They find agreeable at present, rather than to part with *Every*, or *Any*, *Weight* that is likely to *press* Them down; or to remove out of their Way, *Every*, or *Any*, *Stumbling-block*, that may hinder the *Success* of their Course. Again,

5, It was thought necessary for the successful Performance of those *Races* and *Contests* of Old, that They who *ran* and *strove* in them should be inflamed and animated with the Prospect of *Victory*, and the Glory consequent upon it; that They should ever have the *Crown* of *Leaves* (*fading* as it was) before their Eyes, and the Shouts and Acclamations of the *Spectators*, (*vain* as They were) in their Ears. And from hence We *Christians* may be taught, That, in order to our successful running the *Race* that is set before us in the *Gospel*, and contending for another Kind of *Victory*, it is highly necessary that We should always have in our Thoughts the just Expectation of that *incorruptible Crown* of *Glory* hereafter, which is to be the Reward of our *Victory* here. This our blessed *Lord* himself judged worthy of his own Character. To whom *St. Paul* therefore, directs our View, in the *Passage* just now cited, *looking unto Jesus, who, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame.* This all the *Apostles* of our *Lord* thought highly requisite, in the extraordinary Course They had undertaken to run, and the *Fight* They had to fight; to consider the *Rewards* They were at last to inherit; and that all their *Conflicts*, in

ERM. this World, were *not worthy to be compared*  
 XVIII. *with the Glory that shall be reveled.* And  
 They owned that This it was which kept  
 Them firm and faithful to their great Master,  
 in the difficult Office he had called them to.  
 It may well, therefore, become *Us*, who  
 stand in need of all Supports, and all moving  
 Considerations, to enlarge our Prospect beyond  
*this* Scene of Things, and to take into our  
 View the *Glories* of the *Other*, which is to open  
 after this is broken to pieces; and thence to  
 draw *Arguments* for resisting all the Tempta-  
 tions here below, which are but for a Mo-  
 ment; and for pressing forward, without any  
 Intermision, towards *the Mark of the Prize of*  
*our high calling.* When We consider this  
 incomprehensible Reward; according to our  
*Faith*, so will our *Endeavours*, and our *Con-*  
*duct* be, in our *Christian Race*: And, if we  
 truly believe that there is a *Crown* reserved  
 for Those who bear up against all Opposition,  
 in a constant Course of Righteousness, We  
 shall think no Enemies here below insupera-  
 ble.

There is another Consideration peculiar  
 to the *Christian Contest*, and not belonging to  
 those Others which we have been speaking  
 of; and it is *this*, That, as the *Christian* who  
*runs his Course* with all Care, and Diligence,  
 and

and good Conduct, is secure of a glorious SERM.  
*Reward* : so, the *Christian* who, through his XVIII.  
 own wilful Carelessness, and Neglect, fails  
 and sinks in his Christian Course, not only  
 loses that *Reward* which the Other obtains,  
 but inherits unspeakable Punishment, propor-  
 tionable to the *wicked Folly* of One, who pro-  
 fesses to have the most glorious *Reward* in his  
 Eye, and yet of his own Choice neglects to ob-  
 tain it; and is shamefully contented to fall  
 short of it. This is a Consideration which  
 must work upon the meaner Souls, as the other  
 attracts the more ingenuous and best disposed  
 Minds.

6. I shall mention one *Instance* more of  
 what was thought requisite to the glorious  
 Performance of the *Contests* and *Races*, to  
 which the *Apostle* in the Text alludes; and  
 that is, a *Perseverance* to the End.

Many may be apt to think, that it was a  
 glorious Thing to begin, and to proceed hap-  
 pily a good Way, after the best Manner :  
 and so it was, considered as it tended to a happy  
 Conclusion. But if the *Contenders* of Old  
 stopt or failed, in the Middle, or even within  
 view of the *Bound* to which they were to come ;  
*All* was nothing, and They failed likewise, of  
 their *Glory*, and of their *Crown*. And so it is  
 in the Christian Life. It is a happy Thing to  
 begin

SER M. *begin well ; and happier still to make a considerable Progress in the Paths of the Gospel.*

~ But if the *Christian* does not *persevere* steddily to the *End* ; if, when he comes within View of the *Crown of Glory* in the other World, he relapses into the Life of *Infidels*, and *Sinners*, He stains all his former *Lustre* with a base and ignominious Dye ; He forfeits all his Title to the Heaven and Happiness of *Christians* ; Nay, he renders himself much more inexcusable, than if he had never moved one Step in the Paths of *Righteousness* ; by suffering Himself to be conquered by those very Enemies which he had before found he could subdue ; and by falling voluntarily from a State of the most desirable Freedom, into an inglorious *Slavery* to *Sin* ; and thus bringing Contempt and Shame upon the Religion of *Christ* itself.

Thus have I considered the *Parallel* between the public *Contests* and *Races*, so much celebrated and frequented in *St. Paul's* Time ; and the *Christian Race* : and from hence have endeavoured to shew the Nature of the *Latter* ; and what is necessary for the happy Success of it. I must just observe, as We pass, That the whole Intention of the *Apostle* may be plainly expressed thus, agreeably to what has been said. “ If these Men, of whom

I speak, can come, by Patience and Self-denial, to conquer their *Bodies*, and their strongest *Appetites*; and enstate themselves in a perfect Command over themselves; and endure so much, and persevere so long, for the Sake of a *contemptible Prize*, a Garland of fading Leaves; Much more ought *You* to be willing to *labour*, and *strive*, and *exercise* the greatest Government over Yourself, who aim at a much nobler Prize, an *incorruptible Crown* of eternal Glory." I come now,

SERM.  
XVIII.

II. To take occasion from hence to enlarge the *Apostle's* Argument, by adding an *Instance* or Two, of that sollicitous Care, and incessant Labour, with which Men pursue after the Things of this Life; in order to shame Ourselves (if we have any Shame left,) into a greater Concern for the Rewards of another never-ending State.

I. Look on the Man that follows the Alarms of War, and see what He can undergo, for the distant View of future *uncertain* Honours, or Riches: to what Dangers He willingly exposes his Life; in what Fears, and Cares, and perpetual Tumult, his Breast is exercised; his *Mind* continually upon the Rack, ever projecting Evil to his Enemies, and guarding Himself against All their *Designs*; and filled with

SERM.  
XVIII.

with all the Uneasiness of various Passions; and his *Body* worn out by all the Extremities of Heat and Cold, and more Hardships than we can number. What would Men say, were all this required of Them, in order to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven? And how hard a Task-master would they represent Almighty God to be? And yet *all this* Men often voluntarily choose, for what brings along with it Nothing of lasting Good and Happiness; and cheerfully undergo it, for the Sake of those worldly Advantages, which they often do not obtain; and which, if obtained, are never truly satisfactory, and, at best, but of a very short Continuance. For *such* Rewards, *Men* are often seen to bear what one would think intolerable to human Nature: and yet *These* are but the Shadows of *Good*, which often betray Men into Excess and Misery, and can never afford a constant and lasting Satisfaction. On the contrary; the Rewards of Heaven, though of an infinite Duration, carry very weak Charms along with them; and few think it worth their while to *labour*, and *contend*, for them. If they will fall to their Lot, without the Pain of seeking after them; well and good: They are contented to be made happy, if it may be without



out any Expense of their own: But they have a little Zeal or Heart to take much Pains for it. So absurdly do many professed *Christians* behave themselves, and so unequally, with respect to the *corruptible* Crown below, and the *incorruptible* Crown above. And,

2. Once more, Behold the Man that follows the Arts of Gain and Advantage, after a more sedate and less tumultuous Manner: The Man, I mean, that has proposed to himself, as his chief End, the *Treasures* of this World, by the more peaceful Methods.

What Care and Labour, in *his* more silent way, will he refuse to undergo, for the Sake of the wretched *End* He has in view; though He is uncertain of obtaining it, at least before he comes to be almost incapable of enjoying it? He will rise up early, and late take Rest, and eat the Bread of Carefulness, and run all Hazards, and watch all Opportunities, and catch at every handle, and use all Tricks, and think no Pains ill employed, that He may possess himself of what he can never be sure of keeping; and of what, he knows, he must certainly, in a very short Time, leave behind him.

And shall not the Thought of this kindle an Emulation in the Breasts of Those who seek after other *Treasures*, and other *Riches*;  
*Treasures*

S E R M.  
XVIII.

*Treasures* that cannot deceive those whose Hearts are truly set upon them; and *Riches* from which Nothing can ever separate the Man who is once possessed of them. They are perfectly satisfactory to a reasonable Creature; they are of eternal Duration; out of the Reach of all Accidents; guarded by Almighty Power; and dispensed by infinite *Goodness*. And is not the Motive of such *Riches* able to inspire us with another Sort of *Covetousness* than is seen here below? a *Covetousness*, not *the Root of all Evil*, but *the Principle of all Good*; not a fordid Desire of what cannot profit, but a glorious Thirst after true and everlasting Happiness? How can we hope to answer for our Want of Zeal and Industry, in this Pursuit, at the last Day, when our own Zeal and Care, about the Concerns of this Life, shall *perhaps* witness against us; and the *Labours* and *Toils* of Others, the *Children of this World*, shall *certainly* serve to confound and abash us, for our Inactivity and Negligence in a much nobler and more glorious Cause.

This *Argument* is so reasonable that I shall leave it to your own Determination: and return to the *Comparison* used in the *Text*; and so conclude.

We have a *Race* of Labour and Care, to *run*; that is, a *Life* of strict Virtue to *live*. We have

a *Prize* in view, to contend for, inestimable, and worthy of all our Pains and Industry; *that is, eternal Glory and Happiness.* We have a *Day* set, in which we must finish this Course; the present Life; and, after this short *Day*, the *Night of Death* cometh, in which *no Man can run.* We have a *Judge*, infinitely knowing and righteous, to determine our *Condition* according to our *Endeavours* in this *Race*, *viz.* the great GOD, who is not to be imposed upon, and cannot be biassed: and, *after Judgment* given, there is an *Eternal State* for us to live in, either of *Reward* or *Punishment.* And these are not *light Matters*; but such as deserve many of our *Thoughts*, and much of our *Time.* Let us behave ourselves like Men under the Influence of such momentous *Truths*; and then, We shall *for run* our *Christian Race*, that we shall obtain that *incorruptible Crown*, which is the *Prize* we are contending for.



---

---

*The Best* CHRISTIANS, *unprofitable*  
SERVANTS.

---

---

S E R M O N   X I X .

---

---

LUKE xvii. ver. 10.

*So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you, say, We are Unprofitable Servants, We have done that which was our Duty to do.*

---

---

**T**HERE are two *Extremes* Men have SERM.  
run into, in the Matter of *Good* XIX.  
*Works*, and in their rating the *Ser-*  
*vice* They pay, and the *Duty* They perform,  
to Almighty GOD. On the *one* Side, Some  
have put such a Value upon the *Good Works*  
of *Christians*, as to make them *meritorious* of  
that *Salvation*, which is promised in the *Gos-*  
*pel*. And, on the *other* side, Some, who have  
thought this *impious*, and *injurious* to the *Mer-*  
*cy* of GOD, and the *Merits* of *Jesus Christ*,  
have departed as far from it as they could;

SERM.  
XIX.

and have brought down the Price of *Good Works* so low, and made them to bear so inconsiderable a Part, in the great Affair of *Salvation*, as almost inevitably to lead incautious Men of bad Inclinations to think them hardly worth the *Care*, or to deserve any of the Regard, of a *Christian*. The *Church of Rome* teaches the *Merit of Good Works*, in our Claim to the Rewards of *Christians*: And Others, in opposition to *That*, teach us, in effect, that *Good Works* signify so little to our Justification, that we are not so much as to bring Them into the *Account*; nay, That We must cast them from Us, when we would plead our Title to *Heaven*.

The Truth apparently lies betwixt these *Two*, and may be thus expressed; That, though our good Actions do, by no means, deserve the *exceeding Happiness* promised in the *Gospel*; and come greatly short of such a *Reward*, as is set before Us in *That*: yet, They are not so inconsiderable, or of so little account, but that our Title to the *Heaven* of the *Gospel*, cannot be pleaded without them; nor our Station in it be assigned Us, without the Consideration of them. The *Merits of Christ*, indeed, *that is*, His Obedience, and Life and Death here below, are said to purchase this *Reward* for us; and, if He had not humbled himself

himself for our Benefit, our *Good Works* could have given us no Expectation of such Rewards, as He proposes. He *suffered*, that We might be exceedingly happy, upon the *Terms* of his *Covenant* with Mankind; and that *Covenant* is, That We should abound in *Good Works*, Or, in all the Instances of Virtue and Righteousness. Nay, whatever it be, that *He* has merited for *Us*; it is all sufficiently declared to be of no Importance to *Us*, but on Condition that we shew forth in our *Lives* such *Good Works* as He has commanded. And therefore, though We are said to arrive at *Heaven* for the Sake of *Him*, who came to restore *Us* to the Favor of *God*; yet, we must arrive at it, through such a *Life* of *Good Works*, as He himself has made indispensably necessary to the obtaining of it; and no otherwise, as far as He has reveled his *Father's Will* to *Us*.

Which of the *Two Errors* I have mentioned, is of the worst Account before *God*, may be judged of, by considering which of them leads to the most pernicious *Consequences*.

It is a foolish and groundless Boast, to say that all the best Works, of Any Man, collected together, can possibly *merit*, at the Hands of *God*, those eternal *Rewards* promised to *Christians*, which bear too great a Proportion to the poor Services of our

SERM.

XIX.

whole Lives, to be comprehended by us. But then it is worse than *foolish* and *groundless*, to make so little Account of those *Good Works* which the *Gospel* insists upon, in every Page, as tends to render Men careless and unconcerned whether they perform any, or no. *All* that We can do is not worthy indeed, to be compared with the *Glory* that shall be revealed: But, the very End of Christ's Appearance being to *teach* Men to *deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this World,* and expressly so declared, To speak meanly of those *Good Works*, which are in such manner commanded, seems to oppose the declared Purpose of the Son of God's appearing in the *Flesh*; and may unhappily lead Men into a State, first of *Carelessness*, and then, of *Sin*. For, as the Doctrine is sometimes explained, the Obligation to *Virtue* is almost imperceptible to common Capacities; and requires superior Faculties, and some Subtleties, to find it out: And if it does not directly encourage many to neglect what is declared to be of the utmost Importance, by the plain Words of the *Gospel*; yet, at best, it never can be thought to excite Men to the *Good Works* required in it.

Both

Both these *Errors* are carefully to be avoided: and, in order to our avoiding them, the Consideration of the *Words* I have now read to you will, I think, be of some Service, *So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants, we have done that which was our Duty to do.* They are an Instruction given by our *Lord* to his Followers, immediately after a *Parable* he had spoken to them, about a common *Servant* amongst Men, who, though he did all that his *Lord* commanded him, and performed his *Duty* faithfully, yet could claim no *extraordinary* Favour from him; nor any thing more, than to be treated as a *Servant* still. Our *Lord* then adds, *So likewise ye, who are my Disciples, when you have done your Duty to God; and performed the Service He has commanded; You cannot claim that Happiness, as a Reward in Justice due to your Services, which God will in Mercy give you; but ought to acknowledge yourselves Unprofitable Servants.* You have, indeed, performed your *Lord's* *Commands*; and *done what it was your Duty to do*, even for your own sakes considered as *Servants*: And from This you may reap the Satisfaction of thinking, That you cannot have incurred the Displeasure of your *Master*, or deserved any *Punishment*; nay,

SERM.

XIX.

That You have a strict Right to whatever *Wages* You contracted for, or whatever Advantages inseparably belong to your *Offices*: But You cannot claim, from hence, any *extraordinary* Favours, as due to such Servants; and cannot justly pretend to have merited that exceeding Glory which I am come to set before You.

If we apply these *Words* to all *Christians*, to whom They belong much more than to the *Apostles* of *Christ*, whose whole Lives were spent in the greatest Instances of Service and Obedience; We may draw some useful Lessons from *Them*. At present, I propose,

I. To observe, from them, That there is a *Service* and Obedience indispensably due from all *Christians* to Almighty God; or, That they are so obliged to do all that He has commanded in the *Gospel*; that they cannot hope for Heaven and Happiness without it.

II. To observe that, when we have sincerely practised all the Laws of Virtue and Righteousness, given to Us by God, We ought to acknowledge that we are *unprofitable Servants*; and that we cannot claim the *Rewards* of the *Gospel*, as due to us upon the Account of those Services,

Services, but must own ourselves unworthy of them. This will naturally lead Us,

SERM.

XIX.

III. To consider, on what Account, the *Best of Christians* may be justly styled *Unprofitable Servants*; and to have little Reason to over-value their best Services.

I. That there is a *Service and Obedience* indispensably due from all *Christians* to Almighty God; or, that all *Christians*, according to their Abilities and Opportunities, are so strictly obliged to do all that is commanded them in the *Gospel*, that They can have no Ground for any Expectation of the Rewards of *Heaven*, without it. This is plainly signified in the *first Part* of the Words read to You, *so likewise Ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you*; in which there is strongly implied an indispensable Obligation to the Performance of all the Commands of the *Gospel*, in order to our future Happiness promised in it.

The Meaning of this, is not, That there are no *Hopes of Salvation* to a Man, if He shall ever fail in any Point of Evangelical Obedience; or that GOD will be so rigorous as never to forgive any Neglects, or Transgressions, of the most sincere, and honest, of his Servants: But that there is such an Obligation

SERM. upon *Christians*, That, if they willfully and  
 XIX. habitually neglect the Duties of the *Gospel*,  
 and allow themselves in any known Sin; that,  
 if they do, even under Pretense of magnifying  
 the Mercy of God, *continue in Sin*; nay,  
 That, if they do not, in a regular and settled  
 Course, *follow after Righteousness*; They can-  
 not hope to secure themselves an Interest in  
 the Favour of God, or the Rewards of ano-  
 ther Life.

They are all the Creatures of an Almighty  
 Creator, and the highest Obligation to *do his*  
*Will* results from that *first*, and close Relation.  
 They are all the Subjects of a most powerful  
 and merciful *King*; and therefore, obliged to  
 obey, both out of *Love*, and out of a just *Fear*.  
 They are all tied to his Interest by the most  
 endearing Instances of Mercy and Kindness;  
 and therefore, are bound in *Gratitude* to re-  
 turn him all the Duty He can expect from  
 them. They owe all They have, and all  
 They can hope for, to Him, and his Favor;  
 and therefore, They cannot pay him back too  
 much Regard and Obedience. They are all  
 to be considered, as under *his* Authority, and  
*He*, as their great *Lord* and *Master*: and from  
 hence results all possible Service to such a  
 Master. By these, and many more, *Ties* are  
 They most strictly obliged to love, honour, and  
 serve

serve, Almighty God; whether He had called SERM.  
upon them in an extraordinary Manner to do. XIX.  
it, or not. But He has thought fit to *Speak*  
*unto them by his Son.* And by this *his beloved*  
*Son,* and his *Apostles,* it has been declared,  
constantly, in a multitude of the strongest  
Expressions often repeated, That without our  
Practice of all Virtue, and Obedience to all  
his holy Commandments, here *below,* We  
shall never arrive at the Place of *Reward,*  
and *Glory, above.* This is, indeed, so  
plainly the uniform Voice of the *New Testa-*  
*ment,* that it alone may justly be thought a  
sufficient proof that the *Unprofitableness* of our  
*Services,* affirmed in the Text, cannot be  
intended to sink the Value of *Moral Good*  
*Works,* so as to make them appear of  
little Importance in the Affair of Christian  
Salvation. This therefore, being certain,  
in the Dispensation of the *Gospel,* That a *sin-*  
*cere* Obedience to all God's *Commands,* is ab-  
solutely necessary to our *Salvation;* I shall  
now proceed to what I next proposed from  
the Words of the Text, *viz.*

II. That the *Best Christians,* when They  
*have done all that is commanded them,* or, their  
whole Duty, in the Service of God; and have  
sincerely practised all Virtue and Righteous-  
ness;

SERM. nefs; ought, after this happy Conduct, to  
 XIX. confess Themselves to be *Unprofitable Servants*;  
 and to acknowledge that They cannot claim  
 such *Rewards*, as the *Gospel* proposes, as of  
*Right* due to their utmost Endeavours. So ye,  
 when ye have done all that is commanded you,  
 say, *We are unprofitable Servants.*

In which Words We must not imagine that our Lord declares, or insinuates, that the best *Christians*, and such as have exercised themselves in all the *Good Works* of his *Holy Religion*, ought to acknowledge Themselves to have done Nothing in what is called the Service of GOD, or for the Good of Mankind; or of any Significancy to their own Salvation; or That any thing like this is the *Meaning* of the Words *unprofitable Servants*. Far be such Thoughts from Us, concerning *Him*, who, in this very *Parable*, represents Himself, or his *Father*, as speaking to Every Christian of this Sort, *Well done, good and faithful Servant; enter into the Joy of thy Lord.* And from this Passage it may justly be inferred, That a Man may be a *good and faithful Servant*, in the Sense of the *Gospel*; and yet be an *unprofitable One*, as the Word is intended in the *Text*. For the *Name, unprofitable Servant*, here used, is so far from being opposed to *One* who has faithfully performed all  
 due

due Obedience and Service to his Master, that it is actually given to Those who are supposed to have *done all those Things which are commanded them.* SERM.  
XIX.

Nor can the *Unprofitable Servant*, in the *Text*, be the same with the *Unprofitable Servant*, *Matth. xxv. 30.* For the *Unprofitable Servant*, in the *Text*, is expressly described as *One* who has served GOD sincerely, and actually *done what it was his Duty to do*: and the *Unprofitable Servant*, in the other Place, is as expressly declared to have, knowingly and willfully, neglected his Duty; and called, by his Lord, a *wicked and slothful Servant*; and by his Appointment, ordered to be *cast into outer Darkness, where there is weeping, and gnashing of Teeth.* But the Meaning of the *Words* of the *Text* must be, that, as *that Servant*, of whom Our Lord had been speaking, in a *Parable* before, though he had been serving his Lord well in the *Field*, either *plowing, or feeding his Cattle*, could not at his Return home, claim, as his Right, any extraordinary Favor from his *Master*; could not, for instance, demand, or expect, to be invited by his Master *to sit down to Supper* before He himself had supped, as it is expressed in the *Parable*; or to be treated otherwise than as a *Servant* who had done

SER M. done what it was his Business to do: So, the  
 XIX. best *Christians*, Those who have served God  
 most faithfully, in all the Duties of their several Stations, cannot claim, as their just Due, the extraordinary and unconceivable Joys and Happiness of Heaven; but must acknowledge that They are *unprofitable Servants*; and that the *Duty* They have performed bears no Proportion to Those incomprehensible Rewards They are to enjoy. I come now, as I proposed,

III. To consider on what Accounts the *Best of Christians* may be justly said to be *Unprofitable Servants*; And to have little Reason to overvalue their *Services*.

I. They may be said to be *Unprofitable Servants*, because they cannot, with all their *Services* and all their *Labours*, make any the least Addition to the well-being, or Happiness, of Almighty God, their great *Master*. And, in *this*, the *Servants of God*, and the *Servants of Men*, differ; that the *Servants of Men* can, by their Diligence and their honest *Service*, contribute greatly to the Increase of their *Masters* Riches or Honour; and, in some Instances, very much promote their Happiness in this World. But the *Servants of God* can only, by their *Service*, do *Themselves* good, and  
 increase

increase their own true Happiness. And SERM.  
 the Reason is, That the richest and most XIX.  
 powerful of Mankind are frail and imperfect  
 Beings; liable to many unfortunate Accidents;  
 standing in need of many Supports; and ow-  
 ing much of their Greatness to the meaner  
 Sort who are under them: But Almighty  
 God, being most perfect in himself, and en-  
 joying all possible Happiness, is therefore, ut-  
 terly incapable of the least Addition or Increase  
 of Glory, or Pleasure. What therefore, can  
 our *Services* demand of *Him*, to whom they  
 add not one Grain of *Greatness*, or *Happi-  
 ness*?

Every *Master* amongst Men would account  
*him* but an *unprofitable Servant*, who, with  
 all his Pains and Care, could not possibly do  
 any thing for his Advantage, or for his Satis-  
 faction; and hardly think himself obliged to  
 reward him, in an extraordinary Manner, for  
 a *Service*, out of which He could reap no real  
 Benefit. And that *Servant* himself would  
 hardly have the Face to expect or demand  
 the least *Favour* from his Lord, on that Ac-  
 count. Thus it is with Us, considered as  
*Servants* to the great God. We are truly *un-  
 profitable Servants*, to *Him*; utterly uncapa-  
 ble of doing any thing that can increase or im-  
 prove his Happy Estate.

SERM.

XIX.

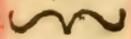
It is true indeed, That, as we are his *Creatures*, brought into Being by his Almighty Decree; and willing and desirous to fulfil his Will; We may claim the Protection of his *Providence*, and his paternal Regard to Us, as long as He continues us in being; and cannot but enjoy the *Reward* of an inward Satisfaction of Mind arising from this Consideration. And again, the great God, whose *Creatures* We are, may condescend, as He does in the *Christian Revelation* of his Will to the World, to call our best *Endeavours* by the Name of *Services* to Himself; and speak of them as promoting his *Glory*, and increasing his *Honour*; and by promising Us more than We can deserve, may oblige himself to *Performance* so, as to give Us a *Right* afterwards to expect and demand it, if We have not failed on our own Part. But, since it is most evident That we cannot, by all our *Services*, add the least Increase to infinite *Perfection*; it cannot but become Us to own, and say, *We are unprofitable Servants*; We have, indeed, endeavoured *to do what it was our Duty to do*, which is a Comfort to Ourselves, but we have contributed Nothing to our great *Master*.  
But

2. *The Best of Christians* may be said to be *Unprofitable Servants*, if we consider the many Failings,

Failings, and Faults, they are liable to, in that *Service* which They really intend to perform; and the Mixture of many *Imperfections* in their very best Actions.

The sincerest *Christians* in the World, though They do what God will, at the last day, accept, for the Sake of *Christ*; yet, They cannot be said, in the Strictness of Justice, always to do whatsoever They can, in what They call God's *Service*. They have their Intervals of Coldness and Indifference, or of Carelessness, when it may be said that *the Spirit is willing, but the Flesh is weak*. And they have, in Every State of Life, strong *Temptations*, to strive against; which they do not always entirely overcome. They sometimes yield; or, if they do not, yet they often overcloud the *Victory* with the Attendance of some *Imperfection*, or other: and frequently experience in Themselves, what They cannot excuse even to the Judge within their own Breasts. And if so imperfect *Servants*, who are sometimes diverted from their Duty; and cannot command Themselves, upon every Occasion, to attend to their Duty: If such *Servants* as these should claim the unspeakable *Rewards* of *Christians*, as due, in Justice, to their imperfect and interrupted Endeavours,

S E R M.  
XIX.



S E R M. *vours*, They would justly incur the Imputati-  
 XIX. on of *Arrogance*.

And besides that the *Best* of Men are guilty of *Failings*, and *Negligences*, in the several Branches of their Duty, They do also, sometimes, mix so much of human Imprudence, and of the *Imperfections* of their Nature, with their best Actions, that They spoil the good they intend, and frustrate the very End they propose to Themselves, by their own Weakness and Inadvertency: so that, if one were to examine into the *Events* of such Matters, it is a *Question*, concerning some very well-designing *Christians*, whether their *Zeal* and *Devotion*, intended for God's Service, has more conduced to the promoting the great Ends of *Religion*, and the *Glory* of God, in the World, than their *Imperfections* and *Imprudences*, (the Characters of which they have stamped upon their best Undertakings) have contributed to the *Prejudices* of other Men, and the *Hurt* of Religion itself. And, though we have to do with a merciful God, who will not rigorously punish these Mixtures of *Imprudence* which are to be found in the Conduct of good Men; yet, when He grants the exceeding Rewards of Heaven, and the unexpressible Glories of a *future* State to such *Servants*; this must be accounted

accounted a *Favor*, and not a *Debt*; promised to Them by the unmerited Goodness of a merciful God; and given to Them, as *Due* on Account of that Promise, and not for any thing done by Them previously to it. Certainly, were They themselves, who are encompassed with such Imperfections, and give daily proofs of such Imprudences, made Judges in their own Case, and set to determine what Name They themselves deserve; whether the Name of *Meritorious*, or of *Unprofitable*, Servants; They would, with all Humility, acknowledge that the *Latter* Title was their due; and That, though They had, in the main, truly intended the *Service* and Honour of God, in the Course of their Actions, yet They had not always prosecuted their Design, or done their Duty, after such a Manner as to deserve any better Word, or Character.

3. The *Best Christians* may, in no very improper Sense, be called *Unprofitable Servants*, considered in Themselves, and their own *Merits*; and justly be said to have little Reason to boast of any thing They can do; because They have received their whole *Capacity*, even of doing any Duty at all, from that *Master* himself, whom They *serve*.

If We carry our Thoughts back, and consider our *Creation* only, We may truly say

D d

that

SERM.  
XIX.

that *Almighty God* endowed us, at our first coming into Being, with all the Powers and Faculties we have; and gave us even the *Possibility* of serving Him: and if we have any Strength, by our original Frame, to do any good Actions, This very Power is the Gift of our *Creator and Master*. And, if We go farther, in our Thoughts, as *Christians*, We shall find That *God*, after having given Us these Capacities of Good, did not stop here, but, in Mercy to Us, sent his *Son* into the World, to make us fresh Offers of his Favor, and to promulgate the strongest Motives and Arguments for the Performance of our *Duty*, which is his own *Service*; and that, in order to this, his *Holy Spirit* is represented, in the *Gospel*, as procured by *Christ*; and given to the *Prayers* of those *Christians*, who duly and heartily ask it.

If therefore, *God* communicated to us, at first, all the Powers and Faculties of Moral Agency, which We enjoy; and if the same *God* affords us all the Assistance in our Service to Him, which is proper and necessary for Us; with what *Right* can We set such an immoderate Value upon our Services to *Him*, as cannot possibly be justified, unless We could evidently demonstrate that our *Good Works* are altogether *Our own*, in this Sense,



Sense, that *We Ourselves* were the Original Framers of All the *Capacities* We are endowed with; and the Givers of all the *Powers* We find in our *Constitution*; which is the highest *Absurdity*: and that *GOD* our great *Creator*, and *Christ* our mercifull *Redeemer*, have no part in Them; which is the greatest *Impiety*.

We find *St. Paul*, who, in that *Foolishness* of *Boasting* which He excuses from the *Provocation* of his *Enemies*, declares that *He had laboured* more abundantly than *All the Other Apostles*, ending his triumphant *Speches* with *Acknowledgments* of what was due to the *Assistance* of *GOD*; and laying the *Glory* of his *Labors* at the *Feet* of his *great Master*. And, in *Imitation* of such an *Example*, the *Best of Christians*, who have been the most *exemplary* in all *Virtue* and *Goodness*, and the most *abounding* in all *the Fruits of the Spirit*, have been always found the most ready to refer the *Glory* and *Praise* of their well-spent *Life* to that *Lord*, who taught and led them; and to attribute the *Success* of their *Labors* to a kind *Providence*, and to a *Conductor superior* to *Themselves*. Considering therefore, under whose *Discipline*, and *Direction*, *Christians* act, in the *Service* of their *Master*; and to whom *They* owe the very *Capacity*

SERM.  
XIX.

and *Power* of acting at all, in that *Service*, They have too just Reason to speak of Themselves as *Unprofitable Servants*; and as utterly void of any *Claim* to *extraordinary Favors* from God, for having performed that *Duty*, which He himself gave them the *Power* of performing.

I have now done what I proposed from the *Words* of the Text; and have shewn, I hope, That there is an indispensable Obligation upon all *Christians* to perform all that is commanded them in the *Gospel*; and that, when They have done all that is commanded them, They ought to confess and say, *We are Unprofitable Servants*: And lastly, That on *several* Accounts They may truly be said to be *Unprofitable Servants*.

I will now add an *Observation* or *Two*, not foreign to what I have been saying; and so conclude.

1. The Subject We have been treating, may naturally lead Us to a *Question* which has been sometimes asked by Those, who, I fear, are much more willing to know what is *not* their strict Duty, than to practise what they *know* to be so: And that is, Whether any *Christian* can do more than He is commanded, or, than it is his *strict Duty*, to do?

To

To this, I think, it may be answered, SERM.  
 That no Christian can possibly do more, in XIX.  
 the great Points of Moral *Duty*, rightly un-  
 derstood, which are the *Good Works* required  
 in the *Gospel*, than He is strictly obliged to  
 do; because *These Points* are always indis-  
 pensably necessary, and the Obligation to  
 Duties never released or abated: But that, in  
 other Points, and these not displeasing to  
 GOD, which may be said to belong to his  
 Religious *Service*, as Circumstances of it, a  
*Christian* may do more than what is strictly  
 enjoined, as absolutely necessary to his Salva-  
 tion.

This may be the better understood from  
 what St. *Paul* says of *Himself*; viz. That He  
 chose to preach the *Gospel* to the *Corinthians*  
 without any *Charge* to Them, in order to  
 have a greater Influence, in the Exercise of his  
*Office*, amongst Them; and that this was *more*  
 than He was strictly obliged to do. For it  
 is plain that He (as well as all others) was  
 obliged to do whatever He apprehended to  
 be most for the Honour of God, and the In-  
 terest of his *Gospel*: And yet it is also as plain,  
 from his own Words, That, had He taken a  
 Maintenance of Them, He could have justi-  
 fied Himself before God; and had ground  
 for *boasting*, that He did not. He expressly

SERM.  
XIX.



distinguishes between his strict Obligation to preach the *Gospel*; and the *Circumstance* of preaching it without Charge to 'Them.---" *Wo to Me, if I preach not the Gospel.* This is my indispensable *Duty*. But whether I shall take a *Maintenance* for doing this, or *not*; *This* is left free to Me: and I have chosen *not* to do it: *This* is the Ground of my Boasting." 1 Cor. ix. 6, 19.

I might mention also what is written of the first Believers, that Those amongst them, who had Possessions, sold them, and laid the Price at the Feet of the *Apostles*, to be distributed, in common, to All who wanted. It is evident, of These Persons, that They were strictly obliged to the *Duty* of Charity to their *Brethren* in want: and yet, it is also plain that This particular *Behavieur* of Those who voluntarily and honestly performed this *Service*, in so extraordinary a Manner, was *more* than was *commanded* Them by their great *Master*. Nay, it is declared, by St. *Peter*, *Acts* v. 4. that it was not their *strict* *Duty*, but a Matter left to their own Choice. From whence it appears, that, in *this*, They did *more* than it was their strict *Duty* to do.

2. From what has been said may appear the absurd *Vanity*, to say no worse, of the *Romish* *Doctrin*e of the *Merits* of the Best Works

Works of any *Christians*. Nay, the *Words* themselves of the *Text*, without any *Comment*, are sufficient to shew it. For, in *them* We are supposed to have actually done all that is commanded Us, and, in another Expression, All that it is our Duty to do; which is the most favorable Supposition possible concerning the *Best* of Men: and, after all this, with such a *Treasure* of Good Works accompanying Us, We are taught and directed to say to our Judge, with our own Mouths, “*We are unprofitable Servants.*” And how our utmost *Services*, imperfect and *unprofitable* as They are, can merit the immense Happiness offered Us, in the *Gospel*, it is impossible for the *Wit* of Man to prove.

3. From what has been said, We may farther learn, not only the *Vanity*, but the *Wickedness*, of another *worse* Doctrine of the same *Church*, which, (for fear, one would think, that Men should not be careless enough in the great Affair of their own Salvation,) encourages Them in all Negligence, by pretending to *transfer* the *Superfluous Merits* of *Saints* (so called) to the Account of the greatest *Sinners*; that is, to give, or perhaps sell, the *Kingdom* of *Heaven* itself to the *Worst* of Men, void of all *Good Works* of *their own*, for the Benefit of procuring Them a Quantity of such *Good Works*

SERM. as can be spared from the Stock of *Others*,  
 XIX. according to this *Invention*.

W You will, I hope, recollect, That the *Instances* I mentioned, from Scripture, of Good Men who have done more than their strict Duty, related to the *Circumstances* only of some Religious Duties; and not at all to what was *essential* to the *Duties* themselves; or to any Branches of *Christian Morality*: and observe from thence, That no Man, amongst the most Perfect, was ever thought to have too many of such *Good Works*; or, for Instance, was ever said to be more *Charitable*, more *Temperate*, more *Pure*, more *Peaceable*, or more *Humble*, than the Dictates of Reason, and the *Commands* of GOD, rightly understood, made it his *Duty* to be. No Works of *Supererogation*, therefore, are to be found in *these*, or any of the *Moral Virtues*. And these being the only *Good Works*, of any Account, at the Great Day; No *Christian*, who is destitute of them, *Himself*, can possibly be supplied by Others; because, of *these* truly and necessary *Good Works*, the *Best* Man in the World, has *none* to spare; but rather justly fears he has not enough for *Himself*, and for the Security of his own eternal Interest. And as to any Mistakes of *Ignorance*, or *Enthusiasm*; such as the *Romantic Excesses* of Some, in the  
*Rigors*

*Rigors of Abstinence, or the Severities of Penances, and the like; They may, by a good GOD, be pardoned to well-meaning Men; but can never be acceptable or pleasing to Him. Consequently, such as these, though, in truth, Works of Supererogation, yet cannot be thought, by any Man in his Senses, to be the Good Works of the Gospel. They may indeed be granted, or sold, to Those upon whom the Managers of such Merchandise can impose. But it is impossible They should do any real Service to Those deluded Men who depend upon Them, because They are not the Good Works required of Christians, as necessary to Salvation.*

4. Lastly, if, from what has been said, We are truly convinced of the *Necessity of Good Works*, as the indispensable *Condition* of our future Happiness; though not of their *Merit*, as the adequate Foundation of our Claim to it; Let this induce us not to be so incensed against the *Doctrine* of the *Merit* of *Good Works*, as to avoid Them, for fear of being tainted by it; and not to dwell so much upon the *Merits* of *Christ*, as to forget the *Conditions* which he absolutely requires at our Hands. For it may, I think, justly, be said, That we had much better believe the *Merit* of *Good Works*, than have None at all to produce  
for

SERM.  
XIX.

for Ourselves at the last Day: And that it will be found a more pardonable Error, at that Time, not to have considered so much as We ought, the *Merits* of *Christ*, than to have neglected that *Obedience* to all his Commands, which He so strictly requires of us, in his *Gospel*.

May We all be sensible, both of what we owe to GOD, and to his Son *Jesus Christ*: and also of the great *Work* We ourselves have to do; that so We may do it, and be blessed in our Deed!

---

---

*The Nature of CHRIST'S Blessing.*

---

---

S E R M O N XX.

---

---

A C T S iii. ver. 26.

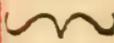
---

---

*God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless You, in turning every one of you from his Iniquities.*

---

---

**T**HE Doctrine plainly delivered by St. S E R M.:  
*Peter*, in these Words, is this, That the XX.  
*Blessing*, with which *Jesus Christ* was   
sent by his *Father* to bless the World, consists  
in *turning Men from their Iniquities*. This I  
design to make the Subject of my following  
*Discourse*. And, in order to give all the  
Light and Evidence I am able to this great  
and important Truth, I shall consider it un-  
der these following *Propositions*; which will,  
I hope, form a strong *Argument* in Support of  
it.

I. That

SERM.  
XX.

I. That the promised *Messiah* was to be the greatest Instance possible of the *Love* of GOD to the World; and the Design of his coming, to bless Mankind with the most perfect Blessing which GOD could bestow on Man, or Man receive from GOD.

II. That the greatest *Blessing* Men are capable of, consists, either, in never transgressing the *Laws* of *Virtue*; or, if they have unhappily transgressed, in their being *turned from their Iniquities*, to the Practice of all *Virtue* again.

III. That therefore, if *Jesus* be the *Messiah*, as we believe Him to be, upon the strongest Grounds; the great Design of his coming must be, to *turn* the World from *their Iniquities*; to restore *Reason* and *Religion* to their rightful Authority over Mankind; and to make all *Virtue*, and true Goodness, flourish in the Earth.

I. That the promised *Messiah* was to be the greatest Instance of the *Love* of GOD to the World; and the Design of his coming, to bless Mankind with the most perfect Blessing, which GOD could bestow on *Man*, or *Man* receive from GOD.

This is so universally acknowledged by all, S E R M.  
who either believe that the *Messiah* is already .XX.  
come, or have any Expectation of the Ap-  
pearance of such a Person; that it may justly  
be taken for granted, without any Injury to  
the present Argument.

The Descriptions of this great *Person*, from  
the Beginning of the World to the Appear-  
ance of Our *Blessed Lord*, were so framed, as  
first, to raise, and then, to strengthen, this  
Notion in the Minds of Men. The Marks  
and Characters, by which He is described  
through the Books of the *Old Testament*; the  
Names, and Titles, and Attributes, bestowed  
upon Him by the Mouths of the antient Pro-  
phets; the *Accounts* given, in the same *sacred*  
*Writings*, of that *grand Revolution* which was  
to attend upon his Appearance in the World:  
*All* these conspire to lead *Them* who receive those  
Books, to look on the promised *Messiah*, as  
the most consummate Blessing GOD could be-  
stow, or *Man* receive: and this, whether  
They believe *Jesus* to be that *Messiah*, or  
not.

Accordingly, the *Unbelieving Jews* them-  
selves constantly maintained, and never could  
forsake, this certain and undoubted *Principle*,  
though they drew a false and fatal *Conclusion*  
from

S E R M  
XX.

from it; and so argued themselves into *Infidelity* and *Ruine*. This they were sure of, that; whatever it was, in which the chief Happiness of Man consisted, *That* they might, and ought to, expect from their *Messiah*. But then, the great Evil was, that the whole Body of *That* which alone They esteemed their *Religion*, was of so low and earthly a Nature; their *Notions* of higher Matters so totally corrupted; and their *Minds* and *Morals* so universally debauched; *That*, at the Time when our blessed *Lord* lived, They did not, or would not, know any *greater* Happiness than what arises from *Riches*, *Honours*; *Pomp*, and *Luxury*; *Revenge* upon their temporal *Enemies*, and *Triumphs* over the *Adversaries* of their worldly Greatness. And the *Consequence* was this, *That*, since our blessed *Lord* appeared in a low and mean Condition, and was so far from flattering their *Pride*, or *Revenge*, or *Sensuality*, that all he did, and said, manifestly opposed and condemned their most beloved *Notions*; *They* resolved to reject him, and shut their *Eyes* against all the Evidence he brought along with Him. One of the *Principles* They went upon, could not be denied, *viz.* That the Design of God, in sending the *Messiah* to his chosen People, was to bless *Them* with the greatest Blessing They were

were capable of; which was the first Thing I propos'd. But the *Other* is most certainly false, *viz.* That the *chief Happiness* of Man consists in the Gratification of his *Appetites*, his *Pride*, or his *Revenge*: As will, I hope, be very evident from the *second Proposition* I laid down, which was This,

II. That the greatest *Blessing* of which *Men* are capable, consists, either, in never transgressing the *Laws of Virtue*; or, if they have unhappily transgressed Them, in their being *turned from their Iniquities*, to the Practice of *Virtue* again.

For the making ourselves sensible of this, We are to consider,

1. That *Man*, as a reasonable Creature, has a *Principle* in him, interwoven with his very Nature, which is plainly designed to direct and advise his Practice *before* Action; and to judge Him *after* it; which calls him back, when he is going astray; and reproves and reproaches Him when He has acted unreasonably. And this is what we call *Reason*; or, which is the same Thing, *Conscience*.

2. The next Step is, That the proper *Happiness* of such a *Being* as *Man* must consist in acting agreeably to this *Reason*, or *Conscience*. This follows from the *Former*. For  
if

SERM.  
XX.

if the *Author* of his Nature has made him so, that He finds within his own Breast a constant *Monitor* and *Director*, pointing out to *Him* his *Duty*; then certainly, this *Duty* must be his *Happiness*; and the acting contrary to it, his *Misery*. The same *Reason* which tells him the *first*, has *Power* enough to make him very sensible of the *Last*. For, as it is a *Guide* and *Director* *before*, so it is a severe *Judge* *after* *Action*: *Reflexion*, upon what a *Man* has done being the inseparable Companion of his *Reason*.

What I would say, is almost self-evident. A reasonable *Being*, not acting reasonably, must be miserable at present, *before* his *Reason* be quite laid asleep; because it is his professed *Enemy*, and a very powerful one: and He must be miserable *afterwards*, because his *Reason* can never dye, and whenever it *wakes* (as it most certainly will) must be a very uneasy Companion to Him. The *Happiness* of *Men*, therefore, or of understanding *Beings* capable of *moral Agency*, must necessarily depend upon their acting according to the *Rules* of *Reason*: and the lasting *Satisfaction* of *Creatures*, endowed with *Reflexion* and *Conscience*, must consist in the behaving themselves so, that *Reflexion* and *Conscience* may not be armed against them. It is not *Riches*, or *Honours*, or any thing *without*, that can give a lasting  
Ease

Ease of Mind, which is *Happiness*, to such Beings; but *That* must always be founded upon something *within* their own Breasts. If they have not their own *Reason*, their *Bosom Friend*, they cannot be *happy*; and this They cannot have, without acting reasonably: And if They have their own *Reason*, which is always present with them, their internal Enemy, They must be *miserable*; and this They cannot but have, if they act *unreasonably*. I proceed to observe,

3. That what the *Gospel* calls *Sin*, and *Iniquity*, is, in every particular Instance of it, the Transgression of the Laws of *Reason*; and that what is there called *Righteousness* and *Holiness*, is always, truly speaking, *reasonable*, and becoming. For, if that *Reason*, which distinguishes us from Beasts, assures of any one thing, it assures us of this; That the *Imitation* of *God*, who is the most perfect understanding Nature, in all his moral Perfections, is what we ought to study. And this is what our *Blessed Lord* came to teach Men; to become the *Children of God*, by being (according to their Capacity) *perfect as he is perfect*, and *holy as he is holy*, and *merciful as he is merciful*; and in their whole moral Behaviour, as *like to Him* as possible.

What I mean is, that every Particular of those *Moral Duties* which our *Saviour* and his *Apostles* lay so great a stress upon, has the Voice of *Reason* on its side; and *this*, not now and then, but constantly. There never was, nor ever can be, a Time supposed, when uncorrupted *Reason* does not determine that *Justice, Piety, Temperance, Chastity, Humility, Beneficence, Placability*, and the like, are what we ought to study and practice; and that *Injustice, Oppression, Intemperance, Impurity, Pride, Unmercifulness, Revenge*, and the like, are what we ought to abhor, and fly from. And, what very much confirms the Truth of this, He who most attends to, cultivates, and improves, his *Reason*, is always most strongly persuaded of this: and None are found to be of the contrary Opinion, but Such as had first sacrificed their *Reason* to their *Appetites*; Such as make their own Lusts and worldly *Affections* the Measure of their *Actions*, and ask their *Passions* what is *reasonable*. And thus, if we consult our own Breasts, we shall find the Matter to be, That this *inward Companion* never fails to applaud us every Step we take in the Paths of *Virtue*: and, on the other hand, 'till we have made ourselves insensible, never fails, not only to warn and recall us, when we are going into  
the

the Paths of *Vice*; but, *after* we have transgressed the Laws of *Virtue*, to give us all the Uneasiness the *Reflexion* upon the greatest Act of *Imprudence* can give an understanding Being.

And, even supposing it strictly *possible* that considering Persons might have learnt their *Duty* and their *Happiness*, competently well, from this *Book* of *Reason* duly studied; yet, with regard to the whole Body of Mankind, the *Best* not excepted, We ought always to esteem it, as a most divine Part of the Design of our *Blessed Lord's* appearing in the World, to call upon Men in an extraordinary Manner, the more effectually to awaken Them to a due Sense of what *Prejudice*, *Education*, and the *Temptations* of a wicked World, might, otherwise, too probably hide from their View. And now,

4. The plain and natural Consequence from what has been said is this, That *Sin* and *Iniquity* are the proper *Unhappiness* of *Man*; and *Virtue* and *Goodness* his only lasting and substantial *Happiness*. For, since Man is a Creature endowed with *Reason*, which directs and judges; acquits, or condemns Him; and therefore, cannot be *Happy* without the *Approbation*, and must be *miserable* under the *Condemnation*, of it: And since what the *Gospel* calls *Sin* and *Iniquity* is the Trans-

gression of the *Laws of Reason*, and stands condemned, and Righteousness approved, in our own Breasts; it follows that *Iniquity* must lay the Foundation of *Misery* in *Man*, because it arms his *Reason* against him; and that the Practice of *Virtue* must be his only proper, or true, *Satisfaction*, because it is what his own *Mind*, *that is*, He himself, never fails to recommend and applaud. I come now to the *Conclusion* of the Argument, which is the *Last* of the Propositions I laid down at the Beginning of this Discourse: *viz.*

III. That, therefore, if *Jesus* be the *Messiah*, as We justly believe, the great *Design* of his coming *must be to turn Us* from our *Iniquities*; to restore *Reason* and *Religion* to their rightful Authority over *Mankind*; and to make all *Virtue* and true *Goodness* flourish in the *Earth*.

For, supposing the Nature of *Man* to be such as is before described; and his *Reason*, or *Conscience*, to be the Judge of his *Happiness*; and supposing Him to be working out *Misery* for Himself, by transgressing the plain and express *Laws* of his *Reason*, (which is too true;) *This* is the greatest *Happiness* he is capable of; absolutely necessary to his inward *Peace*; and the only proper Method of

*Salvation*

Salvation to be wished for by such a Being. S E R M.  
.XX

If there be any Force in all that has been said, To *turn him from his Iniquity*, is to *turn him from his Misery*; To *save him from his Sins*, is, to *save him from his greatest Enemy*; To direct him to the Paths of *Virtue*, is to put him into a certain Method of being at *Peace* with his own Mind, which is *Himself*: And to lay the Foundation of his Happiness upon this Rock, is to deal with *Man*, as *Man*; as a reasonable and thinking Creature, who lives a few Hours in a World where every thing is uncertain but what he possesses *within himself*; and is hastening to *Another* never-ending State, in which the good Temper of his own Soul must be the Measure of all the Happiness He can hope for.

We may, then, very safely conclude, That no Design but *This* could have been so much for the Happiness of *Man*; or so certain a Demonstration of the *Love* of *God* to Him; or so worthy of the great Undertaking of the *Messiah*, and of the Character he was to bear, of being the *greatest Blessing* God could bestow, or Man receive.

Nay, if We may have leave to make a *Supposition* so unbecoming, and yet so agreeable to *Jewish* Prejudices; If our *Lord* had

SERM. come, on any other Errand; and appeared  
 XX. with all that Pomp of Majesty the *Jews*  
 expected: If He had confirmed *Them*,  
 in all temporal Prosperity; led captive  
*Nations* in Triumph through their Streets;  
 and made *Them* drunk with the Blood of  
 their *Enemies*: If such as these, I say, had  
 been his Designs; the *Jews* of that Age (if  
 they had argued aright) might have found  
 strong and reasonable *Prejudices* against Him;  
 and rejected him without that *Guilt* which  
 They then brought themselves under. For,  
 truly speaking, what a poor *Attempt* would  
*This* have been, and how small an Advance to  
 their true Happiness? What a mighty Bless-  
 ing would it have been to such a Creature a  
*Man*, to be put in Possession of all the Earth-  
 ly Honour and Grandeur imaginable, to have  
 lived a few Days in *Pomp* and *State*, and  
 then gone off the *Stage*, not only with the  
 more Unwillingness, but with a Mind quite  
 unprepared for the Good things of *Another*  
 State, in which no such vain Appearances can  
 have any Place? Or, to have been encompas-  
 sed with all the *Riches* the greatest *Luxury*  
 could desire, in a World from which He him-  
 self was soon to be separated? Or, what great  
*Satisfaction* could it be, to *Him*, to see all his  
*Temporal Enemies* conquered; if He himself  
 is

is subdued by worse Enemies; and is that SERM.  
miserable Slave, who is every Day doing XX.  
those things which He cannot but condemn  
himself for doing; and which arm his own  
Conscience against Him?

Thus far, then, we have proceeded; and the Argument stands thus. The *Messiah* was to be the Author of the *Greatest Blessing* Men are capable of. The *Greatest Blessing* human Nature is capable of, consists in the *Præctice* of all that is good and virtuous. Therefore the great Design of the coming of *Jesus Christ*, into the World, must be to turn every one of Us from our Iniquities, as *St. Peter* in the *Text* affirms.

I shall now make some *Observations*, and draw some *Inferences*, which seem naturally to offer themselves from what has already been said.

1. The *first* is, That our *Blessed Lord* himself, and his immediate Followers, give an Account of the *Nature* of his *Blessing*, exactly agreeable to what has been already argued, from the *Frame* of *Man*, and the *Voice* of *Reason*.

As for *Himself*; He professed himself indeed, a *King*, by professing himself the *Messiah*. But then, He took all Occasions to

SERM. avoid whatever might look as if He thought  
 xx. of erecting an *Earthly Kingdom*; and very  
 severely to rebuke his *Disciples* for their gross  
 Notions of the *Nature* of his Design; and  
 to assure them, before hand, that, instead of  
 earthly Glory and Grandeur, He himself was  
 to meet with Scorn, and Contempt, and Re-  
 proaches, and Death; and that *They* must not  
 think to escape better than their *Master*.  
 Agreeably to this, when he was accused before  
*Pilate*, He acknowledged, indeed, that He  
 was that very *King* the *Jews* were taught to  
 expect; but at the same time, He solemnly  
 professed that *His Kingdom was not of this*  
*World*, (*John xviii. 36.*) And his whole *Life*,  
 and *Doctrine*, spake the same thing.

And his *Apostles*, who were to preach  
 the *Gospel* of *His Kingdom* to all Nations;  
 how carnal soever in their Apprehensions of  
 things They were, at first; as soon as He  
 had opened their Eyes, and taught them  
 the Truth, and poured forth his *Spirit* upon  
 Them, we find Them so far from expecting  
 worldly Pomp and Glory, as *his Disciples*,  
 that They looked for nothing but *Persecution*,  
*Bonds*, *Imprisonment*, and even *Death* itself.  
 And their *Notions* of their *Master's Kingdom*  
 were so altered, that their constant *Declarati-*  
*ons*, after his *Resurrection*, were, That the  
 great

great Design of the appearing of the Son of God was, *to destroy the Works of the Devil*, the great Adversary to all Virtue; That the great End of the *Life, and Death, and Resurrection*, of Christ, was to *teach all Men to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, rightcously, and godly in this present World*, as an absolutely necessary Condition of their future Happiness. These, and the like Declarations, scattered through every Page of the *New Testament*, evidently shew, that neither our Lord, nor his *Apostles*, knew of any greater Blessing He was to bestow upon Men, than the *turning them from their Iniquities*; and that *This* was really the Blessing, with which He was sent by God to *bless* the World.

2. From what has been said, it appears, that the *Jews*, who rejected our Lord, had but a very *slender* and weak Excuse to make for this, from the Manner in which the *Prophets* spake of this great Person.

It cannot indeed, be denied that their *Antient Prophets* set forth the *Messiah* sometimes in a most *lofty* and exalted Style; and represent *Him*, as a *King*, the Extent of whose *Kingdom*, should be the whole Earth; and as a *Prince*, sitting upon the *Throne of David*, with a *Sceptre*, and all the *Ensigns of Royal Authority*;

S E R M.

XX.

Authority; vested with sufficient Power to destroy the Enemies of his People; and the like. But it is true also, that, in the same Prophets, there are so many *Passages* allowed to belong to the same Person, which either describe his Kingdom as of quite another Nature than the *Kingdoms* of this World; or *Himself*, as a *Man* in a *low* and *suffering* Condition; that Many of the *Jews* themselves were reduced to the *Necessity* of inventing *Two Messiahs*, to answer to these different *Descriptions*; when, by a due Consideration, They might reasonably have applied all to One and the same Person. And *this* They would naturally have done, if They had not been too much debauched in all their *Principles*, and *Practise*, to be disposed to consider either the Nature of God; or the Frame of Man, and the Dictates of the common *Voice* of their own Reason, in Matters of such a Kind.

For Proof of this, it may be observed, That it would not have been very hard for serious Persons to have accounted for all such lofty and figurative *Descriptions* of their *Prophets*, after such a Manner as this. There is a *Spiritual Kingdom*, as well as a *Temporal* one: And He who reigns in the Hearts of his Subjects is a *King* and *Lord*, as much as the greatest *Potentate*

tentate on Earth: There are *Enemies* to the *Spiritual* and *Eternal* Happiness of Man, as well as to his *present* Ease and Prosperity: And These are the same, with regard to the true and proper Happiness of *Man*, that earthly Tyrants are, to his worldly Peace and Quiet: and *He*, who subdues these, and delivers us from them, is the same, with respect to our real and substantial Happiness, as a *good Prince*, who rescues us from the Tyrants of this World, is, with respect to all our temporal Enjoyments. And therefore, if their antient *Prophets*, in representing the spiritual Kingdom of the *Messiah*, make use of *Words* which signify the greatest *Blessing*, and *Glory*, in *sensible* Matters; if He be said to have his *Throne* and his *Sceptre*; if the *Enemies* he is to subdue, are spoken of by the *Prophets* in the same *Terms* by which *Temporal Enemies* are described; if his redeeming us from their Power is represented by such *Words*, as *Conquests*, *Victories*, and *Triumphs*; this is justified by the Use of very high *Figurative* Expressions, upon many Occasions, in *all*, but especially the *Eastern*, *Languages*; without the Thought that such Expressions would be taken *literally*; or that Those, who were most concerned in them, would not make use of their *Common Sense*, in

S E R M.  
XX.

the Interpretation of Them. The *Jews* indeed knew this *Figurative Style* to be almost always the *Prophetic Style*; and not to be interpreted, in other Cases, according to the *Letter*: and therefore, might have learned another, and a true, Doctrine from such *Figures of Speech*. And this they were still more directed to do, in the present Case, by many *plain Expressions* in several Passages of the *Prophets*, mixed with the *Lofty* and *Metaphorical* ones, and necessarily interpreting them: Such, I mean, as represented the Dispensation of their *Messiah* to have been designed to *make an End of Sin*, and *bring in everlasting Righteousness*; and such as give *This* peculiar Character of it, that under it God would *write his Laws in the Hearts* of his *People*; and *remember their Sins no more*; and Others of the like Sort. All which is fully sufficient to shew the Guilt of that Infidelity of the *Jews*, which was owing to their total and wilful Neglect of such Considerations, as ought to have directed their Thoughts, and influenced their Conduct, upon this Occasion.

3. It will not be improper to observe, That what has been said may lead Us to the true Sense of those *Figurative Expressions* in the *New Testament*, relating to this same *Blessing* of

of the *Messiah*, which have caused great VASERM. variety of Sentiments and Debates. I mean particularly such seemingly hard *Phrases* as, *being* XX. *born again; being created again to good Works; renewed in our Minds; putting off the old Man, or the whole Body of Sin; and putting on the new Man, in all Holiness and Righteousness; being dead with Christ unto Sin, and arising again with Him to a new Life: and other extraordinary Forms of Speech to the same Purpose.* . All these are justly and truly explained by the plain *Phrases* of *ceasing from Sin, and Learning to do Righteousness*; and, in the Words before Us, by being turned *from our Iniquities to all Virtue*; by leading a *new Life* of habitual Holiness: and set forth no other Doctrine than that *the Blessing* of the *Messiah* consisted in calling the World from their former customary *Sins, to the Practice* of all the *Duties* of *moral Righteousness*.

4. From what has been said may justly be concluded the *Presumption* and *Iniquity*, of that *Church*, which assumes to itself the Privilege of  *blessing* Christians in a way absolutely contradictory to what is laid down in the *Text*, and other Places of the New Testament. What I mean is This. Our *Lord* and his *Apostles* declare his *Blessing* to consist in the making Us happy, by *turning* Us from  
all

SERM.  
XX.

Disciples, stand forth, and openly undertake and promise to Sinners, That They will bless and save them, without their being turned from their Iniquities; without one Mark of their Conversion through their past Lives; or one Mark of it, in their last Hours, unless it be a Declaration of their Sorrow. And this, which has no Relation to their Conversion from their Iniquities to a Course of Righteousness, They profess to make Equivalent to a past good Life; and, by some Methods invented by themselves, warrant the Arrival of their Disciples at Happiness, as effectually as if they had spent many Years in Obedience to the Laws of God. This, and the like Doctrines of Indulgences, and Pardons, for the Encouragement of Sinners in not being turned from their Iniquities, are such manifest and direct Contradictions to the whole Tenor of our Lord's own Declarations, that there cannot be the least Need of one Word to recommend such Blasphemy to the Abhorrence of all Christians, besides the bare Mention of them.

5. Others, who have separated from so polluted a Church, may learn not to imitate, in the least Degree, One of the worst Practices in that Communion which they have forsaken.

forfaken. And how near to this *Presumption* of the *Church of Rome* They come, who take upon them to administer the Comforts of GOD'S Mercy in *Christ*, under the Terrors of Death, to Those who have willfully stood out against all the most powerful Motives to Amendment through their whole past Lives, let themselves judge: but let Them first consider how fatal to *Living Sinners* it may prove, to see such Encouragement given to the *Hopes of Dying Ones*; and how naturally This must lead Those who are Witnesses to it, to think assuredly of *Salvation* and *Mercy* at last, without being *turned from their Iniquities* in any Part of their former Life. Who must answer for This great *Injury* to the *Gospel*, and to the *Men* themselves chiefly concerned, but *They*, who are at any Time guilty of prostituting the *Doctrine of Salvation* from *Sin*, to the Service of *Sin* itself; and substitute a *Repentance*, which is only a *Sorrow*, and *Dread of Punishment*, into the Place of that *Repentance*, which is *Amendment of Life*; and which *alone* their Lord and Master declares to be acceptable?

6. Lastly. Let this practical Argument be ever in our Minds. If this *turning of Us from our Iniquities* be the *Blessing* which Reason itself teaches us to expect from *Him*, who  
was

SERM. was to be the greatest Instance of GOD'S Mer-  
 XX. cy to *Sinners*; if This be what the *Jews*  
 themselves had Reason to look for, from  
 their *Messiah*; if This be the serious and con-  
 stant Declaration of our *Lord* himself, and  
 the settled Doctrine of his *Apostles*; it follows  
 most certainly, That *We* are not to hope for  
 any *Blessing* from our *Saviour Jesus*, the  
*Christ*, or *Messiah*, but as we are turned from  
 our *Iniquities* to the Practice of all *Virtue*;  
 That, without this indispensable Condition,  
 we have no Title to the Rewards promised  
 by Him; nay, That against those professed  
*Christians* who still keep their *Iniquities*, the  
*Messiah* himself will pronounce the *Wrath* of  
 GOD; *Depart from Me, ye Workers of Iniquity.*

The *Conclusion* of the whole, and the *Sum*  
 of all that most nearly concerns Us, We  
 must always remember to be This, *If we*  
*know these Things, happy are We only, if we do*  
*them.*

F I N I S.







